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BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

The Latin American Left in the Twentieth Century

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This essay reviews the following works:

La desmesura revolucionaria: Cultura y política en los orígenes del APRA. By Martín Bergel. Lima: La Siniestra Ensayos, 2019. Pp. 384 paperback. ISBN: 978-612-47812-4-7.

Mexico, 1968: Constellations of Freedom and Democracy. By Susana Draper. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. Pp xvi + 251. $26.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781478002499.

El alborotador de Centroamérica: El Salvador frente al imperio. By Héctor Lindo Fuentes. San Salvador: UCA Editores, 2019. Pp xvi + 308. $15.00 paperback. ISBN: 9789996110603.

Uruguay, 1968: Student Activism from Global Counterculture to Molotov Cocktails. By Vania Markarian. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. Pp xx + 230. $29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780520290013.

Global 1968: Cultural Revolutions in Europe and Latin America. Edited by A. James Mcadams and Anthony P. Monta. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2021. Pp xvi + 517. $45.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780268200565.

The Rebel Scribe: Carleton Beals and the Progressive Challenge to US Policy in Latin America. By Christopher Neal. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2022. Pp. vii + 390 $32.99 paperback. ISBN: 978-0761873105

Unintended Lessons of Revolution: Student Teachers and Political Radicalism in Twentieth-Century Mexico. By Tanalís Padilla. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. Pp. x + 376. $28.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781478014799.

Stories That Make History: Mexico through Elena Poniatowska's *Crónicas*. By Lynn Stephen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021. Pp. viii + 328. $27.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781478014645.

This City Belongs to You: A History of Student Activism in Guatemala, 1944–1996. By Heather Vrana. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. Pp xx + 325. $34.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780520292222.

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Making the Revolution: Histories of the Latin American Left. By Kevin A. Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp xvii + 302. $29.24 paperback. ISBN: 9781108439251.

The ten books reviewed here—eight monographs and two symposia—all deal with the Latin American Left in the twentieth century. I discuss each individually—in roughly chronological order—before offering some general comments.

Lindo-Fuentes's *El alborotador de Centroamérica* is a model monograph: clear, original, and well researched. Addressing the domestic politics and foreign relations of early twentieth-century El Salvador—the "trouble-maker of Central America," as a US representative commented (iii)—the author draws on fifty-seven newspapers and seventeen archives, including El Salvador's Interior Ministry (which attests to the state's surveillance of city lowlife: gamblers, criminals, jailbirds, and prostitutes) (21). Lindo-Fuentes shows how domestic politics interacted with international relations—both the key bilateral relation with the US and the shifting multilateral quadrille danced by the Central American republics. He describes the collective actors involved, stressing the role of urban artisans (shoemakers, carpenters, tailors, bakers, and printers: literate, concentrated in the towns, keen on education, plugged into public affairs, and intensely patriotic), as well as students, street vendors, and women, including schoolteachers and San Salvador's feisty market traders (ix, 8–9, 13–14, 17–18). Provincial populations made their voices heard, too, and although ethnicity proves elusive, photographic evidence suggests indigenous as well as mestizo political involvement.

This broad politicization was sustained by night schools, conferences denouncing the evils of alcohol and American imperialism, contested elections, and grand patriotic fiestas, such as the 1911 independence centenary (a much bigger event than the tepid bicentenary of 2011; see pp. 2–3). News was disseminated by a lively popular press and orally—"en voz alta"—in open public meetings (6, 23). Political elites—whose convoluted maneuverings are carefully analyzed—courted these nascent popular associations: President Araujo is depicted as a precocious "populist" (99–101), and activists forged fraternal links with foreign counterparts while feting foreign orators—like the Argentine Manuel Ugarte—who came to spread the antigringo gospel (73–74, 83, 99).

El Salvador thus displayed a keen nationalism: a sentiment stoked by historical memories of earlier triumphs over gringo filibusters and recent US interventions in the isthmus: the 1903 secession of Panama and the "invasión yanqui" of Nicaragua in 1912 (vi, chap. 3). El Salvador led the opposition to the US (hence its "trouble-maker" title), allied with Costa Rica and Honduras and in opposition to Nicaragua—then a US client state. Its leaders pursued the dream of Central American Union, which their liberal predecessors had championed. They failed: the isthmus was too fragmented, nationalism too strong, and the US too powerful. And the leaders themselves were ambivalent: public opinion favored resistance to US hegemony, but political incumbents, needing American political and commercial support, feared offending the US. So they remained studiously ambivalent: nationalist for home consumption, pro-American in their backroom diplomacy (a stance familiar in twentieth-century Mexico) (xiii, 111). But nationalism was a fact of political life: El Salvador was—in Manuel Gamio's words—a *patria forjada*, a genuine nation-state whose people saw themselves as members of a vividly "imagined political community." Indeed, support for US intervention surfaced not among the uneducated plebs but the well-to-do patricians: "my numerous friends and acquaintances, some of the best people in El Salvador," an American described them, "in whose opinion Central American revolutions would become things of the past if these countries came under a US protectorate" (87). American representatives—both well-informed observers and meddlesome actors—were well aware of the force of nationalism, reporting hostile reactions to US policy

(Chalmers Johnson's "blowback") (x, 91). The US-Salvador relationship, though strikingly unequal, was not one of top-down imposition: popular political pressure—"subaltern agency," perhaps—had to be reckoned with.

Martín Bergel is an established historian of Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA): the pan–Latin American movement founded and led—imperiously and tenaciously—by Haya de la Torre from its creation in 1924 to his death in 1979. Bergel's latest work addresses APRA's early years, when during the Leguía dictatorship, its leaders were scattered, living footloose lives in Europe and Latin America, preaching the *aprista* gospel, busily corresponding with one another, leaving an ample archive of letters for Bergel to exploit. The Bolsheviks were a similar bunch of peripatetic, letter-writing exiles; but there the similarity ends. APRA's ideology—*indigenista*, nationalist, anti-imperialist, and increasingly anti-Marxist—was, for all its appeal, a loose doctrine, lacking the rigor and originality of Marxism (no APRA ideologue has the intellectual status of Lenin or Bukharin); and, of course, the Bolsheviks—"five Russians who shook the world," in Haya's words (113)—seized power and ruthlessly pursued their goals, inspiring fear, admiration, and emulation. APRA, having briefly (1930–1932) flourished as a populist party in Peru, endured thirteen years of repression—the "great clandestinity" (305)—which was only briefly relaxed after 1945, before repression resumed.

La desmesura revolucionaria focuses on the 1920s, when APRA's leaders—chiefly Haya and his key collaborators, Manuel Seoane, Luis Heysen, and Luis Alberto Sánchez—pinballed from place to place, spreading the word, particularly to eager academic audiences (Argentina, fount of the 1918 University Reform movement, where anti-Americanism went down well, was a favored destination). Haya settled in Oxford, maintaining his frenetic correspondence while benefiting—he says—from the city's lively Marxist *ambiente* (clearly, things have changed in Oxford since the 1920s). Sánchez—who gets a whole chapter—was an inveterate traveler (as well as a drinker, womanizer, and name-dropper); his life history was one of "journeys, airports, lunches, hotels and cafes," which included prolonged lecture tours in the US and thirteen trips to Paris. So this is a tale of a few cosmopolitan activists, recounted on the basis of their own correspondence and publications: sources that, though useful, are replete with "elogios mutuos" and bullish self-promotion. The reader rather wearies of "huge crowds … strenuous applause.. enthusiastic vivas" and other manifestations of popular acclaim (147, 175). In contrast, the mass politics of APRA—a Peruvian story—is ignored, bar an interesting chapter concerning the newspaper *La Tribuna* and—in a brief coda, far removed from the Parisian Left Bank and Oxford's dreaming spires—the *canillitas*, the child newspaper vendors who hawked the paper on the streets of Lima (253–292, 303–320).

It is a repetitive story. As Bergel admits, these chapters have all been previously published and scarcely revised for republication (17, 24). So this is not a coherent new monograph; it is a plateful of *refritos*—indeed, one chapter (61–86) has appeared in three previous versions, so it's a *rererefrito*. Particular dates, events, and observations keep recurring: the birth of APRA, the brainchild of the young Haya; the exiled Haya, a "real writing machine" (51, 76); the eleven lectures given in twenty days in Panama (42, 72). Quotations also recur: the *apristas* were so few, Haya joked—a rare moment of humor from the great leader—that "the party could fit on a sofa" (78, 104). Julio Antonio Mella twice hails the *apristas* as an "unbreakable phalanx" combatting Latin America's 'petty tyrants and despots'(179, 219). A half page of Seoane's memoirs is quoted (184–185), only to reappear eighteen pages later. What were originally freestanding essays, now that they're cohabiting in one volume, reveal their close family resemblances. Hence, the book is less than the sum of its parts. Reading individual chapters can be informative, but plowing from cover to cover yields diminishing returns.

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Tanalís Padilla, the author of an important book about Rubén Jaramillo's fatal struggle against Mexico's *priísta* state,[1] addresses a related topic: student teachers and radical activism in the 1940s through 1980s. It's a theme close to her heart—she grew up in rural Mexico, in "a Marxist household," her mother being a teacher—so "the topic of this book picked me as much as I picked it" (ix). The choice was tragically timely, since in 2014, forty-three trainee teachers from the Ayotzinapa Escuela Normal died in a mass killing. The most egregious political massacre in Mexico since Tlatelolco (1968), the event generated extensive comment, speculation, and outrage, as well as a long, lame politico-legal process that muddied already-murky waters while providing immunity for the perpetrators. *Unintended Lessons* traces the school's long history, providing a valuable historical backdrop to what are too often snapshot, sensationalist accounts of the massacre.

The book is well researched, based on extensive primary sources and fifty interviews with former students. These add graphic color while lending a partisan quality. "I have chosen," Padilla writes, "to privilege … radical voices"; and *normalista* accounts—frequently of events long past—are, she concedes, "often contradictory, partial and usually romanticized" (16–17). The story—from the 1910 revolution to the neoliberal 1980s—is long and complicated, involving educational policy, student activism, and the broader political environment. Though richly informative, the account is sometimes bewildering in its complexity and might have benefited from some clearer signposts along the way; it halts, rather abruptly, with the neoliberal turn and the 1994 Chiapas revolt, offering no considered conclusion.

Thirty-five teacher-training schools were set up in the 1920s and 1930s, tasked with providing personnel for the expanding school system and mounting an ambitious politico-cultural mission: to educate and uplift Mexico's campesinos, emancipating them from clerical influence (which was real enough; 59, 85) and turning them into progressive, productive, citizens. The campesino—a student essay explained (52)—was like "a caterpillar that carries within it a butterfly … that will take swift flight" when exposed to the benign influence of "progressive" education. More prosaically, schools provided career opportunities while enabling some ambitious *maestros* to become political bosses. Since the 1980s, as the Mexican miracle fizzled out and lawlessness flourished, teacher training still offered poor kids an alternative to emigration or a life—nasty, brutish, and short—of crime: as one put it, "it was the *normal* or working for a drug cartel" (42).

Like the accompanying land reform, the schools flourished in the 1930s but fell out of favor as the regime shifted to the right after 1940, conciliating big business and the church, cutting education spending, purging radical teachers, and abolishing the "socialist" curriculum (35, 68–69, 71, 76). However, as the population boomed, the schools survived and expanded. The students' corporate organization, the Federación de Estudiantes Campesinos Socialistas de México (FECSM), struggled to defend their interests in the face of state indifference or hostility, deploying a variety of "weapons of the weak"—strikes, demonstrations, bus hijackings (177–178). Although student protest fed into broader anti–Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) activism, it began close to home, with "collective action [that] … secured the basic material needs for their institutions' survival and reproduction" (8, 119–121, 176). In contrast to the "Old Left"—which stressed working-class mobilization, revered the Soviet Union, and "privilege[d] structure over agency"—the "New Left" recruited students and campesinos, admirers of the Cuban Revolution, who "believed the conditions for revolution should be made rather than awaited" (7, 87). To this end, students "went to the people," seeking alliances with workers and peasants. The results were disappointing. In Mexico, as elsewhere in Latin America, student "vanguardism" proved illusory (187). Armed insurrection—attempted by rural teachers in Chihuahua in the 1960s—ended in disaster (139–164). The cult of the Cuban

[1] Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

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Revolution continued to win converts (even as the Cuban regime descended into authoritarianism), but in Mexico, as in Bolivia, armed insurrection failed, not least because both countries had experienced popular revolutions while incumbent regimes, for all their faults, enjoyed greater legitimacy than Batista's oppressive kleptocracy.

Student mobilization that focused on educational issues and espoused peaceful protest achieved some success, prefiguring the major protests of 1968 (179, 198–202). But mobilization was brutally cut short by the Tlatelolco massacre. Padilla detects—perhaps optimistically—a "sense of renewed student power" after 1969 (218–219). But in a context of government scare-mongering and co-optation (the twin tactics favored by President Echeverría), gains were scant (235, 241). Some radicals, stubbornly clinging to the "mystique" of guerrilla war and the cult of "heroic masculinity," favored insurrection, thus incurring a third official response: harsh repression (229–230). During the ensuing "dirty war," Padilla reckons, twenty-nine guerrilla groups were active, but with a membership of fewer than two thousand, their efforts to topple the PRI were costly failures (225). The most successful guerrilla, Lucio Cabañas's Party of the Poor, enjoyed *normalista* support in Guerrero, but its success derived from its deep popular roots in a state mired in poverty and bossism (213, 221, 227). Official rhetoric still harped on the "missionary" role of teachers: one of the many gaps between *priísta* words and deeds that widened through the 1950s and 1960s (11, 38). Not until President Salinas's neoliberal turn in the 1980s did *priísta* rhetoric—exemplified by the new neoliberal school textbooks—catch up with changing politico-economic reality (244). Like other dissident groups, the *normalistas* sought to close the gap and recover some of their old radical élan: hence the ubiquitous campus murals depicting Marx and Engels, Lenin and Che; even, in the remote Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, one of a severe-looking Rosa Luxemburg (39–41, 128).

Student radicalism was vilified by the government and conservative opinion: student activists were seen as "agitators, subversives and, more recently, pseudostudents or hooligans" (4, 72). Sex education and coeducation were Marxist tools to inculcate immorality—even to promote abortion (73–74). Most of this was scaremongering. However, allegations of "agitation" reflected *normalista* activism, while the "pseudostudent" charge referenced the role of *porristas* (thugs) and "professional" students, whose educational careers were prolonged by opportunistic politicking rather than resitting for examinations.[2] And given the chronic problems of Mexican schooling—unqualified teachers, "staggeringly low rates of elementary school completion," and the "notoriously corrupt" leadership of the massive teachers union (10, 94, 103, 123)—the claim that "unqualified teachers bore responsibility for the nation's educational shortcomings" contained some truth (9).

Padilla's economic analysis is slightly shaky. The Mexican "economic miracle"—the sustained growth of 1954–1976—was not an "enormous economic windfall" (97). It didn't promote equality, but it did raise living standards, including literacy and longevity, for most Mexicans. The real blow to living standards came later, when the oil boom collapsed in the 1980s. Although the political story is well told, the style sometimes falters. The normal schools "were enshrined with an air of poetic justice" (5). Political consciousness is "expansive, contradictory and contingent" ("contingent" may be fashionable, but what does it mean?). The term *utopia*(*n*/*nism*) is deployed rather casually (another fashionable tendency) (63, 64). Having criticized the notion of a *priísta* "dictablanda" for embodying a "false dichotomy," Padilla produces a fair summation of what "dictablanda" was: "a regime that was both staunchly repressive and remarkably flexible" (14–15). The—"rather bold"—notion of a "long Cold War," stretching from the Mexican Revolution into the twenty-first century and "resulting (not) from US-Soviet rivalry but … from local historical dynamics in connection with global events" (10–11) seems to drain *Cold War* of its

[2] Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).

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conventional meaning. These quibbles aside, this is a well-researched and important study, which deserves careful reading.

Kevin A. Young's *Making the Revolution: Histories of the Latin American Left* is a diverse symposium, covering ten countries. Critiques of the Left, Young argues, often highlight its dogmatism, sectarianism, and "class reductionism" (1–2). But—enter the sober, chin-stroking professor—many leftists were also "flexible, self-reflective and open to critique"; they promoted "bottom-up" activism, including "women and indigenous people"; and leftist mobilization was—no surprise—a "contested historical process." More boldly, Young asserts that "these stories … hold important lessons for people struggling for emancipation" today (3).

To his credit, Young defines the Left rather than assuming it's a self-evident truth; and his definition goes beyond formal party labels and identifies the quest for equity (economic, political, domestic) as the key criterion, thus admitting a wide range of groups—women, Afro-descendants, indigenous people—whose activism is premised on "identity" as well as class (4). Of course, this is no revelation: a monster footnote (5) lists studies that make this point and address multiple motivations. So, the Left is a broad church, sheltering a diverse congregation, singing from different hymn sheets.

To make sense of this, Young bravely ventures a basic chronology (9–11): the aftermath of the Russian Revolution; the years of Popular Frontism, 1935–1959; the impact of the Cuban Revolution; and the "renewed revolutionary ferment concentrated in Central America" after 1970. The benchmarks are chiefly international and imply common experiences across Latin America. While introductions should provide such overviews, the resulting problems are, in this case, fairly obvious. Young rightly stresses that leftists did not slavishly follow foreign ideologies but adapted them to local circumstances, in which case the international chronology looks somewhat suspect. Mexico doesn't fit well: the Mexican Revolution preceded the Russian; there were no "large-scale revolts by workers and peasants" in the 1930s (they'd already been there and done that); and, in consequence, the "oligarchic" order was in disarray well before 1930 (10). Popular Frontism influenced, but didn't fundamentally define, the Latin American Left in the 1930s and 1940s, and it certainly didn't persist through the years of post-1945 Cold War polarization, when democratic regimes collapsed and communist parties suffered proscription. And the Central American "ferment," while it provoked American paranoia, did not produce powerful repercussions in, say, the Southern Cone, where quite different stories were playing out. In short, there's a contradiction between Young's initial—sensible—desire to nuance the Left and his effort to shoehorn it into a common chronological framework. Young finally speculates on the lessons of these histories following the recent neoliberal turn, the decline of the "organized left," and the rise and fall of the "Pink Tide" (15–18). The picture—for a leftist—is somber, although Young discerns a few shafts of light. And he finds solace contemplating the ghosts of leftism past: "the radical ambition of past leftists … deserve[s] our attention … [and] past struggles for emancipation offer many important lessons, both inspiring and cautionary" (18). Only one such "lesson" is mentioned: the need for "internal democracy, self-reflexivity, and humility." Unfortunately, these are not qualities displayed by many political leaders and mass organizations, whether of Left or Right.

The symposium includes three good historical case studies. Forrest Hylton offers a fine account of indigenous peasant insurgency in Chayanta, Bolivia, in 1927: the biggest uprising since the Federal War of 1898–1899, involving ten thousand insurgents and affecting four Bolivian provinces (19–20). Hylton skillfully interweaves national and local narratives, the latter garnished with illustrative details. The rebels voiced agrarian grievances—the dispossession of indigenous land, "forced labor and rack-renting"—as well as allegations of landlord sexual abuse and popular demands for education and "political representation": so, the rebels sought "equity" on several fronts (23, 28). Officials

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and landlords responded with the usual tropes of Indian criminality and barbarism, now allied to denunciations of "communism." As several Bolivianists argue, radical new ideologies, such as communism, could coexist—perhaps synergistically—with traditional Andean cosmology and ritual. Political syncretism was evident in the cities too: the infant Socialist Party "combined images of Inca revolution with a vision of broader social transformation" (39). The Chayanta revolts, incubating for years, were largely autonomous, led by Indigenous caciques; they were not contrived by outside agitators. However, it was no "paranoid illusion" on the part of officialdom that insurgent peasants and radical urban workers collaborated (22). But no parallel urban revolt occurred (as it would in 1952), and the rebels, confined to the south and outgunned by the army, suffered "fierce repression" (24, 27, 41). Once the revolt was suffocated, however, the government proved lenient: prisoners were released, corrupt officials replaced, and landlord expansion curbed (41). The "oligarchic state" survived a scare and sought to conciliate both peasants and urban labor. This official commitment to reform, often seen as springing from the battlefields of the Chaco War (1932–1935), thus predated the war and was a product not of foreign conflict, but of domestic protest (42).

Kevin Young tells a comparable story: indigenous peasant revolt in Los Andes, north of La Paz, in 1946, a moment of political opening when the Villaroel government relaxed authoritarian rule and tolerated a measure of radical agrarian activism. Again, the familiar stories of irrational Indian savagery, stirred up by nefarious "outside agitators," circulated (130–131, 137, 143). The insurgents certainly committed several murders, "though precise responsibility [and motives] are difficult to ascertain" (136). Again, while "past studies have often exaggerated the urban impetus" behind the revolt, the rebels—who sought "land, schools and autonomy"—acted largely independently (131). However, relying on bilingual "brokers"—whose activities are well described (149–152)—the rebels forged links with urban activists, notably the anarchist Federación Obrera Local, whose numbers and influence grew during the 1920s and 1930s, thus "bucking the global trend of anarchism's decline relative to Marxism" (132, 139-43). Indigenous mobilization increased during the 1920s and was boosted by the Chaco War. Even Villaroel's fall (1946) could not stem the tide, as land seizures and rural unionization proceeded apace until mass arrests and several killings brought a bloody end to the insurgency (136). A key conclusion is that the anarchists—who rejected party politics, opposed male "patriarchy," and espoused "notions of liberation … somewhat more expansive than those of many Marxists"—remained a crucial force long after 1917; and they countenanced alliances with indigenous campesinos, still the "vast numerical majority" in the 1940s insurgency (140, 143). However, this was the last kick of the good old anarchist cause. Repression took its toll, while the rise of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) as a populist challenge to the Bolivian oligarchy undercut anarchist support. The revolution of 1952 catapulted the MNR into power, while "the anarchists' … antipathy to party politics and state power put them at a unique disadvantage" (154). In Bolivia, as in Mexico and Russia, the Left found that opposing and dissolving the state was not enough: state power had to be seized and used.

Barry Carr analyses the Cuban sugar industry, popular mobilization, and the black immigrant presence during the 1920s and 1930s. Previously published (*Hispanic American Historical Review*, or *HAHR*, 1998), the essay shows how radical popular movements—involving workers, intellectuals, communists, and others—combined denunciations of foreign imperialism and hostility to foreign immigrants, chiefly Haitians and Jamaicans: the Haitians largely illiterate, objects of Cuban fear, mockery and prejudice; the Jamaicans often literate, feisty, and ready to invoke British diplomatic protection (thus, British officials complained of their offices being regularly besieged by 'aggrieved niggers'—some of whom were British Army veterans [51, 54–55]). As the sugar industry faced falling prices and incomes, labor relations worsened, and black immigrants were deported. Pioneered by

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the Machado dictatorship, this anti-immigrant policy was cranked up by the reformist Grau San Martín government after the 1933 revolution; Haitians were rounded up by bounty hunters, while Spanish immigrants and "Jewish artisans" also suffered deportation (66–67). However, black Cubans—who supported the expulsions—displayed "collective industrial muscle" after the revolution and played a major role in the wave of strikes and occupations that swept the sugar plantations (70). In short, even amid radical mobilization, "racially charged jingoism served to divide the labor force along lines of nationality"; although, Carr notes, this divisive "jingoism" was even stronger in Costa Rica than in Cuba (75).

Cuba is also the focus of Michelle Chase's study of the 1959 Congress of Latin American Women (CLAM), held in Santiago, Chile. Chase recounts who came to the conference and what they said. Acronyms abound. It is not clear what the conference achieved. It "offered debate around important if not ground-breaking themes, laced with strands of more transgressive thinking"; and "the exposure to women activists across the continent … *must have* solidified their burgeoning interest in and awareness of women's common challenges" (172; my emphasis, flagging a leap of authorial faith). A more interesting discussion follows, dealing with the Congress for Cultural Freedom—a US-sponsored engine of Cold War soft power—which denounced CLAM as a communist mouthpiece (173). This accusation, though exaggerated, had an impact. The CLAM provided a platform for the Cuban delegates—some, like Vilma Espín, as loquacious as Castro himself—to denounce US imperialism in long, angry, "blistering" speeches (175). Thus the delegates could "communicate powerful extra-textual messages about women in the Cuban Revolution," making them "immensely inspirational and symbolic to many women on the Latin American left" (176). All of this may be true, but because the sources are the Cuban delegates themselves, we might wonder (176–177).

Marc Becker examines indigenous movements in Ecuador in the 1930s and 1940s, rebutting the notion that Indians possessed only a "ventriloquist's voice," that is, one imputed to them by nonindigenous actors who deny indigenous "agency" (ventriloquists' dummies being—the occasional horror film excepted—inert puppets) (77). This denial is echoed by US observers, notably the Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose files Becker scoured and who, in a clumsy hunt for Axis subversives, paid scant attention to women or Indians (78–79). Indigenous Ecuador was off the gringos' radar. Old tropes of Indian political inertia persisted: US observers clearly took their cues from the "urban middle-class surroundings" they inhabited (85). Yet, Becker shows, indigenous mobilization was underway, as peasant unions helped found the Ecuadorian Socialist Party (1926) and community agrarian claims—an ancient phenomenon—acquired a more militant and even Marxist edge (81–82). And 1944 saw the foundation of the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians (Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios), to which President Velasco gave his blessing—though not much practical support (78, 85, 97). The FEI uneasily combined "paternalist and assimilationist assumptions" about indigenous integration with radical ideas concerning "class consciousness.. and oppressed nationalities" (86). Conflicts between landowners and peasants appear to have spiked around 1945, with the Communist Party—rivals of the FEI—playing an organizational role, which in turn led—the FBI reported—to a "furious persecution of the Indians" (89). Having recounted this neglected story, Becker brings the narrative to a rather abrupt halt around 1948. However, one conclusion clearly emerges: Ecuadorian indigenous mobilization—that is, the mobilization of Indians *qua* Indians—is not quite the recent (post-1992?) phenomenon that is often supposed.

Margaret Power offers a detailed vignette of the relations between the leadership of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) and its counterparts in the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party (PNPR) between 1937 and 1945. The story takes place on US soil, where PNPR leaders, convicted of sedition and imprisoned in Atlanta, befriended CPUSA leaders, including Earl Browder, a key architect of American Popular Frontism (115). The CPUSA

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supported the prisoners financially, and a brisk correspondence ensued, which Power carefully follows. These personal ties survived Pearl Harbor, despite the CPUSA's eager espousal of the American war effort, which meant support for the status quo in Puerto Rico (indeed, the CPUSA regarded the overthrow of Guatemalan caudillo Jorge Ubico as "inopportune," since it might impede "the military effort to defeat Hitler and Mussolini": a remarkable triumph of Stalinist Realpolitik over leftist values) (124). Power focuses on the groups' personal ties, including a contentious love affair (122, 125). It is not clear what we learn from these intimate details. Quoting the feminist slogan "the personal enriches our understanding of the political," she stresses that "relationships among political activists are crucial for understanding political history" (127). This is banally true, as is the contention that "the left is not a political abstraction … it is made up of people who have a variety of relationships with one another" (128). But it's not clear that the personal ties put under the microscope here—however interesting to the biographer or psychoanalyst—tell us much about either Puerto Rico or the Latin American Left.

Aldo Marchesi explores "radical political culture"—the many strands of the New Left—in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1966–1976, looking at the lives of young activists. He proposes a politico-cultural microanalysis that goes beyond the macroanalyses of the past, as exemplified by both "functionalist structuralism" (is that what we used to call [Parsonian] "structural functionalism"?) and by economistic political science (e.g., Guillermo O'Donnell) (185). The New Left, committed to armed revolt, developed a "unique political culture"—embracing "ideology, morals, sentiments, class subjectivity, historical experience and art"—all on the basis of "contingent cultural definitions" (186–187). (*Contingent* thus rears its fashionable head again: if it means "accidental" or "random," it is a nonexplanation). According to the New Left's Manichaean worldview, dedicated young revolutionaries, typified by Che, spurned the "legalism and reformist strategies" of the Old Left, opted for violent struggle and sacrifice, and placed naive faith in "ideology" as "a panacea that would solve all the problems they faced" (196). They also sought to operate transnationally, across national boundaries: perhaps a rationalization of the brute fact of exile (191). However, nationalist tensions—Bolivians against Chileans, Uruguayans against Argentines—persisted (188–189, 193). Marchesi's several protagonists—all, it seems, of middle- or lower-middle-class background—experienced grim life histories in which their radical commitment led to death, incarceration, torture, sectarian recrimination, exile, and—if they survived—disillusionment. Most abandoned politics; one Argentine became "an independent left-wing activist," endorsing the "practices and discourses that were typical of what [the New Left] had originally set out to combat" (194). Marchesi weaves these interesting life histories together with some dense—at times wordy—analysis, which some readers may find confusing. But his chapter, replete with detail, repays careful reading and—to my mind—confirms that, for all its eager optimism and idealism, the New Left of the Southern Cone was a sad failure, not least for its young protagonists.

O'Neal Blacker-Hanson is also hard going but does not much reward the reader's persistence. She focuses on resistance and repression in Guerrero, Mexico, from 1959 to 1974: the home of radical rebels Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez, who battled the *priísta* state and its corrupt minions in the heartland of so-called *México bronco*. The story has been well studied in recent years; Blacker-Hanson's account is workmanlike but adds little to what we already know. Since 1920, she states, the new revolutionary state has been governed by means of coercion and fraud. Up to a point, but the growing stability—indeed, legitimacy—of the regime also depended on positive factors: land and labor reform, education, social mobility, and economic growth. Even the more conservative PRI regime of post-1946 was a "dictablanda" in which repression was calibrated and economic growth sustained. Blacker-Hanson invents a recession that never was: "by the mid-1950s the economy began to slump into recession," which provoked "cutbacks … protests … conflicts … [and] groundbreaking strikes" (215). The source of this mythical scenario is

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John Sherman's perfectly sound chapter in *The Oxford History of Mexico* ("among many" corroborating sources, the author casually claims, in a confused citation).[3] Sherman says no such thing; indeed, he describes "a postwar 'miracle,'" involving 6 percent annual growth continuing "into the 1960s" (581–582, 586). Quotations are also mangled: Barrington Moore didn't say that "the status quo" was as "atrocious as the risks of revolution"; he said the "costs of moderation" were (222). Mexican Defense Secretary Cuenca Díaz is quoted "unabashedly" asserting that the Mexican government sought "to reach the population [of Guerrero] and control it" (233). In fact, Cuenca Díaz attributed Guerrero's "unrest and violence" to its "wild and remote terrain, which makes it difficult to reach the population and control it." In other words, an evasive excuse is turned into an assertion of authoritarian dominion. Finally, Mexico was not a "leader" of the Non-Aligned Movement; and when veteran insurgent Fausto Ávila claims—in an interview with the author—that Azuela's novel *Los de abajo* was "his primary ideological influence," he should have been asked how a depiction of the revolution as an aimless collage of violence and opportunism could prompt a commitment to Marxist politics (227).

Two dense monographs deal with student activism in Guatemala and Uruguay. Heather Vrana, *This City Belongs to You*, is a deeply researched account of the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City; it traces the role of students, faculty, and alumni (some in positions of political authority) during Guatemala's turbulent history, 1944–1996. It covers the fall of President Ubico, the decade of democratization and reform under Presidents Arévalo and Arbenz, the 1954 counterrevolution, and a succession of repressive administrations that, by the 1960s, had initiated a bloody civil war that lasted thirty years. Throughout, San Carlos played an important role: most obviously, by supporting reform and resisting authoritarianism, but also—because the university incubated activists across the political spectrum—by backing the military. Vrana focuses on reformist activism, which involved both peaceful mobilization (demonstrations, publications, protest music, and theater) and, increasingly, violent confrontations, in which the student protestors—denigrated as dangerous communists and effete Bohemians ("discotheque revolutionaries"; 157)—were the principal victims. The first half of the book, charting the "Ten Years' Spring" (1944–1954), is more cogent and coherent than what follows. Having played a key role in the fall of Ubico, in Arévalo's democratic experiment and Arbenz's radical project, the university suffered political repression at the hands of Castillo Armas and his successors. Again, university opinion, like the country's, was polarized: a dissident law student, arrested and hauled before a government interrogator, found himself confronting his law professor (77). Urban protest and repression peaked in the early 1960s; thereafter, during the civil war, the university's role diminished, and the focus shifted to the countryside, where the army conducted a brutal war of repression. Despite recurrent exhortations—and even some practical efforts—to "go to the people" (130–131, 161–162), thus switching from urban protest to rural insurrection, the student response did not go beyond individual commitments to guerrilla resistance. Student collective action could not easily translate into rural rebellion.

Vrana highlights San Carlos' long-standing tendency to consider itself the politico-intellectual vanguard of the country, a chosen elite destined to lead a blinkered people (often depicted—for example, in cartoons—in crudely stereotypical terms) from backwardness to modernity (146–151). Elitist even in the 1940s, this project foundered during the civil war, when university activism became increasingly marginalized. The bold claim that "the city belongs to you"—uttered by the university rector in 1945 (53)—proved hubristically hollow. Given this trajectory of decline and marginalization, the second half of the book, covering the civil war, tends to lose the plot—perhaps because

[3] John Sherman. "The Mexican 'Miracle' and Its Collapse," in *The Oxford History of Mexico,* ed. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 575–607.

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there is no plot, no unifying theme. Instead, we encounter discrete episodes: the 1976 earthquake, contentious oil and mining projects, leftist aesthetics, drugs, films, and rock and roll, all interspersed with brief biographies of leftist activists. Individually illuminating—for example, of how natural disasters catalyze political protest—this is more a fleeting collage than a coherent account.

Two factors add to the confusion. Whatever the blurb writers think about the author's "graceful" style, it is in fact rather clunky. University students are called "literate, ladino, mostly urban—in a word urbane" (46, 48). But *urban* and *urbane* are not synonyms. Mara Salvatrucha gangs are urban, often Ladino and literate, but urbane they are not. Such stylistic aberrations might not matter too much—the narrative of the first half of the book knocks along briskly—but they are compounded by conceptual confusion. As a serious historian, Vrana wants to make sense of a complicated story by means of useful "organizing concepts." The most important—and recurrent—is "student nationalism," a conceptual catch-all that supposedly sums up San Carlos's aspiration to politico-cultural leadership. However, this use of nationalism is confusing. The nature of nationalism is much debated by scholars (consider: primordial versus instrumental, perennial versus modern, ethnic versus civic, and so on). But there's an obvious consensus that it involves a commitment to the nation (Benedict Anderson's "imagined political community"). The San Carlistas were certainly committed to the nation, but so were Guatemalan conservatives, army officers, clerics, and others (including rival San Carlistas) who stood at the opposite end of the political spectrum. As elsewhere, nationalism spanned that spectrum, and with the exception of a few dwindling extremes, such as die-hard anarchists and—in Eurasia but not the Americas—dynastic reactionaries, everyone was a nationalist. Some indigenous radicals—in Central and Andean America—later rejected the nation-state, but this rejection was scarcely hinted at in the 1970s (140). Vrana often invokes but never clearly defines "student nationalism": it involved "a shared project for identity"; it "did not depend on the successful formation of a nation-state"; it was a "social contract"; it embraced "many competing discourses that … provided a more or less coherent way of speaking about power relations" (2–3, 26, 167). In short, nationalism is a slippery concept. It is not the only slippery ism. Later, developmentalism appears, and we're told—somewhat inscrutably—that "developmentalism occasioned a new kind of democratic neocolonial rule" (133–134). Then we get republicanism: the "republican ideal" and the "republican democratic ideal" (166–167). All Guatemalan politicians were republicans, of course (they certainly weren't monarchists), and there is no suggestion that they were republican in the more esoteric historical sense described by Pocock and Skinner.[4] In short, these supposed organizing concepts—nationalism, developmentalism, republicanism—obfuscate more than they clarify.

A final query, perhaps quibble. Vrana sprays around references—even occasional quotations—that are simply wrong. Greg Grandin, discussing conservatism, refers to "an *instinctual* defense of hierarchical privilege," not, as quoted here (58), an "*institutional* defense" (my emphases). Eugenio María de Hostos and José Martí were not "positivists" (33). Mexican historians Silvio Zavala and Miguel León-Portilla were not Marxists (Zavala was curtly critical of Marxism) (275). And for a historian to refer to E. P. Thompson—who is cited several times—as a "sociologist" is beyond bizarre (267). In short, the book, especially the first half, embodies detailed original material and tells an interesting and informative story; the second half tends to falter, while the overall analysis is vitiated by some loose conceptualization.

Vania Markarian, *Uruguay, 1968*, gives an informative analysis of the events of 1968 in the 'Switzerland of South of America," where democracy—even social democracy—was a long-standing tradition. Thus, while Uruguay might be a mere "nub of a country," as Eric

[4] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

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Zolov calls it, in his brief introduction (viii), it is an interesting case, not least because the events of 1968 contributed to the "bureaucratic-authoritarian" turn taken by the Southern Cone in the 1970s. Markarian rightly cautions that we should not "think of the 1960s as a mere preamble to those authoritarian experiences" (152)—although I am not convinced that this "exaggerated tendency" is really so widespread in "existing scholarship." Plenty of studies of 1968—including several reviewed here—focus on cause and process, not (negative) outcomes, and the classic "bureaucratic-authoritarian" analyses, following O'Donnell, prefer economistic to politico-cultural explanations.

Using ample and diverse sources, Markarian charts the confluence of political factors (the fragmentation of traditional parties, the rise of the New Left, the impact of the Cuban Revolution) and cultural influences (generational rebellion, mass education, and—my neat, if flippant, summation, derived from Ian Durie—"sex and drugs and rock and roll"). The structural preconditions of protest are less fully explained: the author mentions the exhaustion of the old development model, culminating in "economic crisis," but offers scant economic data; similarly, the growth of higher education—a quantitative shift that, in Uruguay as elsewhere, carried qualitative consequences—is mentioned but not substantiated. Markarian notes a 22 percent increase in university students between 1961 and 1965 (70), but four years can't capture the underlying trend. After all, she points out (71), student protest was an old phenomenon, evident throughout the twentieth century; what was new was the sheer size of the student population, its social diversity, and its commitment to radical protest.

One excellent feature of the book is its graphic account of how protesters utilized public space, swarming into downtown Montevideo—rather as Perón's *descamisados* had invaded central Buenos Aires twenty years earlier—engaging in running battles with the police, wrongfooting the authorities with flash demos and roadblocks. As usual, the victims of the ensuing spiral of violence were disproportionately protesters. Markarian plausibly suggests that the violence of the 1968 protests has been exaggerated; although this makes the book's subtitle—with its eye-catching reference to Molotov cocktails—rather misleading. The book also provides an informative analysis of popular (protest) music, satirical publications, and personal lifestyles (which suggests that there was rather less "sex and drugs and rock and roll" here than in the contemporary US). Indeed, Markarian rightly warns against glib comparisons between the Uruguayan and US brands of youth protest (158). However, she shows how specific student grievances (including mundane issues like bus fares), marinaded in a rebellious counterculture, drove young people to protest; and how as the authorities chose repression rather than reform, protest became increasingly radical in terms of both daily tactics and broad political goals. And this dialectic affected traditional parties. For all the fragmentation of the Uruguayan Left—socialists, communists, anarchists, and progressive Catholics—party politics remained important during these torrid times. The Communist Party (PCU), in particular, gained strength, and its youth wing, the Unión de Juventudes Comunistas (UJC), played a major role in the protests.

Here arises an interesting riddle, which Markarian mentions but sidesteps. Latin American communists were leery of the New Left, with its emphasis on armed struggle, direct action, and the cult of revolution (typified by the ubiquitous images of Che), which sober, middle-aged communists denounced as rash adventurism. They also swiped at the middle-class makeup of student movements, their self-indulgent lifestyle (long hair and lax morals), and their detachment from the working class—the class that, in communist eyes, remained the revolutionary vanguard. Conversely, the New Left rejected the communists' stick-in-the-mud legalism, their fusty respectability, and their—arguably acute—critique of Che's Bolivian venture. Markarian shows that these distinctions are too stark. Communists, especially young communists, played a brave and prominent role in the 1968 protests; and their rejection of armed struggle was often considered and

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conditional—after all, as some pointed out, Leninism was a doctrine of direct action, which the Cuban Revolution had recently validated. However, to show, as Markarian does, that communist tactical thinking was more flexible than critics claimed does not invalidate the notion of "old" and "new" Lefts as useful categories of analysis. Nor does the old distinction between reformers and revolutionaries lose its heuristic value simply because some actors are hard to categorize (they shifted positions or assumed different stances depending on context: after all, what worked for Cuba in 1959 did not work for Bolivia in 1967). Markarian's fine book, while shedding ample light on a neglected case, helps us understand varieties of the Latin American Left—old and new, reformist and revolutionary—even as it shows that, in practice, these megaconcepts need to be handled with care, so that they inform, rather than predetermine, specific historical analyses.

Susana Draper, *Mexico, 1968*, is hard going: 251 rambling, repetitive, rebarbative pages. The author claims to analyze Mexico's 1968 and how it's been remembered, focusing on individual writers like José Revueltas, Roberta Avendaño, and Gladys López Hernández, as well as activist groups like the Cooperativa de Cine Marginal. The book consists of loosely linked essays: an approach that, though not necessarily misconceived, is oddly justified by the disarming comment: "instead of going through the main archive of 1968" (whatever that might mean), "I decided to look at different interventions that did not share an identical ground or position" (19–20). Buried beneath the turgid prose (of which more anon) are interesting nuggets: for example, the work of the Super 8 filmmakers, especially the intriguing story of the 1971 movie *History of a Document*, in which Óscar Menéndez clandestinely recorded life in Mexico's notorious Lecumberri prison. Or Avendaño's autobiographical account of life in Lecumberri and the gulf that initially separated political prisoners—mostly young, middle-class students—and the "common prisoners" (whom Draper—usually hyperalert to the prejudices of political terminology—casually calls "lumpen," a snooty putdown that can't be justified just because Marx and Engels liked to use it; 170).

As for the rest—including the long essay on Revueltas's work—I should enter a plea of ignorance. I'm not an expert in the densely populated field of Latin American literary criticism. Perhaps readers familiar with the genre will find the book compelling rather than chaotic; if so, it's unfortunate that Latin American studies seem to have bifurcated into mutually unintelligible tribes. However, as a historian of Mexico, I think the book tells us very little, except that the study of comparative literature—at Princeton, no less—is compatible with scholastic obscurity, turgid style, and historical myopia.

Draper's scholastic approach involves repetitive citations of approved authorities, granted *ex cathedra* authority. Page 14 alone contains seven successive quotes, including the ubiquitous Bruno Bosteels, the editor of the series in which this book appears, who provides some obliging blurb on the back: this "powerful new book," we're told, is "poetic and scholarly" (which makes one wonder which poets provide Bosteels's bedside reading). The better bits of the book crop up—at rare moments, like oases in the desert—where Draper describes life histories or the making of *History of a Document*. Then we read about real people involved in interesting—often very unpleasant—stories. But we soon leave the oasis and reenter the arid expanse of textual citations: scholastic quotes from authorities whom we have to take on trust; wordy circumlocutions that demand—but often defy—mind-numbing rereadings; and recurrent italicization of questionably key phrases, presumably designed to drill these portentous terms into the reader's numbed brain (nuances, complexities, social connectivity, radical singularity, historical rupture, capacity for relationality, dialectic of encounter, conceptual dispositive, allotropic negation, et cetera: 7, 11, 17, 22, 40, 42, 45, 47, 65, 68). Draper drops fancy terms into the text without properly explaining what they mean—for example, *clinamen* and *aleatory materialism* (145–147)—even though they are expected to do some analytical heavy lifting.

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Draper regards 1968—a reified concept, never defined—as a rare moment of political drama, a *prise de conscience* that carried hopes of radical, perhaps revolutionary transformation (14). She largely ignores the basic causes. Previous popular struggles—involving railroad men, teachers, and doctors—are swiftly shunted aside on the dubious grounds that, while they pursued sectional interests, the students of 1968 represented no "union organization or a specific party" and made no "claims by and for themselves." Yet the students demanded both educational reform and an end to state repression, of which they were prime victims (23–24). Despite waffling about history and historicity, Draper sheds no light on the causes of 1968. She says more about the consequences, but here arises another problem. She wants 1968 to be a dramatic, transformative moment, but she recognizes—since it's hard to argue otherwise—that it did not inaugurate sweeping change, still less revolution. The PRI still ruled—more harshly than before—and would continue to rule for another thirty-two years. In broader cultural terms, Mexico continued to change; 1968 was a chapter in a longer story (an evolutionary, not revolutionary, story), which involved shifts in lifestyle (dress, drugs, gender relations) and culture (music, film, literature). But *key episode* does not mean "cause"; 1968 was as much symptom as cause of these shifts. However, given the hype surrounding 1968, Draper is reluctant to concede defeat. Surely heady hopes of change could not be so cruelly thwarted? (Of course, cruel thwartings are all too common in history: France post-1789, the 1848 revolutions, Bolshevik Russia, the Soviet Union post-1989, the Sandinista Revolution, the Arab Spring). So Draper hovers between admitting defeat and striving to salvage something from the wreck. One contrived argument is to claim that evaluating success or failure is, in itself, an illicit, neoliberal procedure. (We are now used to *neoliberal*—and even *liberal*—being used as a casual term of abuse, but this is a new low in such ritual incantation. *Developmentalism* is another stage villain whom Draper parades; it is never defined and has nothing to do with developmentalism as conventionally understood by economists like Amartya Sen). Of course, this is nonsense. History is littered with failure and success, which—as Marc Bloch stressed—historians have to evaluate.[5]

Given the insistently abstract approach, one wonders how much Draper actually knows about Mexico. The bibliography omits standard works on 1968 (by Pensado and Stevens).[6] French theorists outnumber Mexican social scientists. And the book hardly displays a sure grasp of Mexican reality (apologies for that bit of simple-minded positivism). Draper refers to Mexico's "parties"—villains of the piece, whom the protestors of 1968 reject—as if the country were a pluralist democracy: the 1968 protest, we're told, "went beyond the logic of party representation and electoral alternation" (11). But "electoral alternation" was minimal and would remain so for another twenty years. At the same time, Draper seems to think—wrongly—that the PRI exercised totalitarian control of Mexico's media. She calls President Vicente Fox "Vincent" (12) and refers to "women from . . . Michoacán, Morelia" (Morelia is a city in Michoacán) (141). She translates *granaderos* (riot police) as "grenadiers" and writes of 1968 as a "broth of cultivation"—a clunky translation of *caldo de cultivo*, or "breeding ground" (41, 133). Draper may command the dizzy heights of literary-cum-cultural theory, but her grasp of—and contribution to—Mexican history is unimpressive.

McAdams and Monta's *Global 1968* is an innovative symposium combining chapters on Europe and Latin America. It contains several excellent synopses of the events of 1968. Vania Markarian offers a useful summation of her book on Uruguay. Massimo Giuseppe provides an original account of Italian Catholic engagement with Latin America in the 1960s: the "irruption of Latin America into the Catholic consciousness" (51). The role of Rome and Pope Pius V—exemplified by the 1968 Medellín Conference—is well known, but Giuseppe shows that a whole panoply of Catholic organizations, both lay and clerical,

[5] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 118.

[6] Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*; Evelyn Stevens, *Protest and Response in Mexico* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

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fostered transatlantic ties, linking Catholic and leftist, including Marxist, activists in common causes. Papal policy aside, this novel development derived from a growing interest in Third World issues—"[19]68 was a year in which Europe was brought closer to realities outside its borders"—from perceived parallels between Italy and Latin America, in respect of state repression, terrorism, and Catholic radicalization, and from a process of "intraecclesial renewal" within the Catholic Church (40, 61–62). In places, the account is a little repetitive (40, 43), and the barrage of names and related organizations—the acronyms come thick and fast—can become a little bewildering for the "lay reader" (48). On the other hand, the several personal stories bring detail and color to what is an innovative and convincing analysis.

J. Patrice McSherry discusses Chile's Nueva Canción, or "new song," movement of the 1960s, which sought to revive authentic folk music, "the music of the people." Comparable to US protest songs, the movement "was part of a larger cultural movement that included the 'Latin American boom' in literature" (262). Since this "explosion of creativity" coincided with important sociopolitical mobilizations by people whom the author vaguely calls the "rising popular classes," including workers, peasants, and shantytown dwellers, the result was a "cultural revolution" (263). That would depend on your definition of *revolution*. Similarly, hailing Allende's government as the world's "first effort to move towards socialism through democratic and constitutional processes" (279) involves either ignoring European social democracy or tacitly adopting a restrictive definition of *socialism*. McSherry usefully describes the "emergence" and "consolidation" of the Nueva Canción movement—its chief protagonists, links to Paris, and political ties. I lack the expertise to evaluate the basic argument, although the repeated assertions of bracing novelty and cultural transformation—"new political currents . . . a new country . . . struggle for a new society . . . a new set of values" (269)—make me wonder whether, at times, the lady doth protest too much. The author's brief foray into global history prompts a similar skepticism: "a sense of change and possibility was sweeping the world in the 1960s" as "anticolonial and liberation struggles . . . erupted around the globe" and "there was tumult" in the US (272). (Anecdotal snippet: I traveled extensively in the US in the summer of 1968, and the only "tumult" I encountered was in Chicago). In the end, of course, the music stopped: Chile fell prey to a military coup, the high hopes of radical political renewal were dashed, and the "ossified hierarchies" of the past survived (276). If there was a cultural revolution, as the author believes, it was followed, and terminated, by counterrevolution (the author agrees, 281–282): a somber finale to the upbeat tune which has gone before.

Jaime Pensado's well-crafted analysis of student protest and state repression in Mexico City and Montevideo offers an unusual paired comparison that notes similarities and contrasts. In both cases, the state ratcheted up its repression—although in Mexico the escalation was more rapid and brazen (a reflection, perhaps, of deeper politico-cultural proclivities, coupled with concern for the upcoming Olympics). Initially moderate and limited in their goals, both protest movements radicalized their demands—moving from specific educational issues to broader questions of democracy and freedom—and resorted to more violent confrontational tactics. While both governments justified repression by appeals to national security, the death toll—repeatedly denied by officials—was much greater in Mexico. In combatting protest, the Mexican state could call on official *sindicatos*, "pseudostudent" gangs (*porros*) and the PRI's "satellite" parties; the protestors countered with "massive demonstrations," decentralized "assemblies," and local "brigades" that, in schools and universities, organized resistance (363). In Uruguay, repression was monopolized by the state, which became increasingly ruthless. Finally, Pensado abruptly switches to the role of the Catholic Church, including Brazil; here, the comparison with Mexico emphasizes the "key role" of the church in resisting the Brazilian military regime (and the price it paid), while in Mexico—bar a few brave exceptions—the church provided "overwhelming" support for the regime (369, 371). Indeed, when troops opened fire on

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protestors in Tlatelolco, the local church barred its doors to the fleeing victims. The contrast is well drawn; but it would help to know why the "mute" Mexican church stayed silent (373). Perhaps it had been tamed by long years of persecution following the revolution; so Díaz Ordaz and Echeverría reaped the benefit of the state-building—and priest-baiting—policies of President Calles.

Christopher Neal's *The Rebel Scribe* is an engaging biography, written by one experienced journalist about another: the American radical Carleton Beals who, during his long, eventful life (1893–1979), traveled the world—especially Latin America—penning some forty history or "current affairs" books (he often needed the money), as well as several inferior novels. Neal has diligently researched Beals's archive and produced, in brisk, nonjargonistic style, a vigorous account of his interesting and complicated life. (And Beals's personal life—not least his relations with women—was certainly complicated). He covers Beals's trips to Spain, Italy, and the Soviet Union, but Latin America—Beals's chief interest, as well as Neal's—gets the most attention. Along the way, we meet a cast of thousands—from Sandino to Castro, with supporting roles from Tina Modotti, Diego Rivera, Trotsky, Frida Kahlo, García Márquez, and others. (The well-known photograph of the young Beals, fresh faced with intense stare, which graces the book's cover, was taken by Modotti; what looks, at first, like a black polo-neck straight out of the Parisian Left Bank is in fact a scarf Modotti arranged "to conceal [Beals's] weak chin"; 75).

Three countries stand out in this odyssey: Mexico, where Beals first traveled in 1918, on the cheap, with his brother Ralph (later to become a distinguished anthropologist of Mexico); Nicaragua, ten years later, where Beals landed a famous scoop by interviewing Sandino, then battling the US Marines, in his remote mountain encampment; and Cuba, where Beals witnessed two revolutions, those of 1933 and 1959. Each encounter produced books—probably Beals's best books—which remain interesting accounts of these historic moments. *Mexican Maze* (1931) graphically describes the Mexico then emerging from the ashes of revolution, while *The Crime of Cuba* (1933) recounts the 1933 revolution and the nefarious role of the United States. The former is arguably the better book: Beals wore his radical heart on his sleeve, but *Mexican Maze* includes perceptive reportage, while *The Crime of Cuba*—a strident denunciation of US policy—is flawed by its florid language and fondness for Cuban stereotypes. Although, as Louise Bogan of the New York Times observed of Beals's journalistic style, it may be "fervent, even feverish, but it keeps you interested" (192).

Beals's style reflected his earnest engagement with the events, places, and people he encountered. He never strove for judicious even-handedness; his stories involved heroes and villains, the US being, throughout, the chief villain. Beals's leftism was personal, polemical, and moralistic. Although he sympathized with—and for a time was financed (modestly) by the Soviet Union—he was no party apparatchik, and his views, boldly expressed, were his own. Indeed, it was this brash certainty—that he could tell the good guys from the bad—that enabled him to express trenchant views on everything, often on the basis of skimpy knowledge (a common practice on the extremes of Left and Right). So, Haya is hailed as a great hero, Batista as a dyed-in-the-wool villain, this judgment being based on Beals's two Cuban excursions, 1933 and 1959. Yet in the interim, Batista had been a progressive, populist leader and, as elected president (1940–1944), he implemented the reformist 1940 Constitution. But either Beals knew nothing about this, or he chose to ignore it, as it jarred with his idée fixe of Batista as a reactionary strong man—a "hated tyrant" (199)—in cahoots with the US (which is true for post-1952, but not pre-1944). So, too, in his historical excursions: Porfirio Díaz was a bad guy (the subject of a readable but polemical Beals biography), so interim president Manuel González (1880–1884), was, in comparison, a good guy ("the most honest president Mexico ever had," 153): a nonsensical judgment, since González was both inept and corrupt, as Díaz had expected he would be. Of course, Manichaean history—the history of heroes and villains—is easy to write (the plot

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structure is given) and tends to sell; and Beals needed to write at pace and bank his royalties, on which he depended for his far-from-lavish lifestyle.

Beals placed the US in the forefront of his rogues' gallery (another familiar ploy favored by kneejerk radicals). The Cuban Revolution of 1959 gave his career, then somewhat stalled, a fresh impetus. His reportage was, again, vigorous, combative, and, for some, persuasive. But it ran along well-worn grooves and at times was questionable. Neal—though clear sighted and sometimes critical of Beals (for example, his dire novels and historical pot-boilers)—is a little too ready to accept Beals's partisan point of view. For example, we're told that Castro's turn to the Soviet Union was the result of US hostility; the US was the driver (and the villain): "Castro's turn to the Soviet Union . . . was largely a reaction to US policy" (335), in which context, Neal cites Jorge Domínguez (a weighty authority).[7] However, Domínguez actually states: "the evidence clearly shows that Castro was not pushed into Soviet arms by the US or by domestic conflict"; rather, it was a deliberate decision—influenced by Castro's negative view of the US but not determined by US policy. Indeed, US policy toward Latin America was neither as consistently powerful nor perhaps as consistently malign as Beals believed.

Lynn Stephen's *Stories That Make History* is an interesting and unusual book, the product of a close personal collaboration between the author and Elena Poniatowska, one of Mexico's most influential public intellectuals. Born in 1932, scion of an aristocratic Polish family, resident in France until she was ten, Poniatowska has, over a long career, commented—by means of direct reportage as well as novels and public engagements—on major episodes in Mexico's recent history: the 1968 student movement and its repression, especially Tlatelolco; the 1985 earthquake that devastated Mexico City, revealing scandalous levels of official corruption and incompetence; the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas; the 2006 presidential election and the protracted mass protest—the *plantón*—launched by losing candidate Andrés López Obrador (AMLO) in Mexico City; the 2014 massacre of students from the Ayotzinapa Escuela Normal (which, incidentally, is not "in Iguala" but about 150 miles away [29]); and—briefly and inconclusively, since the narrative stops in 2020—AMLO's final exercise of presidential power after 2018. Journalism, it's said, is the "first version of history," and along with regular reportage in *La Jornada*, Poniatowska's chosen approach has been that of the *crónica*—extensive reports on current events, told from the bottom up, on the basis of interviews with participants, the vast majority of them "ordinary" people who would usually have no public voice (1, 8, 15). With this innovative approach, Poniatowska has produced valuable first versions of history, which have also survived the test of time—notably her accounts of 1968 (*La noche de Tlatelolco*, 1971) and the 1985 earthquake (*Nada, nadie*, 1988).

Stephen clearly has a warm rapport with Poniatowska—she mentions "our beautiful and ever-deepening friendship" (ix)—and the narrative is fleshed out with interviews (perhaps we should call them comradely conversations) that span more than a decade. Personal touches proliferate ("she paused, smiled, and continued with increased energy, her eyes sparkling"; 36). While the evident intimacy can be revealing (for example, concerning the little-known story of Poniatowska's first child, Mane), it also encourages a certain comfortable coziness. Perhaps Poniatowska really is the quasi-saintly figure depicted in these pages (I daresay such figures exist, although—speaking personally—I've rarely encountered them); but even so, some aspects of the story raise tricky questions that might merit closer attention. For example, the Zapatistas' attitude to abortion is, at best, ambivalent; and Poniatowska rightly questions her Zapatista interlocutors on the subject (without getting much of a clear-cut answer: Subcomandante Marcos is wordily evasive [175–181]). And more broadly, the palpable tension between indigenous claims to

[7] Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 21.

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traditional practices (*usos y costumbres*) and liberal-democratic norms (women's rights, including abortion, democratic representation, and the rule of law) is discussed with studied neutrality, a stance much less apparent when the author berates the PRI and its acolytes (175–81). There are arguments on both sides of this divide (and Stephen, who has done fine work on indigenous politics in southern Mexico, is well aware of this); but—compared to her forthright critique of the PRI—she seems rather reluctant to pass comment. Similarly, Poniatowska's close collaborative relationship with President López Obrador may raise questions and eyebrows. AMLO sought Poniatowska's support and charged her with political outreach among Mexico's public intellectuals (198, 203–205); she responded positively, supporting the 2006 *plantón* even when other luminaries of the Left, notably Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, wisely warned against the risks of divisive rabble-rousing (221–222). She seems to have fed AMLO's obsession with Mexico's history and his own heroic place within it (208). When AMLO declares, "What I want is a true democracy, that has been my dream," Poniatowska is reduced to tears (215). AMLO, Poniatowska declares, is "a different kind of politician . . . his voice is different from voice of the political men we are used to . . . people love him" (205, 218). Recent events make this flattering—arguably naive—description questionable. Some perceptive—including leftist—observers would say that such events were predictable on the basis of AMLO's previous sinuous political career.[8]

The book is not strictly a biography: very little is said about Poniatowska's "Catholic faith," her abortion, or her "aristocratic" and well-to-do origins—although she observes that, when she began her career as a journalist in the 1950s, "my father gave me a car and a typewriter" (154, 182, 37). The story of her alleged rape is openly and bravely discussed. Her first son, once mentioned, swiftly drops out of sight (182–185). There are occasional slips: Mexico's foreign minister is Marcelo Ebrard, not Abrard (231, 303); "Winberto" Jiménez Moreno should be "Wigberto" (5, 307); and Florencio Madrano should be Medrano (107). The British journalist John Rodda didn't claim that five hundred students died at Tlatelolco—this came from an "eye-witness account," which, Rodda says, "we could not believe" (67). The Multifamilar Juárez, which collapsed in 1985, is not located in Tlatelolco "north of the historic center," but five miles to the south (136). And Zapata never attended the 1914 Convention of Aguascalientes— nor did the latter write the Constitution of 1917 (172). Statistics are few and somewhat haphazard: Mexico's annual growth in gross domestic product, from 1940 to 1970, is given as both 4 percent and 6 percent (46–47, 113); and in 1982, we're told, the population of Mexico City, at 8.8 million, represented over a quarter of the national total (so, about 35 million); in fact, it was 68 million (46–47, 113, 115).

There is little by way of overarching analysis linking the several episodes. Poniatowska's "influence" is asserted, but—apart from noting, very relevantly, her impressive book sales (e.g., half a million copies of *La noche de Tlatelolco*)—this is not substantiated (4, 6, 62, 70). (I accept that evaluating influence is a tricky business). The one organizing concept that Stephen recurrently invokes, by way of explaining Poniatowska's impact, is that of a "strategic emotional political community" (not a concept I've encountered before), which is often mentioned though never explained (x, 2, 7, 17, 18-22, 28, 38, 63, 69, 109, 113, 123, 134, 206, 229, 235, 248). It denotes the ability of a—"charismatic"—individual to arouse empathy and enthusiasm among a mass public, whether by means of written texts or public speaking. Perhaps—following Weber (and his analysis of charisma)—it contrasts with appeals based on tradition or rational-legal logic; in other words, it involves appeals to the heart rather than the head. Certainly, Poniatowska's rhetoric seems to embody this quality; and Stephen suggests this may be a distinctly feminine attribute, since "male writers such as [Carlos] Monsiváis . . . do not use emotional expressions or engage with the emotions and feelings of

[8] Roger Bartra, *Regreso a la jaula: El fracaso de López Obrador* (Mexico City: Penguin Random House, 2021).

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those they portray" (13): a questionable generalization that smacks of essentialism. At any rate, I would query the utility of the concept. Public appeals to emotion span the political spectrum: Fidel Castro's marathon speeches, Martin Luther King's declamatory preaching, Donald Trump's incendiary rhetoric (not to mention the noisy shock jocks of Fox News and the social media). Some political scientists, rightly skeptical of dogmatic rational-actor models, see such emotional appeals as central to politics. Are we to place Poniatowska's strategic emotional political community in this category? Emotional appeals may be heartwarming when we agree with the sentiments being expressed; but what if those sentiments are repellently racist, chauvinist, or militaristic? Most readers will probably—and reasonably—endorse Poniatowska's views, as sympathetically relayed by Stephen; but appeals to emotion are not a monopoly of the *bien pensant*, progressive Left, and as David Hume rightly reminded us, normative arguments—about what's right and wrong—are fundamentally different from factual debates (about what's true or false). And, *pace* Beth Jörgensen, fact and fiction are analytically distinct and should not be "seamlessly blended" (that's QAnon's modus operandi) (113, 115). Even though Poniatowska also queries this basic distinction, I think we are more indebted to her for her pioneering investigative—that is, factual—reportage than for her "emotive" political engagement (3). As an old-style newspaper editor once put it, "Comment is free but facts are sacred"—although I accept that Stephen, following Jörgensen and others, may regard that as more naïve positivism on my part.

By way of conclusion, I touch on some common themes that these very diverse books discuss. One is the contrast between the Old Left (typically, communist parties, loyal to Moscow, committed to working-class mobilization of a broadly peaceful, legalist kind) and the New Left, a more fluid movement, appealing to youth, inspired by the Cuban Revolution, believing in direct action, and influenced by the 1960s counterculture. Before addressing this—somewhat stylized—contrast, we might ask what constitutes the Left grosso modo? Self-definitions don't help: few Latin American parties included *izquierda* in their labels (apart from a few *movimientos izquierdistas revolucionarios*—in the 1960s). And labels can mislead: the Mexican PRI wasn't revolutionary, the Democratic Party in the Old South wasn't democratic, and most people's parties have been run by elites for elites. Nor can we assume that the Left favors change and the Right the status quo, since attributions would then depend on the happenstance of who held power.

Better, therefore, to consider objective criteria, as Kevin Young does in proposing the criterion of equity. Or given a verbal tweak, the Left favors popular empowerment and egalitarianism (which may be political, social, economic, or cultural), while the Right opposes them. (Here we enter the thickets of equality of outcome versus equality of opportunity, which are too dense to penetrate now). Genuine democratization—for example, of authoritarian regimes—is by definition leftist, since it empowers people: it is a good in itself (a matter of rights), and it might guarantee better government (a utilitarian argument). It might also promote peace, on the grounds that democracies don't fight each other. Leftist programs should favor economic egalitarianism (whether egalitarianism promotes growth is another question that can't be discussed here, although the evidence suggests they are positively correlated).[9] Progressive Catholicism—see Giuseppe—fits the bill: the preferential option for the poor encapsulates empowerment plus egalitarianism. Finally, egalitarianism can apply to culture and identity, for example by removing discrimination and promoting respect for stigmatized groups, although—as with Mexico's Zapatistas—problems arise when claims to cultural autonomy (indigenous *usos y costumbres*) clash with rival claims (for women's rights or equality before the law). In a similar trade-off, communist regimes (e.g., Cuba) have prioritized socioeconomic equality over democracy (political empowerment). Once, communists airily dismissed this outcome

[9] Joseph E. Stiglitz. *The Price of Inequality.* (London: Penguin, 2013).

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on the grounds that "bourgeois democracy" was a sham; but hard experience suggests that the trade-off was real and that bourgeois—that is, Dahlian, procedural—democracy, including the rule of law, has intrinsic merits. As E. P. Thompson argued, British common law (embodying due process and trial by jury) were historical goods that should be recognized and respected, even by fellow Marxists.

The collective actors considered here espoused egalitarianism and empowerment (even if many failed because of repression or their own backsliding). The Old Left–New Left dichotomy also has merit, but it tends both to omit and to homogenize. It omits—or underestimates—the peasantry. Traditional communist parties inherited Marx's anti-peasant prejudice: the urban proletariat was the quintessential revolutionary class, and the peasantry languished in feudal backwardness and provided the foot soldiers of reaction (e.g., Eastern Europe, 1848). Latin American communist parties—and others—historically spurned the peasantry, focusing on urban constituencies. There were exceptions: the Bolivian anarchists, as Hylton shows; the Mexican revolutionaries who perforce recognized peasant demands; and the Guatemalan regime under Arbenz. These examples predate the efflorescence of the (1960s) New Left; very few New Left activists successfully collaborated with peasant protest. In Argentina and Uruguay, the "peasant question" was marginal; elsewhere, New Left activists, students especially, either failed—or did not try—to bridge the urban-rural divide. Both Vrana's San Carlos activists and Mexico's New Left guerrillas failed (Jaramillo and Cabañas stood closer to the Old Left). As Latin America industrialized and urbanized, the peasantry shrank in relative terms—especially the "traditional" peasantry, grouped in small communities and engaged in subsistence agriculture. (Whether rural proletarians count as peasants is beyond this discussion). Perhaps the biggest peasant—or rural worker—movement of recent decades is Brazil's MST, which does not figure here: was it Old Left or New Left, both or neither?

The New Left is seen as representing groups neglected by Old Left mobilization: students, women, and indigenous people. Indigenous peasants, of course, had a long history of insurgency, notably in Bolivia and Mexico. In recent decades a new wave of movements crested in Andean America, Central America, and southern Mexico; radical demands for autonomy were voiced and sometimes met. Apart from Mexico's Zapatistas, these movements don't figure here, and given the time lag, it's hard to attribute their genesis to the New Left of the 1960s. Similarly, feminism antedated the New Left: it was evident during the Mexican Revolution and in widespread—eventually successful—struggles for female suffrage across Latin America. Finally, as both Lindo-Fuentes and Bergel show, students had been politically active long before the New Left hove into sight. The big difference was that, by the 1960s, the student population had vastly grown, acquiring broader social composition and critical mass in the cities. Several studies note this in passing but, focusing on the *annus mirabilis* of 1968, they neglect long-term structural shifts. Similarly, while broader economic problems are briefly mentioned, most analyses are resolutely noneconomistic, stressing politico-cultural factors. Like the New Left itself, its historians place great faith in voluntarism and élan vital over dull socioeconomic explanations. And judging by these studies, students of New Left politics spurn the number-crunching, model-building, "positivistic" methodology that has nowadays become standard in US (and other) political science departments. Again, academic balkanization—people talking (or shouting) past one another—seems to be the norm.

Voluntarism shifts the focus from the social makeup to the modus operandi of the Left. An old dichotomy contrasts reform and revolution: the first involving electoral competition, unionization, and incremental reform, and the second requiring armed struggle and radical, rapid change. Much discussed in the 1960s, following the Cuban Revolution, it figures in several of these studies. Arguably, it demands nuancing. After all, popular insurrections had shaken Latin America pre-1960: Mexico 1910, Cuba 1933, Bolivia

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1952 (perhaps Colombia 1958). The stereotype of an Old Left, based on urban labor and committed to legal electoral competition, while valid in some cases, cannot be generalized across the whole leftist spectrum. It was perhaps a Cuban perspective, derived from the 1950s and too readily generalized. Some communists, as we've seen, countenanced direct action and armed insurrection. In short, the contrast between a legalist, reformist Old Left and a violent, revolutionary New Left, though sometimes appropriate, has arguably been overdrawn.

Today, as outright revolution has become less appealing, the issue is less salient. Those who sought to emulate the Cuban Revolution—including Che himself in Bolivia—failed. Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution, though briefly reviving the mystique of armed struggle, was compromised by US hostility abroad and its own moral degeneration at home. And Peru's Sendero Luminoso lost the armed struggle it ruthlessly prosecuted, forfeiting its popular appeal. Recent discussions of the Left have involved a different dichotomy: leftist populism—characterized by charismatic leaders, a polarizing "them-and-us" discourse, and a cavalier disregard for established institutions—versus a variety of social democracy that combines social reform and poverty alleviation with respect for the rule of law and established institutions.[10] In simple personalist terms, Chávez, Maduro, AMLO, and the Kirchners occupy the first camp, Bachelet and Lula the second. This dichotomy reprises old debates about populism, which have acquired fresh relevance. But again, the books reviewed here are unusual since the hot topic of populism scarcely figures: the only leader designated as populist is El Salvador's Manuel Araujo of El Salvador, hardly a paid-up member of the populist pantheon.

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[10] Jorge G. Castañeda, *La utopía desarmada* (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1995).

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