The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity (review)

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nificance" (p. 53) that characterized the more other-centered, God-worshiping circular diaries.

At the outset, Demos states that he has worked to fuse the concerns of more traditional intellectual history ("the study of high-level thought") with his "own approach" as "a social historian, concerned chiefly with the ground-level experience of Ordinary Folk" (p. x). In so doing, he has relied almost exclusively on New England sources and examples for his colonial findings, which likely has the effect of overstating the significance of circular forms of behavior in English colonial America. Should that be the case, then the transition from the circular to the linear may not have been as dramatic or dynamic as Demos suggests, especially in those areas (the Chesapeake, the Carolinas, the sugar islands) where self-aggrandizing commercial values held sway from the outset. In addition, there is the unavoidably narcissistic character of modernization theory, which assumes that life in modern (linear) times is somehow more fulfilling and rewarding than was the case with life in premodern (circular) times. This realization may help explain why Demos chose to conclude his lectures by pointing out his personal journey from urban, linear forms to more rural, circular modes of living. For those of us who have experienced life the other way around, we can only agree with Demos that "when all is said and done, with circles and lines—we must have *both*" (p. 83). Whatever one's personal life pattern, reading and thinking about the contents of this book will prove to be both a useful and rewarding experience.

University of Houston James Kirby Martin

The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City: Performing Power and Identity. By Linda A. Curcio-Nagy (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. xiv + 363 pp.).

Reflecting growing scholarly interest in the civic and religious rituals that bolstered colonial rule in the Americas, this book examines five major festivals celebrated in Mexico City during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Linda Curcio-Nagy focuses on the city's most prominent events: the civic viceregal entrance, ceremony of allegiance to the king, the Royal Banner ceremony, and the religious festivals of Corpus Christi and the Virgin of Remedies. These festivals, she argues, represented through performance the ideal principles of good government in the colony; but they also revealed political disagreements over such principles over time.

Curcio-Nagy provides wonderful details of these spectacles: the Native Americans dressed "as ancient warriors" who "positioned their canoes along the causeways and bowed in deference to the new governor;" Afro-Mexican women dancing in accompaniment to a presentation of paintings portraying the viceroy as a phoenix rising to rule over them; a triumphal arch constructed by the silversmiths' guild covered in 102 silver panels illuminated by 400 votive candles placed on 40 chandeliers. She also examines counter discourses within and sur-

rounding the festivals, directly (in the case of satirical floats created by university students) and indirectly (in the various meanings Native Americans in particular may have attached to their participation).

The real contribution of Curcio-Nagy's book, however, is to ask how the celebration of each of these particular festivals changed over time and to what ends, from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Insisting that spectacles were necessary to integrate and control the Crown's colonial subject within the proper social hierarchy, city officials subsidized the participation of large sectors of the urban population in Hapsburg festivals. Officials in the Hapsburg era also favored festivals like the viceregal entry that celebrated the figure of the King's servant, while the King remained an idealized and distant ruler. The eighteenth-century Bourbons, by contrast, favored festivals that furthered royal authority directly, such as the ceremony of allegiance to the king and the Royal Banner ceremony. They also halted subsidies of plebeian participation and relied on donations from an increasingly small sector of wealthy citizens to fund private parties and entertainments. Under the Bourbons, Curcio-Nagy argues, the ideal prince became the King himself; the ideal vassal, an efficient, educated, and increasingly elite and Spanish-born citizen. The ritual function of festivals became less politically integrative in the eighteenth century, and Curcio-Nagy provocatively suggests that in Mexico City, conflicts over the rituals of rule had already targeted the King as the father of Bourbon tyranny rather than a messianic monarch who will save his abused people. Through a cultural and social history of festivals, then, Curcio-Nagy lucidly charts the major political trends in Spanish colonialism, from Hapsburg to Bourbon rule on the eve of Independence.

Curcio-Nagy's marriage of cultural and social history is welcome. She discusses what Mexico City's major festivals meant to different sectors in colonial urban society, using not only poetry, satire, sermons, and other publications created for the events, but also spending records from local guilds, records of city council meetings, Inquisitorial reviews, and Native American petitions to the Crown. When dealing with the admittedly complex and elusive role of Native Americans and Afro-Mexicans in these festivals, Curcio-Nagy seems the most tentative. For instance, she writes that most Native historical memory had been lost and political frameworks fragmented in the sixteenth century (47), necessitating new multiethnic rituals that could replace the old; yet a few pages later, she argues that urban festivals allowed traditional Native ethnic rivalries to be played out against a backdrop of "substantial knowledge of history and past rituals of their communities" (52). One hopes that Curcio-Nagy's study will inspire others to address the roles of these groups in Mexico City's festival life from a more specifically plebeian and/or Native viewpoint. The book also suggests productive questions for historians interested in the use of civic and religious ceremony in rural Mexican society, especially during the later colonial years and also for the Independence era (treated less comprehensively by Curcio-Nagy than the Bourbon period proper).

While some may wish for more explicit discussions of the relation of theater to power, or the "integrative and hegemonic" use of spectacle, Curcio-Nagy generally treats theory with a light touch. She has clearly, however, thought about

the theoretical issues, and this tightly-argued book deserves to be read by student and scholar alike.

University of Miami Laura Matthew

French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability From the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848. By Steven Kale (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. x plus 308 pp.).

This study of the history of the French (Parisian) salon differs from some recent histories of *le tout Paris* and the social rituals of the French aristocracy by focusing on the forms of sociability particular to the salon and its relation to politics. The work of Dena Goodman, Joan Landes and others on the old regime salon and the rupture in its nature and function in 1789 is challenged here by Kale in important respects, though this is principally a consequence of the benefits of his considering salon sociability in a longer historical perspective rather than ending the story with the French Revolution. When one considers the post-Revolutionary evolution of the salon and the changes in its personnel, partisanship, and functions, the old regime salon is thrown into far clearer relief. In brief, Kale does not contest the notion that the salons contributed to the creation of a quasi-public sphere by cultivating the expression of political opinions and philosophical discussion that were, inevitably before 1789, generally critical of the monarchy and the church, but he argues that the *salonnières* who presided over them had less power than is often thought and so cannot be regarded as somehow precipitating the regime of separate spheres that was the immediate legal consequence of the Revolution.

For one thing, he argues, court women and *salonnières* never overlapped. For another, while salon sociability did not exclude political discussion, the old regime salon's intellectual goals were far broader than mere politics, and its primary social function was to promote social integration and advance the reputation of its mistress. In Kale's account, the social agenda of the salon remained intact at least until 1848 if not for some time after; it was the greater intrusion of political discourse into salon sociability after 1789 that introduced the most significant changes to the institution. In this respect salons merely reflected the changes in the new political institutions of the public sphere, the shifts in regime, and the exponential growth of partisanship in representative politics. The viability of salon life was thus threatened less by the regrettable but necessary incorporation of the newly rich into this elite institution than by the distinctly unsociable passions of partisanship that made the *salonnière's* task of presiding over harmonious and disinterested discussion virtually impossible.

Beginning with the Revolution, therefore, and with a few notable exceptions (the post-Restoration salon of Juliette Recamier in particular), the clientele of Parisian salons reflected the political cleavages of the era: legitimist, Bonapartist, Orleanist, Republican, and all their intermediary variations. Salons became increasingly of one party or another and the mistress of the salon generally shared the sympathies of her guests, which made it even more difficult for her to guide discussion in a lofty direction, as had often been the aim of old regime *salonnières*.