THE AGE OF INSECURITY
Violence and Social Disorder in the New Latin America

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ORGANIZED CRIME AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNABILITY: MEXICO AND THE U.S.-MEXICAN BORDERLANDS. Edited by John Bailey and Roy Godson. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000. Pp. 271. $50.00 cloth, $22.95 paper.)

VIOLENCIA Y REGULACIÓN DE CONFLICTOS EN AMÉRICA LATINA. Edited by Klaus Bodemer, Sabine Kurtenbach, and Klaus Meschkat. (Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 2001. Pp. 459.)

NÁYARI HISTORY, POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE: FROM FLOWERS TO ASH. By Philip E. Coyle. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001. Pp. 263.)

DEL ESTRADO A LA PANTALLA: LAS IMÁGENES DEL JUICIO A LOS EX COMANDANTES EN ARGENTINA. By Claudia Feld. (Madrid, Spain: Siglo Veintiuno, 2002. Pp. 154.)

VIOLENCE WORKERS: POLICE TORTURERS AND MURDERERS RECONSTRUCT BRAZILIAN ATROCITIES. By Martha K. Huggins, Mike Haritos-Fatouros, and Philip G. Zimbardo. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002. Pp. 293.)

URBAN POOR PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSION IN COLOMBIA. By Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine. (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2002. Pp. 124. $22.00 paper.)

CITIZENS OF FEAR: URBAN VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited By Susana Rotker. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. Pp. 265.)

Sad as it is to say, violence could arguably be considered the central—if not defining—problem in contemporary Latin America as it faces the new millennium. If nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholarship was concerned with liberalism, civil war, and state formation, and if mid- to late-twentieth-century scholarship was marked by a preoccupation with dictatorship and democracy, then the current explosion of writings on everyday violence, public insecurity, and

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deteriorating rule of law suggests that twenty-first century scholarship is about social disorder and disintegration, especially as produced by the routinization of violence and its expression in state practices and societal norms. Indeed, for scholars and residents of the region concerns about endemic violence and overall conditions of lawlessness are starting to crowd out the prior reigning preoccupations, including the renewed interest in formal politics and the strengthening of democracy and competitive party systems that resurged at century's end.

To be sure, these general thematics often are linked to each other, either by those who see connections between the explosion of violence and criminality and the neo-liberal democratic transition or by those who suggest that untrammeled violence and mounting criminality are themselves undermining citizenship rights, and systemically reinforcing the "unrule of law," in ways that prevent democratic deepening. But the wave of violence and social disorder that appears to be sweeping the entire region has become so unsettling and alarming that it has captured widespread attention in and of itself, and from a variety of disciplinary corners. It has been a long time since a single subject has drawn Latin American scholars from fields as diverse as political science, literary criticism, sociology, economics, criminology, history, anthropology, and media studies into a common pursuit. The inter-disciplinary breadth of the contemporary scholarship on this topic is nothing short of remarkable. But so too is the phenomenon itself, which has transformed fundamental power relations, the underpinnings of market economies, the legitimacy of longstanding political institutions, the basis for collective social order, and the psychological and social infrastructure of people's everyday lives and livelihoods.

The fact that scholars from such a large number of disciplinary homebases are studying the topics of violence, lawlessness, and public insecurity has had a direct impact on the depth of our understanding of the widespread significance of the problem, even as it underscores the overall precariousness of the situation in Latin America. Studies show how and why citizens live in constant fear, how their governments react to or reinforce these and other problems related to lawlessness and violence, how individuals behave and communities organize in response to these problems, and how political and economic elites (both private and public sector-based) accommodate or challenge the principal actors and conditions responsible for this troubling state of affairs. But the broad, multidisciplinary approach to the problem also has its downside, reflected primarily in a lack of consensus about the origins or even character of the problem at hand, as well as the most appropriate entry points or units of analysis for analyzing them. For example, while some scholars point the finger at drug consumption and its impact on youth employment and social organization as a key source of violence, others

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focus on the nature and structure of organized crime or even state perpetrators of repression as sustaining a culture of violence. Still others suggest that violence and insecurity could be considered a routine—rather than irregular or deviant—aspect of everyday life in a modern world where old networks of solidarity are eroding.

Such methodological and theoretical eclecticism in the study of violence is by no means a bad thing, to be sure. But at this early stage in the development of the literature, when no single paradigm for the problem's origins prevails, such eclecticism can get in the way of a deeper and more fully theorized accounting for the widespread emergence of the phenomenon of violence and lawlessness. Indeed, even with all the books and edited volumes now available on the topic, it still is not entirely clear why violence, as perpetrated by both the state and citizens (that is, both public and private sector actors), and across a range of classes and income levels in civil society, is on the rise in so many different cities and diverse countries of Latin America. Can the wide-ranging scope of violence and public insecurity be traced to a single set of structural dynamics that characterize Latin American politics, economics, and society today, such as liberalization or globalization or some other such general dynamic, independent of each country's unique history of state formation? If so, how and why would these macro-structural transformations reach all the way down to the community and individual behavior? Conversely, is the structure of determination the other way around? Moreover, if larger dynamics associated with twenty-first century political, social, or economic development are responsible for this disastrous state of affairs, then what exactly is the relevance of history and/or the uniqueness of each community, city, or country under study in the emergence of this state of affairs?

Larger concerns like these, which raise questions about the impact of the past on the present or the relationship between general trends and historical peculiarities, remain beyond the scope of many of the books and edited volumes presented here. Even so, these seven books lay a wonderful foundation for further study of such questions and concerns. Each one offers valuable information, scholarly or empirical nuance, and enough deep insight drawn from the study of certain dimensions of this larger problematic to help fine-tune future queries about what I prefer to call the "age of insecurity." And although many of the works addressed here frame the problem of violence predictably, as a tangible social phenomenon deriving from individual insecurities and/or a failure of law enforcement agencies to offer individual recourse to violent perpetrators, all do not take this conventional route, either in terms of methodology, substantive focus, or causal claim-making. Indeed, some focus on "top-down" forms of violence, including those manifested in the actions of police torturers working on behalf of

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dictatorships or on the part of military and state personnel embedded in networks of organized crime; others focus on perceptions of violence or on the role of media and the drama of judicial performance in constructing narratives of violence and how to deal with them in the context of democratic transition. Read together, however, these studies of the routine and the irregular as well as the real and perceived forms of violence, impunity, and lawlessness lay a path for new questions about insecurity, including those which could lead to a more theoretical understanding of the origins, nature, and longer-term implications of this fundamental problem of violence and disorder now paralyzing much of Latin America.

THE EVERYDAY VIOLENCE OF URBAN LIFE

Of the seven books presented here, two focus directly on urban violence, perhaps because it is in cities of Latin America where routine problems of everyday, personal violence seem to be reaching crisis proportions. The contemporary interest in urban (as opposed to rural) violence may also owe to its perceived "newness" as a problem, since in previous decades the study of violence in Latin America tended to be focused on peasants and/or rural areas, where it was examined in the context of rebellion, landlord repression, and peasant struggle. Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine's *Urban Poor Perceptions of Violence and Exclusion in Colombia* is a focused, quantitatively-based account of how endemic violence has affected the life and livelihood of residents of nine low-income communities in seven different cities across Colombia. Data presented in this study was compiled for a World Bank project, cosponsored by divisions concerned with sustainable development, Latin America and the Caribbean, and urban peace. The book's lead author, Caroline Moser, directs the World Bank's Urban Peace Project, a program whose existence shows just how wide the disciplinary and institutional circle of scholars concerned with violence has become. Indeed, because violence is now making a dent in the livelihood strategies and social capital dynamics of individuals and communities, economists and other scholars at international development institutions have started to examine its economic impacts, and are pouring considerable resources into the study of violence.

In the past it would have been unusual for economists to concern themselves with the everyday dynamics of violence, and for this reason, it is worth acknowledging that this book does break relatively new ground. But conditions have gotten so bad that economists and development scholars have identified what they call a "violence-capital-exclusion nexus," in which violence limits social (and less so, human) capital in ways that negatively affect communities and their capacities

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to sustain themselves, let alone prosper or take advantage of national developmental gains. According to the authors of this study, these problems are especially acute for the poorest sectors of many Latin American countries, which seem most adversely affected by violence, and in ways that reinforce or create a vicious cycle of poverty. The upshot is that studies of violence and how to counter its negative effects have arrived front stage center among development scholars concerned with poverty, good governance, and social policy.

Moser and McIlwane systematically analyze the costs, causes, and consequences of violence, on both an individual and community level, and they do so while also disaggregating violence into the subcategories of social violence and economic violence. The former refers to the abusive power relations among families and within households, much of it gendered, while the latter focuses almost exclusively on drug consumption and how it reinforces violent behavior. The authors also identify a relationship *between* these two categories of violence, evidenced in their finding that "the most frequently cited causes of drug consumption were intrafamily violence and conflict, peer pressure, and parental example" (3). Such findings raise the ante in terms of scholarly efforts to understand the origins and possible solutions to growing violence and insecurity, primarily because they underscore the intricate interrelationships between micro-level, individual behaviors of violence and the more structural, macrodynamics of economic organization and employment, both of which are directly affected by the availability (and production) of drugs in the national economy, as well as the pervasive political violence in Colombia and the massive numbers of displaced peoples it has produced. The book concludes with a discussion of possible solutions to the problem of violence, focusing primarily on those offered by the residents of the community under study. They include: creating new job opportunities in the formal, informal, and self-employment sectors; reducing society's tolerance for intra-household violence; rebuilding trust in the police and judicial system; strengthening community organizational capacity, especially among groups run by women; and targeting interventions for young people.

While the strengths of the Moser and McIlwaine book rest in its capacity to link micro- and macro-forms of violence and its identification of a wide array of action domains for addressing the problems of violence, the "downside"—if it could be called that—of this approach is that one easily loses sight of the larger developmental dynamics in Colombia, both political and economic, that originally set it on this disastrous path. Colombia is a nation that has served as the poster child for studies of violence and as the testing ground for numerous sociological, historical, and political accounts of why violence served as the reigning *modus operandi* of social and political organization in that

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country since the 1940s and 1950s. Yet, even though this earlier history of political violence is briefly discussed in the first chapter and its impact on the current national political conflict is later cited as a larger constraint on recommended policy actions for reducing violence, the country's unique political history does not seem to factor into the study's design, findings, or proposed solutions in a direct way.

Stated another way, both the regional conflicts and the unorthodox state institutional structures and processes of Liberal-Conservative party power-sharing that have given life to this larger context of political violence in Colombia are almost completely incidental to the study at hand. And the unparalleled power of the military, guerrillas, and paramilitaries that have reinforced the systemic patterns of ongoing violence (and drug trade) are either ignored or merely discussed as local actors—i.e., "gangs, militias, and other violent organizations" (84)—without placing their emergence and power in the larger context of military-guerrilla-paramilitary violence. Thus, if one did not constantly recall the book's title and the fact that the communities under study were in Colombia, this study would read as if it could have been undertaken in almost any low-income community anywhere in Latin America where unemployment, drugs, family violence, gangs and other forms of organized violence, distrust of police, and youth alienation are also on the rise.

Certainly, there is some pedagogic value to not "exceptionalizing" Colombia so much that its problems are seen as entirely unique. They clearly are not. As noted above, the everyday violence identified in the communities studied in this book is no stranger to the rest of urban Latin America. But one also can swing too far away from the notion of Colombia's exceptionalism, and get so involved in documenting the everyday, individual experience of violence at the level of the city or community that one loses sight of the unique historical and political context of Colombia in which these problems emerged—and thus must be understood as well as fought. The potential drawbacks of taking this perspective are best seen in the book's five major policy recommendations, noted above, which are focused more on the task of changing individual behavior and attitudes among community residents than re-casting the larger political and developmental context of the individual violence.

One solution in particular, the recommendation to "rebuild trust in the police and the judicial system" (6), is particularly worth noting. While such a recommendation may actually be worth supporting, the more relevant question is why there is so little trust of police and how exactly this problem might be remedied in a country like Colombia where the origins and character of the police and judicial system derive from many of the larger structures and processes of violence in the first

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place. Recognition of this should force the United States to ask whether remedying the problems of violence means changing individual capacities to trust, or changing the way the institutions operate so that trust is earned by the police themselves. While it is not obvious which of the two options the authors have in mind, one thing is clear: the lack of trust in police, in Colombia and elsewhere, is not merely a question of individual pathologies or a failure to be civic-minded. It is a rational response to the realities of policing, impunity, and judicial injustice. And these problems are far larger then the individuals whose lives are now caught in a downward spiral of social and political disintegration.

To Moser and McIlwaine's credit, even if they do not lay out this larger dynamic in the context of their research on everyday violence, they have published the book with an erudite introduction by Andres Solimano, Director of the World Bank's Colombia Country Management Unit, who prefaces this study with general remarks about countries "in crisis" and the recent breakdown of social, political, and economic institutions in Latin America that led to the current acceleration of violence in the region. These remarks build an analytic bridge between Colombia's historical past and its violent present, even as they portray the Colombian case as more prototypical than exceptional in the larger context of Latin America's political and economic development.

While Solimano's invocation of Habermas and other grand theorists does add certain weight to his claims that what is happening in Colombia is not unique, but part and parcel of larger societal transformations that affect both individuals and institutions, one is even more convinced of this same point after reading Susana Rotker's *Citizens of Fear: Urban Violence in Latin America*. Rotker's edited volume showcases sixteen essays by leading literary critics, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and media analysts who lay bare the daily experience of violence in urban Latin America. This book contains a series of creative and thought-provoking contributions which highlight the magnitude, depth, and destructive impact of violence on cities and citizens across Latin America. While no single chapter in the book successfully weaves the analysis of large-scale political and economic change into a narrative account of everyday urban violence, together the essays show the varieties of levels upon which violence is constituted, especially the psycho-sociological and its manifestation in the form of fear. Hence the book's apt title. That the case studies in this volume purposefully scan the geography of Latin America, from Colombia and Mexico to Venezuela and Brazil, with one contribution offering a comparative quantitative analysis of crime in a variety of Latin America and Caribbean countries, underscores the sense that problems of violence and fear cannot easily be reduced to any single country's unique political or social formations.

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The papers in the Rotker volume are presented under five general headings (Fears, Facts, Stories, Attitudes, Imaginaries), each reflecting a different epistemological approach or analytic point of entry. A prefactory introduction by Jorge Balán followed by an introductory overview from Rotker lays out the general logic of the volume, whose main purpose might be characterized as giving readers a semiotic sense of how fear and violence are experienced on the level of everyday life. Hence the inclusion of three short chronicles ("The Stories"), several drawn from newspaper columns or essays on cities in which violence or fear are central elements. Four chapters that offer a more interpretive approach to narratives of violence, and how they are socially produced ("The Imaginaries"), further build on this aim. To be sure, one could question the analytic distinction between the so-called "stories" and the "imaginaries," not only because the postmodern turn in literature and the social sciences has raised questions about the difference between facts and interpretations, but also because the literary style employed in both sections of pieces seems to blur the distinction. That several of the authors whose chapters fall into the category of Imaginaries are well-known storytellers or chroniclers whose writings both build on and create the social narratives that come to define the urban experience, as is the case with the well known Mexican essayist Carlos Monsiváis (who uses the metaphor of a nightmare to discuss the negative impact of narratives of urban violence on the practices and possibilities of citizenship), further blurs the distinction. But this in fact may be precisely the point. In her introduction, Rotker implores readers to move beyond the facts at hand so they can understand the stories and symbols that mediate our understanding of the new urban culture of fear, and by so doing, hopes to inspire new forms of action that allow urban communities and individuals to reclaim their cities and citizenship rights, even in the face of violence.

All this is not to say that no attention is paid in the volume to the root causes of violence or to the structural conditions that reinforce feelings of fear. Such arguments are first breached in Rotker's introduction, which offers a compelling overview of the spatial and social dynamics of cities and how urban spaces factor into the realities of violence and fear. Her urban geographical approach is then complemented by a more historical view of the root causes of accelerating violence, presented primarily in the five chapters that comprise the section on "The Facts." Conditions as varied as institutional collapse (Leongómez), struggles over democracy and citizenship (Sanjuán), national political culture (Elízaga), and youth unemployment or juvenile delinquency (Adorno) are all identified as contributing to accelerating violence. To complement its attention to structure, the volume also includes some discussion of agency. In the chapters under the heading "The Attitude,"

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we learn more about the actual perpetrators of violence, in this case police torturers (Huggins), as well as the changing social norms and values that bring social acceptance of violent behavior (Cárdia). By including a fascinating chapter on the ways that practices and perceptions of violence are produced and/or consumed by the media (Martín-Barbero), the volume is made practically complete. It encompasses both structural and interpretive dynamics of urban violence and fear, and leaves few dimensions of the problem untouched, whether related to origins, effects, or mediations.

STATE-SANCTIONED VIOLENCE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The widely cast treatment contained in the Rotker volume may open new horizons of cognition and touch all the right bases of conceptualization, but there is nothing like a detailed and well-focused case study to underscore the complexities of violent behavior and their origins or impact in a given social context, let alone for raising questions about the role of history and politics in the social production of these problems. Three remarkable books, each concerned with state-sanctioned violence but all focused on a single country and all framed through a focus on the larger political context of Latin American democratization, achieve just this. The most startling perhaps, focused on Brazil, is Martha K. Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, and Philip G. Zimbardo's *Violence Workers: Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities*. This book will force Brazilians—and anyone else similarly concerned with the murderous actions sustaining authoritarian rule—to confront their troubled past while also considering how to move forward to a democratic future. And whereas this book takes as its starting point the violent and repressive infrastructure that characterized many Latin American political regimes over the last several decades, its principal concern is with the individual persons who perpetrated the violence and sustained the lawlessness that still seems to plague Latin American society, despite the democratic transition.

It is impossible to read this book without awe, admiration, and an overwhelming sense of shock, especially at the horrors discussed within its pages. Still, it is well worth confronting the "squirm factor" elicited by its masterful conception and detailed subject matter. In terms of research design, scholarly boldness, intellectual integrity, and sheer importance to the study of political violence, this book has no match. Using a variety of methodological techniques ranging from direct interviews to focus group meetings to analysis of government records and documents, the authors get inside the heads of police torturers and discover the scope and meaning of their activities for their victims, for themselves, for their families, and for society at large. As with several of the

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chapters in the Rotker volume, one of the key contributions of *Violence Workers* is its capacity to demonstrate how the psychology, personality, and social relationships of individuals change when violence becomes part of their everyday lives. Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo manage to achieve the unthinkable: to present police torturers as everyday folk with work, income, family, and social pressures whose efforts to survive on the job require individual sacrifice and a great deal of personal pain.

Some of the most fascinating chapters in this book demonstrate how the institutional context of police work transforms police torturers in ways that seem almost independent of the larger political context of authoritarian repression that gave life to their torture-related activities in the first place. Indeed, although *Violence Workers* is focused on police in Brazil, a country whose military rulers were responsible for unthinkable atrocities, one can easily lose sight of the peculiarities of Brazil's authoritarian politics in the book's ethno-methodological focus on how (rather than why) torture happens, and with what effects for its perpetrators. And I am not just speaking about the reader here when I say these larger political dynamics get lost. Many of the police torturers interviewed for this study did not see themselves as key supporters or spokespersons for the authoritarian regime(s) that governed Brazil during the years they were employed as police. They ended up as police for a variety of reasons, many times having to do with sheer economic necessity, and only rarely because they purposively sought to fight the larger regimes' political battles. And once they joined the institutional ranks of the police, regardless of their politics, much of their attention was focused on the everydayness of police work and the managerial, organizational, and loyalty constraints that governed interaction with their superiors and colleagues.

This is a rather disconcerting finding for those who seek to understand the link between political regime type and the persistence of a culture of everyday violence, mainly because it suggests that it is the organizational dynamics of everyday police work, in which individuals can readily get caught up in self-deluding mentalities used to justify violence even when they do not accept the larger political project that leads to this behavior, that fuels the culture of violence. In such an environment, we might see the persistence of violent behaviors and mentalities among police, even when the regime changes from authoritarian to democratic, if the organizational context of police authority is not transformed as well.

Equally fascinating in this book is its treatment of how and why police torturers' work is structured around displaying or achieving various forms of masculinity. Through discussion of the notions of personalistic, bureaucratic, and blended masculinity we see how

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(masculinized) hierarchies of power within police institutions contribute to the culture of police abuse. Equally important, these masculinized distinctions produce both "victims" and "perpetrators" even among the police. Such findings produce a much more complex picture of the authoritarian past of police torture than is generally advanced by those who see police torturers in primarily political terms. When police torturers are seen merely as repressive arms of the authoritarian state, then it is natural to think of them as perpetrators and society (or its dissidents) as the victim. But when police torturers also are seen as *workers* (hence the book's title) in an organizational environment where gendered psycho-social dynamics also produce self-victimization, such binary conceptions are no longer appropriate.

Of course, even with this type of formulation the larger political context never fully disappears, especially if one recognizes that many of the police-victimizing intra-organizational dynamics noted in this book are implemented precisely so the police can achieve the government's authoritarian aims vis-à-vis society. Indeed, one cannot forget that the masculinized hazing and continual harassing of new and/or lower-ranking police by their superiors was frequently conducted with an eye to establishing the requisite loyalties, connections, shared secrets, and silences that could eventually bind police to each other and the state in an environment of national security where internal police loyalty was the necessary starting point for successfully identifying and defeating "external" enemies.

Although the main contribution of *Violence Workers* is its exposure of the complexities of police torturers' lives and livelihood, this book also raises several important questions about why such knowledge is important and what should be made of it. Such queries are introduced early on, in fact, as part of the justification for the methodology employed in the study. In order for Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo to understand the work of their subjects, i.e., police torturers, they have to be able to query these individuals about their actions. Otherwise, the past and activities of these actors would always be shrouded in secrecy and silence. Yet for police torturers to speak freely about their work, they somehow have to distance themselves from their own violent behavior and from the atrocious acts they committed. Thus the authors had to help these subjects come to terms with themselves and their pasts. Many of the interviewing techniques used by the authors are intended to facilitate precisely this aim (allowing, for example, police torturers to conceptualize themselves as victims as much as perpetrators). In the process, however, the authors also bring to the epistemological table several absolutely key questions about memory, responsibility, coping strategies, and, of course, forgiveness and moving on. To be sure, in *Violence Workers* it was individual police torturers

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who were confronting their pasts and facing the challenges of moving on, through individual reflection and narration. Yet for many scholars and citizens of Latin America, very similar dynamics and concerns are now playing out on the level of society.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Claudia Feld's *Del estrado a la pantalla: Las imágenes del juicio a los ex comandantes en Argentina*. This is a short little book that focuses on Argentine efforts to come to terms with this country's authoritarian past, and with the violence perpetrated by the state against citizens that marked the period of military rule. Rather than focusing on individual narratives and reflections, however, as does *Violence Workers*, Feld focuses on *collective* narratives and reflections of individual acts of violence--at least as produced through the trials of military commanders and then recounted through the media and/or the government's representation of the trials and the military who participated in them. Through examination of both the timing and the negotiated ways that the state and political parties (at civil society's behest) mounted public trials, which were then televised to the nation, this book asks questions about whether collectively coming to terms with the violence of the past is possible—or even desirable—and whether certain media-generated narratives and representational techniques are better than others in achieving truth, reconciliation, and/or justice aims.

Although the violent atrocities associated with Argentina's authoritarian past serve as the point of departure for this book, in much the same way as they did in Huggins's study of Brazil, *Del estrado a la pantalla* does not showcase the detailed horrors of abuse that filled the pages of *Violence Workers*. Nor does it seek to expose the heretofore unexposed or unimagined. But that may be precisely the point. One of the most compelling aspects of Feld's carefully crafted study is its critical examination of what particular aspects of the past do or do not get addressed and why, when, and by whom. In essence, this is a fascinating sociology of knowledge treatment of the ways contemporary Argentine society has tried to deal with its authoritarian past.

The book spans a considerable period of time, starting in 1985 when Argentina's democracy was still relatively fragile and concluding with a focus on the 1995-1998 period, after politicians and activists spent years debating the appropriate form for the proceedings and after public dissemination of the findings. The book begins by asking questions about how initial decisions were made to hold military tribunals, and which format for holding military commanders accountable for atrocities committed during the dirty war in Argentina was considered best (and why). It then turns to a discussion of the deliberations and conflicts over whether to censor the findings generated by the tribunals, and which ideals or principles of justice would have to be balanced against the collective need to know. One of the key points of contention

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was whether and how the proceedings should be transmitted to the public (i.e., with image and sound, or image only), and whether the manner of representing past abuses through particular technologies and representational techniques could itself contribute to the social construction of collective memory about atrocities in Argentina. In discussing these dilemmas, Feld uncovers some of the same findings identified by Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo in their study of police torturers, but for society more generally: e.g., rendering past atrocities in a form amenable to the public contributed to discussion and debate that helped blur the boundaries between victim and perpetrator even as it diminished collective indignation and outrage.

By and large, this book's arguments are cast within a media studies framework, such that *Del estrado a la pantalla* shares with *Citizens of Fear* an abiding interest in understanding citizen discourses, perceptions, and the role of television and print journalism in producing these interpretations of the character and meaning of violence (in this case state-sanctioned violence). Yet, also hovering over this book is an equally important argument about the larger political context of democracy and its impact on collective representations of the country's violent past as well as the content and character of deliberations over the most appropriate forms of legal, social, or political retribution. Because Feld methodologically frames her study around a series of chronological stages that corresponded to key moments in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, she is able to show how changing party, state, and societal dynamics associated with the democratization of Argentina's political system produced both possibilities and constraints on state and civil society efforts to take responsibility for the past, to cope with the social and political fallout associated with the reconstruction of memory, and to collectively forgive the perpetrators enough to move onward to a future in which the newly democratic state's legitimacy would be enhanced.

On these counts, however, her findings are not nearly as comforting as one might have hoped. While Feld no doubt would be among the multitudes to celebrate the democratization of Argentina and its break from a violent and abusive authoritarian past, this book is far from cathartic when it comes to assessing what democracy--and the military tribunals it enabled—has meant for collective memory and the human condition in post-authoritarian Argentina. In contrast to key aspects of the story told in *Violence Workers*, in which police torturers who confront and expose their atrocities have been able to find some emotional distancing, *Del estrado a la pantalla* seems to be suggesting that when such dynamics play out collectively, the transcendence is never complete. Of course, Huggins et al. are the first to say that police torturers can never fully escape the horrors of their own

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past actions, and the only way they could live with the alienation (or without burn out) was to build connections with their families and friends around them. Yet for Feld, the social organization of citizens united in their efforts to expose the dirty war does not seem to have translated into the same type of solace. She argues, instead, that the complex negotiations and trade-offs surrounding the public exposure of Argentina's legacy of military violence—despite their obvious importance in sealing the country's democratic transition—may have plunged citizens into a psychological or collective state of mind that sustains a loss of humanity, not a recovery of it. After reading Feld's final sentence in the book, in which she questions whether "something essential or indispensable is lost when you try to make intolerable horrors tolerable" (143; translation mine), one can only sympathize with the bittersweet sense of collective sorrow that hangs like a cloud over this book and Argentina too.

If one of Feld's main accomplishments has been to understand the ways that democracy has affected Argentine efforts to deal with its violent past, then it is precisely the inverse that concerns John Bailey and Roy Godson in their edited volume, *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability*, which is focused on Mexico. This book raises questions about state-sanctioned violence and lawlessness—as measured in the rise of organized criminality—and how these longstanding problems affect democratic governability, both in prior periods and today. Like the previous two books discussed here, the focus and scope of the Bailey and Godson volume is tuned to the requisites of the particular case under study. While legacies of military torture and dirty war now preoccupy scholars in Brazil and Argentina, it is the legacy of one-party rule that most concerns scholars of Mexico, and Bailey and Godson focus their attention on one particular dimension of this legacy: the rise of organized crime and the trade-offs and agreements made by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) with these clandestine forces in order to stay in power. The originating premise of the book is that the informal connections made between Mexican officials (be they elected or appointed) and purveyors of organized crime during the last several decades of one-party rule have set limits on the current state's capacity to govern democratically. As such, the book sets out to understand the origins and extent of these connections, what they mean for politics, economics, and society, and what has or can be done to transcend these legacies and make Mexico a more stable, more democratic, and less corrupt nation.

The first section of the book presents articles that focused directly on the "nexus" of organized crime in Mexico and examine it historically (Astorga), through the lens of state formation and one-party rule (Pimental), and in terms of the politics of campaign finance (Curzio).

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The two remaining chapters in this section examine the role of the military (Benítez Manaut) and the Attorney General's office (Arzt) in facilitating or impeding the actions of organized crime. The second part of the book is a focused analysis of organized crime in the border region. This is a particularly welcome addition to the volume because it offers an opportunity to situate Mexico's problems with organized crime and democratic governability in both a regional and transnational context. It is clear that much of the violence and corruption that now plagues Mexico, including the violence and corruption perpetrated by military and police against their own citizens, evolved in response to opportunities offered by political and economic dynamics in the country's northern regions. That is, what soon became a national problem did not only have "national" origins. What also becomes clear in this volume is that illegal activities flourished in the northern regions of the country not only because of their geographic and political "distance" from the capital city and seat of government, but also because of the leeway the revolutionary state gave local *caciques* to engage in such activities in return for loyalty to the PRI. This phenomenon can also be traced to the fact that these regions sat due south of the U.S. border, across which the demand for drugs offered a steady incentive for politicians and criminals alike to partake in the bounty. This transnational contiguity further contributed to the flowering of the politics-organized crime nexus within Mexico.

Neither state-imposed nor everyday violence—let alone what to do about them—are explicitly presented as defining themes of the Bailey and Godson volume, as has been the case with most of the books discussed so far. But in a very real sense, these exact same problems and concerns do constitute an unwritten subtext of this project, despite its seemingly narrower focus on organized crime. This is so not only because organized criminal activities fuel much of the everyday violence and lawlessness that lead to the fear and community disintegration examined with so much care in the Rotker and Moser and McIlwaine books and that now characterize daily life in Mexico. Equally telling is the evidence presented in this volume that organized crime could never have flourished without the tacit support (in terms of action and inaction) from the Mexican state. One reason the Mexican police and military have developed their own lawlessness and impunity, then, is because of their and the state's connections to criminal organizations or activities. This partly explains why Mexican police and military have been involved in similar types of torture, kidnapping, and extortion of citizens seen under authoritarian rule in Brazil and Argentina, although the targets may have ended up being very different—less so political "enemies," at least over time, and more so those who threatened to blow the police-criminal protection racket.

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Where this story differs from Brazil and Argentina's, however, at least as presented in the books discussed here, is that the origins and dynamics of the growing violence—both everyday and state-sanctioned—straddle both state and civil society. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability* is its refusal to see the Mexican state as an entity whose coercive arms (military and police) act only on behalf of a bureaucratic-authoritarian machinery whose principal logic is primarily political, as in rooting out enemies. What is clear from this book is that the Mexican state has had key allies or partners in civil society that helped sustain its coercive character and capacities, and that the criminal nature of these partnerships, as well as the violent acts against a whole variety of citizens that they frequently entailed, emerged in response to the financial, regional, and institutional requisites of state formation and post-revolutionary governance, not to some larger ideological project.

This difference may explain why the challenge to democratic governability is so great in Mexico, perhaps even more difficult than the task of facing the authoritarian past has been in Argentina and Brazil. After all, democratization has made it possible for Argentina and Brazil to confront the violence of their past. But one of the main points advanced by Bailey and Godson in their introductory and concluding chapters to the volume is that despite the democratic transition and the will to confront the violence and abuse of Mexico's past, it is the organized crime-politics nexus—itself implicated in the violence of the past—that still sets limits on this aim. In light of this assessment, if Mexico were actually to get to a point where it could mount the kinds of justice tribunals that Feld describes in *Del estrado a la pantalla*, even if it failed to bring catharsis in the ways she and others would hope, the mere act of having such soul-searching trials would be a major achievement in Mexico and a first step toward democratic governability.

HISTORICIZING VIOLENCE WHILE STRADDLING ANALYTIC DOMAINS

Despite its enviable capacity to straddle the state-civil society domains in the study of violence in Mexico, the relatively circumscribed focus on organized crime of the Bailey and Godson volume means that several key questions remain unaddressed. One is why citizens in Mexico did not act earlier to sidetrack the state-organized crime protection racket that has led the country to such disaster. Another is whether the political peculiarities of Mexico, derived from its revolutionary past and decades of one-party rule, will overly limit our capacities to generalize from this case to the rest of Latin America. The findings presented in two final books, Philip E. Coyle's *Náyari History, Politics and Violence* and Klaus Bodemer, Sabine Kurtenbach, and Klaus

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Meschkat's edited volume, *Violencia y regulación de conflictos en América Latina*, help us answer these questions even as they lead us to some final conclusions about what we do and do not know about violence and insecurity in contemporary Latin America.

At first glance, the Coyle book, an anthropological study of a small village called Santa Teresa in the Sierra del Nayar region of northwest Mexico (state of Nayarit), may seem to be an unlikely candidate for answering fundamental questions about the larger dynamics of citizen action or inaction against state-organized crime complicity in Mexico. After all, the book is firmly cast in the anthropological tradition of detailed and highly circumscribed ethnographic field work focused on one small village, home to the Náyari (Cora) people. Coyle's originating interest, moreover, was to understand the ceremonial dances of Santa Teresa and their role in creating meaning—and conflict resolution—at the level of community. For this reason, he devoted considerable time to the study of descent-group and community-level *mitote* ceremonies, laced with ritual acts and symbolism, and how they tie youth and other residents of Santa Teresa to deceased ancestors and to each other. Of its five substantive chapters, four focus on classically anthropological concerns: the people, land, and livelihood of Santa Teresa; the symbolism of the lake and the world in the mitote ceremonies; the historical origins of these ceremonial practices and costumes; and the community mitote cycle during two key periods—the Day(s) of the Dead and Holy Week. Only a fifth and final chapter, which brings a careful discussion of the Federal Army and national bureaucracies into the narrative, combined with a fascinating preface and conclusion, give any substantive clue at all as to the power and larger significance of this research for the study of violence and the state-organized crime nexus. But these few sections of the book are well worth the price of admission.

The first clue that this study contains within it seeds of deeper knowledge about the state-organized crime nexus is Coyle's acknowledgement, in the preface, that much of the violence in the community derives from the drug trade as well as the Mexican military's involvement in terms of controlling both drug production and rural insurgencies. Thus, what for Coyle may have started out as a simple village study of the history and politics of ritualized ceremonial behavior among a subset of indigenous villagers in an obscure region in the northwest of the country, very soon became a study of violence, hence the book's title. Coyle's initial concern with understanding violence in Santa Teresa was awakened by his witnessing of a killing during the ceremonial dances he was observing in his first stage of field work in 1994. He soon found out that it was the seventh violent death among many more assaults the town had witnessed in a short four-month period. Yet as his research then turned directly to the study of this

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violence, and why it seemed so endemic in this small town, a whole new world opened up to him. Rather than attribute violence in Santa Teresa to the drug trade and its casualties, however, a type of claim commonly advanced in several of the books reviewed above, or even to the impunity of the Mexican army, yet another common argument advanced in the Bailey and Godson book, Coyle arrived at a very different explanation, one that put the drug trade and the army's intervention in a larger political and developmental context.

Specifically, Coyle found that violence was the result of a "simmering conflict between contradictory political systems" in the village, with the local community divided among itself because of the imposition of competing political actors and institutions. Coyle, in short, traces the explosion of violence not to the pathologies of individuals, or to more "natural" divisions and conflicts among groups with different class or economic interests, but to weaknesses and disunity in the internal political structure of Santa Teresa, owing to processes of Mexican national state formation and regional economic development.

With an historical examination of village practices, especially in the decades after the Mexican Revolution, Coyle argues that the post-revolutionary "formation of municipal and national government bureaucracies in the region left a community fragmented among antagonistic descent groups. The absence of any legitimate overarching community authority in turn presented an opportunity for particular individuals and households to involve themselves in drug cultivation and trafficking in hopes of earning money" (3), which we know from the articles showcased in Bailey and Godson's volume was already on the rise in northern regions of Mexico because of state formative and border dynamics. Not only did this excess of drug-related money in Santa Teresa fuel the mounting of "disorderly and un-policed local festivals, resulting in violent disputes" (ibid.), but in the absence of a unified or legitimate local authority this "violence then fed a spreading cycle of retaliation as the relatives of more and more disputants took revenge" (ibid.).

When the federal government brought the military into the picture, ostensibly to help establish local order, their own involvement/complicity with the drug traders merely reinforced divisions within the town and the illegitimacy of government authorities, further fueling the cycle of political conflict and violence. According to Coyle, then, the "key point in this chain of violence . . . was not drug cultivation or trafficking itself, but rather the previous lack of legitimate political and judicial authority brought on by higher-level government intervention in the town" (4).

While some may question the causal ordering of the processes identified in *Náyari History, Politics, and Violence*, one thing is clear: citizens were hardly in a position to struggle against the Federal army's involvement

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in illegal drug trade/organized crime, the question posed earlier, not only because the tensions between national and municipal authorities associated with post-revolutionary state formation had weakened the local political system and its leadership "from above," but also because the drug trade—especially once the Army got involved in facilitating the flow of goods—served as a main source of revenues for some local villagers, thereby the community "from below." This, in short, is part of the answer as to why Mexican civil society has not more forcefully challenged the lawlessness and violence that comes "from above" in the form of the state-organized crime nexus.

Even as the Coyle book lays bare the peculiarities of Mexico's regional, cultural, and political history and how they have led to endemic violence perpetuated from both above and below, Bodemer, Kurtenbach, and Meschkat's edited volume, *Violencia y regulación de conflictos en América Latina,* makes depressingly clear that despite Mexico's historical peculiarities, such dynamics are not confined to this country alone. In this masterful and sweeping volume, hefty even by serious academic standards, the editors compile a series of comparative and historical studies of violence all over Latin America. The twenty-eight chapters that comprise the volume are grouped under the following themes: violence in Latin America; causes and motives for violence; organized and unorganized violence; the main protagonists (actors) of violence; violence and gender relations; consequences of violence and its treatment; and, control of violence by peace forces.

What is most welcome in this volume, and surprisingly absent in practically all of the other works discussed here, is the attention paid to what used to be the predominant forms of violence in Latin America in earlier decades. That is, many of the articles in this volume focus on the standard entry point for studying violence in the 1960s and 1970s scholarship: civil war, rebellion, and guerrilla struggle, much of it focused in rural areas or around questions of land. The inclusion of such articles should not be seen as a throw-back to the time-worn theories and analytic frameworks of the past, but rather as a necessary corrective to the implicit sense that violence is a new problem in Latin America. Equally important, the inclusion of articles that examine these "older" forms of violence may help lead to more conscientious theorization of how and why the scope and character of violence has changed over the decades. Why is it that studies of state-sanctioned as well as of the everyday violence of urban life now seem more predominant than those of rural mobilizations, guerrilla movements, and land struggles? Is it because in a post-Marxist world scholars are no longer "seeing" these struggles—i.e., is it a question of perception or theoretical preference? Or, is something changing in Latin American politics and society so that these long-studied acts of rural rebellion and social movement violence are

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declining in number and scope, at least as compared to state-sanctioned violence and the urban violence and insecurity of everyday life?

While this volume neither poses nor answers these questions, it does give sufficient case-study breadth to understanding the multiple forms and "locations" of violence in Latin America today, both rural and urban, top-down and bottom-up. With articles that focus on the large industrialized countries of the continent (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile), on Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala), and the ubiquitous Colombia, we see that even though the extent and forms of violence may not be all that different, the ways that states and citizens deal with this violence does vary markedly. If we accept that almost all of Latin America today is suffering an age of insecurity, but that each country does so differently based on its own history, why not turn our scholarly attention to how each country confronts its own legacies of violence and with what degrees of success? If, in the process of such querying, countries and their citizens can learn from each other, that is all the better. Maybe this is the most we can ask of this new wave of studies on violence and insecurity, and still keep our optimism.

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