

that ‘Throughout Anglo-American history, political leaders and the governmental systems in which they have led have both shaped and been shaped by the media ecology of a period’ (p. 126). Allison Archer and Kimberly Yost mirror this sentiment and showcase that since the creation of the radio, television and internet, populist leaders have had a tumultuous relationship with the media.

The fourth section delves into the problems associated with populism, primarily the development of immature leadership (Scott Allison *et al.*). Through topics like the US educational system and its supposed status as a safe haven, Thomas Shields and Kate Cassada explore the discriminatory practices (particularly against immigrants) that are distancing civil society from democracy. Thus, as a proposed solution to making the population less susceptible to populism, the section culminates with a call for more education. Thad Williamson contends that only by educating its students and committing as a community to the preservation of democracy, will it be able to survive (p. 210).

The final chapter, by Kenneth Ruscio, wraps up the book by emphasising the importance of humility amongst political leaders – a virtue the authors have shown us Trump is clearly lacking. Whilst not a conclusion, this chapter is somewhat idealistic as it bases the future of democracy on the hope that morality and modesty will be determinant features of our political leaders, a partly naive sentiment.

Overall, this volume is an easy read and provides scholars from various disciplines the opportunity to examine the effect of populism on contemporary leadership.

doi:10.1017/S0022216X21000055

Raúl Diego Rivera Hernández, *Narratives of Vulnerability in Mexico’s War on Drugs*

(London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. x + 211, £69.99 hb, £55.99 E-book

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People in the United States are familiar with the US war on drugs but not so much with Mexico’s and even less so with the extent of US involvement in the latter. As any war, the drug war also has countless victims of the violence unleashed simultaneously by the drug cartels and government forces upon Mexicans and Central American migrants passing through Mexico, as detailed in Chapter 2 of *Narratives of Vulnerability in Mexico’s War on Drugs*, written by Raúl Diego Rivera Hernández and artfully translated into English by Isis Sadek. It brings to the forefront the consequences of the drug war the public at large sees only in

news headlines, Hollywood film series and documentaries, when in reality it is suffered by individuals, the 'vulnerable subjects' who have no part in it but who are the nameless victims of the violence it causes.

Mexico's war on drugs has been widely represented in different cultural products, scholarly books, novels, films, documentaries and series. *Narratives of Vulnerability* draws upon an impressive variety of mediatic forms and discourses (journalistic, memorialistic, legal, historic and narrative), as well as social media, audio and visual materials to illustrate the plight of the often nameless victims whom Rivera Hernández calls 'vulnerable subjects', a designation more appropriate than 'victim', one that takes attention away from victimhood and places it on subjecthood, thus humanising the subjects of collective suffering.

The book consists of a chapter-length Introduction and three additional chapters. Beyond chronicling sad victim stories, the author also celebrates the courage and the bravery of the people who are making sacrifices to uncover the truth and run grave risks in their resistance to the most powerful forces on either side of the drug war. Citizens of a country should be defended by their government and by the institutions of the state against random violence caused by criminal elements. Instead, what we have seen in Mexico is a government that has abandoned its responsibility to citizens and let women, journalists and bystanders die in their thousands; and, in some instances, the state even partakes in and profits from criminal activity.

The Introduction details the Mexican government's strategy of confronting the viciousness of drug cartels by escalating the violence, with innocent civilians caught in the middle and suffering abuses from all sides. This policy, evidently a failure, has cost 300,000 lives in Mexico since 2006. One of the reasons why the war on drugs is lasting so long is the lack of accountability of the perpetrators. One judicial instrument proposed in the book is so-called 'transitional justice', that includes a series of legal tools to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. These may include truth and reconciliation commissions, criminal prosecutions, reparation programmes and other legal remedies.

The theoretical framework of *Narratives of Vulnerability* is based upon philosopher Judith Butler's concept of vulnerability as a collectively shared condition that affects certain segments of the population more than others, contingent upon the possession of power. A body, Butler states, is that of an individual but also a social phenomenon, as in 'body politic', for example. Vulnerability of an individual is easy to understand but its effects on the social body, the community at large, is a cardinal question thoroughly dealt with in this book.

Chapter 1 discusses violence in Mexico that affects not only Mexicans, but also Central American migrants who cross Mexico on their way to the United States, fleeing the violence in their own country. The increasingly militarised fight against drug-trafficking organisations by the Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón administrations (2000–12) claimed many civilian victims subsequently dehumanised by the perpetrators, their deaths reported as 'collateral damage'. Public mourning of victims was forcefully discouraged by the state that branded these acts as signs of collaboration with the drug-traffickers.

The killing of the son of a well-known poet, Javier Sicilia, opened up the politicisation of public pain and pointed to the economic roots of the problem: the link

between neoliberal policies and the escalating violence in Mexico. One of the most horrific cases was the 2014 disappearance of 43 college students from Ayotzinapa Teachers' College in Tixtla in the state of Guerrero, discussed at length in Chapter 3. Beyond the fact that the mass disappearance of 43 young men was a tragedy of Biblical proportions, it also exemplified the active collaboration between local, state and federal police, as well as the military, with organised crime, deconstructing the notion of having two sides in this war on drugs fighting each other.

One of the many consequences of the violence is the transformation of those who have lost loved ones into 'experts without credentials'. These are the parents and relatives of the disappeared and murdered who are searching for answers that government officials are unable or unwilling to give them. They are looking to have some closure, to know what happened to their loved ones, and in their extended search they become members of advocacy groups and learn about forensic techniques and other research methods. Their work is not without risk, as those in office with something to hide use their power to forcefully suppress these inquiries. However, the desire for the truth defies the risks, and investigations by family members continue with the help of journalists who literally put their lives on the line to discover the truth, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the book. According to the International Federation of Journalists, in 2019 Mexico was the deadliest country for journalists, even more so than countries at war, like Syria or Afghanistan.

Narratives of Vulnerability successfully uncovers many of the complexities of the drug war, contextualised by an excellent historical analysis of human rights violations that are still taking place in Mexico and Central America. But it is also a hopeful celebration of courage and solidarity and of the value and sanctity of all human lives.

doi:10.1017/S0022216X21000067

Mateja Celestina, *Living Displacement: The Loss and Making of Place in Colombia*

(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. xxiii + 177, £80.00

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Colombia has been in civil conflict for more than six decades, which has resulted in the massive internal forced displacement of peasant farmers (*campesinos*). Displacement in Colombia has been caused by the fighting between right-wing paramilitaries, left-wing guerrillas and the Colombian military: armed groups vying for economic and political power through the struggle over land. Displacement is a strategy of war, both to acquire the land for capitalist accumulation and as a form of social control.