

terest, written in simple, clear language. It should promote awareness among key Mexican government officials about the need to design a comprehensive border policy as part of our bilateral relations. That policy must be based on our understanding of the many, complex components

in the relationship, considering implications and consequences, and raise itself to the height of an instrument for national security. This task is urgent. **MM**

*Edmundo Hernández-Vela S.*

## **Encuentros y desencuentros entre México y Estados Unidos en el siglo XX**

### **Del porfiriato a la posguerra fría**

(Convergences and Divergences of Mexico and the United States in the Twentieth Century. From the Porfirio Díaz Dictatorship until After the Cold War)

*Walter Astié-Burgos*

Miguel Ángel Porrúa

Mexico City, 2007, 460 pp.

Many have been the defining moments in the complex bilateral history of Mexico and the United States. Geographic proximity joins almost fatefully with a history oscillating between divergence and convergence.

Walter Astié-Burgos's book *Encuentros y desencuentros entre México y Estados Unidos en el siglo XX* (Convergences and Divergences of Mexico and the United States in the Twentieth Century) helps us understand the singularity of this relationship. Written by a career diplomat, the book's 12 chapters narrate interesting political and diplomatic encounters and incidents that show just how complex the relationship between the two countries is, with their different histories and ways of understanding the world, at times similar and at times dissimilar, but sharing a geographic, economic and political space.

The author analyzes the evolution of the Mexico-U.S. link situating it in its international context. The role of our neighbor as a world power, particularly during the twentieth century, has had very clear implications for this relationship. Under these conditions, it is necessary to understand domestic issues in both countries and their place in the international dynamic.

The book's first three chapters narrate the historical events that determined the nature of the Mexican state at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,



when relations wavered between frank confrontation because of the 1847 war and Mexico's resulting loss of territory, and greater closeness because of the convergence of the two economic models during the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz). It is this last historical period that is the starting point for Astié-Burgos's systematic examination.

Starting then, the author analyzes more than 100 years of history that explain the forging of national and cultural identities and how that has been reflected in both countries' foreign policies. Taking this into consideration, some structural and other more temporary aspects of the links between Mexico and the United States can be reviewed.

While the United States' pragmatic policy contrasts with that of its Mexican counterpart due to dramatic events like the outbreak of the 1910 revolutionary war or the 1938 oil expropriation, at other times, the Mexican position comes close to being equally pragmatic. In fact, the extensive lobbying by the Salinas administration to get NAFTA approved in the early 1990s actually has precedents in the remote

past, when Porfirio Díaz and Álvaro Obregón did the same to further their interests in the United States.

The description of certain diplomatic incidents is useful for understanding the roots of the dual nature—both nationalist and pragmatic—of Mexico's foreign policy and its relationship with the United States. In the same way, partisan alternation in office in the United States and the Democratic and Republican Parties' sharing power help us understand their influence in the U.S. drawing closer to or distancing itself from Mexico.

The author analyzes this in the book's middle chapters, where he looks in detail at bilateral relations during World War II and the Cold War. During that period, when convergence and divergence came in waves, Astié-Burgos underlines both countries' positions on regional and world matters. Thus, the study of Adolfo Ruiz Cortines's isolationist policy or Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and Luis Echeverría's diversification strategy reflects the vision of the instruments used by both countries in the international sphere based on positions that clearly sought to consolidate Mexico's political autonomy *vis-à-vis* the United States. Curiously, this is where we can begin to observe a qualitative change, in contrast with the *Porfiriato* or the revolutionary period: there is a relative maturation of the legal instruments for managing bilateral relations, but it is perhaps in the following period, particularly after 10 years of confrontation during the administrations of José López Portillo and Miguel de la Madrid,

when we see a significant transformation of the bilateral agenda and the mechanisms for dealing with it.

The 1990s, the decade that concludes the book, show the complex evolution of bilateral relations. As Astié-Burgos himself states, the two nations became more and more interdependent until they reached the level of dependence and integration. Certainly, with the signing of NAFTA and in the wake of the so-called "spirit of Houston," economic ties between the two countries became significantly institutionalized, with direct implications in other aspects of their relations. Despite the new focus for managing relations, even with the emergence of numerous, diverse institutional mechanisms for cooperation, tense *moments* still arose because of each country's focus on issues like drug trafficking or human rights. This made the structural limits of the renewed Mexico-U.S. understanding clear.

In conclusion, despite the fact that the book does not deal with relations after 2000 when more democracy was demanded, but above all when they were highly conditioned by the priority placed on border security after 9/11, Astié-Burgos's work is a useful tool for understanding the vicissitudes of the links between two countries that, despite their increasing closeness, still seem very distant. **MM**

Bibiana Gómez Muñoz  
and Roberto Gutiérrez

### **Femenino/masculino en las literaturas de América. Escrituras en contraste**

(Feminine/Masculine in the Literatures of the Americas. Contrasting Writings)

Graciela Martínez Zalce, Luzelena Gutiérrez de Velasco and Ana Rosa Domenella, eds.

UAM/Editorial Aldus

Mexico City, 2005, 525 pp.

In his book *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom emphasizes the need to maintain the aesthetic, moral perspective while reading to avoid contaminating our critical perception. He also insists on being aware that the so-called

"canon" is an "art of literary memory" into which literary works the world is ready to consider immortal gradually insert themselves. Of course, for him, the Western canon is based mainly on principles of selectiveness which "are elitist only to the extent that they are based on purely artistic criteria." In accordance with this, the selection of the "best" literary works of humanity often include mostly English-speaking European authors (and an American or two), and, in descending order, French, Italian, German and Spanish writers. *El Quijote* barely approaches Shakespeare's grandeur and, aside from this book, it is almost impossible to encounter books in Spanish from Latin America or elsewhere on the list. If you look carefully, you run