# Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960 (review)

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These two arguments, the *instrumentality* of workers' support for their unions, and the unfixed, highly contingent quality of workers' identities *as* workers, have in recent years become permanent themes in post-Marxist labor historiography. But in Peruvian academic and political circles circa 1986 such observations bordered on heresy, perhaps explaining why Parodi relied so heavily on first-person testimonios, letting workers speak for themselves in their own words. Now that Parodi's arguments have passed from heretical to prophetic to commonplace, these testimonies are arguably the book's principal remaining attraction for the contemporary reader.

If the English translation, published fifteen years later, no longer shatters idols or puts any accepted truths to lie, what purpose does it serve and for what audience? First, as editor Conaghan argues in the introduction, *To Be a Worker* illustrates the genuinely revolutionary impact of Velasco Alvarado's military reformism on Peruvian labor relations at the shop-floor level, an argument that is hardly new, but which is captured in excellent detail by Parodi's oral histories, particularly in chapters 2 and 3. More significant is the way in which the narrative foreshadows subsequent events, most notably the collapse of Peru's organized left and Alberto Fujimori's successful appeal to people just like the workers of Metal Empresa. Fujimori, Conaghan believes, brilliantly tapped the complexities of "worker" identities, offering not a proletarian revolution but a Peruvian version of the by-your-bootstraps-American-dream, with Fujimori posing as the practical man who would bring "development" and make those dreams possible.

If those contributions do not suffice, "To Be a Worker" still has the *testimonios*, including fifty pages devoted to an interview with migrant, then worker, then union leader Jesús Zúñiga. Undergraduate and graduate students of Latin American politics, sociology, urban anthropology, or recent history could find far worse guides than Messrs. Zúñiga and Parodi. The translation by James Alstrum reads easily and catches many—though unfortunately not all—of the Peruvianisms that fill Parodi's original. This UNC Press edition also includes two epilogues by Parodi (one bringing Zúñiga's life story up to date, the other covering Peru in the 1990s), a chronology of events from 1968 to 1995, notes, and an index.

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*Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960.* By Ann Farnsworth-Alvear. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. Pp. 303. Illustrations. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $19.95 paper.

Ann Farnsworth-Alvear's well-written and carefully-argued study of Medillín's textile industry makes crucial interventions in gender and labor history. Drawing on newspapers, oral histories, company documents, and reports by local work inspectors, Farnsworth-Alvear provides a nuanced account of how gender shaped interactions between workers and employers in the first half of the twentieth century.

Stressing that gender ideology created normative distinctions between "good" and "bad" women as well as between men and women, Farnsworth-Alvear traces how gender shaped changes in the factories. During the early years of the textile industry (1905-1935), owners of small-scale mills established direct paternalistic ties with workers who were mostly women. These informal paternalistic ties broke down after 1935-36, when the election of Alfonso López Pumarejo, a populist Liberal, to the presidency prompted a series of strikes and labor mobilizations. Mill owners subsequently employed a more extensive and bureaucratic fordist style of paternalism to manage their growing workforces and avoid the formation of "communist" labor unions. They offered benefits to workers even as they demanded greater labor discipline. Responding to the notion that factory work was perilous for women, the largest mills not only refused to hire married women (who presumably belonged at home with their children and husbands) but also fired women who were found to have sex outside of marriage. Priests hired by the companies indissolubly joined "sexual comportment, hard work, and Catholicism … to one another and to a higher good" (p. 178). This system persisted until 1953, when the introduction of new technologies spurred industrialists to hire men rather than women. As the workforce became increasingly male, mill owners replaced prior forms of discipline with Taylorist systems of time management, and paternalist forms of labor relations disappeared. In describing these shifts, the author seeks not to explain the transformations but to understand how evolving experiences of class and gender emerged from and influenced them.

Although the author views these changes as part of a transnational process, she focuses on local actors and events. Factory owners countered the local labor and leftist mobilizations of 1935-36 by institutionalizing paternalism. Perhaps more important, the staunch Catholicism that prevailed in Antioquia, along with the region's strong Catholic Social Action movement, shaped welfare capitalism there. Farnsworth-Alvear's arguments regarding the specificity of Medellín are convincing, yet the particularities of this case would have been more evident if the author had been more explicit about what was peculiar to the city. Engagement with the now extensive debates on gender and industrial restructuring in twentieth-century Latin America would have been particularly useful.

Farnsworth-Alvear's greatest contribution is her use of oral histories to uncover workers' subjective experiences of work. She rejects forms of class analysis that derive experience from a priori categories and argues against seeing workers' actions as always reacting to elites. Workers' viewpoints were contradictory, she insists, and their experiences and actions did not always resist or accommodate elite-fashioned norms; often, they existed alongside elite injunctions. Workers wore short dresses even as they averred the value of modesty. Others talked proudly of participation in strikes while denouncing worker militancy.

Farnsworth-Alvear's insistence on the complexity of laborers' work lives is compelling and innovative. Her close readings of worker testimonies reveal incongruities overlooked in prior studies. Still, most readers will probably be startled by

the conservatism of the men and women Farnsworth-Alvear interviewed: their intense religiosity and belief in the value of women's virginity and their praise of bosses, anti-communism, and criticism of labor activists. In insisting on the intricacy of worker consciousness, Farnsworth-Alvear sidesteps the question of how to comprehend the varying levels and kinds of collusion between workers and employers. Were Medellín workers on balance more conservative than the workers studied by other scholars? Or does Farnsworth-Alvear's methodology lead her to see conservatism where others have seen resistance? By interviewing retirees who had spent long periods in the mills, Farnsworth-Alvear may have focused on a group especially sympathetic to bosses. Unfortunately, the book fails to explore whether the lack of outright "resistance" was the product of the case the author chose rather than of her methodology. Overall, however, Farnsworth-Alvear has produced an important book that adds to the vibrant literature on gender and labor in Latin America. Her insights on the complexity of worker consciousness will doubtless spur healthy debates on how best to apprehend workers' lives.

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*The Redemptive Work: Railway and Nation in Ecuador, 1895-1930.* By A. Kim Clark. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1988. Pp. 244. Maps. Bibliography. Notes. Index. $48.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

As industrialization spread and deepened in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, railroads played a critical role, opening the way for the advance of the leading economies of the world. Beyond its brute physical contribution to economic growth, the railroad became the foremost symbol of moderation and progress. Given both the ample evidence of the railroad's practical utility and its alluring symbolic power, Latin America could scarcely resist: railroad building fever swept the continent. In some settings, for example across the flat and fertile Pampas of Argentina, building railways made perfect sense. The lines laid there helped make that nation the richest in all Latin America. However, in other places, in mountainous places, building railways was nearly always a wildly impractical and very bad idea. This book looks at the construction of one such line, the famous railroad into the sky, the Guayaquil to Quito in Ecuador.

Based on considerable archival investigation, A. Kim Clark offers much of value in this important work. Clark considers the building of this railway as part of Ecuador's larger project of national integration (a process that most would see as yet unfinished), exploring both the political economy of railroad construction and the railroad as cultural symbol. Clark grounds her study in an examination of the competing interests of Ecuador's regionally based elites. While both the highland (sierra) and the coastal elites supported the building of the railway, each did so for distinctly different reasons, Clark says. The isolated landholding elite of the sierra saw in the railroad an avenue to their economic salvation, the opening of long dreamed of outlets for their agricultural products. The coastal cacao and tropical