INTRODUCTION

The Persistence of Violence

This book emerged from my desire to understand the history and present moment of violence in Colombia, as incarnated in popular culture. It bears in mind the immediate and vital question of a putative end to the conflict involving the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the FARC) and other *guerrilla*[1]—a conflict that has gripped the nation during the lifetime of virtually all its citizens. But the book does not principally focus on that issue. Instead, it considers violence "beyond" the conflict, as simultaneously an ordinary and extraordinary part of Colombian life; something both normal and shocking, accepted and reviled—and contested.

My personal experience of Colombia dates from inaugurating the country's first doctoral program in communications, at the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla in 2011. I subsequently worked for twelve weeks a year at UniNorte across three annual visits between 2014 and 2018, giving graduate classes when in Colombia, and advising doctoral students and researching and writing with faculty then and while away. I also taught for some months at the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar in Cartagena de Indias in 2019. Over my time spent on the Caribbean coast, I have addressed various topics related to the popular and violence, on my own and with colleagues. I learnt much from them and from students. *The Persistence of Violence* is the product of those efforts, and several chapters involve coauthors, from Barranquilla, Bogotá, and Medellín.

So unlike many scholars from the Global North who write about Colombia, I did not study the country in college or graduate school; nor did I go there to do fieldwork. My research may therefore suffer from a lack of formal training—but benefit from an immersion in learning and teaching, and a network of contacts of the kind that can become available to an established, and fortunate, professor.

The fundamental theme animating *The Persistence of Violence* is that Colombia's headline story, about the peace process with the FARC and attendant controversies, may not deal adequately with a fundamental contradiction of the nation, famously identified by Gabriel García Márquez in his pictorial essay *Por*

un país al alcance de los niños (*A Country for Children*) (1998). Gabo, as he is known in the region, wrote evocatively about a common dualism within the population that spanned generosity and violence, warmth and hatred. He described a powerful bifurcation coursing through Colombia, the product of its particular pattern of invasion, dispossession, and enslavement. This resulted in a restless quest to identify the subject of violence—is it the nation, the right, the left, the landowners, the state? At one point in *La mala hora* (*The Hour of Evil*), Gabo says: "Es todo el pueblo y no es nadie" (It's the whole town and it's nobody) (García Márquez 1987: 89).

He spoke of a place that was two countries in one—the ideal and the real—with all the associated paradoxes of a semiotic encounter between *langue* and *parole*, the abstract and the everyday:

- A proclivity for making laws and ignoring them
- A cathexis onto paperwork amid contempt for bureaucratic norms
- A dedicated work ethic and love of get-rich-quick schemes
- A taste for creating icons, then ridiculing and bringing them down
- An obsession with sporting triumph and failure, greater than any identification with human suffering
- A love of life mixed with murderous tendencies
- An adoration of animals but neglect of the loss of species and the environment in general, alongside imperilment of one of the world's great rivers
- A loathing of negative international stereotypes of Colombia while failing to admit that the reality may be worse (García Márquez 1998: 10–11)

García Márquez deemed Colombians capable of both the noblest and the most abject acts imaginable, in a world where it seemed anyone might do anything, from the beautiful to the horrendous. Like many others, I have found this duality—bizarrely akin to Barthes's renowned binary list, "J'aime, je n'aime pas" (I like, I don't like) (1994: 116–117)—enormously suggestive.

Gabo's topics enumerated above inspired the themes covered in the chapters to follow. The book you hold in your hands examines violence in Colombia as reflected, refracted, generated, and criticized at specific sites:

- Football, *narcotraficantes*, and militarism
- Tourism, sexual exploitation, and imperialism
- Journalism, *narconovelas*, and gender
- The environment and emotion

Victor Hugo is reported to have satirized the 1863 Colombian Constitution as "faite des anges" (written for angels) (quoted in Blanquer and Gros 1996).[2] The nation labors under what the *Financial Times* calls "extreme legalism": a bewil-

dering array of laws and courts of review, matched only by its bewildering array of lawbreakers (Rathbone and Long 2018). This collective irony is emblematized by Francisco José de Paula Santander Omaña, the man regarded as the country's founding parent of law following independence who was in fact a key figure in maintaining an intransigent political-economic elite (Calvino Ospina 2008: 13).

The apparent lawfulness of what has been a political democracy for six decades leads many outsiders to admire seemingly significant governmental initiatives. For example, the International Organization for Migration details well-codified Colombian legislation forbidding sexual violence (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones 2015); the world's most famous liberal philosopher praises it for policies protecting women (Rawls 1999: 110); and the state produces impressive-looking reports for the UN's Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2017). But anyone with material knowledge knows that this is one more case where policing, the courts, government, and everyday life are distant from such ideals and claims. Hence the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) producing an *Integrity Review* as part of deciding on Colombia's accession to the group and to propose a way forward to genuine peace (2017). It continues to find major flaws in the country's claims that it is implementing the Organisation's Anti-Bribery Convention (OECD Working Group on Bribery 2019). For the long-standing and contemporary reality is that many citizens bribe public officials as a matter of course. They regard Colombia as a profoundly corrupt blend of collusive private and public interests, clientelism, fraudulent elections, and criminal-justice abuses (Transparency International and Chr. Michelson Institute 2013; Transparency International 2017).

The situation is summed up in the idiomatic expressions (not unique to Colombia, but particularly popular there) "Hecha la ley, hecha la trampa" (When you pass a law, you create a loophole) and "muy viva" (truly alive)—the notion that one must be slyly on the make to be fully "with it." For example, the mythic *vivo* (street sharp), makes his living from the *tonto* (fool) who actually bothers to work in the formal economy. This is a means of dealing with the duality of a supposedly open capitalist system governed by rules and open to competition, versus the reality of stubbornly immobile oligarchies and oligopolies.

That inevitably leads to stereotypes from foreign observers. It is a shock, even from this distance, to read Darwin referring to "the savages of Colombia" (2008: 307). A century and a half later, Eric Hobsbawm alarmingly described the country as "a naturally bloodthirsty culture" (1994: 52). Edgar Morin typifies Colombia as taking the underside to all societies and internationalizing it via drugs (Baudrillard and Morin 2004: 61). This puts such thinkers uncomfortably close to elites in Bogotá and Washington, who speak "as if Colombians had an innate propensity to shed one another's blood" (Hylton 2006: 8) and the

common local discourse arguing that Colombia is a "sick" society (Woodward 2018). The head of the Instituto Colombiano de Medicina Legal (Colombian Institute of Legal Medicine) reflected on the 2016 peace accord by saying that the population had interiorized violence as ordinary conduct. Its form might alter with history, but a dark underlying reality still characterized the nation (Valdés 2017).

Alongside Gabo's imaginative cultural interpretations and others' Olympian generalizations, some basic definitions and data are necessary in order to comprehend the grisly phenomenon of Colombia's persistent violence. The statistics and stories make chilling reading:

- Millions killed over the life of the country
- The largest national displacement of a citizenry in history
- The ongoing kidnapping, murder, and "disappearance" of activists[3] and journalists
- Levels of domestic and street violence that both color and transcend the conflict

Mass killings in what is now Colombia began with the Spanish state's attacks on the Muisca people in 1595. The Catholic Church collaborated: it sought the destruction of alternative religious materials and customs, with information obtained through torture and punishment gladly meted out (González and González 2007: 60–61). Ever since, human devastation has taken so many forms, and in so many, often isolated, parts of the country, that even with the increasingly systematic collection of data, judicial and medical statisticians, the police, and peace activists all doubt the reliability of the numbers they come up with and compare, which tend to stress urban violence, neglecting rural realities (Rubio 2000; Cumbre Agraria et al. 2018).

Of the quarter-of-a-million people killed by firearms worldwide in 2016, half perished in the Americas, with Colombia a leading contributor (Global Burden of Disease 2016 Injury Collaborators 2018). The first official Colombian homicide figures, from 1938, counted sixteen murders per hundred thousand residents. The ratio diminished with the introduction of limited hours of alcohol availability, but was spurred on again by contests over cocaine production and distribution, increasing in the 1950s and hovering between twenty and thirty deaths per hundred thousand until a dramatic hike in the 1980s, from forty to eighty. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014: 22–23, 26, 37, 75–76). By 2015, the ratio had fallen to seventeen, but that was still almost double the level considered to be endemic (Guerrero and Fandiño-Losada 2017).

Both Human Rights Watch (2015) and the Colombian government ("Colombia's Santos" 2015) estimate that well over two hundred thousand people have been killed and almost eight million displaced in "the conflict" since the 1960s—but the

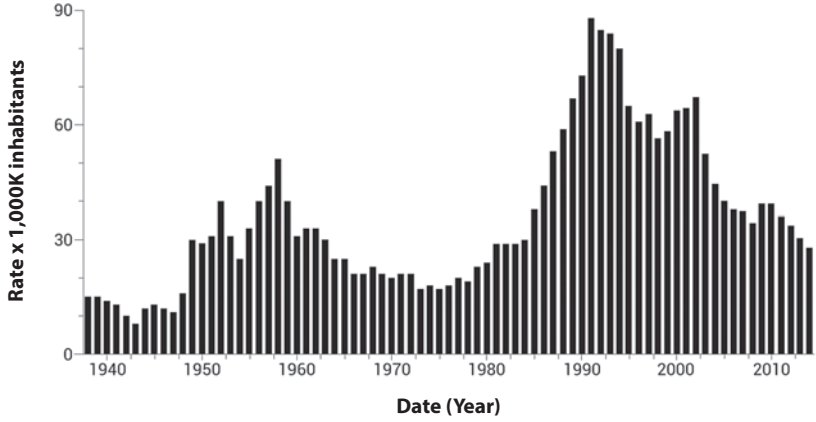

FIGURE 1. Colombian homicide rate per hundred thousand people, 1938–2014. (Source: Guerrero and Fandiño-Losada, 2017.)

state only began systematic collection of these data in 1985, and 85 percent of murders probably elude human-rights discourse (Human Rights Watch 2017: 152). They are often defined as "common crime" (W. Tate 2007: 4) but approach warlike figures, especially with three thousand people a year kidnapped at the turn of the century and an annual average between 1990 and 2010 of 1,800 (see figure 1) (Pécaut 2001; Bergman 2018: 64).

In 2018, the state announced that the conflict had claimed 262,197 lives—of whom just 46,813 were combatants (Romero 2018), with the *paramilitares* specializing in mass killings and disappearances, the *guerrilla* in kidnapping, and the military in falsifying the number of enemies killed by counting civilians they had murdered (Hunt 2009; Uribe Alarcón 2011; Aranguren Romero 2017: 2–3; Human Rights Watch 2017; Bergman 2018: 64). The Institute for Economics & Peace's *Global Terrorism Index* ranks the country in 27th place worldwide, 28 points above any other South American state (2018: 38). Improvised explosive devices killed 221 Colombians in 2018, up from 57 the year before (Oquendo 2019). Since the FARC came out of jungle hideouts in 2017, handed over their arms, and moved to supposedly safe areas, many have been assassinated: 31 in 2017, 65 in 2018, and 77 in 2019 (Torrado 2019; United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia 2019). Official figures for 2019 list over ten thousand homicides in the first eleven months, up more than 2 percent on 2018 ("Colombia cierra" 2019). One wonders how the nation could embark on "a new era of post-conflict when the paramilitary's surmounting debt with humanity is nowhere close to being paid" (Hristov 2014: xviii; see also Manrique Rueda and Tanner 2016; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 2018b).

How to explain the persistent violence? Colombia's mythic nineteenth-century liberator, Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar Palacios

Ponte y Blanco, thought of the "new" Americans as bicultural products of usurping Spaniards and resistant indigenous folk, and hence inheritors of both a rule-governed struggle to impose empire and a fiercely elemental refusal of invasion and conquest (Villota Galeano 2017). The reality was that the violence of the *conquista* (conquest) amplified following independence, as the new *criollo* rulers (direct descendants of the Spanish) sought to take over, govern, and exploit more and more territory in order to confirm their colonization, statehood, and economic future (Colmenares 1996). Bolívar's remarkable 1815 letter from Jamaica leaves no doubt as to his preferred identity. Even though he acknowledges Spanish "[a]trocities [that] transcend the limits of human perversity," refers to a "genocide," and regards slavery as "inherently corrupt," Bolívar says "natives [must] become civilized," and deems Columbus to be "the creator of our hemisphere" (2003: 13, 18, 26–27). That mythic version of the struggle for independence has been handed down over generations. It denies the role of Afro-descendant and indigenous Colombians in the movement (Cote 2019) and sidesteps Bolívar's own taste for violence (García Márquez 1998).

Local and foreign novelists, essayists, activists, survivors, fighters, and social scientists have endeavored to explain the long and disturbing history of Colombia's violence (Farnsworth-Alvear et al. 2017).[4] These *violentólogos* attribute the nation's violent characteristics to numerous causes in addition to those mentioned by Gabo and Bolívar (García Villegas 2015). They include the following:

- A topography that militates against the effective government of numerous regions (Cauca, Antioquia, the Andes, and the north coast) with people left to fight for terrain and power in the absence of a functioning state
- Machismo
- Systematic class inequality
- Discrimination against indigenous and Afro-descended Colombians
- Marxism
- The role of the United States, from the creation of the Panama Canal to Plan Colombia and Peace Colombia (today's military policies)
- The World Bank making Colombia a template for development via the exploitation of natural resources and antisocialist strategies
- The Janus face of neoliberalism, as a blend of economic deregulation and statist reformation of citizens
- Cross-generational oligarchy
- Media dominated by clientelist and familial ties to politics
- Paramilitary, *guerrilla*, and mafia forces
- Kidnapping, drug dealing, and the informal economy
- A state riddled with corruption
- Public distrust of the police, the judiciary, and politics

Since the 1960s, being in a "state of siege" has become routine in Colombia, enabling exponential growth in the size, reach, and violence of the military and its U.S. partners. Emergency is a daily condition; counterinsurgency, a norm of political organization (Aranguren Romero 2017: 13–14). No surprise, then, that the late 2019 nationwide protests against neoliberal authoritarianism saw 170,000 troops mobilized within moments ("Colombia Anti-Government" 2019).

The country "is synonymous with 'violence'" in a "global imagination . . . of kidnappings and assassinations" (Karl 2017: 1). In the eyes of "most international observers, violence remains the primary evidence of Colombian national failure" (W. Tate 2007: 31)—what Alfredo Molano has called its "diabólica inercia" (diabolical inertia) (2001: 13). No wonder Ana María Ochoa Gautier describes violence as the country's "foundational myth" (2014: 159) and Idelber Avelar avows that it "has come to represent Latin America's ultimate instance of violence as a constant, pervasive element in the nation's self-definition" (2004: 20).

For many Colombians, familial violence, from murder to sexual assault, is "a daily occurrence," generally associated with machismo, alcohol, narcotics, and unemployment. As a consequence, the streets often feel safer to children than their homes, leading to new forms of criminality and violence deriving from drug use and truancy (Moser and McIlwaine 2000: 3–4). Polling indicates that many Colombians endorse personal and systematic violence alike. Half the urban population believes in taking force into their own hands and killing to protect their families. A third favors eliminating criminality through *limpieza social* (social cleansing) and deploying corporal punishment against children (Guerrero and Fandiño-Losada 2017). It is estimated that 39 percent of children under the age of 4 have suffered such physical assaults at home (Cuartas 2018). And while Law 294 of 1996 only permits parents to "correct them and sanction them moderately," Civil Code 1883 allows "violent punishment in the home" (Global Initiative 2018).

Comparative social psychology proposes that authoritarian conservative ideology is close to Colombians' sense of a national self and may involve a certain admiration for violence when associated with success (Espinosa Pezzia et al. 2017). Public-opinion research suggests that just half the population favors democracy over other forms of government—a lower percentage than in most of the continent—and voter turnout is the lowest across Latin America (Hellinger 2015: 8, 397). Such attitudes, born of a history of intense malevolence, contrast with much of the Global North (Puig-i-Abril and Rojas 2018). True believers in biological roots of conduct throw their hands in the air when thinking about Colombia (Raine 2013: 125) or blame it on the "decivilizing" antics of "gangs of drugged or drunken hooligans" (Pinker 2011: 437).

Prior to explaining the history and contemporaneity of this violence and outlining the chapters to come, I want to spend some time working in more conceptual detail on two key themes: violence and the popular.

VIOLENCE

Across the globe, violence is one of the world's most pressing yet enduring issues. From time immemorial, it has been a key theme of religion, social organization, family dynamics, and politics—a central concern of public policy, social movements, academic research, journalism, drama, fiction, military strategy, god-bothering, and policing. In other words, violence is a universal problem. Whether we look at nuclear weaponry, civil war, or domestic assault, violence stalks both social and interpersonal relations. I cannot imagine newspapers, current-affairs programs, or congressional debates without it.

Colombians under the age of 75 have no experience of life beyond the conflict/civil war that began in the 1940s. For women around the world, both the street and the home can be places where violence must be avoided on a daily basis (Goel and Goodmark 2015). The World Health Organization (WHO) (2017) estimates that a third of women have suffered physically at the hands of lovers. For working-class U.S. youth, the military is a "poverty draft" (Mariscal 2006). Australians date their emergence as a nation from the bloody attempt to invade Turkey in 1915 (McKay 2018). French and U.S. citizens rise to national anthems celebrating weaponry and slaughter. Colombians sing along to words glorifying the fact that their land emerged from "surcos de dolores" (furrows of pain) and "se baña en sangre de héroes" (bathes in the blood of heroes).[5] Marginalized, low-income groups in Colombia came up with sixty different definitions of violence in the late 1990s, with most connected to economic deprivation (Moser and McIlwaine 2000: 2). Such linguistic distinctions may derive from profound experience: regression analysis correlates violence with income inequality across Colombia's regions like no other factor, while at the urban level key elements also include poverty, the labor market, and education (Cotte Poveda 2012, 2011). Bogotá's incapacity to keep its citizens safe and govern whole swaths of the country places under erasure its ability to govern.

Around the world, there are differences between state, group, and interpersonal violence; between planned and passional violence; and between fatal and nonfatal forms. And even free-speech absolutists worry that hateful language, whether interpersonal or demagogic, may index or provoke violence. The WHO favors this broad definition:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. It takes the forms of self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. (2002)

That focus on intentionality, power, and threats has set the tone for many scholars, states, and activists (Lee 2019).

The OECD specifies political violence as

> the use of force towards a political end that is perpetrated to advance the position of a person or group defined by their political position in society. Governments, state militaries, rebels, terrorist organisations and militias engage in political violence, as well as actors who may adopt both political and criminal motives. (2016: 20)

It describes social violence like this:

> a broader manifestation of grievances, criminal behaviours and interpersonal violence in society. These include multiple types of crime, homicides, and interpersonal and self-directed violence. (2016: 20)

The United Nations defines violence against women as

> any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (1993)

Official pronouncements and statistics clearly don't cover the totality of violence. But they derive from scholarly and social-movement influences as well as governmental ones and affect the way we calculate the phenomenon's dimensions. They must be understood through the lens of theoretical reasoning, whether via philosophy or faith.

A lock on the legitimate use of force is foundational to the essence of the state. It is intimately bound up with the nation via mythic origins and obligations, through policing and war. Weber's classic definition of sovereignty is of a "human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (1946: 78). Achille Mbembe modifies Weber's account to argue that "necropolitics" is the state's way of life, "that the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (2003: 11). Both are of course dependent on Tolstoy's provocation that "government is violence" (1990).

Wars are generally thought of as occurring between governments. Few theorists of war have been able to transcend von Clausewitz's capacious yet precise definition of it (Sharma 2015), even if his use of the first-person plural is troubling in its certitude about the allegedly universal desire for power: "War is . . . an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" (von Clausewitz 1989: 75). Von Clausewitz avowed that it "is not merely an act of policy but a true political Instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means" (1989: 87).[6] Yet Michael Howard suggests that wars have long been understood

as "an aberration in human affairs . . . an occurrence beyond rational control," and more recently as effects of masculinity, class greed, or evolutionary necessity (1984: 90). Those accounts still resonate, but we have some newer ones.

Institutionalist political science identifies "power theories, power transition theories, the relationship between economic interdependence and war, diversionary theories of conflict, domestic coalitional theories, and the nature of decision-making under risk and uncertainty" (Levy 1998: 139). Quantoid neoliberals advise the following:

> There are two prerequisites for a war between (rational) actors. One is that the costs of war cannot be overwhelmingly high . . . there must be some plausible situations in the eyes of the decision makers such that the anticipated gains from a war in terms of resources, power, glory, territory, and so forth exceed the expected costs of conflict. Second, . . . there has to be a failure in bargaining, so that for some reason there is an inability to reach a mutually advantageous and enforceable agreement. (Jackson and Morelli 2011)

This decontextualized game theory, founded on rational action as defined by a capitalist consumer mentality, dominates the deracinated world of mainstream political science—the reductive, selfish side of rationality (Altman 2015; Meadwell 2016). Psychological explanations have been diminished to such assumptions and their cozily artificial experiments (Böhm et al. 2015); cliometricians are also subject to the imposing spells of this warlockcraft (Eloranta 2016; Jenke and Gelpi 2017).

Such approaches form part of the warfare/welfare mentality that colors U.S. and northern European social science, alongside service to capital. In the case of war, we see such forms of life adopted and encouraged by technocrats and militarists alike (Roxborough 2015). In short, mainstream academia, diplomacy, and the military are wedded to the notion that "war between states is to be seen in terms of rationally decided aggression rather than in the internationalization of social conflict" (Halliday 1990: 207).

Contra those perspectives, we confront J. A. Hobson's (1902) ideas about imperial conquest being driven by the capitalist problem of domestic overproduction; Marxist theories of class war caused by unequal control of the means of production; Maoist arguments for the peasantry as motors of revolutionary change; feminist critiques of masculine violence; and postcolonial insights into wars that derive from decolonizing cartography (Gruffydd Jones 2006).

Keynes (1936: 381) provides a succinct political-economic explanation:

> War has several causes. Dictators and others such, to whom war offers, in expectation at least, a pleasurable excitement, find it easy to work on the natural bellicosity of their peoples. But, over and above this, facilitating their task of fanning the

popular flame, are the economic causes of war, namely, the pressure of population and the competitive struggle for markets

The development economist Frances Stewart (2002) advises the following:

- The incidence of war has been rising since 1950, mostly within rather than between states.
- Wars may be prompted by race and religion, but with underlying economic causes.
- The principal stimuli are political, economic, and social inequality; poverty; economic stagnation; poor government; high unemployment; environmental degradation; and individual incentives.

The Royal Geographical Society nominates "land disputes, politics, religious and cultural differences and the distribution and use of resources" as causes of war, while the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research database finds that ideological struggle is a source of most wars, generally nested with other factors.[7]

Like states, most religions take the codification and enactment of violence as fundamental to their very being, as any glance at doctrines of allegedly just war or putatively holy tracts will attest (Finlay 2019). For true believers, deities are intimately bound to crime and punishment, requiring them to "root . . . out heresy, natural impulses, and evil" (Fanon 2004: 176). Virtually all religions justify violence under defined circumstances, and a desire for their gods to rule humanity with unquestioned authority (Popovski et al. 2009; Jerryson et al. 2013). Prelates of righteous, omniscient deities ready to judge and mete out painful punishment are matched by political theorists and military commanders discerning when and how might is right in order to make the remaining life 'better.' Sometimes these groups overlap in their membership.

The Olympian idea of violence as purifying also relates to secular revolutionary fantasies about clearing away the past to free the future. Hence Engels (1968: 151, 154) and Rosa Luxemburg (2004: 64) saying acts of violence are ipso facto political, as private property only emerges from theft and assault, notably during primitive accumulation; Sorel (2004) and Michels (2001) viewing proletarian violence as a riposte to decadence that paradoxically revives the bourgeoisie; or Sartre naming it "the midwife of history" in his endorsement of "murderous rampage" as the "collective unconscious" of the colonized to their subjugation. One must destroy colonial authority in order to "erase the marks of violence: violence alone can eliminate them" (2004: 117, 127, 135). In Fanon's words, "decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives" (2004: 165). For her part, Emma Goldman saw political violence as a response to "accumulated forces in our social and economic life," akin to Nature's "storm and lightning"; it "may

destroy life and cause great loss," but "also bring relief" (1917: 1). Nietzsche regarded it as crucial to modernity (2002: 78).

Sexuality and gender issues are crucial to comprehending violence. Wherever you look, from diplomats to bombardiers to correspondents, war is an implicitly male activity. This is rarely if ever recognized in mainstream media coverage and academic knowledge, or problematized as such (Ackerly et al. 2006; Hearn 2012; Sjoberg 2013). But the astonishing inequality between men and women, in socioeconomic power and cultural representation alike, relies on the threat and the actuality of violence to undergird it, as exemplified in the fact that so many more men than women bear arms, both inside and outside the military. Violence between men is also important in determining who among them obtains the spoils of this gendered dominance, and as an index of, and displacement from, other crises such as economic disadvantage (Connell 2005: 82–83).

Feminist international relations theory stresses the significance of gender in the causes of war, emphasizing these factors at structural and interpersonal levels, from across the world system to internal dynamics within nations, including the masculine priorities and personalities that drive conflicts. At the level of mythology, the "right" way of doing violence births ideas of male nobility, from protective dueling knights to endless military campaigns allegedly waged in the name of women, whose putative vulnerability is routinely invoked as a justification for conflicts, even as they suffer from the violence that ensues (Riley et al. 2008; Mackie 2012). Of course, the claim that women are naturally nurturing or pacific has not stood up to a multitude of counter-examples, from feminist *guerrilla* (in the FARC as elsewhere) to women who are violent to children (Enloe 1983; Feinman 2000; Rayas Velasco 2009). But this violence is in no way symmetrical with male militarism.

Recent, rather sanguine, analyses argue that war is, so to speak, dying out. They rely on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, which emphasizes state participation and battlefield casualties. The Program privileges a form of warfare that has been partially superseded by violence done to civilians by non-state actors (Kaldor 2012: 10–11). That tendency underscores that fully-fledged, declared wars are only the most spectacular and all-encompassing form of violence.

POPULAR CULTURE

Unsurprisingly, violence is a common theme in popular culture. Much drama derives from interpersonal and international conflict, many sports are dedicated to physical brutalization, and numerous social anxieties derive from the fear that representing violence may encourage it.

The word *popular* generally denotes "of the people," "by the people," and "for the people." In other words, the popular both constitutes and is constituted by the following:

- Subjects, whom it incarnates via such genres as sports, information, and drama
- Workers, who produce performances and recordings
- Institutions, which industrialize, regulate, and sell their work
- Audiences, who interpret it

In Latin America, however, the word *popular* connotes the proletarian, the peasant, or the poor and their production of meaning: "prácticas culturales de las clases de bajos ingresos y/o de grupos racializados o subordinados que *no* se han domesticado al negociar su entrada en las esferas mediáticas nacionales o globales" (cultural practices of low-income classes and/or racialized or subordinated groups who have neither been disciplined, nor have they tailored their points of entry into national or global media spheres) (Yúdice 2016: 95). *The Persistence of Violence* moves easily and uneasily—as one can and must—between hegemonic Anglo understandings of the popular and its Latin American connotations, which are both similar and different from what one finds elsewhere.

The word *culture* derives from the Latin *colere*, which describes tending and developing agriculture (Benhabib 2002: 2; Adorno 2009: 146). With the advent of capitalism's division of labor, culture paradoxically came to *embody* instrumentalism and to *abjure* it, via the industrialization of farming, on the one hand, and the cultivation of individual taste, on the other. Eighteenth-century Spanish, French, and German dictionaries document this metaphorical shift from agricultural cultivation to spiritual elevation. As the spread of literacy and printing saw customs and laws passed on, governed, and adjudicated through the written word, cultural texts supplemented and supplanted physical force as guarantors of authority. With the Industrial Revolution, populations urbanized, food was imported, and textual forms were exchanged. An emergent consumer society produced such events as racing, opera, exhibits, and balls. The impact of this shift was indexed in cultural labor: *poligrafi* in fifteenth-century Venice and hacks in eighteenth-century London wrote popular and influential conduct books. These works of instruction on everyday life marked the textualization of custom and the development of new occupations. Anxieties about cultural imperialism also appeared, via Islamic debates over Western domination (Mowlana 2000; Briggs and Burke 2003).

Immanuel Kant ideologized these commercial and imperial changes, arguing that culture ensured "conformity to laws without the law." Aesthetics could generate "morally practical precepts," schooling people to transcend particular interests via the development of a "*public* sense, i.e., a faculty of judging which in its reflective act takes account (*a priori*) of the mode of representation of everyone else . . . to weigh its judgement with the collective reason of mankind" (2007: 123). Kant envisaged an "exit from . . . self-incurred immaturity," independent of religion, government, or commerce (1996: 62).

Culture's organic law and lore, and their textual manifestations, have come to represent each "epoch's consciousness of itself" (Althusser 1969: 108). As a consequence, audiences, creators, governments, and corporations make extraordinary investments in it. For imperial Britain, the study of culture formed "the core of the educational system." It was "believed to have peculiar virtues in producing politicians, civil servants, Imperial administrators and legislators," incarnating and indexing "the arcane wisdom of the Establishment" (Plumb 1964: 7) to reproduce and renovate what Matthew Arnold called "that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman" (1875: x).

Culture has usually been understood in two quasi-Kantian registers, via the social sciences and the humanities. They emerged as secular alternatives to deistic knowledge (Schelling 1914) focused on dual forms of "*self-realization*" (Weber 2000)—truth and beauty. This heuristic distinction grew substantive as time passed (Williams 1983: 38). Culture came to be understood as a marker of differences and similarities in taste and status within groups. It could be explored interpretatively or methodically.

So art is understood through iconography, quality, and representativeness, as framed by cultural criticism and history. The social is understood through language, religion, custom, time, space, and exchange, as framed by ethnography and statistics. Whereas art articulates differences within populations via symbolic norms (for example, providing some of us with the cultural capital to appreciate high culture) the social articulates such differences via social norms (such as legitimizing inequality through doctrines of human capital) (Bourdieu 1984; Wallerstein 1989). An aesthetic discourse about culture sees it elevating people above ordinary life, transcending body, time, and place. A folkloric discourse expects culture to settle us into society through the wellsprings of community, as part of daily existence. A populist discourse idealizes fun, offering secular transcendence through joy (Frith 1991: 106–07).

For some Anglo analysts, popular culture is the apex of modernity. It stands for the expansion of civil society—the moment in history when the state becomes receptive to, and part of, the general community. The general population is hence made part of the social rather than excluded from the means and politics of political calculation. This occurs along with diminished authority, augmented rights, and newly intense, large-scale human interactions that are necessitated by industrialization and aided by the media: the spread of advertising is taken as a model for the breakdown of social barriers, exemplifying the triumph of the popular (Shils 1966; Hartley 1992). "Administrative research" was named and valued in the 1940s and operates under this sanguine sign (Lazarsfeld 1941). It supports technological innovation, buoyant demand, audience measurement, marketing, regulation, enforcement of property relations, and so on, in the name of capitalist efficiency and governmental normativity—making capitalism function by ensuring a skillful, willing, and docile populace.

But popular culture also elicits critique. At the onset of European imperialism, Antonio de Nebrija wrote in his *Grammar of the Castilian Language*, published in the fateful year 1492, that one must systematize and promulgate an orthodox Spanish in order to elevate readers beyond "romances or stories" that consisted of "a thousand lies and errors" (2016: 203). And for centuries, the links between art as a form of market-based entertainment and a reflection and generator of social identities have produced very varied reactions: during Europe's Industrial Revolution, anxieties about a suddenly urbanized and educated population raised the prospect of a long-feared "ochlocracy" of "the worthless mob" (Pufendorf 2000: 144). Ever since, theorists from both right and left have argued that newly literate or minimally educated publics could be manipulated by demagogues. Bourgeois economics may assume that rational consumers determine what is popular culture, but even neoclassical/neoliberal chorines worry that ordinary people can be bamboozled by unscrupulously fluent ones. Marxism has often viewed popular culture as a route to false consciousness that diverts the working class from recognizing its economic oppression; feminist approaches have moved between condemning the popular as a similar distraction from gendered consciousness and celebrating it as a distinctive part of women's culture; and cultural studies has regarded it as a key location for the symbolic resistance of class, race, and gender oppression (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Mattelart 1980; Smith 1987).

There has been a cross-generational, cross-disciplinary emphasis on the number and conduct of audiences to popular culture: where they came from, how many there were, and what they did as a consequence. Such concerns are coupled with a focus on content: *what* were audiences watching when they. . . . Both audiences and texts are conceived of as empirical entities that can and must be known, via research instruments derived from sociology, the psy-function, criticism, demography, linguistics, communications, law, anthropology, accountancy, economics, and marketing.

Administrative research was originally juxtaposed with the anti-Nazi Frankfurt School's critiques of popular culture, which suggest that its commercial conditions "impress . . . the same stamp on everything." The principals of that School, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1977), saw consumers and citizens as manipulated from the social order's economic apex, with "[d]omination" masquerading as choice in a "society alienated from itself." On this reading, culture becomes just one more industrial process, ruled by economic forces that diminish ideological or generic innovation in favor of standardization. That organizational form necessitates repetition rather than difference, because of the factory-like production of film, music, news, and radio.

The Frankfurt School and its adherents worry that popular culture commodifies and governmentalizes signification. As a consequence, while semiosis begins as a reflection of reality, commodity signs displace representations of the truth

with false information. Then these two delineable phases of truth and lies become indistinct. Once underlying reality is lost, signs become self-referential, with no residual correspondence to the real: they have adopted the form of their own simulation (Baudrillard 1988). People are said to buy commodities to give meaning to their lives because societies no longer make them feel as though they belong. This concatenating simulation has implications for the aesthetic and social hierarchies that "regulate and structure . . . individual and collective lives" (Parekh 2000: 143) in competitive ways that harness popular culture for social and commercial purposes. For this reason, analysts discern close ties between ideological content and industrial impact.

More positive responses to popular culture also exist within critical thought. For example, Brecht admired, copied, and sought to transcend the popular, welcoming passionate crowds as potential sites of resistance to government and capital (1964). Even Adorno reflected that sports had "an anti-barbaric and anti-sadistic effect by means of fair play, a spirit of chivalry, and consideration for the weak" (2005: 196–197). Historical and contemporary analyses of slaves, crowds, pirates, bandits, minorities, women, and the working class have utilized archival, ethnographic, and statistical methods to emphasize day-to-day noncompliance with authority, via practices of popular-cultural consumption that frequently turn into practices of cultural production. For instance, U.K. research has lit upon Teddy Boys, Mods, bikers, skinheads, punks, school students, teen girls, Rastas, truants, dropouts, and magazine readers as magical agents of history—groups who deviated from the norms of schooling and the transition to work, thereby generating moral panics. Scholar-activists examine the structural underpinnings to collective style, investigating how bricolage subverts the achievement-oriented, materialistic values and appearance of the middle class. The working assumption has often been that subordinate groups adopt and adapt signs and objects from dominant culture, reorganizing them to manufacture new meanings. The oppressed become producers of new fashions, inscribing alienation, difference, and powerlessness on their bodies (Leong 1992).

A commitment to social and cultural justice as well as academic theorization and research has proven magnetic to many subordinate groups embarking on international academic exchange over the last fifty years. Hence the appeal of studying popular culture not only at the conventional scholarly metropoles of the United States and Britain, but in Colombia, Brazil, Turkey, India, and other important sites that are all too accustomed to being theorized and analyzed; and all too *un*familiar with being regarded as the *sources* of ideas, not merely places for their application.

Perhaps the foremost theorist of popular culture in critical thinking of the kind represented in *The Persistence of Violence* is Gramsci. He maintained that each social group creates "organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic

but also in the social and political fields": the industrial technology, law, economy, and culture of each group. The "'organic' intellectuals that every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development" assist in the emergence of that class, for example via military expertise. Intellectuals operate in "[c]ivil society . . . the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private,' that of 'political society' or 'the State.'" They represent the "'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society" as well as the "'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'juridical' government." Ordinary people give "spontaneous' consent" to the "general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci 1978: 5–7, 12). In other words, popular culture legitimizes socioeconomic-political arrangements in the public mind and can be a site of struggle as well as domination. Gramsci also crucially noted that the words for "national" and "popular" were similar in several languages, such was their affinity, and called for a closer alignment between everyday concerns and intellectual practice to reflect that linguistic kinship and animate socialism (2000: 366). The process might take dialectical form: for example, cinema has been the property and design of elites seeking to recruit the population to their projects through film's carnivalesque expressivity and mythologies of upward mobility, but brokered through multinational taste cultures of a very different kind that bring status and rewards from a cosmopolitan cultural élite.

Raymond Williams (1977) drew on the idea of residual, dominant, and emergent hegemonies to describe the process whereby class formations compete over narratives that legitimize social control. Examples of these categories might be the remains of an empire, a modern mixed economy, and neoliberal transformation, respectively. Extensive use has been made of Gramsci's beyond the Global North, in South Asia and segments of the Arab and African worlds (Marks and Engels 1994; Patnaik 2004; Dabashi 2013). Across Latin America, his notion of the national popular harnessing class interests is common sense for both left and right (Massardo 1999); for example, music represented this incorporation of popular urges into officially-sanctioned and -enjoyed culture in many parts of the region from the 1920s to the 1940s (Yúdice 2016).

I well remember arriving late to a meeting in Guadalajara prior to the 2006 presidential elections in Mexico, when it seemed likely that the left would triumph. A group had been assembled to plan a new cultural policy. I entered quietly and remained so, in part due to my lateness and in part through lack of familiarity with the people present. Two middle-aged men were citing Gramsci and Benjamin. I thought "Good grief, here we go again—leftist academics droning on about Euro theorists. Pointless." Little did I know. For the speakers were both members of Congress, including a senator; one a survivor of the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, the other a campaigner for media reform. Unlike my experience of the white-settler colonies and Britain, such embodied theorization was

part of capital *P* political discourse. In Colombia, Gramsci's ideas have been adopted and adapted since the 1950s by academics, social movements, arts educators, writers, the teachers' union, and the Communist Party, which proceeded to endorse guerrilla resistance (Brands 2010: 17; Santofimio-Ortiz 2018).

Hegemonic cultural ideas have always mattered. They informed imperial expansion through the religious, civilizational fervor of Spain's *conquista de América* (conquest of America), Portugal's *missão civilizadora*, and France and Britain's *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission), as western Europe sought to remake the globe in its own phantasmatic image (Rojas 2002). The Spanish wrote self-aggrandizing tracts to celebrate killing native peoples (Braudel 1984: 393; Colmenares 1996). And from the first days of her empire, Queen Isabella's functionaries established Castilian as a mode of conquest and management. Indeed, the imperial grammarian de Nebrija argued that "language was always the companion of empire." Along with Christianity, it would enable the queen to "put under her yoke many barbarous peoples and nations of alien languages." With physical conquest came linguistic and hence codified rule (2016: 202, 204).

The outcome was religious violence and conversion, a cohort of satraps doing the work of Eurocentrism, and a forceful reaction against foreign cultural domination that has never subsided, exacerbated over the last century by the global entertainment demesne of the United States (Mowlana 2000). This latter element is especially strong in Latin America, in keeping with the Monroe Doctrine, which was enunciated almost two centuries ago to keep Europe out of the Americas by declaring anything that went on in the region's new states to be the business of the United States:

> The Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. (Richardson 2004: 1038–1039)

The Colombian government embraced this policy in 1826, referring to it as the "gospel of the new continent" (quoted in McPherson 2016: 17). And by midcentury, the now-established independence elites sought their own hegemonic *civilización mestiza* (mixed civilization). It would transcend the country's "black and indigenous past" through education, faith, fashion, and conduct (Rojas 2002: xxvi).

Critiques of cultural imperialism have found significant uptake throughout the Global South—not least for their focus on the machinery of propaganda sold to ordinary people by powerful sovereign-states. Such arguments have resonated in everyday talk, broadcast and telecommunications policy, unions, international organizations, nationalistic media and heritage, cultural diplomacy,

anti-Americanism, and postindustrial service-sector planning (see Dorfman and Mattelart 1971; Beltrán and Fox de Cardona 1980; Schiller 1976, 1989). They are exemplified by Armand Mattelart's stinging denunciation of external cultural influence on the Third World:

> In order to camouflage the counter-revolutionary function which it has assigned to communications technology and, in the final analysis, to all the messages of mass culture, imperialism has elevated the mass media to the status of revolutionary agents, and the modern phenomenon of communications to that of revolution itself. (1980: 17)

The concern is that popular culture exported from the Global North transfers its dominant value system to others, through hegemony over news agencies, advertising, market research, public opinion, screen trade, technology transfer, propaganda, telecommunications, and security. There is a corresponding diminution in the vitality and standing of local languages, traditions, and national identities. As Herbert I. Schiller expressed it, "the media-cultural component in a developed, corporate economy supports the economic objectives of the decisive industrial-financial sectors (i.e., the creation and extension of the consumer society)" (1991: 14).

It can be no surprise that Latin Americans generated the theory of dependent development in the 1940s to explain why the industrial takeoff experienced by western Europe and the United States had not occurred elsewhere. It gained adherents across the Global South over the next three decades in reaction to the fact that rich societies at the world core had become so through their colonial and international ventures—*im*porting ideas, fashions, and people from the periphery while *ex*porting manufactured popular culture (Prebisch 1982; Cardoso 2009). When UNESCO formed its International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems in the 1970s, chaired by Séan MacBride, García Márquez was a member. Its landmark 1980 report, *Many Voices, One World*, resonated across the globe. Britain and the United States withdrew from UNESCO, in part because the Commission's radical findings and proposals fell victim to the Cold War (Preston et al. 1989). This critique has enjoyed particular purchase in Latin America and other postcolonial states whose traditions and languages tie them to texts exported from the metropole. That analysis is of value for Colombia, given the oligarchies that run politics and the media and a dependent relationship on U.S. screen drama and music, albeit leavened by black, indigenous, and mestiz@ cultural production. Foreign influences have been enabled by successive generations of local policy makers following the Yanqui dictum of open communications technologies but copyrighted textual markets as a means to development and modernization (Dorfman and Mattelart 1971; Segoviana García 2011; Barranquero Carretero et al. 2017).

And there remains a paradox—possibly a contradiction—in critical engagements with the popular. Whenever spectacle is used effectively by social movements, advertising agencies "borrow" what they see. The fashion and music industries dispatch spies to watch and listen to the popular as part of a restless search for new trends to market. Capitalism appropriates its appropriators, and so do its lackey governments, as per the transmogrification of the term "culture industries" into "creative industries" (Miller 2012) (of which more below).

Popular culture around the globe has become ever more central to economic and social life: world trade in culture increased from US$559.5 billion in 2010 to US$624 billion in 2011 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2013). Popular culture has internationalized, in terms of the export and import of texts, attendant fears of cultural imperialism, and a New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL) (Miller 2018b). A prosperous economic future supposedly lies in finance capital and ideology rather than agriculture and manufacturing—seeking revenue from innovation and intellectual property, not minerals or masses.

Popular culture offers important resources to markets and nations—reactions to the crisis of belonging and economic necessity occasioned by capitalist globalization. It is crucial to advanced and developing economies alike, and can provide the legitimizing ground on which particular groups (e.g., African Americans, lesbians, the hearing impaired, or evangelical Protestants) claim resources and seek inclusion in national and international narratives (see Yúdice 2002 and Martín-Barbero 2003 on Latin America; Colla 2012 and Pahwa and Winegar 2012 on Egypt; Yang 2009 on China; Boateng 2011 on Ghana).

Latin American cultural policy has gone through several transformations in response to this commodity fetishism. The rather musty, dusty sphere of arts policy has become subject to intense criticism for its failure to encompass the popular-culture industries and their relationship to development (Yúdice 2018). But Latin American critics of the old patrimony approach to cultural policy—arts and crafts—did not all wake up with sore heads from a wine-and-cheese gallery opening and turn into prelates of the putative creative industries. Many maintained and even developed their concerns about neoliberalism as it turned its lustful gaze toward culture. They favored an approach that blended solidarity and difference, through a mixture of regional policy making and taking culture beyond markets to recognize the issues confronting indigenous and Afrodescended peoples (Yúdice 2018).

Methodologically and theoretically, we need to be aware of the double-edged side to cultural commodities, as objects of resistance whose very appropriation can then be recommodified. That makes socioeconomic analysis via critical political economy a good ally of representational analysis via close reading. But a certain tendency on both sides has maintained that the two approaches are mutually exclusive: one is concerned with structures of the economy, the other

with structures of meaning. That need not be the case. Historically, the best critical political economy and the best close reading have worked through the imbrication of power and subjectivity at all points on the cultural continuum, bringing together the insights of Gramsci and Frankfurt. Such examples help animate what follows, together with an appreciation of history.

HISTORY

Eduardo Galeano put it well when he wrote that "Colombians suffer violence like a disease, but they do not wear it like a birthmark on their foreheads. The machinery of power . . . is indeed the cause of violence" (2013: 426). For like most sovereign-states, the nation's history has been contoured by the earth-shattering concatenation of political-economic events since the eighteenth century:

- The shift from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy
- The social upheavals of imperialism, colonialism, slavery, war, postcolonialism, industrialization, urbanization, human rights, feminism, and climate change
- The expansion of global capitalism

Against that heady history of exploitation, productivity, democracy, and destruction, one scholarly tradition, populated by conservative ethnonationalists, argues that nations are constants across history, albeit changing their morphology with time and circumstance (Smith 2000). The nation is sustained through supposedly indelible ties: origin myths, languages, customs, races, and religions (Herder 2002).

For those more in thrall to modernity, such "ties" are invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2002). Far from being the outcome of abiding mythologies, the materiality and idea of the nation derived from the Industrial Revolution and imperialism, which brought places together that had not previously deemed themselves linked in any way. Relatively isolated, subsistence villages were transformed by the interdependence engendered by capitalist organizations, the commodification of everyday relations, and the sense of unity generated from nation-binding technologies and institutions, most notably print and public education (Gellner 1988). Since that time, the state articulates the nation as a spirit-in-dwelling, which gives it legitimacy, but which it nonetheless reserves the right to name and monitor; for nations are coterminous with systems of government. Even as the nation is manufactured, it is said to be an already-extant, authentic essence of statehood and personhood.

Discussions with *campesinos* (peasants) about political violence in Colombia generally return to one point of origin: the clearance of the poor from land by murderous means, at the hands of state, *guerrilla*, and *paramilitar* alike (Molano 2001). That suggests the nonessentialist account of nationalism can best help us

understand Colombia's history—that is, in the light of the development and reproduction of national, regional, and global capitalism (Giraldo Durán and Álvarez de Castillo 2018).

Prior to its conquest in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the area we know today as Colombia comprised distinct peoples. Those distinctions were ramified with the administrative geography imposed by Spain, which created western and eastern spheres of control (Safford and Palacios 2002). It soon imported West African slaves to mine gold, leaving the agricultural east largely intact, where indigenous populations generally survived. The colonists' basic unit of social control and economic production alike was the hacienda, a sphere of living and working for slaves and First Peoples. The latter were required to pay tributes to the Spanish Crown. They lived somewhere between servitude and slavery throughout the colonial period (Celis González 2018: 32–33).

The Colombian nation-state was birthed, like many others, in revolutionary struggle over the long period of 1810 to 1824 when the Republic of New Grenada (now Panamá, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia) won independence. The major beneficiaries were hacienda landholders, whose power over people and territory was consolidated at the expense of those with smaller holdings. The requirement to 'pacify' hitherto-neglected terrain as part of this process made violence a core part of extending the authority of state and capital alike and paying the costs of the war by selling off cultivable land. The formalization of land ownership and use militated against the peasantry, who lacked the finance to purchase what was physiocratically theirs. The nation's wealth was being integrated into the world economic system after a period of economic contraction following independence, and class exclusion via race was a core component of ensuring restrictions on how that wealth was distributed internally. The process was in turn colored by divergent interests—conservative Catholic landowners and liberal urban businessmen. Manumission was achieved in 1851 and helped motivate intense struggle. Liberal and Conservative blocs and parties formed to represent different fractions of capital and relationships to religion (Bergquist 1991; Green 2000; Rojas 2002: xxiv; Bértola and Ocampo 2012: 66; Comisión Histórica 2015; Celis González 2018: 33, 35; Pino Uribe 2017).

That binary party system has plagued the country ever since. The power of the two blocs has essentially precluded electoral uprisings and economic redistribution alike; conservative, Spanish-oriented Catholics opposed British-leaning liberals and radicals via their infamous tendency to divide people and formations as *amigo-enemigo* (friend-enemy) (Rojas 2002: xxvii; Giraldo Durán and Álvarez de Castillo 2018). Although this division applied in much of the region, it was nowhere so deep or violent as in Colombia. The blocs fought ten civil wars in the nineteenth century over slavery, land reform, and new institutions, driven in part by U.S. intervention in Panamá's isthmus (then part of Colombia) (Deas 2015).

At the close of the colonial period, the nation's export base was dominated by gold and silver mined in the eastern highlands. It soon diversified, thanks to coffee, tobacco, and quinine, while hitherto-limited imports grew through consumer goods, particularly luxury items. What had been a country in name only—it was more a set of autonomous regions, and frequently lamented as such by urban intellectuals—was now subject to struggle by competing capitalists, governments, and social groups, alongside the denunciation of indigenous and Afro-Colombians as degrading development and national identity alike. In addition, there came to be not only industrialization and repositioning within the world economy, but also an emergent capitalist imaginary. It drew on reactionary Christianity as a moral technology but allowed for cultural heterogeneity as a means of justifying class hierarchies (Pécaut 1987, 2001; Bulmer-Thomas 2003: 25, 43, 143; Castro-Gómez and Restrepo 2008; Alvarado 2012).

Colombia became one of the least secular countries in the region, in keeping with the large number of Church officials and priests from the colonial era. Its first Constitutions disavowed religious tolerance, until liberal hegemony from the 1850s undermined Catholic exclusivity, legalized divorce, and cut previous tithes. The 1860–1863 war saw liberalism triumphant. Armed with a new Constitution, Liberals exercised political dominance through the mid-1880s, when they were displaced by another civil war and a revised Constitution that favored the Catholic Church, granting it suzerainty over education and religious control of a third of the country. Uniquely across the region, a concordat was signed with the Vatican in 1888 that institutionalized Church hegemony until the 1970s, by which time 95 percent of Colombians affiliated with Catholicism, up from 80 percent in 1910 (Freston 2004: 228; Schwaller 2011: 154–56, 181; Pew Research Center 2014: 27; de la Torre and Martín 2016: 476).

Conservatives ruled until 1930 in concert with the Church, punctuated by the horrendous 1899–1902 War of the Thousand Days, which claimed the lives of a hundred thousand people from a population of four million and saw the Panama Canal ceded to Washington. Theodore Roosevelt regarded the Colombian government as "homicidal corruptionists." He insisted that the "Bogotá lot of jack rabbits" must not be permitted to "bar one of the future highways of civilisation" (quoted in McPherson 2016: 57). The period also saw chaotic currency movements. Conservatives and Liberals both issued paper money, and the peso's value against the gold standard fell from 30 to 0.4 cents over the three years (Bulmer-Thomas 2003: 111 n. 96).

Conservative control fell into disrepute during the Depression, even though the latter's economic effects were relatively mild. When the government slaughtered up to three thousand banana workers who were striking against U.S. capital on the Caribbean coast, this helped stimulate the Communist Party's organization of the rural and urban poor. Violence between Conservatives and Liberals emerged again under Liberal hegemony from 1930, and a new bloc erupted,

the Unión Nacional Izquierdista Revolucionaria (National Union for Leftist Revolution). Vicarious tensions arose during the Spanish Civil War, when Conservatives favored Francoist and Hitlerian demagoguery. Liberals removed the Church from its privileged position in favor of a nonsectarian and secular approach to daily life and public education. Meanwhile, an urban proletariat was forming, with the rise of textile manufacturing and government public-works programs designed to offset the loss of export revenue to the Global North. Through it all, extravagant claims were made for coffee as a panacea that could bring Colombians together pacifically in an idyll of decent work and just rewards (Bergquist 1991; Galeano 1997: 102; Bulmer-Thomas 2003: 230, 247; Schwaller 2011: 195; Comisión Histórica 2015; Aranguren Romero 2017: 7–8; Guerrero and Fandiño-Losada 2017).

In 1946, the twenty-year *Violencia* began, as the different interests of peasants, workers, politicians, soldiers, and fractions of capital were drawn into conflict. Conservatives used their electoral success to displace and persecute Liberals, who revolted. The radical presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a brilliant radio orator and arguably the Colombian politician who has resonated most with the popular classes, was assassinated. Bogotá burned, though the main areas affected were in the countryside. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's military coup in 1953, and associated anti-leftist rhetoric, bundled opposition groups together under a putatively socialist barrier. The Conservatives rolled back minimal agrarian reform in a welter of Cold War panic mixed with opportunism, slaughtering *campesinos* in the process and initially identifying Protestantism with the Soviet bloc. Colombia led the way when the Organization of American States expelled Cuba in 1962. By that time, Christian groups had combined in their opposition to the Left, though liberation theology was also emerging within Catholicism (Bergquist 1991; Roldán 2002; Freston 2004: 229; Brands 2010: 51; Schwaller 2011: 197, 244; Deas 2015: 97; Guerrero and Fandiño-Losada 2017; Celis González 2018: 36; Giraldo Durán and Álvarez de Castillo 2018). Meanwhile, Frantz Fanon fondly imagined Colombia's *campesinos* interpreting national radio against the grain and taking revolutionary direction from Cuban and Chinese broadcasts instead (1965: 6–7).

The period from 1946 to 1966 cost three hundred thousand Colombians their lives, displaced two million others, and stole four hundred thousand plots of land from indigenous people. The *Violencia* ended when the junta installed a collaborative front, the two major parties agreed to take the presidency in turn, and Liberals purged progressives and minorities from their ranks. The accord suited an emergent international division of labor that set citizens of the periphery to work as extractors of primary goods and consumers of secondary ones, dragging peasants toward either regional production of cement, energy, and textiles, or industrialized food for export, notably bananas and coffee. As coal and petroleum grew in importance for the nation's balance of trade, agriculture's share

diminished, and *campesinos*' economic prospects worsened. The demographic corollaries were intense: Colombia's rural dwellers formed 70 percent of the population in 1960, less than 25 percent at the end of the century, and 20 percent in 2018. Food aid across the 1950s and '60s had impoverished the rural sector by driving down the price of local commodities versus imported wheat, dispatching *campesinos* to the cities. Primary products accounted for 80 percent of exports in 1980 and 66 percent in 2000, drawing level with manufacturing in their contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) (Orlando Melo 1998: 65; Ocampo and Tovar 2000: 240; Pécaut 2001; Dennis 2006; Comisión Histórica 2015; McMichael 2017: 68; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019a: 13).

These changes birthed and developed today's principal *guerrilla* and propelled the nation into collective traumas that have never truly ended. Political violence took a new turn from the 1960s due to insurgencies. In keeping with Cold War norms, Washington successfully urged violent repression on Bogotá. They jointly bombed resistant peasant groups and set up militias to persecute leftists. That set the precedent for *paramilitares*: Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) (United Self-Defense Force of Colombia) (Dugas 2005; Hunt 2009; Brands 2010: 60) and Las Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) (United Self-Defense Gaitanistas of Colombia), their successors following a putative demilitarization in 2007. These forces have also done the dread work of corporations and ranchers (Hellinger 2015: 311). The AGC exploits the revered memory of Gaitán to reverse his politics, invoking populism while serving established interests.[8]

As in many cases across modern history, the relationship of such militias to the state is ambiguous (Carey et al. 2015), and there has been a tendency for the media to emphasize the horror of guerrilla atrocities by contrast with those committed by paramilitary forces (García Marrugo 2017) despite the latter's intense brutality, from rituals of initiation to forms of torture and combat (Whitehouse and McQuinn 2013). And when a leftist political party ran for office in the 1980s, it was decimated by what the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center for Historical Memory) now refers to as a genocide (2018a).

The Colombian government has sponsored three major studies into the causes and effects of this violence, in 1958, 1987, and 2007. They betray the lineaments of their time. The 1958 Comisión Nacional Investigadora de las Causas y Situaciones Presentes de la Violencia en el Territorio Nacional (National Research Commission into the Causes and Current State of Violence in the Nation) comprised men from politics, the military, literature, and Catholicism. It attempted to put a bipartisan end to bipartisan violence, referred to as "a widespread cancer" that could be overcome by cathartic confrontation and ameliorative social policies (Jaramillo Marín 2015).

The 1987 Comisión de Estudios Sobre la Violencia (Study Commission into Violence) saw membership shift to public-university faculty from law,

anthropology, sociology, and engineering, plus one retired officer; all were men. Because the agents of violence had become so varied and intense, it had to manage events that went beyond disagreements between elites that might be resolved technocratically. A discourse of bipartisanship neither described nor explained the numerous guerrilla and paramilitary groups plus narco gangsters generating what was now referred to as a "dirty war." Whereas the 1958 group looked at policies, the 1987 team focused on classification, generating taxonomies rather than programs, predicated on the belief that a renewed democracy would bring peace. A penny for your Habermas, since the evidence suggests that opening dialogue and interaction escalated the violence from 1985, when mayors were directly elected and a leftist political party made legitimate, and 1991, when a new Constitution increased decentralization (Steele and Schubiger 2018). Narcoterrorism emerged and the *paramilitares* and *guerrilla* alike killed and terrorized more and more people in struggles for these new political-economic resources, defying the assumptions underlying democratization. That said, the Commission marked a key moment in the advance of human-rights discourse in Colombia, which remains an intermittently potent tool of denunciation to this day (Jaramillo Marín 2015).

Its successor, the Subcomisión de Memoria Histórica (Subcommission into Historical Memory) (2007–2012), comprised scholars and activists. It sought to monitor the supposed integration of armed groups into civil society and justice for their victims. Memory became a key concept, not merely as an aspect of knowledge but as a performative right in itself. It was to be used as proof of suffering and to shed light on sociocultural experiences of loss and grief. But the Subcommission's work was overdetermined by an administration dedicated to violent destruction of the *guerrilla* and the assertion of nationwide state power (Shapiro et al. 2014; Jaramillo Marín 2015).

In summary, the various official inquiries, like academic work, tend to converge on certain topics as explanations of violence in Colombia, albeit with differences attributable to their governing conjunctures. But most agree that it results from elite desires and disputes, profound social inequality, disparities in living conditions between urban and rural life, the structure of political parties, failures of democratic will and participation, and narcotrafficking (Celis González 2018: 28).

DRUGS

Narco has become the prefix to much of contemporary Colombian life—narcotrafficking, narco-war, the narco-state, narco-culture (Lezcano 2018). Cocaine runs across the recent history of national violence, largely determined by the drug's labor process, which has diversified over time with industrialization and as the gangs hired by cartels become actors in their own right. For some critics,

the nexus of cocaine and violence is a gruesome neoliberal project "in conjunction with both civil society (social capital) and the state, to forge both a model and a mythology of development whilst waging a phony war on drugs and drug dealers who have been incorporated into, and/or deployed by, elites in their genuine wars to dispossess rural citizens" (Fine and Durán Ortiz 2016: 14). The notion is that oligarchs, drug dealers, *paramilitares*, the United States, and Colombian national and departmental governments conspired to seize land, develop the corporate sector, and discredit the Left. That may be true, but the history is longer than it might suggest.

Andean coca leaves, which naturally abound in Bolivia and Perú, were immediately seized on by the conquistadores as a means of controlling and stimulating their indigenous silver-mine workers. Coca was inserted into world capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century, though its industrial alkaloid derivative cocaine was fairly insignificant globally until the 1970s, other than for anesthetic purposes and as a creative and sporting stimulant. Legal commodity chains operated from 1860 to 1910, connecting Europe and the United States to Andean suppliers. Then criminalization took hold, and the trade internationalized as contraband through the Dutch, Japanese, and U.S. empires until World War II (Gootenberg 2006).

From the mid-1970s, Colombian gangsters imported coca paste from the Andes and chemical-processing elements from the Global North, using a complex supply chain of many small, informal businesses. The cartels set up cocaine factories in urban and then jungle laboratories, sending the product to Europe and the United States on passenger flights or light planes (Orlando Melo 1998: 68). Coca leaf was successfully transplanted en masse to Colombia in the 1990s from Bolivia and Perú, which were gradually overrun by Yanqui interdiction. In 1994, 20,000 hectares in Colombia were dedicated to coca. By 1996, the figure was 200,000. During initial production, indigenous and *campesino* rural dwellers were attacked to subdue or clear them out. Once cocaine was in play, intense violence proliferated across numerous sites (Bergman 2018: 5, 30, 51, 102):

- Distribution markets and routes
- Among traffickers
- With the state
- During retail on the street
- In related fields (football, oil, and minerals)
- Caused by addicts

By the twenty-first century, cocaine accounted for a quarter of the country's exports and three percent of its GDP (Bulmer-Thomas 2003: 9). Coca cultivated in Colombia virtually halved between 2000 and 2013; but that was followed by massive increases as a consequence of failed compensation schemes for farmers, new cartel tactics, and diminished interdiction. The amount grew by a third from

2015 to 2016, to almost nine hundred tonnes. Two-thirds of the globe's hectares dedicated to coca (170,000) are in Colombia, the majority in the Pacific and central zones. Thousands of laboratories convert the raw material (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018a: 8, 29; 2018b: 11). There are gun battles in Bogotá and Medellín between rival gangs and the police, threatening the relative calm in big cities as assault weaponry proliferates via FARC cast-offs and Venezuelan military sales. Meanwhile, cartels compete for domestic as well as international demand (Ávila 2019).

As a consequence of cocaine, what had been largely political struggles branched out and deepened in both their violence and their overall impact. The blend of organized, non-ideological, criminal violence and organized, ideological, militia/guerrilla/state violence is unprecedented in Latin America since independence. New fractions of capital have become involved via the financial sector's invention of monetary instruments to launder plunder (Alvarado 2012; Kacowicz and Mares 2016: 16; Aranguren Romero 2017: 9–11; Guerrero and Fandiño-Losada 2017; Giraldo Durán and Álvarez de Castillo 2018).

As a consequence, whereas violent crime and systematic conflict are generally quite separate, that is not the case in Colombia. During the 1980s, the cocaine trade stimulated the rise of powerful, ruthless cartels, notably in Cali and Medellín. They ruled as alternative governments, vying with each other and the state for control and authority: the informal economy rearing up to challenge all comers and seize the mythology of populism. The power of the narcos derived from many factors (Atehortúa Cruz and Rojas Rivera 2008; Castells 2010: 205):

- Support for the trade in drugs by the U.S. government during the Vietnam War as a means of funding proxy local actors, who quickly perceived potentially powerful market forces at play among the U.S. military and fueled a demand that was soon repatriated
- The counterculture's fantasy of alternative consciousness
- Favorable climatic and agricultural conditions
- Peace Corps veterans' taste for "Santa Marta Gold" *mariguana*
- Capacity, based on generations of coca production
- Proximity to U.S. ports
- Smuggling skills garnered from transporting contraband over generations of piracy and catering to legal addicts (of tobacco)
- The ease of transporting large amounts of powder by contrast with weeds
- Interest from U.S. mafiosi
- Lack of interdiction, facilitated by police who were for sale

Since the Cold War, the conflict has transformed from a desire for land redistribution to human exploitation via narcotics and sequestration, as inspiration for the *guerrilla* switched from Marxism-Leninism to wealthy nasal passages

(Moser and McIlwaine 2000: viii, 7). Today, drug traffickers and rebel groups of all kinds are often one and the same—by turns rivals and collaborators in a trail of cocaine that is harvested and manufactured in Colombia then moves through Ecuador, bordering the Pacific en route to the United States. This fragmentation of gangsters leads to massive violence between rival groups, as yesterday's cartel enforcers become tomorrow's new cartel (Bergman 2018). Gangs and guerrillas, inhumanness and ideology, kidnapping and cocaine overlap in an "age of violence entrepreneurs" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2016: 27, 2009: 39).

New and transformed occupations and formations proliferate and transmogrify: assassins, militia, gangs, mafia, and corrupt administrations, churches, football clubs, universities, press, politics, police, the FARC, the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL—Popular Liberation Army—Maoist then Marxist-Leninist), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN—Army of National Liberation—a Guevarist group originating among urban students), and its dissidents, who formed the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP—People's Revolutionary Army) (Pécaut 2001; Celis González 2018; Oquendo 2019).

"There are no 'good guys'" (Meltzer and Rojas 2005: 1). As a consequence, the association of Colombia with the drug has become magnetic for outsiders. To give just one instance, John Oliver's liberal HBO satire *Last Week Tonight* (2014–) dedicated a 2018 episode to Venezuela's political economy, in a way that was remarkably balanced for bourgeois Yanqui (U.S.) television. But almost inevitably, in order to provide some context to that nation's level of corruption, Oliver compared it to Colombia, "a country where the only campaign finance law is 'please report all bribes consisting of more than 10 kilos of cocaine.'"[9]

Beyond ideology and social structure, cocaine has transmogrified the country. It represents the collision of rural resources and poverty, urban mafia and commerce, corrupt and fragmented *guerrilla*, and international demand for distraction and addiction (Hobsbawm 1995: 366). The governmental context for all this is a state that is by turns overly present (as a threat) and overly absent (as a source of protection).

THE STATE

The state can be forcefully present in Colombia through the police, the military, and proxy AUC/AGC *paramilitares*. As already noted, the militarization of Colombian society was undertaken at the partial expense and behest of the United States, which preferred state-sponsored violence to development aid as a route to control cocaine traffic and political insurgency (Tokatlian 1997; Rosen and Kassab 2019: 61). The bilateral "Plan Colombia" shifted the battleground states for cocaine export elsewhere and led to a vast array of extrajudicial killings and other crimes: former members of the AUC/affiliates of the AGC now harass

and kill indigenous, peasant, and Afro-Colombian activists, while others have been extradited to the United States for drug trials to avoid implicating establishment co-conspirators. The record shows that the *paramilitares* are emboldened to commit more and more killings with increased "military assistance," as it is coyly known. They have a particular taste for assassination during elections (Dube and Naidu 2014).

At a geopolitical level, Colombia is celebrated by DC as a successful junior partner in defeating the *guerrilla*. The U.S. and Colombian militaries position themselves as joint masters of drug interdiction, protecting their budgets and numbers by offering such services around the globe (Lindsay-Poland and Tickner 2016; Sontag 2016). This is known as "risk-transfer militarism" (Smith et al. 2014). It serves as a model for U.S. intervention in conflict from a distance: select, train, and arm foreign militias, police, and armies, tell them whom to kill—then sell them materiel that had once been distributed as aid (Lindsay-Poland 2018: 7–8, 11).

U.S. nationalists regard Colombia "as perhaps the U.S. military's greatest human rights success story in Latin America" (Laurienti 2007: 62). Amateur-hour foreign-policy experts, informed by helicopter visits rather than scholarly or practical knowledge, declared a "Colombian miracle" a decade ago (Boot and Bennet 2009). John Kerry's 2013 confirmation hearing as secretary of state featured astonishing claims to this effect, capable of coming only from someone ignorant of the language, life, geography, history, and contemporaneity of the nation. He called Colombia "[o]ne of the great stories of Latin America," praising ultra-rightist ex-president, rentier-class propagandist, and paramilitary patron and pardoner Álvaro Uribe Vélez for "rescuing that nation." Kerry euphemized these changes as a tribute to DC's "citizen security partnership" ("Nomination" 2013: 19, 80). For their part, coin-operated liberal think tanks such as the Brookings Institution speak of the Plan as offering "much to celebrate"; it may be "too soon for America to declare victory and forget about Colombia," but Uribe's "personality and energy" are prized along with his ability to develop tighter links between the military and citizenry (O'Hanlon and Petraeus 2013). This is pomposity as per the discourse of these bodies during the Cold War, an arrogance that Hannah Arendt sought to puncture (1970: 14–16) but which has never been deflated. In the similarly bizarre world of orthodox international-relations scholarship, Plan Colombia is understood as the successful disciplining of an errant child: "a combination of rewards, punishments, and capacity improvements" (Vaughn 2019: 80).

A breathtaking blend of solipsism and ignorance forms the substructure of such great-game international strategizing. In that world, the putative task of foreign policy is to stabilize conflict to the satisfaction of the leading powers, acting in the name of principle and commitment but favoring the satisfaction of one's own interests in restricting the spread of unrest. That is how Colombia appears

in the literature of U.S. policy (Morgenthau 1969: 26–27). It has nothing to do with proletarian and peasant views, nothing to do with languages beyond English, nothing to do with material life, nothing to do with the cultures being tossed about like so many suddenly worthless cards in a hand. The continuity is obvious: the desire of Western powers to create a form of stability by selecting, encouraging, and securing comprador elites. This doctrine is a regrettable and seemingly unstoppable legacy from imperial order and international-relations discourse.

The Colombian corollary is that successive administrations in Bogotá picked up on Washington's post 9/11 fetishes and redefined the FARC and others as terrorists, thereby expanding U.S. aid by enveloping the conflict in the putative "war on terror" (Rosen and Bagley 2015). Uribe colluded with the worst of the worst. Hundreds of politicians had "relationships" with the paramilitary and cartel worlds (Romero 2007; Acemoglu et al. 2013; Fine and Durán Ortiz 2016).

More generally, Colombia is a "paradoxical marriage of a state of continuous violence with the hallmarks of democratic civilization" (Rojas 2002: xxii), "an extreme example of the contemporary unpicking of the so-called Westphalian model of territorial states that monopolize violent resources" (Keane 2004: 179). This is true in terms of both the impunity of violent actors and the failure to deliver basic social services to citizens. But there *is* a national government, which has been almost exclusively democratic in form, unlike many of its neighbors (Karl 2017: 1) (albeit routinely put into a state of exception to permit repression [Aranguren Romero 2017: 12]). It is putatively held to account by an independent press. International obligations are entered into, whether bilaterally with the U.S. military, or multilaterally, in the form of commitments to neoliberal economic restructuring. In terms of the chapters to come, there is intense nationalism, on display in football fandom. Hugely popular televisual dramatizations invoke glamorous and easy (albeit illicit) lives. And Bogotá's policies stimulate and govern tourism and claim to protect the environment.

With a large, educated middle class and significant resources suitable for secondary accumulation, Colombia is supposedly poised to open its newly secure, bountiful territory to increased foreign investment, extraction, construction, and natural and human exploitation. Hence the tourism slogan adopted by the government in 2012, "La Respuesta es Colombia" (The Answer Is Colombia), displacing the idea of the nation as a problem with the conceit that it is instead a solution—rebranding the country as enduringly appealing and now safe. Once the drug cartels and terrorist *guerrilla* were dispensed with, it was said, Colombia would enter a new golden age. This would counter such stereotypes as being the "Tibet Suramericano" (the Tibet of South America) in the 1980s and a *narcodemocracia* (narcodemocracy) in the 1990s. Instead, the nation seeks to define itself as "una estrella que brilla" (a shining star) and the new "tigre de Latinoamérica" (Latin American tiger), troping the booming Southeast Asian economies of the

1980s. Colombia stands ready and able to help meet the world's economic needs—and focuses, in dutifully neoliberal fashion, on labor-market training rather than guaranteed income, agrarian reform, or job creation (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019b: 392), obediently liberalizing, deregulating, and privatizing to satisfy its northern masters (Rodrik 2007: 20).

Here is the current economic reality. By the end of 2018, Colombia's (formal sector) GDP measured by purchasing-power parity stood at well over US$730 billion. Petroleum, petrochemicals, coal, and coffee were its major exports, principally to the United States, China, and Panamá (Economist Intelligence Unit 2019). Yet despite these numbers, a lengthy period of significant economic growth, and virtually zero inflation, the country is as unequal as when the conflict began. Two decades of neoliberal policies have slowed growth, increased unemployment in the formal sector—and brought double-digit percentage job growth 'thanks' to cocaine (Hellinger 2015: 326).

The supposed national interest serves a small ruling elite of ranchers, politicians, moguls, and *narcotraficantes*, buttressed by state violence (Hunt 2009; Aranguren Romero 2017: 14). Oxfam estimates that "over 67 percent of productive land is concentrated in 0.4 percent of agricultural landholdings" (2016: 5–6) and Thomas Piketty and the World Top Incomes Database list Colombia's elite receiving a fifth of all national income between 1990 and 2010—more than is the case in the United States (2014: 327).

Waves of fixed capital formation investment and contraction cycling with international demand for oil and related commodities have done little for the popular classes, while public works have generally been undertaken to enable capital or recover from environmental disasters (Bulmer-Thomas 2003: 8, 10, 387; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2018: 498–499, 505). The tax system minimizes corporate contributions to government revenue and maximizes indirect taxes. Corporate taxes and surcharges plunged from 40 percent in 2017 to 33 percent in 2019. Indirect taxation soared to 19 percent, the highest rate ever (Economist Intelligence Unit 2019; International Monetary Fund 2019), thereby aiding the wealthy at the expense of the poor. The economy had already slowed down due to levies on consumption, while unemployment was just below ten percent (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2018).

Almost half the population is stuck in the informal sector. A third lived below the poverty line in 1980; half did so twenty years later. Lower-income people improved their income relative to the wealthier in 2017, but the tenth of Colombians living in extreme poverty was double the proportion of Brazilians and many times the percentages of Chileans and Argentines (Hellinger 2015: 320; Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico 2015: 8; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019b: 110, 234).

Nor is there a national popular identifiable with the needs and hopes of the majority. Rather, it is animated by entitled classes, many of whose forebears gained authority and wealth from colonial dispossession and enslavement. This has accentuated regional and other differences. No wonder so many people shrugged their shoulders when they were promised that the peace would see a true exchange of armaments in favor of votes: two-thirds of the electorate did not participate in the 2016 plebiscite to endorse the accord with the FARC (Magallón 2016).

The lack of trust in major institutions has spread to religion: Catholic hegemony has come under challenge. About 60 percent of the population are practicing Christians, while over a third say they embrace God but do not attend church. Seventy percent are Catholic. Atheism and agnosticism are marginal, and just a quarter of people adhere to the theory of evolution. But the period since the 1990s has seen a wave of Pentecostalism in both urban and rural Colombia, especially among women and young people, to the point where around a sixth of the population identify as evangelical, three-quarters of whom were raised Catholic (Beltrán 2012; Pew Research Center 2014: 5).

There are profound contradictions at play here: a country with one of the longest-running conflicts in history is technically a stable democracy. Cocaine and mining are a toxic mixture for defenders of indigenous and peasant lands, who face execution by means up to and including decapitation, deeds undertaken with impunity as the paramilitary assert authority over terrain in ways reminiscent of the 1990s. The number of indigenous, human-rights, and environmental activists murdered has multiplied massively since the peace accord was endorsed, while corporate geologists and others involved in gold exploration have been killed or kidnapped by groups seeking hegemony over illegal mining and corruption and killing—directed by rivalrous multinationals (Dennis 2006; Sheinin 2015; Pino Uribe 2017; Chaparro and Yagoub 2018; Goldberg 2018; McEvoy 2018; Rueda De la Hoz 2018; Saavedra 2018; Sánchez-Garzoli 2018; Peláez Sierra 2019).

The cosmic failure of the Colombian state and oligarchy to produce a substantive and inclusive national popular has seen violence fill that gap, as the seeming essence of the nation and its people. Elsewhere, such traumas have produced a solemn public and elite determination to turn tragedy into myth in the name of unity. Not in Colombia. Instead, the violence has taken numerous grotesquely targeted forms.

GENDER AND RACE

Violence against women is more common in Latin America than in the rest of the world, as are female deaths from firearms (Small Arms Survey 2016). Colombia's many extreme forms of gendered violence feature rape, disfigurement, and

femicide (Moloney 2015; Huertas and Jiménez 2016). The Instituto Colombiano de Medicina Legal reported 21,115 cases of sexual violence in 2014, with 85.05 percent of victims being women (2015). As in many countries, over 90 percent of homicide victims are men, but unlike women, generally not as a consequence of violence undertaken at home, or with a sexual element. Women are frequently killed by people they know—attacked by family members rather than strangers (De la Hoz Bohórquez and Romero Quevedo 2016). A full 39 percent of Colombian women report violent treatment from male partners, and a spate of acid attacks by men on women over the last five years has affected thousands (Guerrero 2013; "Alarma y repudio" 2014; Gaviria Castellanos et al. 2015; "Wonder Women" 2015). Public-health experts argue that a failure to consider historical patterns of oppression downplays the statistical significance of such violence (Bello-Urrego 2013).

All sides in the conflict have engaged in sexual torture, with women and sexual minorities targeted for humiliation as part of a violent clearance aimed at sex workers, street retailers, and other people on the margins of power, who are assaulted by armed groups when in public space (Oxfam 2009; Suárez-Pinzón 2015; Serrano-Amaya 2018). Colombia Diversa, a human-rights organization dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex issues, estimates that over a thousand queer people were killed between 1993 and 2017. Many victims are unidentified, and perpetrators remain free.[10] Statutory rape is routine practice for the *guerrilla* and *paramilitares* alike (Human Rights Watch 2019).

Colombian women played key roles in the struggle for independence and have formed social movements to define and defend their rights and publicize their experiences over the past two centuries (Villarreal Méndez 1994; Solano 2003; Lamus 2008; Puello Sarabia 2017: 84–85; León Soler 2019). But state policies designed to alleviate systematic gender discrimination and inequality have been inconsistently applied and largely ineffective (Gómez Cano et al. 2015). And there has been a wave of U.S.-inspired evangelical opposition to women's and queer rights, culminating in the defeat of the peace plebiscite: Pentecostals are distinguished by their heterosexist and patriarchal politicization, and the process had dared to guarantee marriage equality and other citizenship norms. These evangelicals closely follow leaders' instructions, which promise health and prosperity as quae pro quibus.[11] Those hegemonic intellectuals also engineer events understood as "divine healing," which three quarters of their flock say they have witnessed. Half deem themselves to have been present at exorcisms and a quarter to have spoken in tongues (Beltrán 2012; Pew Research Center 2014: 15, 65–66; Marcos 2016). The Pentecostals seem less concerned that a third of women in their twenties are subject to child marriage than with their exercise of sexual and reproductive rights (UN Women n.d.).

Women's health and participation in the workforce, education, and politics saw Colombia ranked 42nd of 145 countries in 2015, descending from the 22nd spot it attained in 2006 (World Economic Forum 2015). The Human Development Report's index of gender inequality reveals that Colombian women encounter serious difficulties in securing positions of public leadership (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2015). More than four out of five seats in the congress are held by men (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019a: 27). A decade ago, the United Nations noted a stark gendered difference in the unemployment rate: 11.5 percent for women as opposed to 6.9 percent for men (2010). That disparity continues today (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019a: 17). Women are likely to be stuck in the informal sector and secondary labor markets, especially if they are indigenous or black; and those groups have disproportionately high levels of maternal mortality (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económico 2015: 34; Cabezas Cortés 2016; Perazzi and Merli 2017; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2019b: 472).

Ethnicity/race are defined differently from the norms of the Global North. The state counts much of the population as mixed race—a single group that would be disaggregated as indigenous, black, Asian, and so on in western Europe and its settler colonies. The latest census (2005) considers 37 percent of Colombians to be white and 49 percent mestiz@ (mixed)—a distinction that is itself not always clear (Hudson 2010: 10). It identifies three non-mestiz@ minorities: 87 national indigenous groups, comprising 1.4 million people who live communally and use their original languages (3.4 percent of the overall population); 4.3 million Afro-Colombian descendants of slaves (10.6 percent); and 5,000 Gitano (Roma) (0.01 percent) (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística 2007: 33).

The majority is therefore defined as largely unified in racial terms, despite being a blend of indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Asian, European, Sephardic, and Arabic heritage. The prevailing ideology of *mestizaje* assumes a norm in which Colombians form a mosaic of racial intermarriage and respect. As the popular saying goes, "Aquí en Colombia somos muy mezclados" (Here in Colombia we are very mixed) (quoted in Restrepo et al. 2014). Recent scientific, political, and commercial investments in genomics seek to confirm Colombia's hegemonic cultural landscape. Results are pored over to reveal that most people have indigenous heritage—downplaying Africanism—and that the dominant *fons et origo* was sexual liaisons between *conquistadores* (conquerors) and *indigenas* (Wade 2013).

Here's the real deal: descendants of the original inhabitants who survived colonization and capitalism mostly occupy peripheral areas, through isolation or exile (Stavenhagen 2002). Indigenous and black minorities suffer massive

inequality, and whites and mestiz@s dominate political, economic, cultural, and social life (Cabezas-Cortés 2016; Perazzi and Merli 2017. Black lives are cheapened by state actors and others—not just in colonial history or contemporary tourism, but through violence that targets them from all sides (Vergara-Figueroa 2018).

This social structure follows a familiar history throughout the region—an elite defining itself against indigenous and black peoples while relying on slave labor, forcibly dispossessing native peoples, and raping and marrying indigenous women. South American movements for independence from Spain and Portugal were not about distancing oneself from Europe and integrating with original owners. The revolutionaries favored Westphalian nation-building, U.S. political republicanism, British economic liberalism, Prussian militarism, and social Darwinism.

In sum, Colombia's problems arose before it did, with the horror of empire and slavery. They concatenated with the formation of a powerful oligarchy, which continues to this day: obsessed with the rule of law, dependent for its *origins* on stolen lands worked by slaves, and for its *continuation* on clientelism and control of the formal economy and politics. That has left little opportunity for a vast number of poor people other than in the informal sector, where they frequently operate through criminal, violent means, sometimes with and sometimes without ideological alibis.

That macrohistorical account gains human contour in the remarkable work of Miguel Ángel Beltrán Villegas (2018). Incarcerated for many years as an alleged FARC ideologist, Beltrán Villegas spent his time interviewing fellow-prisoners from across the spectrum—*guerrilleros*, *paramilitares*, soldiers, and their visitors. The result is a profound work of participant observation that finds much in common among fellow cellmates: they combined a lamentation for the pain they had caused with a disgust for the corrupt oligarchies running corporate and state life.

COLUMBIA AND THE POPULAR

Iván Duque Márquez, an invention/political creature of Uribe, was elected Colombian president in 2018, having spent many years in the Inter-American Development Bank's Division of Culture, Creativity and Solidarity. During his time in DC, he became a fervent disciple of an English conceptual export to the world, the fantasy of a creative economy—a postindustrial, post-polluting world. Duque is coauthor of the Bank's book, *Orange Economy: An Infinite Opportunity* (Buitrago Restrepo and Duque Márquez 2013). The choice of the word "orange" derives from pharaonic tombs, but for me, it invokes Benjamin's distaste for the nation's 1930s stamps: "the postal parvenus . . . large, badly perforated, garish formats" (2016: 82).

I remember, with a stiff stomach, a congress in Lima when Felipe Buitrago Restrepo, Duque's coauthor, presented their extravagant promises, obediently

copied from the British Council: a secular religion that offered transcendence in the here and now through a world blessed for workers, consumers, and residents, where waste would be code rather than carbon. Other participants tried to foment discussion on the subject, but it was almost impossible. We were in the presence of a true believer and an audience keen to see itself transferred from welfare recipients to economic agents. Six years on and his reward was to be Duque's Viceministro de Creatividad y Economía Naranja (Deputy Minister of Creativity and the Orange Economy), responding to what Buitrago describes as the challenge to "hacer digerible, sexy y provocativa a la economía naranja" (make the orange economy digestible, sexy, and provocative) (quoted in S. Rincón 2019).

The latest fetish among the sacerdotes of creativity is the putative "collaborative economy." A cybertarian fantasy of pre-capitalist bartering is brought to bear on supposed new liberties occasioned by digital communications and economic deregulation, but with monetary incentives for brokers (think of lonely-hearts club Internet dating, bed and breakfast services that don't pay taxes, or underregulated door-to-door driving services).

Unsurprisingly, Duque's administration emphasizes the financial value of the sector:

> La economía naranja está en camino de convertirse en uno de los principales motores económicos de Colombia: el mundo de la iniciativa empresarial, la tecnología y las industrias creativas ya representa casi el 3% del PIB del país latinoamericano, lo que representa tres veces la contribución del café y casi 1,5 veces el aporte de la minería. Colombia quiere posicionarse como símbolo naranja, color de la cultura y creatividad.
>
> "Impulsar la economía naranja es una de las prioridades del gobierno. En ProColombia, hemos identificado grandes oportunidades de ventas en el desarrollo de software, películas, televisión, animación y videojuegos. Estos son sectores que han crecido más de un 30% en exportaciones," explica Flavia Santoro, presidenta de ProColombia, la entidad del Gobierno de Colombia que promueve las inversiones, las exportaciones, el turismo y la marca país en el exterior. "Colombia se está convirtiendo en un lugar ideal para filmar industrias como Hollywood. Antonio Banderas, Tom Cruise, Will Smith o Mark Wahlberg son algunos de los actores de talla internacional que en los últimos años han filmado películas en territorio colombiano."
>
> (The orange economy is on the way to becoming one of Colombia's principal economic engines: the world of entrepreneurship, technology and the creative industries already represents almost 3% of the GDP of the Latin American country, which represents three times the contribution of coffee and almost 1.5 times

the contribution of mining. Colombia wants to position itself as an orange symbol, the color of culture and creativity.)

("Promoting the orange economy is one of the government's priorities. At ProColombia, we have identified great sales opportunities in the development of software, movies, television, animation and videogames. These sectors have grown more than 30% in exports," explains Flavia Santoro, president of ProColombia, the Colombian Government body that promotes investment, exports, tourism and the country brand abroad. "Colombia is becoming an ideal place for film industries like Hollywood. Antonio Banderas, Tom Cruise, Will Smith and Mark Wahlberg are some of the actors of international stature who in recent years have made movies in Colombian territory.") ("Orange Economy" 2018)

Again, there is a space between governmental rhetoric and reality. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's comparison of Colombia's cultural import-export performance in 2003 and 2012 discloses a serious and growing trade imbalance in the culture industries, with the U. S. an increasingly powerful influence (2015: 36–37). The nation's own accounts indicate that the area's contribution to GDP in a period of strong overall economic growth (between 2001 and 2007) went from 1.6 percent to 1.8 percent, though that represented a doubling in value, from under three and a half billion pesos to over eight and a half billion (Oxford Economics 2014).

Colombia has issued the world's first bonds to develop cultural infrastructure, to the value of four billion pesos ("Colocados" 2018). Duque spoke at the auction, indicating that he wanted his invented "Orange Economy" to contribute a tenth of the nation's GDP, akin to the contribution from manufacturing. Ironically, the model was Holland—very orange. Given that proletarian labor costs are higher than in many Asian economies, Duque sees Colombia's urbanism and digital connectivity as key competitive advantages—and supposed safety from the violence that disrupts the extractive sector in remote areas (Sonneland 2018). The generous state underwrites/materializes Duque and Buitrago's *desiderata* via fiscal, monetary, and taxation incentives designed to encourage the NICL by promising foreign investors that they will pay no income tax for seven years and receive a 19% break on indirect taxes for exported texts. The government allocated half a billion dollars towards this extravaganza for 2019, thanks to the formation of Duque's very own Consejo Nacional de Economía Naranja (National Orange Economy Council) (S. Rincón 2019; "Consejo Nacional" 2019).

So Colombian popular culture is reborn as a set of creative industries; subordinating inalienable heritage, craft production, and the refusal of racism, sexism, and nationalism to avaricious capital. It seeks to make things in similar ways to the manufacture of an automobile or artificial knee, producing objects for con-

sumption in the so-called magical operation of supply and demand. Consider the New Cinema and Location Colombia laws. Taking advantage of the growing number of technical and university degrees that school the willing and worthy in film and television, Location Colombia was enacted to lure international productions. It copied similar actions elsewhere: cash rebates and tax returns to foreign companies (AKA Hollywood) willing to relocate production. The lure included a new El Dorado of cheap labor, beautiful scenery, and industrious servitude—the classic NICL. It is creating primary (international) versus secondary (local) audiovisual labor markets: international productions increase the quality of life for audiovisual workers in an environment that is out of reach for those employed in Colombian screen drama. For example, Dynamo, a Colombian production company that has profited from the new legislation, has done little to support local talent or national films (Rocha 2018: 363). Despite the increasing numbers of Colombian films and audiences for them, the local industry remains a site of precarious work and difficult working conditions (Arias et al. 2018). And runaway productions promote the exploitation of local workers by local producers, since foreign producers are required to hire Colombian firms, which profit most when expanding their overheads and reducing local costs, generating those primary versus secondary labor markets that separate foreign from domestic crews (Uribe-Jongbloed and Corredor-Aristizábal 2020).

Like the orange economy in general, the benefits are unevenly distributed, because they require technology and English. Twenty million Colombians do not have access to the Internet and well under a fifth of the workforce is bilingual (S. Rincón 2019). At the high end financially, this means that Colombian settings and actors are used to represent Venezuela in the second season of Amazon's *Jack Ryan* (2019), its highest-rating series ever, with virtually no one aware of the part played by the NICL. In case anyone imagined that Bogotá standing in for Caracas was dubious, lead actor John Krasinski was on hand to reassure viewers that filming in Colombia was "genuinely dangerous" (quoted in Griffiths 2019). Conversely, Colombia becomes the diegetic source of a rampaging imperialism in season five of *The Last Ship* (TNT, 2018)—shot in California (Richford 2018; Thorne 2019; Debnath 2018)—to match its lawless, leftist reputation.

Despite this oleaginous political economy, other cultural practices—heritage, craft, the avant garde, contemporary dance, and activism—are not mere crumbs scraped from the chopping board of a 'creative' corporate bakery.

Consider the century-long career of José Eustasio Rivera's 1924 modernist classic of the jungle novel, *La Vorágine* (*The Vortex*) (1985). It details the elopement of a young couple from Bogotá during the 1879–1912 rubber boom. They make their way through violent gangs and rough terrain, all the while observing the hell of daily life for enslaved indigenous plantation workers. The vortex of the Amazon ultimately claims the protagonists: they can neither find a way out, nor be found by others.

The story borrows from an array of influences:

- A Greco-Roman tragedy of an inferno claiming star-crossed lovers
- The avant garde
- The fearful encounter of *mestizaje* with the environment
- The horror of forced labor
- The destructiveness of industrial lust for natural resources

La Vorágine is regularly reimagined in commercial screen forms via Colombian film and TV adaptations—part of a constantly developing national tradition of rap music, plays, poetry, and drama that places the horror of violence and the hope for peace at its core. Again and again, the theme is the seeming inevitability of conflict, the desire to end it, and links between corporatized crime, ideological violence, the state, and mainstream civil society (Oslender 2008). The nation's novelists and short-story writers in particular frequently use first-person narration, offering horrified wonderment at their survival, or feature protagonists making their way across the country who are bewildered by its "ubiquitous tragedy" (Chaparro Valderrama 2007: xviii).

This literary fascination is not always critical or progressive; the popular is also crucial to gendered violence. So memoirs by Colombian assassins articulate masculinity to violence through pleasure—a hedonistic cathexis onto motorbikes, guns, and clothes as signs of virility obtained through death (Franco 2001). Consider the textualization of Jhon Jairo Velásquez, a key assassin for the Medellín cocaine cartel in the 1980s. He was personally responsible for killing hundreds of people, and managed the assassination of thousands more. Jairo Velásquez became known as Popeye due to a supposed resemblance to the cartoon character—a typical *sicario* (assassin) appropriation of popular culture to leaven and lighten their image (Uribe 2018). Following his release from prison in 2014, Popeye's YouTube channel exploded in popularity, gaining well over a million subscribers.[12] He remade himself under the soubriquet "Popeye Repentido" (Repentant Popeye) and claimed redemption through apology, even as he started his videos with bullet holes and gunfire, proudly admitted to mass murders, and interpellated his ultra-right followers as political *confrères* (compatriots) (Mele and Garcia 2016; Anderson 2018). Netflix merrily parlayed a Colombian adaptation of his memoir, *Sobreviviendo a Escobar* (*Surviving Escobar*) (2017) and a reactionary Spanish province hired him to promote its setting and cuisine.[13] *Rolling Stone* and the *New Yorker* profiled him (Glade 2017; "Popeye" 2018) and Russia Today released a bizarre documentary, *Escobar's Hitman* (2017), which trailed Popeye around Medellín as he encountered victims and their families and was hailed on the streets by the popular classes.[14] Throughout, the carefully curated image is of a paradoxically dependent man's man, indebted to hegemonic masculinity, craving the approval of his chosen chief, and eschewing

introspective males and 'scheming' women (Bialowas Pobutsky 2013). In 2018, he was back in the joint, accused of extortion, intimidation, and leading a group of bagmen for the mob. The following year, he was charged with human-rights violations for his part in the 1986 murder of the prominent newspaper editor, Guillermo Cano Isaza (Higuera 2019).

To understand how vanguardist prose and a mass murderer can be so influential, we must travel beyond material macrohistory and enter the seemingly ephemeral world of popular culture. Gabo's thoughts about the binary contradictions of Colombian subjectivity apply tellingly to both a modernist classic's intertexts and remakes, where an intolerable, inevitable fate is part of the ecstasy of love, development ruins the environment, and labor is forced and painful—and to a crude, cruel, coarse assassin who draws on so-called social media for self-aggrandizement, incitement—and renewed criminal organization.

La Vorágine instantiates and criticizes hegemonic forms of racial, ecological, and gender power in a way that presages both the magical realism of Gabo and his list of binaries: paradoxes of gentle and harsh people and places, where comfort and ease are cheek by jowl with pain and suffering for humans and the natural world. Those paradoxes are homologous with the novel's industrial history, which crosses ancient European myth-making, modernist literature, and popular cinema and television. For his part, Popeye's brazenly murderous narcissism appeals to young men, publishers, and Hollywood alike in its quasi-humorous deadly outrage at the world—and right-wing bling.

Comprehending the life of these commodified cultural signs is part of understanding Colombia's persistence of violence, especially now that there is such adoration of culture's commercial potential via the putative orange economy.

THE BOOK YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS

I write as someone who has been heavily influenced by Latin American social science and humanities and their equivalents in the United States and Europe. Colombian communication studies, which is of particular pertinence to me, is divided into "four fields" (not unlike U.S. anthropology). They include journalism, quantitative method, organizational communication, and semiotics, derived from the intersection of administrative (U.S.) and critical (Latin American) paradigms (Martín-Barbero 2006; Barranquero Carretero et al. 2017). But unlike in the Global North, Colombian faculty and students frequently function across these domains, doing policy-oriented and quantoid work as well as textual analysis and political economy. *The Persistence of Violence* follows that lead in its methodological mix.

The book draws on the accounts and contradictions adumbrated in this introduction to contextualize detailed investigations of key sites in Colombian popular culture that express violence and its counters. I blend political economy,

ethnography, and content and textual analysis, mixing philosophical, scientific, and social-scientific approaches through the filter of Latin American studies. Each chapter commences with an account in theoretical and research terms of the general phenomenon of popular culture that follows, in its Colombian context.

Chapter 1, on sports, focuses on the national pastime, association football. It looks at the hypermasculinity embodied by many fans and its imbrication with narcotrafficking, the media, and symbolic ties to militarism. The chapter draws on football's history, its corruption and violence, and a close reading of the game's recent use by television networks and the state to invoke and develop a regressive national popular, as the government seeks to emphasize its monopoly on legitimate symbolic and actual violence.

Chapter 2, on tourism, examines the marketing of Colombia as a brand in the formal and informal economy, with a dual attention to sexuality and history. The sexual component argues that successive tourism policies have emphasized gender and nature via homologies between young women and the environment. This tendency is connected to child sex trafficking in Cartagena de Indias, the incipient violence underpinning the port's gender and racial politics—and resistance to these formations. The historical component focuses on the recent controversy in Cartagena over a plaque erected to attract U.K. tourists that commemorated Britain's blockade of the city during a struggle to control the Caribbean slave trade.

Chapter 3, on the media, is again double-sided. The first side investigates past and present violence against Colombian journalists, using interviews with victims to see how self-censorship arises from newsroom corruption and public threats and what can be done about it. The chapter's second side draws on a content analysis of high-rating broadcast *narconovelas* and their narco aesthetic of light-skinned, blonde, surgically modified femininity, in a country where very few people either resemble that stereotype or can afford to develop it. This popularity derives from production practices within the media, historic tendencies toward machismo and *Marianismo*, domestic violence, and wider debates over gender and *narcocultura*.

Chapter 4, on the environment, looks at the nation's crucial riparian thoroughfare, the Río Magdalena, and its systematic and accidental pollution through industrialization, warfare, and neglect. A content analysis centers on emotions expressed by Colombians in the words they use to describe the river, its meaning, and their feelings about the devastation it has undergone. The context is debates within science, activism, and government over the environment and the violence suffered by the Magdalena from development and conflict.

The book concludes with the notion that García Márquez's oppositions are useful ways to understand the profound duality over violence in Colombian life that is both evident in, and sustained by, popular culture. At the same time, although binaries are good to think with, they are frequently logocentrically

interdependent, rather than truly opposed. One can see them more as paradoxes than contradictions.

The liberal/UN mantra of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration as routes to post-conflict Colombian peace and prosperity derive from postwar western Europe and Japan—taking industrialized fascist countries and reestablishing them after monumental military defeat by state-socialist and state-capitalist ones. The model is barely credible when "reintegration" means returning to a corrupt, hugely unequal, and barely/badly governed nation. The focus on former combatants as problems is understandable, but it misses the reasons for their and others' alienation, and the structural and organizational forces that either incubate or enact violence (Carranza-Franco 2019).

That said, many Colombians are dedicated to peaceful progress. In that spirit, I analyze the book's themes in the context of theories and initiatives for building peace. For there are progressive elements in sports that draw on history and critique to problematize corporate nationalism. In tourism, social movements organize contra child sexual abuse, and there was opposition to the British plaque. Colombian journalists have shown a bravura, inventive response to occupational and physical intimidation, and critical responses problematize the racial and sexual politics of *narcocultura*. Social movements and environmental scientists seek to protect the environment from development.

The evidence of these diverse yet interconnected sites of the popular is that violence is never far from the surface; but nor are alternatives to it. *The Persistence of Violence* sheds light on the nation's scarred bringing-into-being, the strange dialectic of a state that is either too present or too absent—able to coerce/unable to serve—and prevailing economic, racial, and sexual dogmas. It also addresses equally Colombian, pacific, social movements. They are just as persistent as the violence they oppose.