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Yucatán Through Her Eyes: Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, Writer and Expeditionary Photographer. By Lawrence Gustave Desmond and Claire L. Lyons. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009. Pp. xxvii, 287. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. References. Index. \$45.00 cloth.

“Heartsick, brainsick, body sick”—this is how Alice Dixon Le Plongeon described her state after a particularly trying day in 1876 at the ruins of Uxmal. Alice had many similar days, as she braved yellow fever, “near starvation, deadly snakes, swarms of insects, [and] intense tropical heat” for more than a decade, exploring and photographing Maya ruins in Yucatán and Central America with her husband, the British-born archaeologist Augustus Le Plongeon (p. 32). But Alice was no mere helpmate to her husband, as Lawrence Gustave Desmond proves in this biography. She was a scholar of the Maya in her own right, as well as a journalist, writer, photographer, and amateur ethnographer. Her interests ranged from the study of the ancient Maya to political activism and epic poetry. Alice comes off as a fiery, determined, and intrepid woman in Desmond’s account, which he constructs in large part by allowing her to “speak for herself” (p. 32). More than half of the book consists of Alice’s diary, a fascinating day-to-day narrative of her initial years in the field, recently discovered along with many of her photographs and other writings now held at the Getty Research Institute. When the Caste War between Mexican forces and the autonomous Maya loomed near, Alice donned male clothing and slept with cash and rifle in hand. She held on to few Victorian conventions in the jungle, a place she came to love. “If you were here,” she wrote her parents, “you would know the pleasure of life in the wilds” (p. 345).

Alice had come far from the comfortable, middle-class life she was born into in London in 1851. She met Le Plongeon at the age of 19 in the British Museum, fell in love, and set sail to photograph the pyramids of the Maya with the archaeologist who was 25 years her senior. Desmond proves his case for the importance of their work in photography. Alice was an expert in this complicated nineteenth-century art, which she had learned at her family’s photography business. Both she and Le Plongeon left us with some of the only images of the Mayan state’s artifacts and ruins in the latter part of the century—objects that later were often lost or destroyed. Over 2,400 of their images exist, and the book is rife with them, including stereographic photos that, if one masters the right “cross-eyed” squint, appear to be three-dimensional. Alice and her husband were also some of the first to excavate Chichén Itzá and Uxmal. In fact, archaeologists recently used one of their photos to prepare for the restoration of Chichén Itzá’s “La Iglesia” building.

But posterity would not prove kind to Alice. As Getty curator Claire L. Lyons points out in her eloquent foreword to the book, which places Alice within the context of famous female explorers, she is absent from “the roster of late Victorian women of accomplishment” (p. xix). Alice was the first woman to publish in the prestigious *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, yet today she is virtually unknown. This is largely due to her support of her husband’s far-fetched theories: Le Plongeon insisted, for example, that giants had built Chichén Itzá and that the Maya had founded ancient Egypt.

Alice did not content herself solely with the ancient Maya. Her diary is also a vivid account of the people and customs of Yucatán, especially the hardships faced by Maya women. The

book should thus be of interest to scholars and students of archaeology and travel writing, as well as women's history and Maya studies. Desmond intrudes little in the diary; he offers comments needed only to understand the context. But one often wishes that he had intruded a bit more. Alice, he argues, became more attuned to the struggle of the Maya as time progressed: "she began to see the Maya rebellion as justified because of the hundreds of years of oppression" (p. 2). What sparked this change? Perhaps Desmond could have drawn from Alice's other writings to illuminate how this late-Victorian Londoner became an advocate of the Indians. Once she left Yucatán to live in New York City, she spent the rest of her life defending the Maya, as well as writing and lecturing on a broad range of other topics, from archaeology to technical advice on photography. Tireless, she was also involved in social justice causes, including the suffrage movement. Desmond's accessible and well-written biography has clearly placed the fascinating and dynamic Alice Dixon Le Plongeon among the roster of accomplished Victorian women.

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POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Mobilization, 1916-1930. By Joel Horowitz. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. Pp. x, 240. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00 cloth.

From the passage of an electoral reform law in 1912 to the military coup of 1930, Argentina conducted an experiment in democracy. Relatively free and fair elections make the period a significant outlier within the country's history of extreme political instability and recurring authoritarianism. Just as important, these years saw the emergence of the Unión Cívica Radical, arguably the first political party in Latin America to succeed at modern mass politics. Yet despite its obvious significance, the Radical era has resisted historical reassessment; David Rock's *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930* (1975), published more than three decades ago, remains the classic touchstone. With his new book, Joel Horowitz aims to fill this void by offering new interpretations of the Radical presidencies of Hipólito Yrigoyen and Marcelo T. de Alvear, of the party's use of clientelist tactics, and of its relationship to the labor movement.

Horowitz challenges the received wisdom on the Radicals in several ways. Rock and others have argued that the key to the party's electoral success was its distribution of political patronage, particularly in the form of government jobs. Horowitz agrees that clientelism was extensive during the period, and he provides the most nuanced account we have of its operation on both the municipal and national levels. But he argues that these tactics cannot account for the party's appeal. In fact, other political factions distributed jobs to their followers, yet they never approached the Radicals' popularity. After the party split in the mid-1920s, Alvear's Anti-Personalist faction was just as committed to the use of patronage as Yrigoyen's, yet the Anti-Personalists fell far short at the polls. Instead, Horowitz attributes