

VINCENT PELOSO (ed.): *Work, Identity, and Protest in 20th Century Latin America*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003.

Vincent Peloso's new edited volume, with thirteen empirical essays and three synthetic chapters, positions itself in an ongoing debate within labor history. Peloso argues in the introduction that using identity as an organizing theme springs from "the historian's turn from economics to culture in the study of Latin American labor history" (xiii). In a 1990 article Ronald Chilcote lamented that "classes and class struggle are being displaced by an emphasis on political pluralism, political organizations, and interest groups." However, as political scientist Kenneth Roberts observes in the volume's final chapter, recent years have seen "a modest revival of interest in class relations and class actors in Latin American scholarship" (324). Some historians have brought to the fore multiple elements of subjectivity – race, ethnicity, and gender, for example – that are essential to the crafting of identity. The authors in this volume all appear to agree that these cross-cutting influences on the constitution of class are central to understanding organization and mobilization among the working peoples of Latin America. Most of the authors provide detailed cultural studies while retaining a strong interest in the dynamics of class formation, maintaining an admirable balance as they shift their gaze back and forth between subjects and politics.

David Parker and Ann Farnsworth-Alvear both show, though in very different ways, the difficulties and pitfalls of establishing the contours of identity. Parker describes early 20th century conflicts in Peru over labor legislation, when the terms were set for distinguishing between white collar and manual laborers. In this situation, when as Parker notes "law challenged custom for the right to determine a critical social boundary" (112), class politics were made explicit in social debate. But while authors of the new law based the division between classes on their prior assumptions, many workers held different assumptions and the resulting conflicts would have a long-lasting impact on the labor movement. This piece is a welcome addition to an area long neglected by labor studies, namely the middle class (although Parker's monograph and Brian Owensby's work on Brazil are recent exceptions to this lack of attention).

Farnsworth-Alvear grapples with the question of gender in her analysis of a 1920 Medellín textile strike carried out largely by women. She objects to the image of striking "*mujercitas*" portrayed in the contemporary press and by extension questions the category she admits to be central to feminist labor history: "women workers." The imposition of this identity, she cogently argues, "obscures working women as subjects" (104). The historian's reconstitution of workers' identities, then, can inadvertently elide important elements of their subjectivity.

Several other selections also underline the importance of, and obstacles presented by, heterogeneity in working class movements. Both Alejandro de la Fuente and Miguel Tinker-Salas describe industries that drew heavily on immigrant labor forces – respectively, Spanish and West Indian workers in the Cuban sugar industry and Chinese and West Indian workers in the Venezuelan oil industry. However, while de la Fuente makes the convincing claim that “more often than not, cross-racial alliances characterized the labor movement” (9), Tinker-Salas finds that only “occasionally examples of labor solidarity [among the workers from different backgrounds] surfaced” (157). In his piece on the revolt against mandatory yellow fever vaccination in turn of the century Rio de Janeiro, Jeffrey Needell describes how an “alliance between ideological middle-sector leaders and the workers, marginalized, and *desordeiros*” (51) nearly managed to topple the oligarchic Brazilian government. While it emerges is a theme that recurs throughout the volume.

Anton Rosenthal, for example, frames Uruguay’s first general strike in 1911 as a product of, and lashing out against, modernity. He also demonstrates the importance of spatial relations to the dynamics of labor mobilization, an area that is ripe for more analysis. Rosenthal shows that Montevideo tram workers’ circulation throughout the city and their exposure to other workers played a crucial role in their ability to organize and mobilize. As Rosenthal argues, “space and class are closely connected” (79).

Also focusing on spatial or geographic connections are Catherine LeGrand and María del Carmen Baerga, who highlight the importance of analyzing the influences of industrialization on rural areas, in addition to the urban centers that are more frequently studied by labor historians. LeGrand shows in her study of the Colombian banana industry that the boundary between “peasant” and “wage worker” was a porous one and as workers eased between categories, they changed not only their earning techniques and labor patterns, but also their attitude toward land ownership or occupancy. Baerga suggests that understanding Puerto Rican women needle workers’ attitudes toward unionization can be explained by the differential effects of industrialization in urban and rural areas and the corresponding labor strategies of women in the different areas.

Both Anthony Pereira, who discusses Brazil’s “new unionism” of the 1980s and 1990s, and Thomas Klubock, who writes about Chilean copper miners under Pinochet, address the activities of and prospects for workers after the period of industrialization and the consolidation of the working classes from the 1930s through the 1970s. Klubock shows how Chile’s traditionally radical copper miners formed the core of organized opposition to Pinochet’s repressive government in the early 1980s. Originally published in 1996, Anthony Pereira’s article is notable for its claim that “the organized working class...is unlikely to join a

ruling coalition at the national level in the near future” (279). Despite the fact that the Workers’ Party (PT) ruined this prediction by winning the presidency last year, Pereira’s observations about organized labor’s increased political clout help to explain the PT’s success in last year’s elections.

Most of the articles in Peloso’s collection focus on the period before World War II, though the temporal coverage in the book reveals the arc of organized labor region-wide. The synthetic essays that end the book, by Kenneth Robertson and Michael Jiménez (the latter an elegant assessment of liberation theology), as well as Pereira’s chapter on labor in Brazil, take up more current questions about the directions in which Latin America’s working peoples are headed and the challenges they face. This will be a useful volume to assign to undergraduate classes, because of its temporal and geographic coverage (eleven different countries are discussed) as well as the willingness of many contributors to engage in ongoing debates about the relative importance of different aspects of identity construction and the relationship of individual subjects to mass politics. Peloso has also provided excellent suggestions for additional readings in the field.

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DIEGO ARMUS (ed.): *Disease in the History of Modern Latin America: from Malaria to AIDS*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

This is a collection of articles by various researchers dealing with the vast field of health, disease, and sickness in Latin America. The editor, Diego Armus, who is also the author of one of the articles, lays in the introduction the historiographic foundation for this awakening field, known in the past simply as “the history of medicine in Latin America.” Armus redefines the boundaries of the field, mainly by dividing it to three distinctive, but often interrelated, sub-fields – the history of medicine, the history of public health and the socio-cultural history of disease. The following articles serve as examples to support the newly constructed historiographic structure.

Gabriela Nouzeilles’ article, “An imaginary plague in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires: Hysteria, discipline, and languages of the body”, deals almost entirely with an analysis of the discourse concerning hysteria. This discourse, led by physicians and politicians alike (all male of course) was primarily created as a response to a new social phenomenon in late nineteenth century Buenos Aires – the entrance of women into the public sphere and the beginning of their struggle for universal suffrage, higher education, and economic independence. This phenomenon also meant a more public expression of female sexuality,