

Book Reviews | Reseñas

– *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, edited by Enrique Desmond Arias and Daniel M. Goldstein. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010.

With *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, Enrique Arias and Daniel Goldstein propose a major intervention into analyses of Latin American politics, statehood and citizenship, suggesting ‘an alternative framework within which to begin a new discussion of Latin American politics in the context of proliferating violence’ (p. 4). The democratization and economic liberalization of Latin American political systems, institutions and policies have been accompanied by pervasive violence and insecurity, resulting in ‘violent democracies’. Much recent research has attempted to understand this apparent paradox of persistent and escalating violence in the face of the establishment of democratic rule and the on-going extension of citizenship rights. The majority of these political analyses, the editors argue, have resulted in evaluations of the democratic transition as imperfect, incomplete, disjunctive and so on – judgments that implicitly or explicitly take European and North American states as the democratic ideal, as a yardstick against which all others are measured and found wanting. Such binaries of state success and failure are not very useful in explaining the pervasiveness of violence in everyday life. Rather than seeing the proliferation of both state and private violence as an indication of the *failure* of democracy, Arias and Goldstein propose understanding violence as integral to the functioning of democratic governance and institutions in Latin America. The everyday presence of violence is not so much an aberration, as intimately connected to processes of economic liberalization and the extension of formally democratic institutions in the region; it is central to both processes of state formation and of challenges to those processes.

Combining insights from political science and anthropology, *Violent Democracies* connects elections, legal rights and formal political institutions to the lived experience of citizens. Throughout the region, a broad range of state and private actors employ violence to establish, maintain and contest specific forms of lived democracy. The editors analyse these vari-

ous actors in a framework of ‘violent pluralism’ that studies the relations between Latin American states and subnational armed actors. This is a pragmatic, empirically informed approach that points our attention to role of organized, extra-state violent actors (militias, vigilantes, gangs) in establishing social order. It also underlines the fact that these violent organized groups are not only involved in conflict and competition with state actors; they also negotiate and collaborate with them. This approach is outlined in the introduction and conclusion, and applied in eight chapters, authored by contributors from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, and featuring case studies from Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, the Dominican Republic and Brazil. A number of these chapters, such as those by Diane Davis, Mary Roldán, María Clemencia Ramírez and Javier Auyero, provide strong illustrations and elaborations of the main thesis. The other chapters, while providing often harrowing descriptions of police impunity or the power of organized crime, are less tightly linked to the book’s central argument. Todd Landman’s macropolitical comparative analysis might even be taken to contradict it, given his rather teleological typology of political regimes, with Europe and North America on one end and the remaining states ranked lower based on the nature of their formal political institutions and their failure to protect citizen rights.

On the whole, however, *Violent Democracies* presents a coherent, thought-provoking intervention. It provides a welcome challenge to existing analyses, and frames important avenues for future research. It is an indication of the book’s qualities rather than a point of criticism that both the editors’ theoretical framing and various case studies raise a number of additional questions. If state and ‘non-state’ actors are, always and everywhere, entangled through long-standing collaborations, should we still speak of pluralism and of state versus non-state? If gangs, politicians and bureaucrats actively share governmental responsibilities, if vigilantes are formalized and legalized, if perhaps millions of police officers across the region moonlight as private security guards, can we still make clear distinctions between different categories of actors, between public and private violence? Might these symbiotic entanglements, these collaborations, overlaps and blurrings – many framed by neoliberal concepts of public-private partnerships – imply a new type of political formation that is hybrid rather than plural? Another question is whether the type of state formation *Violent Democracies* describes is particular to Latin America. It could well be argued that violence is central to the functioning and contestation of democratic rule not only in postcolonial states in the Global South. In Europe and North America, the proliferation of private security and gated communities,

the violent policing of ethnonational borders and the increasingly authoritarian state suppression of dissent all suggest similar interpretations. In pointing us towards such questions, Arias and Goldstein make an impact on political analyses both in and beyond Latin America.

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– *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth Century Mexico. The Other Half of the Centaur*, edited by Wil Pansters. Stanford University Press, 2012.

For a long time, the questions of violence and public (in)security remained somewhat marginal topics within mainstream scholarly debates on Mexico's political development. This situation has recently begun to change. Starting with rising crime rates during the mid-1990s and accelerated by the more recent escalation of violence that has accompanied Mexico's ongoing 'drug war,' issues of violence and insecurity have moved from the margins to the centre of the academic debate on Mexico's political development. This edited volume distinguishes itself remarkably from many, if not most, related efforts to analyse and explain Mexico's violent present. It does so by moving beyond the analytical limits and blind spots of many other studies that are dominated by a focus on (formal) institutional developments and an overly presentist interest in the question of the 'rule of law' that too often produces descriptive, ahistorical and normatively charged portrayals of Mexico's 'violent democracy' through the lens of what some scholars refer to as 'liberal institutionalism'. In fact, as Pansters argues in his introductory chapter, much of the more recent publications on Mexico's political development have 'been dominated by an influential conceptual framework that privileges changing institutional and non-coercive forms and modalities, thereby (unintentionally) obscuring the harsh realities of a darker Mexico of bullets and blood, one that seems to exist (and to have existed) at a distance, albeit functional from the institutional realities of ballots and legal battles' (p. 8). The major contribution of this edited volume consist in making these 'harsh' everyday violent realities of the 'darker' Mexico visible through a coherent, interdisciplinary scholarly endeavour, guided by a convincing analytical framework, also outlined by Pansters, for the assessment of 'zones of state-making', differentiated along the involved degrees of coercion, actors and practices (pp. 26-32), in twentieth-century Mexico.

The first chapter of the book by Shirk discusses the relationship between the Mexican state and violence from the perspective of the U.S.-Mexican

border from the late eighteenth century to the present, illustrating how internal state formation processes and growing asymmetrical intra-state integration between the two countries historically affected and transformed the manifestations and intensity of violence along the U.S.-Mexican border. The next chapter by Davis analyses the changing patterns of capital city policing in twentieth-century Mexico City, from the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 to the democratic transitional period of the 2000s. In focusing upon changing configurations of the 'police-military-state nexus' (p. 70) during critical episodes of regime transitions in the city, she demonstrates the historical origins of contemporary policing problems as well as the overall and on-going embeddedness of Mexico City policing in national political developments, conflicts and struggles. After that, Gillingham re-examines the *Pax Prúista* and the frequently assumed increasing pacification of post-revolutionary Mexico. In focusing upon the use formal and informal violence by state and non-state actors in Veracruz and Guerrero during the 1940s and 1950s, he illustrates the crucial role of (formal and informal) state coercion in 'establishing what rule the PRI enjoyed across a disorderly countryside' and that 'selective, and generally adroit management of both state and non-state violence was central to that rule's endurance' (p. 111). The contributions by Knight and Serrano both offer a deeper historical interpretation of Mexico's drug violence. While Knight's chapter specifically focuses on the historically changing role of the state (as well as political entrepreneurs) and its relationship with illegal actors, Serrano's chapter focuses on the emergence and reconfiguration of the relationship between illegal economies, violence and the state in post-revolutionary Mexico, demonstrating how the breakdown of a state-regulated drug economy since the 1990s and a transformation of the drug market contributed to an acceleration and privatization of drug-related violence in the country. By providing an ethnographic account of police raids in the San Juan de Dios market in Guadalajara, Aguiar's chapter showcases the ambivalent nature of local policing operations aimed at enforcing a global neoliberal copyright regime. In tracing these operations and by mapping the involved actors and practices, he shows how policing these 'new illegalities' is a highly selective practice, due to an on-going 'exchange of favors and values between state and illegal actors' (p. 161). By contrasting the historically changing forms of violence and union bossism in regulating labour unrest during the 'textile wars' in Puebla in the 1920s and railway conflicts during the late 1940s and 1950s, the chapter by Aguila and Bortz highlights the dynamics of continuity and change in Mexican union bossism, and its overall reliance upon the informal use of 'quasi-legal state violence' (p. 208).

Powell's chapter offers a reassessment of the adaptability of clientelism and its embeddedness in as well as reproduction of physical and symbolic violence in post-PRI Mexico. In contrast to frequently held assumptions regarding an assumed withering-away of clientelist relations during democratic transitions, Powell shows that clientelism as such as well as the violence and coercion that underpin and sustain patron-client relations and 'their regulatory force has intensified as neoliberalization has significantly reordered the political landscape' (p. 213). Along quite similar lines, Gledhill's analysis addresses the impact of state and structural (neoliberal) violence on indigenous communities, as well as upon the frequently highly ambivalent repercussions of these encounters inside the communities themselves. He thus provides an analytical perspective that makes visible the connections between 'the multiple social violences of neoliberal capitalism' and 'the forms of violence that exist within poor communities' (p. 235). In the final chapter, Koonings puts the findings of the different authors into a broader comparative perspective. In doing so, he points out that if there once might have been something like a 'Mexican exceptionalism', those days are definitely over. Far from being spared by the rise of the 'new', predominantly criminal and not so much politically motivated violence, Koonings shows that 'Mexico has arguably acquired a leading position [in terms of the regional unfolding on the "new violence"] in the course of the past decade and a half. In terms of its international reputation, Mexico even surpassed Colombia as the paradigm of drug-related violence that has gone out of control' (p. 273). In sum, Pansters and his contributors make an important and much needed contribution that significantly enriches our understanding of Mexico's violent present.

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– *Police Reform in Mexico. Informal Politics and the Challenge of Institutional Change*, by Daniel M. Sabet. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Even before Enrique Peña Nieto became president of Mexico in December 2012, he announced his intention to found a new national police force modelled after the French national gendarme. If his plan materializes, it will be the newest chapter in a long story of successive reforms of Mexico's police forces since the 1990s. This is not surprising, since the police have been in the eye of the storm of Mexico's security and violence crisis. According to numerous accounts, police forces have been found to be either protecting or working for criminal organizations. Although this occurs at all levels, mu-

municipal police forces have been the most susceptible and criticized. Consecutive governments have reformed the complex policing landscape through reorganizations, new recruitment criteria, screening tests, militarization of police command, etc. It would not be hard to find evidence that most of these efforts have been to little avail.

Daniel Sabet would not agree with this harsh assessment, since the starting point of his study is that the state of affairs of Mexico's police forces renders a mixed bag of two realities: some reforms are successful to a certain degree (e.g. educational levels have increased, training and equipment have improved), but there is also stasis. Sabet's central research question is why so many reform policies have failed to produce meaningful institutional change. Why is it that, despite all the money and political capital thrown at the police forces, they remain resistant to enduring transformations that offset the three key accusations levelled against them: corruption, ineffectiveness and human rights violations?

Sabet's book is a fascinating account of comparative research about the reform efforts of four local police agencies in northern Mexico (Chihuahua City, Hermosillo, Mexicali and Tijuana). Although his work is mainly based on qualitative material (interviews, documents), it also incorporates survey data about other municipalities. His conceptual toolkit is that of the political and policy sociologist interested in the incentives and challenges of institutional change; he organizes and interprets the research material with the help of a range of additional concepts and theories, including, as the subtitle suggests, political culture. A key merit of this book is therefore that it examines police reforms with the help of a broad conceptual framework. Sabet argues that deeply entrenched informal rules and practices of Mexico's political (and social) system impede genuine police reform since they generate two key factors: patronage politics and the absence of effective accountability. Clientelism, personalistic leadership and appointments (of police chiefs e.g.) based on *camarilla* loyalties instead of technical expertise and professional experience, in combination with the constant rotation of public officials, explain why reforms do not stick and cannot engage the systemic roots of corruption and ineffectiveness. Police reforms are always part of the logic of personalistic interests and loyalties. This is an important conclusion, which goes against the influential view that the corruptive capacities of organized crime and the ineptitude of much of the police force itself are the central obstacles to genuine reform. They are important but the crucial factor is politics. Sabet thus refers the challenge of police reform back to those who every three (or six) years brag that they will resolve it.

The book is well structured as it first deals with the challenges within

the police forces themselves (policy design and implementation), and then with the external environment and actors that condition police reform. The latter part constitutes the largest part of the book with chapters on local politics, organized crime, citizens, organized civil society and the federal state. The chapter on local politics convincingly shows that (in)formal rules of municipal governance result in a lack of horizontal accountability and reform continuity. The most successful case studied by Sabet is Chihuahua City, because of policy continuity across administrations (although even here the process may not be irreversible). The interesting case study of organized crime-police relations in Tijuana shows the importance of governmental strategies, the seriousness of robust accountability mechanisms (internal affairs) and the force of organized crime, e.g. to employ violence. A good example of Sabet's broad approach to frustrated reforms is when he involves citizens and shows how they are not only victims but also co-producers of a vicious cycle: 'Corruption and ineffectiveness drive distrust, which inhibits citizens from coming forward with information about criminal activities, and encourages citizens to offer bribes when they themselves are caught violating the law. The consequence is continued ineffectiveness and greater corruption-reinitiating the cycle' (p. 158). I fully subscribe to Sabet's conclusion about the significance of day-to-day corruption, partly driven by ordinary citizens, for explaining the systemic obstacles of police reform. Sabet then asks if organized civil society can help break this vicious circle by encouraging compliance and cooperation with the police and by constructing accountability mechanisms. A measure of success in this regard has been accomplished in Chihuahua and Mexicali. There are indeed interesting examples of citizen observatories, but it is equally important to point to the risks of politicization and personalistic manipulation. The Mexican state has much experience in defusing organized civic counterweights. If the recent history of citizen-controlled human rights committees is anything to go by, Sabet might be pushing his confidence in organized civil society too far. The last empirical chapter examines police reforms implemented by the Calderon administration (2006-2012). While it is interesting to see how Sabet lays out the manifold difficulties encountered by the federal government in carrying them through, it is surprising that the author does not apply the critical perspective of the negative role of personalistic politics to the federal power domain. Too often the president and his cabinet appear as genuine reformers who confront corrupted local police forces and mayors, as technocrats channelling new resources to local government, and as valiant fighters of organized crime who design programmes of police professionalization. This leaves out the weighty role of

informal rules and personalistic interests at that political level as well. The core problem is politics, locally, regionally *and* nationally, which together explain the limited success of reform policies. This should be kept in mind when future ‘dramatic changes, such as dissolving one police force and creating an entirely new one, might in practice amount to little actual reform of how policing is done’ (p. 218). Sabet deserves praise for having written an important book.

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– *Bribes, Bullets and Intimidation: Drug Trafficking and the Law in Central America*, by Julie Marie Bunck and Michael Ross Fowler. University Park: Penn State Press, 2012.

Central America has long been an important narcotics transit zone, notably during the armed conflicts that engulfed the region in the 1980s. Gradually, however, the isthmus turned into a more significant staging ground for drug operations, in large measure due to the growing prominence of Mexican criminal organizations and the law enforcement actions against them. There exists widespread concern that the fragile Central American democracies may be overwhelmed by the corruption and violence associated with drug trafficking. Yet, although the phenomenon has captured the attention of policy-makers, academics and journalists, few systematic studies have hitherto been written on the subject. Political scientists Bunck and Fowler seek to fill this gap by offering a comparative account of the drug trade in Central America. Drawing on extensive primary and secondary sources, *Bribes, Bullets and Intimidation* explores both the contemporary dynamics of this illicit economy and the ways in which states have confronted it. After an initial overview of the inroads Colombian and Mexican cartels made into the isthmus, the volume presents detailed studies of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama. El Salvador and Nicaragua are conspicuously absent from the research owing to a supposed paucity of data. Nevertheless, the work entails a wealth of empirical information, particularly as regards two themes: the role of the state vis-à-vis drug trafficking groups and the nature of transitional societies.

Adopting an interdisciplinary perspective on the relations between states and non-state actors, Bunck and Fowler examine how the Central American nations have dealt with the drug trade. The authors find, contrary to much scholarship that underscores the perceived incapacities of states, that the latter persist and reassert themselves when faced with narcotics trafficking. The country chapters each recount historical developments, consider

bridge-favouring factors – geography, government structures and economy – that impact the drug trade, relations with the United States as well as drug trafficking routes and organizations. While the analysis of country characteristics yields fascinating insights into the socio-economic and political contexts in which narcotics trafficking unfolds, the remainder of the discussion – centring heavily on smuggling methods and law enforcement exploits – is highly descriptive and often excessively detailed. Even so, Bunck and Fowler demonstrate that the Central American nations’ distinctive traits represent costs and benefits for criminal gangs. Costa Rica, for example, constitutes at first blush a puzzling case. With higher levels of development and institutional maturity than its neighbours, Costa Rica seems better equipped to deter drug flows, investigate money laundering, and put perpetrators behind bars. Yet, as elsewhere, its authorities are strained, potential transshipment sites abound, and local collaborators are plentiful. Despite their diversity, the isthmian republics all grant incentives that – inadvertently or not – facilitate, even invite, drug operations. More significantly, the study shows that in the absence of a comprehensive state presence the drug trade has acquired not only national, but also regional variations that require scrutiny.

A broader point to emerge from the discussion pertains to the nature of transitional societies. Once the civil wars and military dictatorships had ended, the Central American nations established electoral democracies, but their transitions have otherwise remained incomplete. Most continue to wrestle with elevated levels of crime and violence as well as social exclusion and inequality. Bunck and Fowler highlight two related problems: the tenuous institutionality and sustained elite influence. Security and justice sector reforms were initiated, but they left behind scores of unemployed individuals with weapons and logistical training. Meanwhile, the newly created law enforcement agencies remained undertrained, underpaid and poorly equipped to confront new criminal challenges. Political, economic and military elites, determined to ensure their impunity for past abuses and corruption, had no incentive to create effective and impartial policing and justice bodies. Hence, they generally thwarted the institutional reforms that were required to build the democratic rule of law. As a result, the actors tasked with the fight against organized crime are poorly prepared to do so, having undergone no cultural transformation and remaining plagued by corruption. Unsurprisingly, this scenario makes the Central American countries attractive targets for profit-minded criminals in search of institutional and legal loopholes.

Bribes, Bullets and Intimidation is an accessibly written and empirically rich study that takes a systematic and historically informed look at drug trafficking under both democratic and authoritarian regimes. The authors are to be commended for tackling a subject that, due to its clandestine nature, poses methodological challenges for anyone wanting to examine it. However, the data are often more than a decade old and do not permit a more up-to-date analysis of the Central American narcotics trade. The omission of El Salvador and Nicaragua is similarly unfortunate, given the important role they have played in regional drug smuggling and the quite substantial pool of information on them. The volume constitutes a starting-point for debates on an important sociological and criminological phenomenon and will appeal to students of Latin American studies and politics, organized crime scholars and lay readers. All the same, there is a patent need for more extensive and current research. Ultimately, Bunck and Fowler remind readers that Central America, squeezed between the main drug supplier and consumer, can do little to impede illicit substance flows and that an alternative to the prohibitionist drug policy may be unavoidable.

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– *Latin American Urban Development into the 21st Century: Towards a Renewed Perspective on the City*, edited by Dennis Rodgers, Jo Beall and Ravi Kanbur. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

This volume explores perspectives on contemporary urban development in Latin America. The book is the result of an academic search for ‘a more systemic engagement with Latin American cities, contending that the time has come to reconsider their unity’ (p. 5). Rodgers, Beall and Kanbur argue that Latin American urban life has increasingly been described in terms of fragmentation and that this bias has had negative ramifications for urban development agendas. They summarize the alternating tendencies in thinking about Latin American cities from a dystopian analysis of informal settlements in Lewis’ work to more utopian visions by Perlman, Castells and De Soto. From the start of this century, works on the empowerment of the urban poor have again been accompanied by pessimistic descriptions of the outcomes of neo-liberalism and the rise of crime and insecurity, for example in the work of Caldeira and Koonings and Kruijt. Instead of the fragmented-city thesis the editors propose a more holistic perspective both in scale and disciplinary scope. The introduction is followed by ten articles divided into a section about urban fragmentation and one about urban reconnection, plus a conclusion. The content of the chapters is briefly out-

lined to explore their value to the overall aim of the book.

The section about urban fragmentation starts with Diane Davis' chapter evaluating crime-reducing policies in Mexico City of the past decade. She foresees social and political conflicts as a consequence of zero-tolerance policies and a lack of local government's accountability and proposes to select more critically the adequate territorial scales for different policy designs. In his excellent chapter on cocaine cities, Ignacio Navarro deducts how fluctuations in the cocaine production in Bolivia have affected urban construction activities. Although cocaine production creates employment, money laundering activities cause inflation of real estate prices. Navarro argues that finding a middle ground between safeguarding (informal) jobs and access to cheap housing for the urban poor is one of the pressing challenges for many Latin American cities. In her ethnographic account of urban mobility, Paola Jirón highlights the limitations of policies to create socially-mixed neighbourhoods. She claims that a discussion about spatial segregation should include time management and the gendered components of (im)mobility: 'women in low-income households are not only "cash poor" but also "time poor"' (p. 95). In a chapter about El Alto, Bolivia, Helene Risør states that poor urban residents were politically successful because they presented themselves not as indigenous people, but as citizens with property rights based on the colonial notion of *vecino*. Dennis Rodgers argues in his contribution on urban democracy that institutional frameworks for participation of the poor often work counter-productive. Based on Caldeira's analysis of the 2002 Master Plan for São Paulo, he demonstrates that participatory planning in São Paulo mainly served the elite and polemically compares this with the 'separate but equal development' policies of the South African apartheid regime.

The section about urban reconnection starts with Lucy Earle's chapter on the Alliance of Housing Movements (UMM) in São Paulo showing how the UMM used the law to change the social set-up of the city. This well-substantiated chapter stresses the intricacies of law compliance and opportunistic law-breaking by municipal authorities and social movements alike. She successfully sustains the book's aim to overcome a geographically reduced vision, demonstrating how low-income groups in a highly unequal society can still find room for manoeuvre. Lissette Aliaga-Linares remarks that farmer markets have gained renewed popularity in western cities, while urban planners in Latin America fail to see the quality of open-air markets. Presenting the exceptional case of Santiago de Chile, where relatively successful attempts have been made to govern open-air *ferias*, her account demonstrates the intertwining of well-functioning public space with the

urban political economy. The five authors of the following chapter compare policies that successfully reduced violence and degradation in Bogotá and Medellín with the unsuccessful attempts in Cali. However, the argument that the trade-off that convinced the elites in Bogotá and Medellín to prefer better infrastructure and lower transaction costs over political influence could not be established in Cali does not yield new insights. The contribution by Cynthia Goytia and others explores access to gas programmes in a poor neighbourhood in Metropolitan Buenos Aires, suggesting that offering access to infrastructure might be a better policy measure to achieve formalization of informal settlements than land-titling projects. Eduardo Lora and Andrew Powell explain in the last empirical chapter a monitoring tool for municipalities that offers Quality-of-Life indices, in which assets of houses and urban locations are valued. This sophisticated system can help local authorities to design counter-segregation policies and tax systems. Rodgers, Kanbur and Beall conclude that Latin American cities should be put ‘in and of itself at the centre of debates’ (p. 261), in order to steer towards a new paradigmatic intersection between geography and politics. They explicitly propose to revive the political economy approach. However, their observation that mobility is what really sets urban life apart from rural settings seems to favour Sheller and Urry’s ‘mobility approach’.

There can be no doubt that this book fills an academic void in Latin American studies, where integrated urban research has been all but abundant. A shared perspective on the workings of urban governance and power inequalities creates coherence. At the same time, holistic views of urban life cannot be achieved without attention for cultural processes, which are hardly addressed. In his pioneering attempt to promote holistic studies of the city, Ulf Hannerz asserted some decades ago that the political economy approach dominated much of the social science research on cities, whereas to do justice to the differentiation within and coherence of the city, the urban system should be studied with an eye for cultural processes and flows that shape social organization. The chapters of Navarro, Jirón and Aliaga-Linares demonstrate that attention for flows and mobility does enable a broader view of the potentialities of urban contexts, which was the principle aim of the book. A mobility-focussed approach could even synthesize political economic and cultural perspectives as Hannerz contended and, as such, open up the aspired pathways towards a new research agenda for urban development; one that includes meaning-giving processes.

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Note

1. Hannerz, Ulf (1980) *Exploring the City: Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York: Colombia University Press.

– *Latin America’s Turbulent Transitions: The Future of Twenty-First Century Socialism*, by Roger Burbach, Michael Fox and Federico Fuentes. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood; London and New York: Zed, 2013.

This book is a welcome and refreshing addition to the by now copious literature available on the ‘pink tide’ of new left governments in Latin America. Concisely, informatively and even-handedly it identifies and analyses three main elements seen by the authors as most influential in shaping the left in the region: ‘confronting US hegemony, social movements, and socialism’ (p. 10). Central to their analyses of these three elements is their Gramscian-grounded concept of *transition*, in which the global context is seen as experiencing ‘an interregnum, a period of turbulence and transition [whereby the] old order is breaking down... [while] the shape of the world to come is unclear and undefined’ (pp. 1-2).

First, US hegemony – meaning the ability to dominate ‘through consensual agreements and arrangements with those under its rule’ (p. 33) – is on the decline, largely due to ‘imperial overstretch’ (p. 31). In Latin America this has manifested itself most notably in the decline of neoliberalism, with the election of a plethora of left governments, the rise of multi-layered processes of regional cooperation, such as UNASUR, CELAC, ALBA and MERCOSUR among others, and the confirmation of China as one of the region’s major economic partners. Nevertheless, while the ‘Colossus of the North [may be] floundering’, it has by no means abdicated ‘its interventionist policies’ (p. 8), with its ‘war on drugs’ in the Mesoamerican region and in Colombia and involvement in coups in Venezuela (2002), Honduras (2009) and Paraguay (2012) to give only a few examples.

Second, with regard to social movements, these are conceptualized in terms of Hardt and Negri’s ‘multitude’ with its emphasis on horizontality, networking and diversity. Hence, while these groups have been important elements in creating the context and capacity for the emergence of the new left governments, key terrains of struggle between them have emerged over government reliance on natural resource extractivism as the basis for growth and a concomitant expansion of the centralized state. But while these are identified as sources of tension with social movements, they are also recognized as key ingredients for the vitality of the new left governments and hence the survival of the entire regional left project, despite recognized risks and limitations. Moreover, the authors sanguinely note that such tensions can be viewed as typical of such a period of transition.

Third, and finally, the authors deal with the role of socialism in the rise of the ‘pink tide’. They recognize that none of the new left governments were elected on an anti-capitalist (as opposed to anti-neoliberal) ticket.

Moreover, as noted, their economic models can be viewed as the ‘Achilles heel of these counter-hegemonic processes’ (p. 156). Nevertheless in chapters on Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil and Cuba, they show how socialism, to greater or lesser extents, is a major guiding light for government policy in each of these countries, informing much innovative policy in terms of collective ownership of the means of production, or in terms of national sovereignty and/or in social policy empowering the poor. These policies – and many of the innovative mechanisms for democratic participation at the grassroots – have opened up important spaces for dialogue on the meaning and practice of socialism at an everyday level.

Socialism then is central to the struggle, but the struggle is not summed up into one between capitalism and socialism. Rather there are ‘a plethora of struggles and confrontations that zigzag across the pages of history; between classic liberalism and post-liberal politics, *extractivismo* and post-development, transnational agribusiness and food sovereignty, patriarchy and feminism, exclusionary educational systems and free democratic centres of learning, nation-states dominated by the descendants of the colonizers and the new pluri-national state’ (p. 158). The struggle therefore is multi-dimensional, evolving and sometimes contradictory. Most importantly it is transitional – emerging from the past, rooted in the present, but facing and shaping the future. It is therefore, a ‘war of position’ in the Gramscian sense, a long-term process of change, where the recognition of diversity within a unity of forces is key to the survival of the overall project.

This book provides incisive critical insights into the state of the left in the region. The authors put into practice one of their key insights – the need to provide critique without undermining unity, which they rightly fear would leave space for ‘the right to strengthen’ (p. 158). In this way, it is both inspiring and realistic in its overall assessment. One of the main ways it achieves this is by giving voice to a wide range of left sources – from grassroots activists to respected academics – most of these from the region itself. This gives it an up-to-the-minute, contemporary feel, providing the general reader access to both cutting edge and more long range analysis. It therefore offers a balance of idealism and realism, making it a refreshing, accessible, informative and original read.

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– *Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion*, by Arnold August. London: Zed Books, 2013.

While much has been written on the structural economic challenges that Cuban socialism faces today, scant attention has been given to the inner workings of its political system. This Cold War hangover has blinded many observers to the possibility of conducting substantial research and sharing scholarly reflection upon Cuban democracy. With the rise of new models of democratic governance throughout Latin America, emphasizing popular participation beyond electoral politics, Cuba can now be studied in comparative perspective. In *Cuba and Its Neighbours*, Arnold August delivers his assessment of the evolution of Cuban democracy, contemplating also the nature and condition of four other American republics. This study is based on more than twenty years of original research conducted on the Caribbean island and a review of scholarly work on democracy produced by North American, European, and Latin American authors.

The book begins, in the first and second chapters, with a conceptual framework that differentiates between the static, US-centric model of democracy and the idea of continuous democratization – or democracy in motion. The first is defined strictly by institutional arrangements and party politics of representation, a process alienating more than half of the population in its electoral exercise. Democratization, on the other hand, allows room for renovation, considering alternative experiments in popular participation and the integration of larger sectors of the population into the process of decision-making. August's idea of democracy in motion requires the observer to think about how much input citizens give to national debates on such issues as production, development and redistribution. This becomes significant if one were to contemplate the popular uprisings witnessed worldwide since 2011, especially the *indignado* movement in Spain and the Occupy movement that rocked the United States. Protesters in these last two countries, inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, took to the streets, in search of new forms of political action by way of seizing public spaces (pp. 11-13). No longer can any country claim to hold a monopoly over the idea of democracy.

Essential to August's theoretical evaluation is the principle of sovereignty and the right of each country to develop its own model of democracy, without the imposition of formulas composed by thinkers of more rich and powerful nations. Taking the Latin American left turn of the past decade as the context for a comparative study in a latter chapter, August likens the concept of democracy to socialism, which in Cuba is 'currently undergoing a

radical update' (p. 3). The two cannot be thought of as inert, but as a 'moving target whose varieties are arrived at by many different paths' (p. 3).

After careful reflection upon how US electoral politics has worked historically and by revisiting the concept 'military-industrial complex' (pp. 21-22), August provides a critique of the superpower's claim to being the homeland of democracy. He builds his analysis by quoting and deliberating upon North American thinkers like Martin Luther King Jr., Errol Sharpe, Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky and Michael Hardt, but also intellectuals like Egyptian Samir Amin, Peruvian Aníbal Quijano and Cuban Thalia Fung Riverón. In this sense, August's work is anything but provincial.

The third chapter, entitled 'Exploring Democracies in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador', may be the book's strongest contribution to the study of comparative politics. During the 1990s Cuba appeared to be isolated and it was easy to dismiss Cuba's state-socialism as an archaic remnant of the Soviet bloc. Now, in light of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution, Bolivia's Indigenous Socialism and Ecuador's Sovereign Fatherland Alliance, the case of Cuba becomes especially relevant to the study of popular democracy. August explores each case beginning with the rise to power of social movements and indigenous groups that sought alternative political, economic and developmental paradigms while debunking Western (neo-) liberalism. The case of Venezuela is the most thoroughly delivered, detailing constitutional reform, and the involvement of social movements in the definition of twenty-first century socialism. What the three Latin American countries clearly have in common with the Cuban experience is the struggle to defend sovereignty in the face of direct US aggression. In this sense, national independence and popular participation in the economic, political and cultural life of the country become the foundations of democracy.

The fourth and fifth chapters offer a review of the development of political institutions and practices since the Cuban revolution of 1959. What follows is a rigorous analysis made on the sixth Cuban Communist Party Congress (2011) and the first Party Conference (2012), which is presented by August as a prolonged exercise of popular will and national consensus regarding the changes found necessary to decentralize production and redefine social property. For the Party Congress, August describes the process of proposal submission and public debate on official documents at the work place, schools and neighbourhood committees. The Party Conference and its preparation was also an opportunity for the people of Cuba to consider the essentials for renovating socialism, confronting bureaucracy, and defining the role of the press and social science. In few cases has the involvement of the masses been so meticulously documented, much less in Eng-

lish, than in this book, which does not lack empirical data to back up the author's favourable position towards the regime. Dedicating an entire chapter (8) to the Cuban parliament and its relation to other organs of popular power, August accurately explains how the municipal, provincial and national organs of popular power interact and what goes on between elections.

The book concludes with some global considerations about the future of democratization and socialism. Cuba is highlighted as a case study of institutional innovation worth considering. What is perhaps distracting from the book is the attention given to dissidents who unremittently dismiss the authenticity of elections and representative bodies in Cuba. On the other hand, with so much disinformation on Cuban politics in the English-speaking world, the need for August's direct confrontation with renowned dissidents from the left and right is perfectly understandable.

Antonio Carmona Báez, University of Amsterdam

– *Bolivia: Processes of Change*, by John Crabtree and Ann Chaplin. London: Zed Books, 2013.

Este volumen aborda cumplidamente lo que se propone, a saber, dar cuenta de la trayectoria del gobierno encabezado por Evo Morales en Bolivia en lo referente a las percepciones y cuanta efectiva mejora hubo para sectores populares en el país, tomando en cuenta que tal gobierno dice ser 'de los movimientos sociales'. El trabajo tiene un par de capítulos que sitúan muy bien la actual coyuntura como resultado de una constante movilización social, una de las características del país, que los autores conocen de cerca. Identifican así, las actuales tensiones que se enfrentan en ámbitos donde esa bases sociales que en su momento apoyaron casi unánimemente la emergencia del MAS, los sectores rurales de tierras altas y bajas, los productores de coca, los mineros y recientes migrantes a El Alto; así como regiones que en su momento se opusieron, como Santa Cruz, el norte Amazónico y el sur chaqueño. En sucesivos breves capítulos los autores describen los cambios de posición política en esos referentes así alineados al inicio del denominado 'proceso de cambio', casi un sinónimo de 'revolución', con ecos de promesas de modificaciones sociales sustanciales e irreversibles. Veremos adelante el plural del título.

Como una gran mayoría de ciudadanos, intelectuales incluidos, el gobierno que se inició el 2006 concitaba grandes esperanzas. Nuestros autores lo saben y sin duda compartieron el entusiasmo, más eso no impide un recuento honesto de las dificultades y tensiones actuales, división entre campesinos e indígenas (telón de fondo del conflicto en el TIPNIS, por ejem-

plo), corrupción, actividades ilegales y sensibilidad al denunciar el machismo agresivo contra las mujeres en ciertos casos dentro las propias organizaciones populares. También dan cuenta adecuadamente de la creciente informalidad y precariedad de los empleos en el Alto y cooperativistas mineros, por ejemplo. De igual modo destacan que para estos y otros sectores emergentes el ‘Vivir bien’ – noción emblemática de cambio de paradigma de desarrollo en el régimen – no tiene configuraciones comunitarias o ecológicas, sino simplemente mejoras en sus condiciones de vida vía mayores ingresos. En esa línea, destacan bien el dilema del gobierno entre los enunciados que se pueden asociar al legado indígena que estaría contenido en la proclama de ‘Estado Plurinacional’ y la vieja pauta extractivista que ha caracterizado la explotación de recursos naturales en Bolivia.

Como su enfoque enfatiza a organizaciones populares y regiones donde, en efecto, hay un ascenso social – concomitante al político –, el volumen no aborda, la cuestión siguiente, aunque siempre está cerca a ello al describir sus problemas. Así, la cuestión del deterioro de la administración de justicia, que en Bolivia siempre ha sido una asignatura pendiente, no tiene el tratamiento que completaría muy bien el panorama trazado. Y es pertinente hacerlo, porque la vigencia de libertades – incluida la política – es un rasgo central de toda democracia contemporánea. En dicha materia, ciertamente la cuestión ha involucionado, y ante los conflictos sociales e intrasectoriales, los roles de policías y fiscales (y aun jueces) no siguen pautas propias de un Estado de Derecho, de universalidad de la norma; que aún en vigencia de justicia comunitaria tiene rasgos de no discriminación. El tema no es menor, y por ello consignamos esa ausencia, digamos la única del meritorio y actualizado volumen que comentamos. Por ello en las elecciones *sui generis* para elegir por voto popular los más altos cargos del órgano judicial, previamente seleccionados en la Asamblea Plurinacional – donde el partido de gobierno tiene la mayoría absoluta – los votos nulos y blancos derrotaron a los válidos. Ese ejercicio se constituyó en la primera derrota electoral del MAS a escala nacional.

Desde luego, ello no impide reconocer que como una de las vertientes de los *procesos* en curso está el más saliente, el proceso de la creciente inclusión de sectores sociales otrora vetados en espacios de poder sobre todo político. Se puede afirmar, en perspectiva histórica, que los gobiernos del MAS que encabeza Evo Morales, han completado el proceso de ampliación de ciudadanía que vigorosamente impulsara la Revolución Nacional de 1952. Y lo hizo de un modo similar, con pocas consideraciones a la construcción institucional – aunque suene paradójico con la noción de ciudadanía – y más acompañado de los ímpetus de específicos sectores sociales

movilizados desplazando a otros y compitiendo desordenadamente – y a veces encarnizadamente – a sus rivales, que fácilmente devienen ‘enemigos’, incluidos antiguos y hasta hace poco aliados. La vía de acceso a la titularidad gubernamental, entonces, insurrección popular o victoria en las urnas electorales, parece más una anécdota, que formas alternas – y acaso excluyentes – de construcción de una comunidad política más democrática y equitativa. Por ello el volumen que reseñamos es serio, pues da cuenta de esas varias direcciones, ritmos y conflictos.

Gonzalo Rojas-Ortuste, CIDES-UMSA, La Paz

– *The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Latin America*, by Raúl L. Madrid. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

This book is a deserving contribution to both our knowledge about the successes and failures of ethnic political parties in a series of Latin American countries, and to the theoretical debate about indigenous parties and politics. The book consists of six chapters and a conclusion, and additionally provides a detailed index on subjects addressed across the various chapters. The first chapter introduces the questions that will be dealt with: the how’s and why’s of indigenous parties in seven countries in the region (Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and less extensively, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Venezuela), their successes or lack thereof, the explanations for those different outcomes, and the impact of those parties on democracy. Additionally, the position the author will defend is introduced: instead of focusing on institutional conditions and reforms, or the decline of traditional parties, or the rise of indigenous self-consciousness and organizations, the author argues that the key factors in explaining their accomplishments are the inclusive ethnic and populist appeals of these parties. Basically, the point is made that ethnic parties – contrary to widespread belief – are not necessarily exclusive, and that indeed inclusion is the crucial factor for success. Inclusive and ethnic border-crossing political appeals can do well, even if they prioritize the interests of the indigenous population, because in Latin America ethnic mixing, *mestizaje* and non-polarized ethnic relations predominate. Such parties, however, also need to include populist appeals. It means that they will need to develop discourses that position the masses against the elites, that reject the establishment, and that talk of redistribution, nationalism and state interventionism in order to attract the non-indigenous, lower-class voters.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 do excellent jobs in reconstructing the emergence of indigenous parties in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, connecting the features of

the respective stories to – the reduced exploratory value of – institutional changes and the loss of prestige of the traditional party system. Rather, the exploratory context is the one of ethnic relations and mixing, of the histories of earlier indigenous parties, and most importantly of the articulation of ethnic and populist appeals (at least, in the cases of the MAS party in Bolivia and the Pachakutik party in Ecuador). Another central issue is the strategy of inclusion that was applied. Here, key features are the range of programmatic themes, the contact with *mestizo* organizations such as those of factory workers, street vendors and urban neighbourhood organizations, and the inclusion of ‘white’ or *mestizo* candidates. For instance, in the case of Bolivia, Madrid concludes that, ‘The efforts to reach out to whites and *mestizos* helped the MAS boost its support steadily in predominantly Spanish-speaking areas...’ (p. 61). In all three cases, the argument is built on both an analysis of the strategies on inclusion and on combining ethnic and populist appeals, and on statistics on voting behaviour amongst various indigenous and non-indigenous sectors of the population. Combined together, they add up to convincing stories. The Peruvian case is of course quite different. Here the focus is on three populist candidates (Fujimori, Toledo and Humala) and the degrees to which they successfully appealed to indigenous voters. As in the more superficially described cases of Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia and Guatemala in chapter 5, here again the emphasis is on the ways in which indigenous appeals combined with inclusive populism account for their success or lack of it in ethnic politics.

Chapter 6 evaluates the contribution of ethnic politics to democracy focusing in the first place on the case of Bolivia – where an indigenous party actually made it to power. Madrid suggests that indigenous politics, in general, expanded and deepened democracy, whereas the populist component did the opposite: ‘The government’s populist policies have undermined horizontal accountability, generated widespread protest, and created growing political polarization.... (It) concentrate(d) power considerably during its tenure’ (p. 183).

The book is a welcome contribution for its analytical quality, wealth of material, and theoretical suggestions. But there are also a few reservations. Although the book addresses demographic data, I still have the feeling that the issue of the percentage of indigenous population per country could have been addressed in more detail – since the author does not explain what electoral result an indigenous party might obtain with *only* the indigenous vote, and this is not a negligible matter. Also, the impression emerges that at times the argument is sustained in a too schematic manner: in all countries the explanatory strength of institutional edifices and reforms are tested, and

found insufficient. In practically all countries the argument of ethnic mixing is used to elucidate the probability of success *as* an ethnic party reaching across ethnic boundaries, so that the point loses its distinctive value as explanation. Connected to this point, the unique and situational features per country are downplayed. For instance, the ways and degrees in which the established political parties were discredited in Bolivia is quite different from the Ecuadorean case. And the degree in which white/mestizo urban professionals and ‘wealthy’ urban indigenous contributed to the triumph of the MAS in Bolivia could have been more prominently addressed – but was not because it would not fit the exploratory scheme. In spite of these reservations, this book should be read by both scholars of Latin American politics and by those interested in ethnic political performance worldwide.

Ton Salman, VU University Amsterdam

– *Intimate Indigenities. Race, Sex, and History in the Small Spaces of Andean Life*, by Andrew Canessa. Duke University Press, 2012.

Visiting Wila Kjarka for the first time as a PhD student in 1989, Canessa relates more than twenty years of fieldwork in this tiny Andean community of just over two hundred people. Wila Kjarka – not the real name of the community – is located in the department of La Paz, Bolivia, at an altitude of 3 km. The community could only be reached by a few hours’ walk from the nearest road to La Paz until under the government of Evo Morales a road was finally built that reached the community. Despite this, Wila Kjarka should not be considered as having been an isolated community. To the contrary, the book deals mainly with how its members are situated within wider regional, national and international networks (p. 11). Canessa is especially concerned with exploring the multiple identities of the Wila Kjarkeños. Outsiders would describe the monolingual Aymara-speaking community as clearly indigenous. However, the residents themselves reject the term and self-identify themselves as *jaqi*, simply meaning people or proper people (p. 5). The book explores the cultural meanings, fluidity, contextuality and relativity of being *jaqi*, indigenous or Indian, their underlying hierarchies and power differentials and their intersection with gender, class, racial and national identities.

In the introduction Canessa explains the use of the word Indian, describes his methodology and methods and gives a classical ‘getting there’ account. He introduces the relationality of identity, the desire for social progress and the relation between sexual desire and race. Chapter one introduces Wila Kjarka, its social structure, its regional context and its identi-

ties by comparing them with a kaleidoscope. Canessa states, 'A slight shift in the kaleidoscopic lens ... and a whole new set of configurations emerges' (p. 37). He doesn't think there is a better way to describe Andean identities than through this metaphor. The introduction is followed by seven chapters and a postscript. The variety of its chapters allows the book to be read in different ways. It has many aspects of a classical ethnography with dense descriptions of daily life and lived experiences. It takes the reader from the practices and rituals surrounding birth, marriage, death and ancestral spirits (chapter 4) to the threats of the fat-eating Kharisiri (chapter 5), the functioning of schools (chapter 6), marital relations, domestic violence (chapter 7) and the importance of military service for manhood (chapter 8). Canessa relates all these themes eloquently to the processes of identity constructions, personhood, race, being jaqi and not a *q'ara* (a term used for white people meaning literally 'peeled'). As indigenous identities are based on the sense that present-day injustices have their roots in the injustices of the past (p. 32), Canessa offers two perspectives on the history of Wila Kjarkeños; the first based on Western historiography and the second on Wila Kjarkeños oral history (chapters 2 and 3). This approach gives the book a profound historical basis.

Canessa relates in detail about his work as an anthropologist, the little occurrences during the many continuous months he spent in the field, the interviews he held and the friendships he developed with the Wila Kjarkeños. This turns the book into a personal narrative of the anthropologist at work, clearly showing the process of data collecting and the personal involvement and investments the anthropologist makes. The writing art of Canessa is shown by the fact that he has found a good balance between this personal account of his involvement and the necessary analytical distance towards the Wila Kjarkeños. And last but not least, the book is very timely as the author in the postscript analyses the importance of the policies of the indigenous president Evo Morales for Wila Kjarkeños and summarizes the transformations the community has undergone since his election in 2006. One of the most important conclusions that the reader can draw from this part of the book is that finally the inhabitants of Wila Kjarkeños can improve their life as residents of Wila Kjarkeños. The irrigation programme improving the villagers' produce and the new road connecting the community to markets has made a cash income possible. Electricity has arrived in the village and cell phones have become the anthropologist's new wakeup call (p. 288-289). These new developments have allowed the villagers to reach some social mobility within their own community instead of having to migrate to a city and obtain a more urban lifestyle and identity. In all, the book is a

splendid example of how longitudinal fieldwork highly improves our anthropological understanding of the dynamics of change.

The narrative and debating style of the book opens up much for the reader to think about. In his endeavour to be all-embracing and all-inclusive, Canessa says it all, and convincingly, too. He gives many perspectives, lets many voices speak, tells many case histories, all in great detail. But in the end the reader tends to feel a bit overwhelmed and in need of some guidance. What is Canessa's conclusion about twenty years of fieldwork? Each chapter ends with a few summarizing words, but instead of a firm concluding chapter the author has chosen to write a post script. However interesting the post script is, the lack of solid conclusions feels like an omission. On the other hand, perhaps twenty years of intense and engaged fieldwork is just too much to distil into one chapter of conclusions to guide the reader. In any case, it is a wonderful book for anyone interested in Bolivia, Andean culture, Aymara people, ethnicity, fieldwork experiences or anthropology in general. Just read it and let yourself be amazed.

Annelou Ypeij, CEDLA, Amsterdam

– *¡Américas Unidas! Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-1946)*, edited by Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch. Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2012.

Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch are two of today's leading experts on the history and workings of the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), a federal agency established by Franklin D. Roosevelt to bolster Good Neighbour cultural and economic ties between the United States and Latin America and insure hemispheric solidarity during World War II. Their co-edited volume is an important and timely addition to discussions of the OIAA as an example of the United States' first full-scale effort at cultural diplomacy. Building their long-standing contacts with other academic specialists, the editors have succeeded in bringing together a collection of engaging, informative and well-written commentaries that analyse the agency's work in motion pictures, print and broadcast media, the arts, as well as in fields such as public health.

The editors' incisive introduction provides a historical context for the individual studies and addresses recent debates about the means and ends of public diplomacy and initiatives like the OIAA, which today are described in terms of soft power. However, the editors also call attention to the agency's oftentimes hard edge approach to cultural exchange – an exchange that, depending on the circumstances, could deliver a body blow to a na-

tion's economy. Depriving the Argentine movie industry of film stock and access to profitable Hollywood movies is one example of the economic hardball that the OIAA was willing to play to show its dissatisfaction with Argentina's neutrality during the war. As Uwe Lübken's shows in his essay on the Nazi threat in Latin America, given the 1936 non-interventionist agreement signed by all the Americas, the OIAA's 'cultural game' became an important means for the U.S. to continue to exercise its power and influence in the hemisphere.

What forms did that influence take? As Pennee Bender notes, the OIAA invested heavily in 16mm educational films to teach Latin Americans about the 'American way of life' and to instruct U.S. audiences about neighbours to the south. Similarities were touted over differences among the twenty-one republics with emphasis on the modern and progressive aspects of hemispheric life. While the 16mm project was under way, the OIAA sent goodwill ambassadors Walt Disney and Orson Welles to Latin America to meet people and make movies. Catherine L. Benamou analyses the different strategies of the two directors. While Disney made colourful cartoon features and shorts that charmed audiences with funny and endearing characters like Zé Carioca, Welles took to the streets of Rio de Janeiro to film carnival and made his way to the impoverished Northeast to recreate an epic journey on a raft by four fishermen. Disney's future 'magic kingdom' was secured because of his successful alliance with the OIAA/ RKO Studios and other war-time agencies, whereas RKO cut Welles's funds for his documentary *It's All True* because of his focus on poor, dark-skinned Brazilians – an emphasis that also displeased Brazilian president-turned-dictator Getúlio Vargas, who preferred to project an image of Brazil as white and middle-class.

José Luis Ortiz Garza's essay is a compelling account of the OIAA's investments to modernize the Mexican press, and its questionable tactics to win over resistance and gain influence, including threats to cut off the nation's paper supply. Gisela Cramer examines in detail the agency's attempts to influence the Argentine airwaves in the face of resistance to certain OIAA programming that was unpopular with local audiences. She shows that, ironically, the battle for Argentine radio dominance came down to a struggle not between the Axis and Allied powers, but rather between the OIAA radio division and the BBC, which was losing ground to U.S. programming. In her essay on Brazil, Ursula Prutsch examines the extent to which the OIAA served the nationalist project or *brasilidade* of Vargas, who negotiated the construction of the Volta Redondo steel mill and investments in public health in exchange for U.S. naval and air bases in the

Brazilian Northeast and access to rubber in the Amazon Basin. Several of the articles address the work of the agency's numerous regional coordination committees, whose membership was largely composed of U.S. businessmen who lived in Latin America. In his essay, Thomas M. Leonard provides important and little-known information on these committees in Central America and their use of mass media and special public relations projects to promote goodwill in the region. Catha Paquette's article comments on OIAA traveling exhibits of U.S. and Latin American art to forge better hemispheric relations; although there were differences of opinion within the agency about the desirability of showing modern urban images of Latin America over rural indigenous ones, the OIAA exhibits attracted large audiences both north and south and were helpful in demonstrating that the U.S. had interests beyond those associated with business and industry.

¡*Américas Unidas!* is an impressive work of scholarship and essential reading for specialists and students interested in U.S.-Latin American relations, World War II, the culture industry and foreign diplomacy. Although the book would have benefitted from an index, its availability in both English and Spanish-language versions (Madrid: Iberoamericana) is a boon for its many prospective readers.

Darlene J. Sadlier, Indiana University-Bloomington

– *How a Revolutionary Art became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State*, by Mary Coffey. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

Aunque en México el término *muralismo* suele remitir al arte público desarrollado en la década de 1920, cuando arte y gobierno parecían convergir en intereses y acciones, el apoyo sistemático del Estado federal a los artistas ocurrirá, en realidad, mucho más tarde, entre 1940 y 1968, principalmente. La periodización propuesta en este trabajo abre una veta de investigación al considerar al Maximato (1929-34), no como el fin de un ciclo (del muralismo revolucionario), sino como un punto de partida para un periodo y un tema menos estudiado que podría llamarse 'Muralismo Revolucionario Institucional'.

No se cuenta la historia de la conversión de los murales más conocidos de Palacio Nacional o de San Ildefonso en íconos solidificados de la retórica nacionalista postrevolucionaria. Se trata de otro conjunto de obras que desde su concepción misma fueron pensadas para exhibirse en tres museos particularmente importantes por su riqueza material y por su función como vitrinas del Estado: el Palacio de Bellas Artes (1934-1960, Capítulo 1), el

Museo Nacional de Historia (1948-1969, Capítulo 2) y el Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia (1963-1965, Capítulo 3).

Cada capítulo inicia con una cita de Octavio Paz, que sintetiza la tensión que se analizará. En el primero, el objetivo es mostrar cómo el muralismo se convirtió en una especie de arte sacralizado que, según este intelectual, el público devoto contempla como si fueran imágenes religiosas. La autora sitúa ese tránsito con la entrada de Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros y Tamayo, al proyecto artístico de Bellas Artes. El segundo, reconstruye las condiciones que posibilitaron la conjunción de intereses entre el gobierno alemanista y los artistas (González Camarena, Orozco, Siqueiros y O'Gorman) en el Museo Nacional de Historia: ambos grupos habrían coincidido, aunque por razones distintas, en su desinterés por seguir pintando las paredes de los edificios públicos. El último capítulo, se propone analizar qué sucede cuando el arte mural se desliga de su función crítica. El reducido rol que tuvieron los artistas en el desarrollo de la museología del Museo de Antropología ejemplifica la crítica de Paz a la cultura de la pirámide. En los tres se articulan el contexto político y artístico de la época, con una descripción de la institución museística en cuestión, un análisis formal de las obras y los debates ideológicos entre los actores involucrados.

El eje transversal más evidente es el título del libro: el paso de un arte revolucionario a una cultura oficial y de un 'arte para el cambio' a una tecnología de poder. Otros procesos menos aparentes permiten concatenar estos tres capítulos. La evolución artística que va del realismo social al simbolismo abstracto y que se acompaña de un desplazamiento ideológico – del socialismo o comunismo a la democracia liberal – así como de una disminución progresiva de la experimentación y creatividad artísticas. En lo que respecta al papel de los artistas, aparece también una gradiente que va de mayor a menor intervención en la concepción misma del museo. Si en Bellas Artes los artistas buscan transformar el espacio mismo a través de la pintura, en el Museo Nacional de Historia esta apuesta solo será retomada por Siqueiros y no aparecerá en absoluto en el Museo de Antropología, en donde la obra artística servirá de mera decoración. Los artistas pasan de un museo de arte a uno de historia y luego a uno de antropología. Aunque fueran proyectos centrales para los gobiernos que los promovieron, ¿estas dos evoluciones, no muestran un proceso de marginación paulatina y discreta de los artistas, como parte de los dispositivos que el Estado utilizó para su propia puesta en escena? ¿Influyó en esto la creciente importancia de los medios masivos de comunicación, grandes ausentes del relato de Coffey?

Por último, la producción artística en el Palacio de Bellas artes estuvo atravesada de conflictos, tanto personales como formales e ideológicos en-

tre todos los participantes. En el Museo Nacional de Historia, estos antagonismos se reducen a la disputa entre Siqueiros y O’Gorman y están ausentes del trabajo artístico realizado para el Museo de Antropología. Así, el arte no solo se volvió ‘cultura oficial’ sino que dejó de ser espacio de confrontación, para convertirse en un espacio de consenso y aceptación.

La riqueza informativa de este volumen – ampliamente ilustrado, con reproducciones de alta calidad- revela estas y otras líneas analíticas. Quedaría pendiente una mayor distancia entre el objeto estudiado y el análisis de la autora pues paradójicamente, el arte mural va ocupando cada vez menos lugar en los capítulos del libro, de la misma manera en que esta forma de expresión parece haber sufrido una pérdida de valor dentro de los dispositivos de poder entre los años 1930 y 1960. ¿Se debió esto simplemente a aspectos formales o de políticas culturales? ¿Hay un vínculo entre esta pérdida de riqueza en el arte y la consolidación de un estado autoritario y presidencialista? Para responder, faltaría una reflexión más profunda sobre la articulación entre producción artística y formación del Estado, procesos que a veces corren en líneas paralelas en vez de aclarar cómo se determinan entre ellos.

Paula López Caballero, CERI (Sciences Po-CNRS)

– *Sugar, Slavery, Christianity and the Making of Race*, by Mark Edelman Boren. Caribbean Studies Press, 2013.

This is at once a thought-provoking and profoundly disappointing book. Presented under an ambitious title suggesting a wide-ranging intellectual synthesis, *Sugar, Slavery, Christianity and the Making of Race* eventually has much less on offer than this reader at least would have hoped for. Apart from a short Introduction and Epilogue, this short book has six chapters which do not really hold together even if they deal with the same overarching subject from different angles. The first three chapters discuss the origins and workings of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and of the Caribbean sugar revolution. As the rest of the book, these chapters are highly readable, but quite arbitrary in their use of examples given and sources cited – with little recent historical scholarship discussed at all. Mark Edelman Boren comes up with strong and partly convincing statements, but in my opinion continues to push the point beyond the point of credibility. Thus, to give just this one example, enslavement and the middle passage may be seen as instruments of industrial dehumanization, but then again the extent to which such dehumanization was successful is widely debated among historians, and Boren’s apodictic conclusion on the success of this policy are not presented with convincing empirical substantiation.

In the next two chapters Boren discusses the role of Christianization in American slave societies, particularly in the period around Emancipation, and cultural legacies. Again, he makes some good points, stressing how conversion to Christianity was often part and parcel of a new disciplinary policy aiming to keep the enslaved and their descendants in increasingly 'racially' defined constraints. But the empirical and historiographical substantiation is weak once more, and Boren shows little awareness of the significant diversity within the slavery regimes of the Americas. By then it also becomes irritating to the reader that all kinds of arguments previously made about Caribbean slavery are now used to explain racism in North America and its persistence in the contemporary United States. The same kind of argumentation pervades the fifth chapter, discussing present-day stereotypes about African American culture and ending with the conclusion that 'we are still disciplined and guided by the legacies of the mechanisms introduced with the rise of sugar slavery over three hundred years ago' (p. 136) – a statement probably inspired by postcolonial theory but nowhere convincingly pinpointed, and in this reader's opinion too broadly defined to make much sense at all.

The final essay – for in the end the book is more a series of essays than a monograph – belongs to the scholarly field of Borne himself, who teaches in the Department of English at the University of North Carolina. The analysis of American poetry from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is interesting and testifies to the author's professional skills. The Epilogue gives Borne the platform to be most explicit about what his ideals are and why he wrote this short book. He talks about his 'ethical responsibility' as a teacher trying to make sense of 'the legacy of bondage, our imperialist past, and issues of race [that] are clearly still among the biggest challenges facing the contemporary world' (pp. 169-170). I sympathize with all of that, and on reading his book I got the idea that Borne may be a wonderfully engaging teacher to his classes. But then again, as much as I would have liked to have such progressive and committed professors when I was studying history, even then I would have been deeply sceptical about statements such as 'identity and luxuries *always come at the expense of someone else*' (p. 172, italics in the original). Having spent a few decades studying history and at the same time trying to establish how we can connect the present to the past, I have only grown more suspicious about well-meant but at best suggestive and surely ill-substantiated efforts to use the present for contemporary objectives, no matter how much I may share these ideals.

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