2006 CLAH Luncheon Address: A Personal Porfiriato: Thirty-Five Years of Muddling Through Mexico (and Points South)

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The Americas, Volume 62, Number 4, April 2006, pp. 519-531 (Article)

Published by Cambridge University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2006.0077*

The Americas
62:4 April 2006, 519-531

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A PERSONAL PORFIRIATO: THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF MUDDLING THROUGH MEXICO (AND POINTS SOUTH)*

I should first like to thank CLAH, Tom Holloway, and Mark Wasserman for the invitation to give this talk.

I should also clear up some confusion about the title, which is "My Personal Porfiriato" (details to follow)—not "My Personal Portfolio" (as an earlier version wrongly stated). While I can't guarantee that the former topic will be riveting, it should be more interesting than the latter; since, as my wife Lidia will confirm, my personal portfolio is unusually small and unimpressive; it can't compare with the bulging portfolios of some colleagues (I think enviously of Colin MacLachlan, who owns 50% of Telmex; and Bill Beezley, who controls half the Canadian brewing industry).

All of us, or most of us, here belong to a profession for which the old—often hypocritical—disclaimer, "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking," would be particularly hypocritical, given that we spend a good deal of our professional lives speaking in public: addressing eager graduate seminars, gabbling our way through conference papers at AHA or LASA panels, lecturing to the massed ranks of undergraduates, leafing through dog-eared lecture notes (if you don't know the text by heart). Recycling lectures is possible because, as historians, we don't have to be *au fait* with every passing conjunctural event—every coup, crisis, election, impeachment (as political scientists are meant to be: I return to that comparison in a moment); indeed, even as *political* historians of modern Latin America—that once teeming tribe, whose numbers were thinned, but are now recovering (I also return to that in a moment), we are also helped by the striking continuities in Latin American politics; its

* Remarks delivered at the Conference on Latin American History Annual Luncheon, Philadelphia, January 2006.

resemblance—as Charles Taylor once remarked—to a "living museum," in which political leaders, driven by some primordial and life-sustaining lust for power, live on (like Perón, Vargas, Haya de la Torre or Paz Estenssoro) or are reincarnated (thus, Lázaro Cárdenas, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and now Lázaro number two, that is, Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, current governor of Michoacan like his dad and granddad before him; and someone who, as a historian of Cardenismo, I sincerely hope may yet become president of Mexico; or, at the very least, generous patron and sponsor of a very rich institute dedicated to the history of Cardenismo). But I digress. Indeed, I fantasize.

Compared to lectures, classes and conference panels, this kind of public speaking—after-dinner speaking, or more strictly after/during lunch speaking (what in Oxford, when we stop talking Latin and lapse into English, we call post-prandial perorating)—is another matter. For some, it a great deal more lucrative. Bill Clinton, I believe, gets $150,000 a go; Mrs Thatcher rather less; and even Cherie Blair, wife of our Prime Minister, now commands $40,000 (£25,000), chiefly on the grounds of being married to a war criminal.[1] But she has a way to go to match Henry Kissinger's $75,000 (but then Kissinger is a *real* war criminal *and* has a Nobel Peace Prize to prove it).[2]

I did once give a genuine, post-prandial peroration at the San Jacinto Historical Center near Houston: a fine museum, lying in the shadow of a giant obelisk, close by the USS *Texas*. There, some years ago, while I worked at UT-Austin, I was asked to give an after-dinner talk to the Friends of the Museum, on the theme (chosen by them, not me) of "Texas and the Mexican Revolution." This, for me, involved some reading and research, though not too much; the secret, as with undergraduate lectures, being that of finding a text which the audience wouldn't know about (in this case, not difficult). Fortunately, I had a copy of Linda Hall and Don Coerver's then recent *Revolution on the Border*—one of Linda's excellent contributions to Mexican revolutionary history, before, alas, she swapped Alvaro Obregón for the various Virgins of the Americas—Guadalupe, Luján, etc. Psychics in touch with the astral plane tell me that Obregón is distraught at this abandonment; indeed, would give his right arm to get her back. But he can't.

Thus equipped, I crafted what I thought was a witty and scholarly talk, knowledgeably informed by historiographical revisionism, respectful of subaltern agency, and spiced with occasional jokes, jokes of an ironic and scholarly

[1] According to serious observers such as the veteran Labour M.P. Tam Dalyell: *The Guardian*, 27 March 2003.

[2] According to Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (London: Verso, 2001)—and others.

kind; all of which fell completely flat (so that I soon went into simultaneous editing mode: not something one wants to do too often; and not something, I hope, I will have to do here today). The crunch came when, having given a somewhat truncated talk to a very muted response, I concluded and took questions, the first of which was: "What did I think of Prime Minister Thatcher?"—which required me to go into even more severe self-editing, self-censoring mode. It became clear, as we proceeded to informal socializing, that the Friends of the Museum, though no doubt fine citizens, pillars of the community, and all that, were, by and large, second-hand car-dealers who, as friends of the museum, combined social kudos with tax breaks, were politically to the right of Ronald Reagan, and historically—how shall I put it?—seriously unencumbered by any nuanced knowledge of the Mexican Revolution.

This talk, of course, is a different proposition; and the audience (many of them known and none of them, to my knowledge, second-hand car-dealers) is politically diverse and historically distinguished. Which means I can scatter scholarly allusions, confident that the references will be recognized, the jokes will be tittered at (I am not expecting riotous belly-laughs) and no-one will ask me what I think of Prime Minister Blair (though I have thrown out a broad hint already).

I'm afraid this over-long preamble contains one last item: a disclaimer, to the effect that, although I am addressing the Conference on *Latin American* History, my talk is skewed towards *Mexico* (though I do strive for broader ecumenical coverage of the whole Continent which, as I sometimes remind my benighted Europeanist colleagues in Oxford, is a very big and complicated place, containing twenty republics, most of them older than most European nation-states. Of course, they pay no attention to me). This Mexican bias *could* be justified on the grounds that Mexico is by far the most historically interesting and important of all Latin American countries ("como México no hay dos," as the Mexicans like to say; of course, they also say things like "saliste de Guatemala y metiste en Guatepeor," so we perhaps should not take Mexican sayings too seriously). Such a claim of Mexican superiority would be excessively partial and subjective (even if true), but the fact is that we historians usually know about *countries* or bits of countries; we each tend to have our own patria or patria chica. There are, it is true, a few of us who display greater spatial mobility: Herb Klein hopping from Cuba and Virginia to Bolivia to Brazil; Steve and Florencia—I assume I can, in this case, dispense with family names: there are a few people in the world, like Madonna, who don't need them—from Peru to Mexico to Chile. But these historians are unusually nimble. They are the fleet mountain goats of history. Most of us are highly territorial animals; we are limpets rather than ibexes;

and with good reason. It takes time to crack a country: big countries have big bibliographies and even small countries may have substantial archives, sometimes chaotic archives, which need to be mastered. This is not the work of a short vacation and, once the costly investment in time, effort, money, travel, discomfort, amoebic dysentery or whatever else, has been made, the logic of staying put is powerful (an economist would call this the logic of sunk costs). At any rate, we, as historians, have limpet-like tendencies and tend to stick to our particular rock; whereas, in contrast, political scientists can flit around the Continent—or even the world—testing their models, running their regression analyses, and flaunting heuristic devices wherever they choose, often in blithe disregard of local circumstances. Increasingly, indeed, they do not even need to flit around the Continent but can download and process suspect data, preferably statistical, without ever leaving their desks in . . . (well, it would be invidious for me to say where; you can fill in the gap).

At any rate, when Mark Wasserman asked me to give this talk, I reflected on my engagement with Mexican history and, being a bit of closet Cliometrician, I spent several hours with the calculator and concluded that I had spent exactly as many years as a historian of Mexico as Porfirio Díaz had as president of Mexico; or, in case there are smarty-pants in the audience who will now do the calculation on the back of a napkin, my historical engagement, dating it from 1970, when I first did research in Mexico, equalled the Porfiriato, if we include the presidency of Manuel González. So, the Porfiriato, 1876-1911; my stint as a historian of Mexico, 1970-2005 (when I wrote this).

I should 'fess up that I actually first set foot on Mexican soil in the memorable year of 1968 (if nothing else, we historians have the right to say which years are memorable, just as we get to say which Kings are Bad, which Nations are Top, and so on). In '68 I travelled the US on Greyhound buses and crossed a few times from El Paso into Juárez. Now, at this point, I should, like a stand-up comic ask if anyone in the audience is from Juárez. . . .[3] Well, even the most patriotic juarense would, I hope, understand if I say that *that* experience alone did not convert me into an instant mexicanófilo. (Not that it was so bad an experience; Juárez in 1968 was a lot smaller and less menacing than it is now; indeed, when it came to menace, Chicago a month later—in August '68 during the Democratic national convention—was a lot worse; indeed, it's the only place in the world where I've inhaled tear gas). More crucial than crossing into Juárez was returning to Britain and, in a scattershot effort to get funding for graduate work in the history of somewhere that wasn't Britain, I got a grant for Latin American research; for which, indi-

[3] It turned out there were a couple of juarenses in the audience.

rectly, I probably had Fidel Castro to thank (since the Cuban Revolution had jolted the British government into briefly and very uncharacteristically funding a smidgen of Latin American research).

This comparison with the Porfiriato was sobering, by virtue of reminding me how long I had been at it and, to put it bluntly, how old I was—and, I repeat, how small my portfolio still remained. It also set me thinking about the changes that had occurred during that period, both in Mexico and in Mexican historiography (and, by extension, in Latin America as a whole).

Let me deal with the historiography first. I realise this can be a tricky subject; historiographical resumes risk being either tedious booklists or, if the booklists are spiced with pungent comments about one's fellow-historians, they can cause offence, something I would not wish to do, especially in a convivial environment like this, in the City of Brotherly Love, where I'm getting a free lunch. So I will err on the side of blandness, generality, sweetness and light. The last generation has seen a massive increase in scholarship on Mexico and Latin America, not least in the US, but also in Mexico (it is striking, too, how, despite very adverse circumstances, history has also advanced in countries like Argentina). I say "advanced" since, while I don't think that history is as patently cumulative as the natural sciences, I am enough of a positivist—which, I know, in some people's eyes, is tantamount to being a paedophile—to believe that history does advance, albeit in a rather awkward crablike way, with a good many delays and detours; and that, as a result, we know more about Mexican history now that we did 35 years ago. (That is not to say, of course, that today's historians are better than those of the 1960s; indeed, to the extent that there are more of them, or us, the mean may in fact be lower; and, speaking personally, I would still include, say, Womack's *Zapata* among the ten best books written on modern Mexican history and, more diffidently, since I am less of an expert, Gibson's *Aztecs Under Spanish Rule* among the top ten colonial texts).

Occasionally, the sheer growth of knowledge can lead to myopia; to knowing more and more about less and less; to losing the wood for the trees; to generating nitpicking monographs, of the kind which get spoofed in academic novels and the like. The British novelist Kingsley Amis did this over fifty years ago in his novel *Lucky Jim* (1954); however, the nitpicking topic/title of the hapless Jim Dixon's doctoral thesis, "The Economic Influence of the Developments in Shipbuilding Techniques, 1450-85" sounds positively Olympian in its sweep and ambition compared to some that have come along in more recent years. However, I don't think one should disdain narrow monographs which are, after all, the raw material hacked from the archives

(using archives broadly to include, say, oral and visual sources, not just mouldering documents), without which we would be condemned to recycling old data, dug up long ago, perhaps re-jigging the data according to the latest theoretical modes and fashions. (There is quite a bit of that these days.)

Modes and fashions, of course, are important, and play a part in determining what kind of monographs, especially theses, get written. Back in the 1970s the "modal" doctorate and typical article tended to be regional or even local; it explored, for example, the Mexican Revolution in the state of X, or municipio of Y, often combining political, economic and social themes (including themes which, at the time, did not yet know they were "cultural"); such as elections, the circulation of elites, landownership, markets, communications, literacy, and popular protest. Hence chapter 2 of Womack's *Zapata*; the swathe of regional studies of the Revolution mentored by Friedrich Katz (I believe Mark was the first of that Chihuahuan school, which included Dan Nugent, Ana María Alonso, Teri Koreck, Rich Warren, Peter Guardino), or edited by Brading, or promoted by Martínez Assad, or inspired by the late Luis Gonzalez, whose *Pueblo en vilo* (San José de Gracia) set a benchmark for *microhistoria*, local history, which many have tried to emulate but few if any have equalled. For the Revolution, the slogan was "Many Mexicos" (hence the edited volumes of Benjamin and McNellie, Benjamin and Wasserman . . . was there no Wasserman and McNellie?); the approach was "decentered" (before that became another cliché); and the result was a much better grasp of the variability of the Revolution and its outcome—even if, occasionally, this came at the risk of endless subdivision: my revolution is different from your revolution which is different from his or hers. . . . So, like the French Revolution, the Mexican ran the risk of dying the death of a thousand revisionist cuts, sliced up into endless disconnected bits and pieces. Some revisionists (I use that term cautiously and neutrally) even denied that there had been a Revolution at all; that, at least, was the perspective of Don Ramón as he surveyed the scene from the commanding heights of his hacienda near San Diego. As the French parallel suggests, similar decentring had been going on in Europe for a long time; and, elsewhere in Latin America too, the grand national narratives were being decentred: hence, for example, the innovative regional studies of Brazil pioneered by Warren Dean, Joe Love, John Wirth and others.

Regional and local studies not only recognized the complexity of Latin American societies; they also exploited new archives (and, sometimes, oral sources); and they made possible a view both from the *provinces* (thus, periphery-in) and from below, from the *people*, thus, "bottom-up:" in which respect, the social history of the English Marxists—Edward Thompson in particular—

had some beneficial influence. As yet, the "subaltern" had not taken flight; it still lurked in its larval form, as a good old worker, peasant or proletarian. (Remember, those were the days when our social science colleagues were earnestly discussing dependency and the articulation of modes of production in Latin America—at least, my colleagues in the windswept University of Essex were, when they weren't mounting occupations or joining picket lines).

There is a risk, which historians above all should be aware of and should resist, of glorifying the good old days, which were usually not nearly as good or glorious as often supposed. But that period of expansion—of output, focus and, in some cases, quality—was very positive. "Bliss was it then to be alive and to be young was very heaven"—Wordsworth's take on the French Revolution—may be putting it a bit strongly (and maybe Anglocentrically, since, for the reason I mentioned, the late '60s and early '70s saw a rare mini-boom in British Latin American studies); but there is little doubt that Latin American history prospered in those years and—to make a slightly more polemical point—several of the conceptual breakthroughs which are sometimes associated with the new cultural history are to be found, even if semantically concealed, in that earlier formative period.

I just uttered the dread term "the new cultural history"—an emblem of historiographical emancipation and (though they might not like the term) of progress for some, a red rag to a bull for others. At some point in the second half of my personal Porfiriato—from the later 1980s, I guess—we began to hear a lot about mentalities, archaeologies of power, deconstruction, decentering, subalterns, gender, signs, signifiers and semiotics. Especially in the US (less so in Europe, a good deal less so in Mexico and Latin America: which in itself is a big and interesting problem which needs to be . . . well, problematized). But postprandial perorations do not lend themselves to such problematization; nor is there the time—or, on my part, the will—to re-enter the thickets of the new cultural history (NCH), where several of us have previously got lost or acquired some nasty scratches. Like any new wave, NCH brought with it a lot of fresh and interesting insights and approaches (there's no doubt that women and gender history was hugely neglected in earlier days), as well as a good deal of old historical mutton dressed as sexy new lamb (workers transmuted into subalterns, ideologies into discourses), and some heavy-handed jargon which defeats the primary object of history, which, presumably, is lucid communication about the past. As Marc Bloch once observed, "I can conceive no higher praise for a writer than to be able to speak in the same tone to savants and schoolboys alike:" Bloch recognized that this was difficult, but argued that it should remain a goal; thus, obscurantism for its own sake should be avoided.

While the NCH, like any fashion, has its fair share of duds and dumbos, it is not, I think, the threat to civilization-as-we-know-it that some doom-sayers suggest. Much of it is less original and iconoclastic than either its champions or critics assert; it sometimes displays a confusing but basically harmless tendency to sandwich conventional empirical history between two stale slices of post-modern pap; and, like any fashion, it will come and go. Or, to repeat a metaphor I've used once before, the cultural wave has crashed on the beach, rearranged the shoreline a bit, and may even now be on the turn, while other waves are building out to sea.

For example, while US economic history has tended to take the high road of Cliometrics—which resounds to the crunch of numbers being crunched, the squelch of postmodernists being squelched, and the oohs and aahs of admiring economists (who are the target audience for this brutal activity)—economic history in Mexico (and, I think, other parts of Latin America), is undergoing quite a renaissance, which is all the more welcome for the fact of being accessible in approach as well as rigorous in method. I am thinking of the work of people like Carlos Marichal, Leonor Ludlow, Sandra Kunz, and Paolo Riguzzi. So, as a useful corrective to the impression conveyed in some recent history, we find that Mexicans in fact spent more time in *fábricas* than they did in *fiestas*; that commercial railways were at least as important as civic rituals; and that machinery can be usefully studied alongside Mariolatry.

Again, it would be interesting to speculate about the cause of this renaissance; and it might be that the recent neo-liberal turn, with its "neo-Porfirian" emphasis on markets and export-led growth, has prompted a return to economic history (at the same time it has prompted rather more questionable rehabilitations of Díaz and the Científicos). However, it is the outcome rather than the cause of historiographical shifts which really counts and, in this case, the outcome seems to me very positive.

At the same time—and perhaps for comparable reasons—there has been a notable revival of political history, even constitutional and electoral history; a revival prompted, I suspect, both by "externalist" factors, such as Mexico's recent democratization, and by "internalist" dynamics, including debates about political culture spurred by the French Revolution bicentenary in 1989 (I am thinking of the work of Keith Baker and others). Such an approach goes further and deeper than the old politico-constitutional history of pre-1960; it takes note of subalterns as well as elites; and it links history to considerations of power, ethnicity, gender and all the usual conceptual suspects. The late François-Xavier Guerra, who mistakenly applied a French politico-cultural logic to the Revolution of 1910, made

much more sense when he addressed independence and its aftermath (that is, the fall of a monarchical *ancien régime* roughly comparable to that of France); and his somewhat abstract formulations have been given greater depth by the work of Antonio Annino, Virginia Guedea and—among the best Anglophone scholarship in this vein—of Peter Guardino, who did Guerrero, and has just done Oaxaca and has only 28 more states to go. (Interestingly, we have here an Italian, a Mexican and an American—which is not the start of a tasteless ethnic joke, but a comment on the cosmopolitanism of current Mexican historiography). Again, this renewed interest in political history, broadly and imaginatively defined, is a continental-wide phenomenon, which has its counterparts in Colombia (Eduardo Posada), Chile (my old colleague, the late Simon Collier), and the Río de la Plata (Hilda Sábato, Jorge Myers, Paula Alonso); indeed, it has also produced the heroic comparative analysis of Carlos Forment, covering Mexico, Peru, Cuba and Chile. Four republics done and just sixteen to go. Guardino, eat your heart out.

The explanation for this *political* turn might be found in contemporary processes of democratization (actual elections make people take historical elections more seriously). Or it may be that we have hearkened to and heeded the recent clarion-call from Yale and Madison that we should "Reclaim the Political," so we have dutifully gone out and reclaimed it.[4] Indeed, it may be that, even as we speak, or as I speak, Yale and Madison are composing another clarion-call and we will soon be heading in another direction and reclaiming something else. . . .

Meantime, in the real world, where such clarion-calls are at most offstage squeaks, the last thirty-five years have seen some dramatic changes in Mexico. My first research trip to Mexico occurred, as I said, in 1970: it coincided with the death of Cárdenas; the first Mexican World Cup (where the host nation's victory over Belgium led to late-night carousing in the streets); and a presidential election won by the workaholic PRIísta apparatchik Luis Echeverría. This was the last classic PRI election: preceded by the *dedazo* (the big finger of the outgoing president; in this case, the blood-stained digit of Díaz Ordaz); the *destape* (the official unveiling); the orgy of PRI publicity (the huge, slightly sinister image of Echeverría, peering through shaded lenses like a Sicilian mafioso, dominated the streets of Mexico City that summer); and the wholly predictable outcome, with the PRI winning 85% of the vote. As one Mexican put it, when an American

[4] Gilbert M. Joseph, ed., *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History. Essays from the North* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

boasted of the speed of US voting machines, which could deliver a result within hours: "that's nothing—we know the result weeks in advance."

Well, things have changed, in both respects. Mexican elections—such as the presidential election scheduled for July this year (2006)—are now unpredictable (a necessary prerequisite of democracy); while US elections are no longer quite such impeccable models of speed and efficiency. (If they ever were: I lived long enough in Texas to hear some hair-raising stories about LBJ's electoral shenanigans). Mexico's shift from one-party rule (or, better, one-party hegemony) to genuine multiparty competition and *alternancia* is a major historical change. While other Latin American countries have also democratized, their experience has often been one of sudden oscillations between authoritarian, usually military, and democratic regimes; whereas Mexico, unusually, has evolved—over time, incrementally, though not wholly peacefully—from civilian one-party semi-authoritarianism to competitive electoral democracy (more of a Taiwanese than a classic Latin American transition). In the process, the hypertrophied presidency has shrunk; state and municipal governments have acquired more power; the media have become more plural and responsible (reporters no longer collect their regular *embute*—their rolled-up "sausage" of pesos—from the Ministry of Gobernación); the "myth of the Mexican Revolution" has come to look increasingly threadbare; and the once-dominant machine of the PRI has begun to clank and emit black smoke. Looking back to the 1970s (or even to the 1980s, when, I recall, a group of assembled experts at UCSD scouted Mexico's "alternative political futures"), this outcome is quite surprising and counter-intuitive. It is not what historians expected (but then we probably have a collective bias for continuity, there being a lot of it in history; and, anyway, we are by definition concerned with the past); but nor was this outcome foreseen by political scientists, who *are* meant to read the entrails of the present and, perhaps, predict the future. Mexican democratization did not involve coup, revolution, or "implosion" (as some predicted); it tended to be incremental and relatively peaceful (or, at least, only sporadically violent). The Mexicans, who for years had been regarded as congenitally macho, violent, authoritarian, patrimonial, corrupt, in thrall to Catholicism, corporatism and a backward Iberian colonialism (see the collected works of Howard Wiarda and others)—these same Mexicans readily discarded their cultural baggage; elections were cleaned up and the opposition started to win. PRI presidents acquired the bad habit of leaving power amid crisis and in disgrace: Echeverría in 1976 (I was there that summer, but, as usual, left just before the big September devaluation), López Portillo in 1982, Salinas in 1994. This remarkable shift accompanied—but was not a simple political reflex of—economic change, as the dismantling of the bloated state sector

(a sector that was, incidentally, a quite recent creation: a product of the populist 1970s, not the populist 1930s) reduced the PRI's patrimonial power; and as Mexico lowered tariffs and entered NAFTA (again, the myth of the Revolution took a serious hit). Exports boomed; and they included a vast quantity of illegal narcotics. As the old revolutionary corridos lost some of their lustre, narco-corridos became fashionable; and Mexico's well-populated pantheon of saints (illustrative of the country's enduring religiosity) acquired numerous new recruits: first, a slew of official saints—including Juan Diego, perhaps the most important person never to have existed in Mexican history—who have been created by that great maker-of-saints, Pope John Paul II; and, second, an unofficial narco-saint (San Jesús Malverde), who joined the roster of religious icons who have been researched by that great student-of-saints, Professor Paul Vanderwood I (San Juan Soldado, Santa Teresa de Cabora, El Niño Fidencio, etc.).

Although, as I said, the historical debates which agitate Anglo-Saxon academia do not cut much ice in the real world south of the Río Grande, the changes which have taken place in Mexico are not only historically significant, but are tied up with changes in the way history is done down there. Over the last 35 years or so, history has been literally decentred, as the chilango monopoly of UNAM and the Colmex has given way to a more pluralist universe, with robust provincial institutions, like the Colmich, the state universities of Chihuahua and Sonora, the Tec de Monterrey and many others; provincial and local archives have improved (while the proposed move of the National Archives out to Pachuca, there to join the Big Ben clock tower and the Mexicanized Cornish *pastí*, has fortunately been quashed). In Mexico, though not, I think, in all Latin American countries, archival access and conditions have in general got much better. The days when labour historians had to use the old Casa Amarilla in Tlalpan, where the archivist shot the pigeons in the rafters with an airgun and served *tacos de paloma* to hungry investigadores—those good old days are gone, along with the amoebic dysentery which went with them. Well, perhaps not entirely. At any rate, the pampered generation of today, with their computerized catalogues, laptops, regular library hours and legal access to functioning photocopiers don't know how lucky they are or how intrepid we of an earlier generation were. (I put that in to antagonize any 30-somethings who may have snuck in).

In the meantime, Mexican history has, like Mexican politics, become more plural. In these thirty-five years, Enrique Florescano must have written at least thirty five books; Enrique Krauze has written biographies of almost everyone and brought Mexican history to the TV screen, thus furthering the rehabilitation of Porfirio Díaz, but signally failing to please Clau-

dio Lomnitz; and Alicia Hernandez served briefly as an organic intellectual of Salinismo. The Cristeros have been rehabilitated, sanctified, and discursively admitted to los Pinos; while the son of the Sinarquista—that is, the fascistic, falangist—leader Salvador Abascal now heads the Ministry of Gobernación in President Fox's musical chairs cabinet. Talking of famous fathers and sons, we could also note that Carlos Madrazo, the great white hope of the reformist wing of the PRI in the 1960s, who died in a suspicious air crash in 1965, lived long enough to produce Roberto Madrazo, current cacique and presidential candidate of the not-so-reformist PRI, which after 71 years of office is now learning to live with the novel experience of opposition and all that goes with it. (As the PRI saying went: "vivir fuera del presupuesto es vivir en error." Well, the PRI now has to live in error, at least federally). At the risk of seeming something of a *chupa-medias* (if you will allow me an Argentinism), I could say that these striking generational sequences (I have already alluded to the three-generation Cárdenas dynasty) are proof of the extraordinarily percipient analysis which Mark Wasserman gave us of post-revolutionary Chihuahua: of "persistent oligarchs" who, despite major social, political and economic changes, still managed to promote their family interests. Which, in a country like this which gave us the Kennedy and the Bush dynasties, need come as no surprise.

By way of conclusion, and on a fraternal note, I would like to recognize an absent friend and fellow-Mexicanist. When I agreed to give this talk I asked Eric Van Young if he would be here and he said: "only if I win." (Win what? Surely he wasn't going to appear on *Jeopardy* for a second time?) As you all probably knew, but I didn't, being a far-off inhabitant of Donald Rumsfeld's Old Europe, Eric was running for the presidency of the AHA, no less. But, Eric went on, I won't win. The other candidate, he said, is better and I will probably vote for her myself. Coming from a Mexicanist, I thought, this was pretty feeble stuff, deplorably defeatist and un-macho; had Eric really immersed himself for so long in Mad Messiahs and Masked Men that he had never heard of the PRI, of "patriotic fraud," of stuffed ballot-boxes, forged credentials, rentacrowds, convenient computer crashes and hallowed principles like "vote early and vote often"? But my expertise in the art of so-called electoral alchemy was spurned, and Eric lost, and he pays the price by not being here.[5] I mention Eric not just as an absent friend (for there are, of course, a good many others), but because Eric, like other colleagues here present, whom I would not wish to embarrass, exemplifies some of the virtues which I think make Mexican and Latin American history such an

[5] This, for me, is a rare excursion into both oral and contemporary history; both, as we know, tricky fields of historical research.

attractive and rewarding field to work in, as I have these 35 years. (You will gather that I don't much believe in national stereotypes; but the idea that a self-selected group of historians may display some shared characteristics seems to me quite plausible; and an anthropological study of AHA subgroups—dress, deportment, interests, politics—would, I think, bear this out). Eric and I don't entirely agree about Mexican history; I don't follow some of his psycho-babble and he thinks I am a "knee-jerk empiricist." But Eric and I seem to be able to argue about our differences in open and friendly fashion; and I think we share, as many of us do who have spent a Porfiriato, or less, working on Mexico or Latin America, a common interest in, and affection for, a region which—despite the hassles of research which I mentioned—fully repays the investment we have sunk in it. (And I am not talking about MacLachlan's Telmex shares). Even if *my* academic entry to Latin America was rather serendipitous, a minor by-product of the Cuban Revolution, I have not regretted my decision to work on the Mexican Revolution rather than, say, the Elizabethan Poor Law; as a result—since, as we all know, "time flies when you're enjoying yourself"—these 35 years have flown by—much faster, I am sure than the Porfiriato did, especially for the poor bastards toiling in the tobacco fields of the Valle Nacional. And I have, during those years, benefited greatly from the work, criticism, and camaraderie of fellow-Latin Americanists, north and south of the Río Grande, who have shared my interests. Not least, my fellow-members of CLAH.

Now, I am tempted at this point to do a Simon Schama, to blur history and fantasy, and to quote a fictional character: "I don't know half of you as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve:" after which I should slip on my magic ring and disappear from the party in a blinding flash of light. That, of course, is the Bilbo Baggins way of finishing a speech. Instead, I shall stick to hard historical fact. The Porfiriato came to a violent and unexpected end after 35 years. I hope to avoid such a fate; and, while it might be optimistic, in actuarial terms, to look forward to another entire Porfiriato, I certainly hope to eke out a few more sexenios being attached, like a limpet, to the hospitable rock of Mexican and Latin American history.

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