

A MONSTROUS REGIMENT OF WOMEN?
State, Regime, and Women's Political Organizing
in Latin America

Tracy Fitzsimmons
University of Redlands

- MOVIMIENTO DE MUJERES EN CENTROAMERICA*. By Ana Leticia Aguilar, Blanca Estela Dole, Morena Herrera, Sofía Montenegro, Lorena Camacho, and Lorena Flores. (Managua: Programa Regional La Corriente, 1997. Pp. 511.)
- GENDER POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA: DEBATES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE*. Edited by Elizabeth Dore. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997. Pp. 251. \$38.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.)
- MUJERES Y PARTICIPACION POLITICA: AVANCES Y DESAFIOS EN AMERICA LATINA*. Edited by Magdalena León. (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1994. Pp. 347.)
- WOMEN AND THE STATE: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES*. Edited by Shirin M. Rai and Geraldine Lievesley. (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996. Pp. 182. \$24.95 paper.)
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- WOMEN AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA: POWER FROM BELOW*. By Lynn Stephen. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. Pp. 352. \$37.50 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)
- WOMEN AND REVOLUTION IN AFRICA, ASIA, AND THE NEW WORLD*. Edited by Mary Ann Tétreault. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994. Pp. 456. \$39.95 cloth.)
- SUBVERSIVE WOMEN: WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA, ASIA, LATIN AMERICA, AND THE CARIBBEAN*. Edited by Saskia Wieringa. (London: Zed, 1995. Pp. 271. \$59.95 cloth, \$22.50 paper.)

For who can deny that it is
repugnant to nature that the blind
shall be appointed to lead and
conduct . . . , that the weak, the sick

and the impotent persons shall nourish
 and keep the whole and the strong,
 and finally, that the foolish, mad, and
 frantic shall govern the discreet and give
 counsel to such as be of sober mind?
 And such be all women compared
 to man in bearing of authority.
 John Knox, 1571

A perverse pleasure arises in thinking about how John Knox would have cowered from and then vilified the wave of women's political organizing that Latin America has witnessed in the last generation. Although his words targeted Mary Tudor in the sixteenth century, he surely would respond with equal repugnance at the end of the twentieth century at the scholarly women who spend much time analyzing the politically active women of Latin America. Despite the probable chagrin of Knox and perhaps many others, women activists mobilized against patriarchy and authoritarianism during the 1980s in Latin America and gained significant strength and numbers in the process. The mobilizations and outcomes of that decade have been extensively if not excessively studied. The legacies of that authoritarianism amidst new models of development and democracy now merit the critical scrutiny of Latin American women activists and scholars.

In a 1992 review essay in this journal, Francesca Miller reviewed the literature on *conscientización*, which has gone hand in hand with feminist political organizing for the past two decades. Consciousness raising among women in Latin America entailed identifying oppression and liberating women from it—a struggle in response to authoritarian regimes' hold on the home and the state. While oppressions at home remain a real challenge for Latin American women, authoritarian regimes have been at least formally broken. Women and scholars of Latin America therefore need a *re-conscientización* to reflect the new political regimes and shifting economies in which they are now operating. Under democracy, oppression now looks different, as do the oppressors and circumstances in which women might win or lose. Similarly, the reasons why women mobilize, how various women's groups interrelate, and how women and the state interact have also changed.

The current literature on women's organizing in Latin America reflects the authors' and the women's struggles to respond to these changing environments. Yet the theories have not quite caught up with the reality. It seems to be an easier task to organize and analyze women under authoritarianism than as part of an emerging democracy. Collectively, the eight works under review here lay a strong foundation for future research in this direction. The authors identify the old as well as the emerging constraints

on women's political participation, characterize the broadening sphere of women's subversive activity, and address women vis-à-vis the changing nature of political development. The works also attempt to place these phenomena as they occur in Latin America in a cross-regional perspective.

Women Shaping and Shaped by Democratization

Nearly a decade ago, as revealed in Judith Adler Hellman's review essay in this journal, much academic attention was being given to understanding the central role that women have played in the economic and political changes occurring in Latin America. The books currently under review demonstrate the broadening scope of literature on women in the region. Scholars continue to analyze the roles women play in political change, but an increasing number of academics are studying how women are affected by those changes in political and economic regimes and by state institutions. In a sense, the causal arrow now moves in two directions rather than one. A predominant research question in the late 1980s and early 1990s was, how do women's movements influence democratization processes? The works to be reviewed here demonstrate that scholars have now adapted their query to reflect the changing political systems of Latin America: how does a transition toward democracy affect women and women's organizations? Or, how can these democracies be altered or fine-tuned to be more hospitable to women?

For anyone doing research on how women's political organizing is shaped by and responds to changes in political regime or state, *Women and the State: International Perspectives* should be required reading. For those just starting out in the field, Shirin Rai's introduction serves as a useful primer on how Western theories about the state—even feminist state theory—have virtually ignored the relationship between third world women and post-colonial states. Rai's command of the literature informs a well-written introduction that would also make an ideal text for a women's studies course. The goal of this edited volume is to bring the varied experiences of these women to the foreground of feminist debates on the state and women's political organizing. In separate essays, co-editor Geraldine Lievesley and Georgina Waylen presume that just as women may have changing and contradictory goals, the state is not a unified or static entity. Waylen examines SERNAM (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer) in Chile. She points out that this Chilean state institution owes its creation largely to pressures from the women's movement and would benefit from input from a strong women's movement. Paradoxically, the ongoing existence of SERNAM has led to a marginalization and weakening of the women's movement, which some might view as a co-optation of the movement. Just as many Latin Americans have experienced some form of disillusionment with their new democracies, disillusionment has followed the creation of a state institution

focused on women. Many feminists fault SERNAM for being less neutral or less progressive on gender issues than they had hoped, and those within SERNAM report a multitude of unforeseen obstacles to completing their work: party pressure, funding reductions, and contradictory demands from women's organizations.

Lievesley argues that women political activists must adopt distinct and complex strategies in dealing with the state. Women will often find themselves in contradictory or changing roles because the state, like individuals, can assume multiple identities. As a result, there is no "best practice" in political mobilization. To make her point, Lievesley uses an adaptation of Walter Rostow's "stages of growth" model. As she demonstrates with the Peruvian case, if women adopt a stages of growth mentality by placing different types of mobilization on an evolutionary scale, then women's movements will be hard pressed to recognize and adapt to the complexities of each interaction with the state and other women's movements. Without complex strategies, women's movements will experience difficulty moving from local to national politics and from authoritarian to democratic regimes, switching from a personal voice to an "official" one and subverting the hierarchies of "better and lesser women" created by the state and political parties. The case studies presented in *Women and the State* bring to light the contradictions and challenges of finding a government voice for women while maintaining women's autonomy in political organizing.

The central paradox is that representative democracy, a goal around which many women activists mobilized, has turned out to be unrepresentative for women. Lievesley and Waylen agree that "formal democratization has not been friendly to women" and that, perversely, the military regimes in Peru and Chile may have offered more opportunities and stimuli for women to organize politically than the ensuing civilian regimes (p. 49). A common conclusion in nearly all the books reviewed here is that for Latin American women, empowerment has been more a women's strategy than an outcome of democracy.

In the introduction to *Mujeres y participación política: Avances y desafíos en América Latina*, Magdalena León asks why leadership and decision-making positions throughout Latin America have remained in the hands of men despite the recent advances achieved by women in the political realm. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the public and private spheres cannot be divorced from one another, a reality that ironically tends to reinforce the subordinate position of women under democracy. Norms and relationships within the state become replications of those in the household. Conversely, relations within families often reflect the dominant societal model. Why should the manner in which women and men interact in the public realm (as citizens) be any different from their interactions in the private realm (as family members)? Why should state institutions dominated by

men be empathetic or responsive to women's groups and demands? If patriarchal attitudes and relationships are embedded within the home and the society, they will be replicated in voting patterns and decision making on the state level. The fact that a democracy may formally consider women as the political equals of men does nothing to urge voters or leaders to put aside their gender prejudices and elect or appoint women to positions of power. Voting patterns and decision making will simply reflect those deep-seated biases. The books reviewed herein advance earlier arguments, made most notably by Anne Phillips and Carole Pateman, that the assumptions and the rhetoric that democracy affords equal political status to all citizens serve only to mask the political inequalities that exist between men and women—and continue to exist in Latin America despite the new democratic systems.

Jane Jaquette's contribution to *Mujeres y participación política* adds to this discussion by observing that the transition period represented a political opening in the broadest sense in offering opportunities for participation that allowed women's organizations to flourish. Conversely, she argues, democratic transitions cannot be understood without studying the important role of women's movements. Jaquette shows that the advent of democracy has not proved to be the entirely new way of doing politics that many feminists had hoped. Hierarchies, personalism, and masculine institutions remain. Jaquette suggests that feminists may be threatened by the transition to democratic rule because their approaches to mobilization under authoritarianism gave them little experience dealing with clientelism and asymmetric power relations. León's *Mujeres y participación política* is the most thorough and useful compilation I have read in this area. It successfully contrasts the challenges and accomplishments of women's organizing under democracy with those under bureaucratic authoritarianism. This achievement may reflect the fact that the book was published in Latin America and includes the work of noted scholars long familiar with women's movements in the region. The essay entitled "Feminismo en América Latina: De Bogotá a San Bernardo," by Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Marysa Navarro Aranguren, Patricia Chuchryk, and Sonia Alvarez, would make an ideal text at the outset of a women's studies course.

León's compilation of essays is unique. The existing literature contains much work on women's political organizing under authoritarianism and the period of transition but little examining women and women's groups under the new democracies. León's collection takes important theoretical and empirical steps in this direction (as highlighted in Virginia Vargas's essay in *Subversive Women*). Agnes Heller's (1985) book on the political Left in Western societies argued that social movements arise primarily because of unsatisfied needs. Given the many unsatisfied needs of women following transitions to democracy, it seems reasonable to expect a continued organizing presence of women in Latin America. The literature is only

beginning to establish the complexities of what really happens in the arenas and levels of women's participation after democratization. Yet the related question of what role women play in the consolidation and deepening of democracy remains largely unasked in the literature.

Constraints on Women's Political Participation

Democratization often brings popular disillusionment, changes in funding availability for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), a rise in partisan politics and the emergence of new arenas of participation. All these outcomes present obstacles for women's continued mobilization. Women's political organizing may also face serious challenges from other aspects of the political and social environment. On this topic, a pattern emerges from these books. Many of the authors advance the study of women in Latin America by identifying and analyzing theoretically the constraints on gendered participation. For example, Ann Matear posits in Elizabeth Dore's *Gender Politics in Latin America: Debates in Theory and Practice* that the central obstacle to participation and representation under democracy may not be gender but social class. In her case study on Chile, Matear observes that female elites may have much success participating under democracy but that women in the popular class find themselves still isolated from political power in the new political system. Surprisingly, Anna Fernández Poncela contends in the Dore volume that the notion that Nicaraguan women enjoyed extensive political power and participation in the 1980s is a myth. She argues that the main obstacles to Nicaraguan women's participation were economic and cultural subordination. The economic necessity of working one or two jobs coupled with a perceived obligation to be involved in community activities led women to be too tired or overburdened to take on more formal political activity. At the same time, the revolution's ideological framework reproduced the traditional cultural model promoting the home as the primary sphere for women as an important arena for teaching the revolution's ideals. While women were active participants in Nicaraguan society through their jobs, home life, and informal relationships, their involvement in formal political life was limited.

The women interviewed by Lynn Stephen for *Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from Below* echo Fernández's assertions in detailing the difficulties they face in balancing their responsibilities as wives and mothers with their desire to participate in development projects or political organizing. Stephen's interviews with Salvadoran women activists yield a kind of discussion of the perceived and real constraints of machismo on women's ability to organize and act politically. Her book is a rare find—one that expertly interlaces testimonials of activists with an academic voice in a way that makes the work analytical yet accessible to all. An anthropologist, Stephen also provides useful case studies for those work-

ing with organizations theory or issues of structural inequality. One chapter of *Women and Social Movements* highlights the political factionalism that combined with diverse levels of education among women to create unique challenges to women's small-scale economic projects and their participation in ejidal unions in the Nayarit region of Mexico. According to Stephen, "women's dependent status both within their *ejidos* and within the larger *ejido* union put severe constraints on their organizing projects, but it also made them determined to secure the rights of representation and access to land they were supposed to have" (p. 192). She is referring here to the well-known paradox that many of these constraints may also serve as catalysts to women's political organizing.

Movimiento de mujeres en Centroamérica by Ana Leticia Aguilar et al. argues convincingly that a major constraint on women's political participation in Central America was the subordination of the women's movement in the popular movements on both sides of civil wars under authoritarianism. This subordination inhibited women from becoming political and being viewed as such by others. Diane Mitsch Bush and Stephen Mumme's contribution to the Tétreault volume, "Gender and the Mexican Revolution," echoes this idea. Their case study confirms the hypothesis that gender issues become subordinated to broader objectives within revolutionary movements. *Movimiento de mujeres en Centroamérica* offers further insights into the tensions between a woman as an individual political actor and the collective women's movement in Central America. This book is a must for anyone planning to do research on women in Central America. It offers a comprehensive if not exhaustive study of the process of constructing a women's movement in Central America and, to a lesser extent, the roles that movement has played in women's lives and in the politics of the region.

From another disciplinary approach, Ileana Rodríguez obliquely addresses in *Women, Guerrillas, and Love: Understanding War in Central America* the ways in which literary discourses depict and even shape the environment in which revolutionary women live as citizens and organize politically. Rodríguez's analysis is pertinent to this review essay in that she demonstrates how the construction of literary discourse involves the creation of categories that constrain individuals—in this case, women. In discussing the romantic narrative *They Won't Take Me Alive* (Alegria and Flakoll 1983), Rodríguez surmises, "the pressure inflicted on women as wives in the prison-house of monogamy is transferred from the family to the state and from the house to the nation. The power of the father/husband is reconstituted as the repressive state apparatus" (p. 165). Such pressure is imposed through narratives that represent constructed social norms that have been adopted by both revolutionaries and the state. Rodríguez argues that language is a domain of struggles for power. Therefore when revolutionary narratives written by leaders (such as Che Guevara or Arturo

Arias) marginalize women by depicting a collective masculine “I,” the narratives impinge on revolutionary women’s power and identity. For Rodríguez, the deconstruction of the nation-state is linked to woman’s absence or death in narratives, “the casting of woman as corpse, and the gradual exclusion of love from literature, signals the nation-state’s deconstruction and the people’s de-nationalization” (p. xix).

Saskia Wieringa’s edited volume, *Subversive Women: Women’s Movements in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean*, succeeds where many others have failed. It documents the successes as well as the challenges or failures of women and their organizations, concluding that structure and agency are both to be blamed and that both present constraints. Maritza Villavicencio’s contribution on the early women’s movement in Peru asserts that Peruvian feminists struggled to respond to the closing of democratic spaces by becoming “less outspoken, withdrawing into small circles which continued to advocate civil and political rights for women, but had little or no resonance on the political scene” (p. 67). The closing of democratic spaces and the extreme polarization of political forces led Peruvian women to mitigate their level of involvement and arenas of participation. Villavicencio’s account of Peruvian feminists echoes Francesca Miller’s earlier review essay in this journal, which suggested that “maybe the reason women have not ‘succeeded’ in making visible gains for themselves and their agendas in democracies . . . is that the problem lies not in the women—not in some intrinsic inability to act politically or to make the transition from oppositional politics to cooperative politics—but is embedded in the political system itself” (p. 195). Her essay went on to highlight some paradoxes of participation for women under democracy.

Yet when women’s groups fall short of their stated goals, the blame for failure is almost always placed on inequities in society or the patriarchal nature of the political system. Although it is true that the culprit is largely the external social or political structure, scholars tend to overlook the problems of agency within women’s organizations. Women can and do make strategic errors in political organizing, and at times those errors are attributable less to the constraints of the social or political structure and more to poor decisions, political infighting, ill-preparedness, or lack of foresight in an organization. In reviewing the gains made by the early women’s movement in Trinidad and Tobago in their status vis-à-vis white women and men, Rhoda Reddock’s contribution to *Subversive Women* also faults the black and colored women of the middle class for “never questioning their own position in relation to women of the working class” (p. 119). Virginia Vargas’s essay on the Peruvian case in the same volume stands out for presenting a more complete view of the obstacles encountered by women’s movements while recognizing the internal contradictions within the movement. In this respect, the two contributions on Peru in this volume stand in contrast to one another.

The six coauthors of *Movimiento de mujeres en Centroamérica* also discuss the problems within and outside the women's movement. They postulate that fragmentation of the women's movement is attributable to competing national ideals of citizenship and undefined spaces for participation as much as to the movement's failure to articulate clear policies for international cooperation and the disbursement of resources. At times, women in the movement have conflated institutionalizing the movement with bureaucratizing or administering it. While internal agency problems account for only a minority of the failures or obstacles experienced by women's organizations, a perusal of the current literature might lead one to believe that all shortcomings of the women's movement can be blamed on external structural constraints. *Subversive Women* and *Movimiento de mujeres en Centroamérica* are commendable in demonstrating the interplay of the external and internal constraints on women's political organizing.

Women Subverting the State

Subversive Women points out that women have much experience in overcoming barriers, although history has often distorted or denied their successes. This edited volume grew out of a collective multidisciplinary research project begun in the mid-1980s entitled "Women's Movements and Organizations in Historical Perspective." Rich in detail and description, *Subversive Women* provides a strong foundation for those beginning research on related topics or teaching advanced undergraduate or graduate courses on women's movements. While the collection includes essays on women around the globe, nearly half are devoted to reflections on women's movements and subversive activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with some case studies. According to the contributors, women "creatively and deviously" subvert the state, laws, societal norms, and economic circumstances that collude to bind women's participation and power. While the political environment almost everywhere in Latin America has changed from authoritarianism to democracy or semi-democracy, women continue to feel a need to subvert the state. Throughout Latin America's new democracies, women have expressed frustration over lack of representation, co-optation of the women's movement by the state, and the state's prioritization of nongendered issues over women's needs. Women's efforts to jostle for space in which they might convince those in political office to acknowledge and respond to their demands are often met with warnings not to derail the democratic process by putting too much pressure on the state. Faced with these difficulties, women have found new ways to voice and meet their needs.

Virginia Vargas's essay in *Subversive Women*, "Women's Movement in Peru: Rebellion into Action," balances her examination of the Peruvian women's movement with theoretical reflections on Peruvian history, the

Peruvian state, and violence. Vargas mentions how feminists in Peru have organized experimental theater groups, newspapers, and a documentation center for women's medical and legal issues. The implicit goal is to help women achieve personal autonomy, which will then facilitate greater political autonomy for women's groups vis-à-vis the state. Vargas observes that the more innovative means of women's participation were fostered by the existence of the military government. Peruvian women have not been content to sit back and wait for the fledgling democracy to meet their needs. Consequently, the women's movement in Peru has experienced its greatest growth not under military rule but during democratization.

Addressing another South American case, Alvarez's contribution on the politics of gender in Brazil (in the León volume) provides important examples of the political achievements enjoyed by feminists during the transition period, in contrast to their battles in the late 1980s to keep from losing earlier gains. Alvarez describes the current Brazilian state as "a distanced friend" of women, one that feminists thought they knew well and now view as an old friend on whom they can no longer rely. Given this situation, the new and varied versions of feminism of the 1990s are finding novel channels of participation, from independent feminist lobbies to policy centers that attempt to make politics "from outside the state."

Tétreault's *Women and Revolution* outlines the various ways in which women in several regions have formed alliances and built coalitions in support of revolutionary movements as a way to subvert or topple the state. Joan Supplee's contribution reminds readers that women actively participated in the counter-revolution during the Allende administration in Chile as a way of protesting that the government throughout the 1960s had focused on class oppression to the exclusion of gender oppression. Tétreault's introduction serves as both a review of the literature and a theoretical analysis of conceptions of revolution. She invokes Gailey's argument that all states have a gender hierarchy and the "subordination of women . . . emerges as an integral part of the emergence of . . . the state" (p. 19). This observation fits nicely with Vargas's similar assertion. If gender subordination is indeed part of the foundation of a given state, then each achievement of personal autonomy or effort toward women's empowerment can also be seen as subversion of the state.

Aguilar et al. conclude that the women's movement in Nicaragua has achieved the clearest consciousness of political expression and subsequent success in effecting positive changes in the state. My research on gendering new civilian police forces in Latin America and the Caribbean supports their conclusion. Nicaragua currently boasts a higher percentage of women police officers, more women officers in the highest ranks, the most institutionalized system of women's police stations, and the most extensive police training on gendered crimes in Central America. While much of the initial progress in this area is attributable to norms and structures of polic-

ing institutionalized under the Sandinistas, continued organizing by women's groups has improved the lot of women in Nicaragua's police force and as survivors of gendered crimes over the last eight years. While clearly not subverting the state, women in Nicaragua and Brazil have used the establishment of women's police stations as a way to subvert the masculine identity of the state from within the state structure.

Cross-Case Comparisons

The eight books reviewed here represent a recent trend in scholarly work on women: a notable increase in edited volumes promising cross-regional or cross-national comparative perspectives. In each book, most essays or chapters are theoretically and empirically robust enough to stand on their own. Together they present a solid overview of women in a particular geographic region or context.

Comparative methodology is apparently taking on new meanings. Most of the volumes in this review essay do not really compare cases. They merely bring together separate case studies from several countries or regions and require the reader to make the comparisons. Many of the essays, however, present useful intra-case comparisons of women across time, types of organizations, or changes in political regime. Most notable are Stephen's two chapters on women's organizing in Mexico. Yet in many of these books, easy opportunities for making broader comparisons have been lost. For example, two of the non-Latin American chapters in Rai and Lievesley stand out as especially rigorous theoretically and would have lent themselves to cross-regional comparisons. First, Maria Holt's discussion of how women are affected by and organize under a flawed or absent state is just as applicable to research on women in Haiti as to her own case study of women in Palestine and Lebanon. Second, Ann Stewart's chapter on legal pluralism, tradition, and postcolonialism in Africa has particular relevance for those examining women's rights under the emerging democracies in Latin America. In Tétreault's *Women and Revolution*, Sita Ranchod-Nilsson provides a well-researched case study of rural women's participation in Zimbabwe's war of liberation. Although the postcolonial context may render this case distinct, her observations about the motivations and means of rural women's support of the guerrillas would find many parallels in the Salvadoran case. Such comparisons can lead to better informed readers and research. Women have become increasingly connected internationally, yet many of these books leave out the learning across cases that has occurred on this level.

Of all these books, *Movimiento de mujeres en Centroamérica* offers the strongest intra-regional and intra-national comparisons of women's organizing. The first and third chapters of the first part merit careful reading by scholars in the field. The second part of the collection, however, suffers

from a problem that plagues many edited volumes: the essays are unified by a common theme but little else. Without a series of questions asked across cases or a common theoretical perspective, the case studies are excessively empirical or isolated when read alone. Striking a balance between the authors' autonomy and the collection's cohesion is the main challenge for editors. Wieringa's introduction to *Subversive Women* admits that "no single question motivated the research process." The resulting compilation of studies is rich in detail, data, and feminist methodology but exhibits little analytical or theoretical unity. In these terms, Elizabeth Dore's work as editor of *Gender Politics in Latin America* is exemplary. In her multidisciplinary collection, each essay represents a different approach to analyzing how the gendering of power has institutionalized various forms of exclusion of women in Latin America. Led by Jean Franco and William Rowe, many of the contributions to the Dore volume help scholars deepen the ongoing discussion of how the personal is political and the political is personal. These essays also demonstrate that the blurring of lines at times exacerbates women's exclusion or subordination but at other times helps overcome these same problems.

Emerging Trends, Missing Links

Three important topics are noticeably absent from the contemporary literature on women's political organizing in Latin America, as these books exemplify. First, they make no mention of the press. With the advent of democratization, previously censored or banned media largely enjoy freedom of expression. Has this freedom of the press benefited women's organizing? Does the press give equal coverage to women's events and organizations? Have women learned how to manipulate the press and thus influence public opinion, perhaps as another means of subverting the state?

Second, the literature has documented that women have devised creative means of offsetting the negative effects of the neoliberal model experienced by their families and communities. But women's national- and international-level responses to the neoliberal approach have received little attention from scholars. Have women not mobilized in the national political arena in response to "the feminization of poverty" exacerbated by the neoliberal model? Alternatively, has the implementation of neoliberalism provided fewer or greater opportunities and resources for women's participation in political and economic realms?

The third and most astonishing gap in the books reviewed here concerns issues of women, justice, and the rule of law. Although much research has been done on domestic abuse, rape of women by security forces, and laws on women's reproductive and political rights, surprisingly little has been published on empowering women in the criminal justice systems in Latin America. Borrowing terms from the work of Maxine Molyneux and

Caroline Moser, scholars have focused largely on women's practical gender interests and the criminal justice system but have not yet moved on to studying women's strategic interests in courts, prisons, and police forces. Mobilizations and discussions about women and justice in Latin America have tended to center around women's survival issues, derived inductively, and how the criminal justice system might improve women's daily living situations. With the notable exception of the Brazilian case, little research has been spent on how women have influenced and been empowered by the reforms of the justice system accompanying democratization processes. In many cases, such reforms have been minimal. How has the integration of women into new civilian police forces in Central America affected the reporting and investigating of gendered crimes? Has democratization allowed for greater access to justice through the courts for women? Why have women's practical gender interests in justice not spurred more strategic gender interest in the criminal justice system (except in Venezuela and Chile), and hence more mobilization around judicial reforms and institutional change?

Feminist scholars might do well to employ Ileana Rodríguez's approach and look for the narratives that have been written into reforms of judicial codes and constitutions in the emerging democracies of Latin America. Adapting Rodríguez's argument and words to fit such reforms, the textual constitution of the subject (whether the judge, alleged perpetrator, or victim) as a male subject signifies a sexuality that alienates women and can discourage their participation in the judicial system. By denoting "the citizen" or "the State" as masculine, democratizers construct judicial systems and codes that sound to women more like legacies of authoritarianism than institutions of democratic justice. Women organizing in the moment of democratic transition might instead heed Gayatri Spivak (as quoted in Rodríguez) that the terminology of "the moment(s) of change [needs to] be pluralized and plotted as confrontation rather than transition" (pp. 157–58) because written "language is the terrain of the struggle for power" (p. xvi). Ann Stewart (in Rai and Lievesley) correctly points out that such examinations of women's rights and justice must analyze state and customary laws and systems of justice. She stands at the fore of what is likely to become a needed boom in scholarly work on women, justice, and the rule of law in democratizing societies.

In comparison with a decade ago, the literature on Latin American women and by them is more sophisticated theoretically, more attentive to the intricacies of women's organizing, and more open to nuances across cases. Taken together, these eight volumes represent the changing nature of women's political organizing in Latin America. Faced with new challenges presented by the emergence of democratic rule and the neoliberal model, women are struggling to find creative means to maintain a political voice. The case studies included in these volumes demonstrate that women have

largely succeeded in this endeavor, although not without costs or obstacles. Women writing on Latin American women are becoming more pragmatic and self-critical, and while most of the authors are feminist partisans, ideological diversity is expanding among those writing on this subject. Finally, some academics have grumbled that the scholarly work coming out of the region was overly descriptive and lacked analysis. Yet two of the most insightful books in the field, as well as several useful chapters in other volumes, originated in Latin America. As this review has demonstrated, such academic imperialism finds no basis in the current literature on women in Latin America.

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