

Hallwas's book is not an academic account of the hydroelectric project or the Mississippi River; for that one should consult Phillip Scarpino's *Great River: An Environmental History of the Upper Mississippi, 1890-1950* (1985). The book's value is as a photographic history. Through the illustrations, Hallwas details the engineering and construction processes. He stresses the role of Hugh Cooper, the genius behind the project's promotion, design, and construction. As an engineer who brought his talents to the Mississippi, Cooper reminds one of James Eads, who designed the Eads Bridge at St. Louis and the jetties that opened the river's mouth to sea-going vessels (see John Barry's *Rising Tide*). Hallwas's book is, inherently, a history of the early development of hydroelectric power in the Midwest and the United States.

Barrios Noteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century, by Dionicio Nodín Valdés. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000. viii, 380 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.

Reviewer Everard Meade is a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Chicago. His research focuses on modern Mexican history and on Mexican and Central American immigration to Iowa and the Midwest.

In 1949 Gus Garcia of the League of United Latin American Citizens, frustrated with Mexican communities in the United States that wanted to call themselves Spanish-American or Latin-American, remarked, "I define a Latin-American as a Mexican who has become prosperous and joined the Rotary Club" (164). Aspirations for middle-class status remain a staple of contemporary identity narratives, such as *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez, to the detriment of structural understandings of the discrimination and economic inequality facing Mexican communities in the United States. In their focus on memory and discourse, more sophisticated "histories from below" written by practitioners of the "new cultural history" similarly occlude basic questions of social inequality. Community studies that tackle discrimination head on, moreover, often compartmentalize racial and economic justice or at least elide broader synchronic structures of exclusion and inequality in their emphasis on local struggles. In his history of Mexican communities in St. Paul and the Midwest, Dionicio Nodín Valdés exchanges the "hunger of memory" for the "memory of hunger." He provides a systematic examination of the structural reality of social and economic marginalization of Mexican individuals and communities in the twentieth-century Midwest, one in constant dialogue with local experience and idiom.

With clarity and verve, Valdés demonstrates that the experience of Mexican communities rooted deeply in the Midwest does not fit in many predominant Chicano studies paradigms developed in studies of the Southwest. The region's recent history of European immigration, the related ethnic diversity, and the lack of experience of direct conquest, he points out, distinguish Mexican communities in the Midwest from those in the Southwest. A greater variety of assimilation schemes flourished in the Midwest, making "American" identity itself more contested than in the Southwest. Finally, midwestern Mexicans whose parents or grandparents usually came directly from Mexico experienced "a continuing direct link with Mexico," whereas in the Southwest Mexican roots were often obscured by the passage of several generations.

Valdés sets his midwestern scene primarily in Rust Belt cities, telling a familiar tale of migration, associational life, segregation, and "urban renewal," yet with Mexican actors. By documenting the systematic discrimination Mexicans faced in employment, education, and residential choice, he challenges the "culture of poverty" thesis, attacking the common assertion that the "traditional" culture and social behavior of Mexican people prevented them from achieving the dream of middle-class status achieved by previously stigmatized European immigrants.

Valdés frames his portrait of social marginalization in St. Paul and other midwestern Mexican communities within a "world-systems" analysis. He argues that after the U.S. conquest of Mexico in 1848, capitalists from the dominant "core" country penetrated the Mexican economy, acquiring land and other means of production by force and subordinating Mexico, the "periphery," economically, politically, and culturally, thereby creating a reserve of labor to be circulated and exploited across the border. This approach allows Valdés to revise standard Rust Belt theories of deindustrialization in the Midwest, offering a more nuanced portrait of industrial mobility and the insecurity wrought in its wake. Yet world systems analysis vastly oversimplifies the relationship between Mexico and the United States, essentializing both Mexican and American identities to the detriment of the complex history that Valdés himself elaborates.

Valdés mentions the regional backgrounds of Mexican migrants to various parts of the United States, suggesting that they brought particular values and experiences with them, but provides no further ethnographic data, merely waxing sentimental in his conclusion that midwestern Mexicans came from the "Mexican heartland" and thus fit into a 500-year cycle of conquest, colonialism, and migration. Valdés misses numerous opportunities to analyze the regionally diverse historical experiences informing Mexican identities and decisions to mi-

grate to the United States. Instead, he repeatedly revisits the conquest of 1848, which has undeniable resonance and relevance to the Chicano Southwest, but is far from the definitive event in twentieth-century relations between Mexico and the United States. Valdés illustrates that Mexicans in the United States have consistently fared worse than other Latinos. Given that the Mexican state has been in a much stronger position with regard to the United States than any other Caribbean or Central American country, his core/periphery analysis falls flat in explaining this phenomenon. Many neocolonial fields of interaction certainly characterize the relationship between the United States and Mexico; yet one cannot brush aside complex relations of domination and resistance within Mexico or other "histories from below" in the Americas. A faithful "history from below" is poorly served by nationalist rhetoric ironically drawn from southwestern Chicano paradigms that Valdés himself shows are not directly applicable to the midwestern experience. The meticulous analysis of the spatial and social relations of cultural and economic production constituting the bulk of the study serve Valdés and his historical subjects immeasurably better.

Meredith Willson: The Unsinkable Music Man, by John C. Skipper. Mason City: Savas Publishing Co., 2000. xv, 227 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$15.95 paper.

Reviewer John E. Miller is professor of history at South Dakota State University. The author of many books and articles on South Dakota and the Midwest, he is working on a book on famous "sons of the Midwest," including Meredith Willson.

This brief, fast-paced biography of the ebullient author of the popular Broadway musical, *The Music Man*, fills an important gap in the historical literature. Author John C. Skipper, a reporter for the *Mason City Globe Gazette*, indicates that he does not intend his book to be the definitive or all-inclusive account of Willson's life. With 68 well-chosen illustrations in a text of fewer than 200 pages (several appendixes list additional facts, awards, honors, books, and music), it can hardly answer in detail all of the questions we might have about this talented, ambitious, high-achieving, romantic, positive, generous, sentimental, and ultimately fascinating character. Willson did not leave behind a lot of letters, diaries, or other documents revealing his inner thoughts, but Skipper skillfully mines press clippings, magazine articles, and the few manuscript sources that are available in the Mason City Public Library, supplementing them with personal interviews, to tell the story of Willson's life.

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