

Will Straw

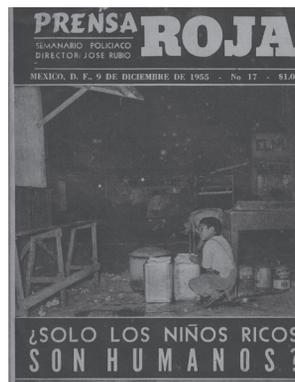
Pulling Back From Apocalypse

In two recent works of audiovisual documentary we see Mexican newspaper crime photographers rushing to scenes of violence.¹ John Dickie's 2008 film *El Diablo y la nota roja*, set in a southern Mexican city, focuses on the routines through which a small local newspaper covers violent crime. Its central character is an amiable, methodical reporter-photographer,



followed as he drives from one crime scene to another during bright sunny days. *Alarma!* (2010), Vice Media's 3-part online documentary about Mexico City's longest-lasting crime news periodical, is noisier and more sensational, as its source might lead one to expect. Filmed mostly at night, it is filled with the sounds of police sirens and footage of photographers on motorcycles speeding along city streets.

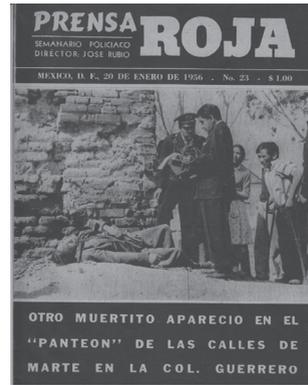
Both of these documentaries are from the very recent past, but each, in minor and slightly sinister ways, prompts a sense of nostalgia. For viewers from the Anglophone North, these films evoke an adventurous mid-twentieth-century print journalism long gone from



their home countries. The continuing vitality of this journalism in Mexico is signalled by intense competition among newspapers, front-page photographs of dead bodies, and the mythologized bravado or ingenuity of news photographers. For visitors to Mexico City, this same nostalgia is often fueled by the discovery that a morbidly sensational press, delivered to consumers by an underclass of news-hawkers circulating precariously amidst the movement of cars and people, still exists somewhere on the North American continent. As they have for decades, and with virtually unbroken consistency, daily tabloid newspapers like *El Gráfico* and *La Prensa* fill their front pages with images of one or more corpses lying on city streets. Perversely, this daily death imagery functions as reassuring proof that, somewhere, newspapers still have the capacity to interrupt everyday life with novel, startling content.

Increasingly, however, the heroic photojournalism documented in *El diablo y*





la nota roja and Alarma! seems like the residue of a quickly receding past in Mexico. These documentaries evoke a period before the carnage of the narco wars seemed to impose itself as the exclusive frame through which media images of death should be understood. As I shall argue in this essay, attempts to write about violent news photography in Mexico are caught between the assertion of that photography's long tradition and the sense that violent news photography has become simply one more symptom of the climate of militarized violence that has spread throughout much of the country during the last decade. To set the violent imagery of the present within the "tradition" of Mexican photojournalism is to risk seeming oblivious to the distinctive contemporary circumstances in which it has flourished. At the same time, to insist on the brutal exceptionalism of present-day violent imagery is to deny the continuities of a profession and practice of social documentary

as significant achievements of Mexican visual culture.

The dilemma just described is captured astutely in a chapter title from a recent book by Marco Lara Klahr and Francesc Barata: "A concept in crisis: From the obsolete 'nota roja' to a journalism of public security and criminal justice."² The term nota roja (literally, "red note") has been used for many years to designate sensational varieties of crime-oriented media in Mexico, from tabloid newspapers specializing in criminal violence through book-length compilations of true-crime narratives. Scholarly and fannish studies of nota roja have enumerated several of its key formal characteristics and traced their development through twentieth-century Mexican print culture: the interweaving of documentary realism and the fantastic within the popular crime-oriented press, the common juxtaposition of photographs and comic-book-like drawings, and the play of language in headlines and titles.³ If the pertinence of nota roja as a term is in crisis, as Klahr and Barata suggest, it is perhaps because it designates elements of genre and style rather than a socio-political referent. As such, the label risks



appearing trivializing and inadequate, at least since the expansion of drug-related violence that marked the presidency of Felipe Calderón (2006–2012). The notion of a "journalism of public security and criminal justice" directs those studying Mexico's crime-oriented press to focus on the country's current political and



economic challenges rather than on longer histories of media form.

The Photojournalism of Violence and Tragedy

On a trip to Mexico City in June 2013, I attended a public discussion at the Museo de Arte Moderno featuring Mexican news photographer Enrique Metinides (b. 1934). The occasion was the launch of a book titled, for its English edition, *The 101 Tragedies of Enrique Metinides*. The photographs gathered in the book, most of them well-known and previously anthologized, are from several decades in Metinides' career. They show us the victims of car accidents and street murders, the devastation left by Mexico City's 1985 earthquake, plane crash wreckage, and other vestiges of violence and disaster. While the older, black-and-white photographs included in the book carry forward some of the humanist dignity of mid-twentieth-century Mexico City street photography, later images, shot in the colour processes of the 1960s and 1970s, look more like Jeff Wall tableaux or snapshots of urban life run through Instagram. As Museo de Arte Moderno employees distributed cappuccinos to those in the audience, Metinides offered the sorts of anecdotal reflections on his work one expects in interviews with photojournalists. He discussed several of his most renowned photographs in terms of the manoeuvring or serendipity that made them possible. Ethical or political

constraints were discussed as the focus of struggles pitting Metinides against interfering editors or publishers.

Alexis Salas has traced the sequence of events and consecrations which took Metinides from peer respect among photojournalists to art-world success.⁴ Like the Mexican news photographer Nacho López (and, to a slightly lesser extent, Héctor García), Metinides has found a place within two distinct regimes of aesthetic value. One, of which I will say more shortly, is the rich body of curatorial and art-historical work on Mexican photojournalism. This work has painstakingly reconstructed the careers, patterns of influence, and institutional contexts of news photography in the country, with a special emphasis on those photographers known for their documentation of urban crime and violence.⁵ The other locus of value, more recent and scattered, is that hazy cluster of tastes shared by Vice Media, hipster T-shirt makers, and the publishers of picture books or magazines filled with lurid imagery from Mexican popular culture. This taste formation finds in Mexican tabloid crime photography, Santo films, 1970s Mexican porn, and Day of the Dead tourist paraphernalia

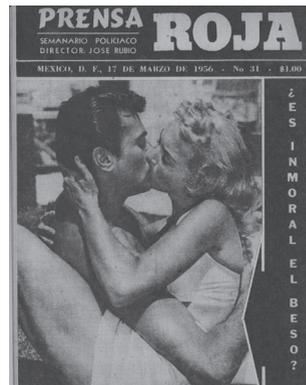


evidence of a punkish and profane challenge to cultural propriety. Vice Media, unsurprisingly, called Metinides "our new favourite photographer," and asked "How did we not know about this guy until now?"⁶ Both of these aesthetic regimes continue to flourish, materialized in ever-proliferating artefacts for

sale (such as posters and picture books) and exhibits put on by both fine-art and popular-culture museums.

More than any other nation I know, Mexico has set urban news photography near the centre of its officially consecrated visual culture. This may seem counter-intuitive, given the global circulation, in both touristic and connoisseuristic circles, of Mesoamerican artefacts, 1930s muralism, and present-day artesanía as the defining tokens of Mexican visuality. It is the case, nevertheless, that the historiography of photojournalism remains one of the great achievements of Mexican cultural scholarship. News photography in Mexico is the focus of rigorous, interesting writing and research, whose central venue for many years has been the journal and book series *Luna Córnea*. Serious writing on photography—journalistic, artistic, and vernacular—continues in semi-scholarly magazines like *Alquimia* and *Cuartoscuro*; exhibits of work by canonical photographers like Manuel Álvarez Bravo often fill outdoor walls in cultural or historic districts of Mexico City. In the capital, the gravitational centre for curatorial activity around photography is the Centro del Imagen, though key holdings of Mexican photography are to be found in such institutions as the Casa Lamm Cultural Centre and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura. One of the most eagerly awaited posthumous anthologies of writings by the Mexican cultural critic Carlos Monsiváis was *Maravillas que son, sombras que fueron*, a collection of essays on photography published in 2012.

Photographic scholarship in Mexico typically traces thick lines of interaction between the main currents of image production and circulation in early- and mid-twentieth-century Mexico City: the post-Revolutionary illustrated press, the work of canonized fine art photographers (like Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Tina Modotti), and the emergence of key photographic news agencies (like the *Agencia Fotográfica Mexicana* and the *Cassola* agency). The twentieth-century history of photography in Mexico is closely interwoven



with that of national versions of international artistic movements like surrealism and radical montage. At the same time, and more than in most other countries, still photography in Mexico developed in close proximity to cinema, producing versions of Mexican visuality which cross both media. Gabriel Figueroa, widely regarded as the most accomplished of Mexican cinematographers, worked early in his career as a still photographer on film sets; canonical press photographers Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Héctor García likewise spent significant parts of their careers as movie still photographers. The scholarship of curators/historians like Rosa Casanova has helped to reconstruct the complex set of networks in Mexican photographic history, which link together news agencies, star photographers, fine art galleries, and picture magazines.

In recent years, this scholarly and curatorial activity has focused more and more on news photographers, like Rodrigo Moya or Nacho

López, whose work moved from the observation of street-level social rituals in Mexico City to the documentation of more isolated instances of violence or victimization. This shift in their work, never complete, corresponds partly to the rise of the illustrated tabloid newspaper as a key vehicle for Mexican photojournalism in the 1950s and 1960s. Present-day Mexican interest in these photographers may acknowledge their importance as observers of the everyday, but in Anglophone countries interest is fueled above all by the expanding taste for noirish photographic images of criminality and violence. This taste has also led to the gallery success of the American Weegee, book after book collecting police agency mugs shots, and volumes devoted to the photographic archives of luridly sensational newspapers like the *New York Daily News*.⁷

Mexican crime photography slides neatly into this taste formation, but inevitably prompts two broad frameworks of understanding common within Anglophone responses to violent Mexican imagery. One such framework is the pop-anthropological notion of a Mexican obsession with death, used as journalistic shorthand to explain everything from the



baroque iconography of Mexican cathedrals to the frequency of car-crash imagery in daily newspapers. The other is the vision of Mexican public life as irredeemably tragic and brutal, a vision that draws lines of continuity between the Revolution of the early-twentieth century, the mid-twentieth-century urban *fait divers*,



and the militarized violence of the twenty-first-century drug wars. The first of these responses provides the essentializing foundation for the second, though both serve to simultaneously underpin and haunt the economic order installed by NAFTA and global neoliberal doctrine. Violence is invoked as that which makes necessary the limits on immigration and the imposition of visa requirements, which have trampled over the modest hopes for broader social and cultural exchanges raised twenty years ago by the signing of NAFTA. At the same time, and to the extent that they enshrine narco-war violence as the dominant feature of contemporary Mexican life, the governments of the United States and Canada open the door to a reading of such violence that recognizes their own complicity in the drug trade and in the economic relations which have ensured its viability.⁸

Images of Atrocity and Apocalypse

I started writing this article in order to work through my feelings about the curious relationship of Mexican photographic criticism to that being published elsewhere, mostly in Anglophone regions of the world (and in the United States in particular.) What marks this relationship are the different ways in which Mexican and non-Mexican criticism speak of violence. For a decade or more, English-language writing on news photography has been dominated by an interest in images of tragedy and atrocity: the Holocaust, 9/11,

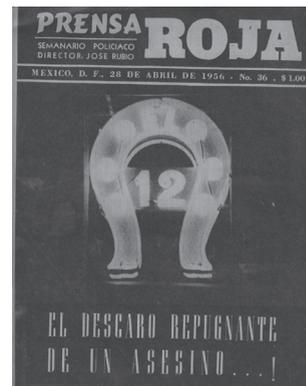
genocides in Africa or the former Yugoslavia, the desaparecidos in Argentina, etc.⁹ I should state from the outset that the important political impulses underlying most of this writing cannot be dismissed. One reason for the recent reinvigoration of photographic studies more broadly has been the medium's vital role in practices of witnessing, in genocide trials and truth-and-reconciliation processes. Recognition of this role has spurred the recent interest of artists and critics in the forensic functions of photography.¹⁰ At the same time, this interest in the photography of atrocity follows the ascension of trauma and memory as key concerns within cultural analysis more broadly.

My slight discomfort with this writing has to do with the impression it conveys of an interchangeable corpus of international atrocities equally accessible from particular vantage points within global critical culture. The most recent collection of this writing, *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (2013), is full of commentary marked by deep political commitment and incisive analytical rigour, but it is difficult to imagine those outside English-speaking critical circles feeling the same authorization to range so freely across twenty-five horrific sites or events from around the world. It seems clear, as well, that photographs of the dead (or the nearly dead, or the about-to-die) serve as promising supports for scholar-critics wanting to push key questions about photography's ethical, technological, and representational status towards the point of their possible resolution.

It is in the most horrific of photographic imagery, we are sometimes asked to believe, that the photographic medium reveals its essential character, greatest potential, or constitutive contradictions. Susie Linfield's book *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* mobilizes the affective and cognitive power of atrocity photography in order to challenge the insistence by Susan Sontag, Allan Sekula, and other so-called "modernist" critics, that the appropriate response to the photographic image is suspicion. In their preoccupation with exposing

the fraudulence of photography's claims to truth, Linfield suggests, modernist critics frequently used images of violent death as the clearest examples of photography's failures. The death photograph was criticized as both too specific (in its fixation on the individual victim rather than the political processes which produced it) and too vague (in its capacity to elicit a shapeless empathy detached from political understanding.) Countering these criticisms, Linfield points to the ways in which atrocity photography is able, in some of its most extreme examples, to overcome this diagnosed double failure. It does so both through its capacity to gather around itself communities of victimhood and through the ways in which the most powerful of atrocity photographs are able to convey a strong sense of the singularity of individual suffering.¹¹

The substance of these arguments is of less interest to me here than the ways in which extremes of photographic violence have come to serve as the cases against which propositions about photography's essential character are tested. More than any other class of image, atrocity photography is seen to lay bare the fundamental contradictions posited as being at the heart of the photographic enterprise. In her powerful book *Cruel Modernity*, Jean Franco suggests that photographs of executions and massacres stage, in its most legible form, the tension between distance and fascination that organizes much of our broader relationship to photography. Removed in time and space from atrocious events that have been



photographed, we are nevertheless drawn to "a show of violence that we can safely watch."¹² Likewise, photographs of those who have been permanently "disappeared," in contexts of political repression, are said to manifest in literal form the broader status of photographs as the residues of an irretrievable past.

Structurally similar conclusions about death imagery are developed in Leonard Folgarait's *Seeing Mexico Photographed*. I address this example not as a way of returning to Mexican photography, but because Folgarait's treatment of death imagery from the Mexican Revolution similarly uses images of atrocity as limit cases in which photography comes close to its pure form as a medium. Here, photographs of immobile corpses simultaneously represent photography at its least self-reflexive (inasmuch as marks of the



photographer's presence, like blurring or other indices of movement, are absent) and most self-vaunting (insofar as such photographs offer themselves up as the most heroically perfect examples of the medium's capacity to capture the immobility of death.) In the stillness of the photographed dead body, Folgarait suggests, "the photograph hides its presence as a medium, it exposes a closeness of fit between its workings and the stillness of this subject which draws us into a recognition that only a photograph could cause this effect."¹³ As speculation about various end-games for photography itself becomes more widespread,



so too does an interest in the furthest reaches of photography's engagement with the horrific. The horrific is offered up as the characteristic state of the modern or late-modern world, but also as that condition under which photography reveals its constituent tensions and essences with the greatest clarity.

The Longues Durées of Mexican Photography Criticism

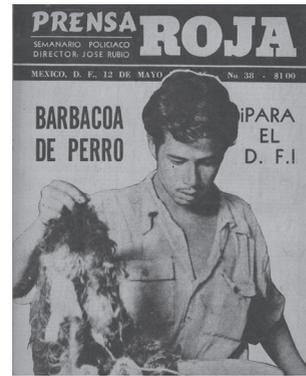
In Mexico, where estimates of those killed between 2006 and 2012 in the so-called "Mexico Drug War" have reached 100,000, the scholarly and critical discussion of photography is flourishing, as already noted. Much of that discussion now, as in decades past, is concerned with images of violence and criminality. Within that discussion, however, there is a noticeable reluctance on the part of critics, curators, and scholars in Mexico to exploit the "usefulness" of violent Mexican imagery for the sorts of transnational paradigms of analysis, like those just discussed, in which images of atrocity have become central. Put simply, discussions of present-day violent photography in Mexico seem determined to set that photography within longer, more local and finely textured histories of the photographic medium. These histories are, in large measure, those of the development of national photographic styles and of a social role for photography in Mexico.

Implicit in this work, I would argue, is a resistance to letting the present-day climate of horrific violence serve as the only prism through

which Mexican news photography might be studied and understood. This is not to overlook the many important treatments of narco-war violence and its visual dimensions, like Sergio González Rodríguez's astonishing book *El hombre sin cabeza* (2000), which examines the cultural meanings of the decapitated body. Nevertheless, Mexican writing on the photography of violence typically sidesteps the conviction, present in so much English-language work, that a critical engagement with violent photography must move quickly to confront its most horrific outer edges. To put it crudely, this writing resists the opportunity to set violent Mexican photography within a transnational canon of images and attendant ideas which would inflate its critical value, while also squandering those understandings of photography and its social meanings that have been carefully developed over a long time.

Underlying this resistance, I suggest, are several impulses. One is the desire to counter the judgement that the narco war is all that defines Mexico, as if any interest in violent imagery that sidesteps that war would be somehow trivializing or the result of a willful obliviousness. In this respect, the steady production over the last few years of studiously methodical books and exhibitions devoted to the history of violent photography in Mexico stands as a rebuke to any claim that, amidst the present-day carnage, discourse on the imagery of violence must be apocalyptic in tone. Histories of Mexican crime photography that locate the roots of their subject within the cultural and social modernity of the twentieth century usually resist the impulse to cast present-day narco-war atrocities as the final unravelling of that modernity. By refusing to dissolve the *longue durée* of Mexican cultural history within a single narrative of ceaseless brutality, these historiographical works offer the solidity of expressive traditions against the end-game visions of national collapse and chaos that circulate so freely north of the border.

A subsidiary impulse here is the refusal of photographic critics and historians to



dissolve Mexico City within constructions of a war-torn, failed, or tragic state. Clearly, cartel-related violence has reached the edges of the city, and wealth from trafficking and associated corruption runs throughout the city's economy. Nevertheless, Mexico City's contemporary art scene and richly layered art-historical communities have negotiated ways of acknowledging this condition while resisting any compulsion to operate as if in a state of emergency. In photographic criticism and scholarship, this refusal of the apocalyptic manifests itself in an interest in the ongoing, reciprocal relationship between news photography as a form or practice and Mexico City as a space of constant transformation. Historically, this relationship has been seen as one of mutual constitution: while the city generated the intersecting practices of image production that defined Mexican photography throughout the twentieth century, those practices, in turn, mapped the spatial and



social diversity of the city. As Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo suggests, in his recent study of Mexico City, Mexican news photography developed its characteristic forms during the rapid expansion of the Distrito Federal following the Revolution. Mexico's post-revolutionary period coincided almost exactly with the technological and commercial expansion of the illustrated press around the world. In this coincidence, Tenorio-Trillo argues, "the city and photos were born together."¹⁴ The "lateness" of Mexico's post-Revolutionary consolidation as a nation, he suggests, set Mexico City's growth as a capital and cultural centre more neatly within



the period of press photography's enormous technological and stylistic expansion, from the 1920s through the 1940s. Internationally, of course, the interplay between urban expansion and photographic documentation has been noted in relation to other cities.¹⁵

Throughout most of that history, and in

the canonical photography of García, López, Metinides, Moya and others, images of violence were intelligible within a broader mapping of mostly urban misery and poverty. This embedding of violence within a textured account of the social would mark even the most luridly sensational of mid-twentieth-century crime tabloids, like *Prensa Roja* and *Nota Roja*. This was less because journalists were committed to social explanations for violence, arguably, than because criminality was part of the broader moral and economic ecology of cities—Mexico City in particular—and was described as such.

Today, the violent crimes whose victims are shown on the front pages of *La Prensa* and *El Gráfico* each day are given little social context, but they are for the most part offered up as isolated crimes of opportunity or impulse rather than as symptoms of an apocalyptic social collapse. Even today, implicitly, the crimes featured on these front pages are framed as "city stories," evidence of the logics or inequities of urban life, rather than of a late-modern condition of national disintegration. We may regret the lurid sensationalism that detaches these crimes from broader frameworks of political legibility, but the same sensationalist insistence on the singularity of each crime pushes back against the reduction of Mexico to little more than a war zone.

Dispatches from the front

In 2011, the photography magazine *Cuartoscuro* organized a group discussion by Mexican photojournalists on the ethics of publishing extremely violent imagery.¹⁶ The photographic situations referenced by the participating photographers—massacres and executions—were among the most horrific of those attributable to narco-war violence. Arguments among the participants in this discussion set the need to inform the public against the ethical requirement that newspapers not pander to the voyeurism of reader/viewers for base commercial motives. This same duty to inform was cast against the risk that, by doing so, photojournalists might intensify a sense of public insecurity from which the perpetrators of violence would benefit.

Unexpectedly, to me, the tone and substance of this discussion differed little from those which might characterize a debate over similar



issues in a Canadian journalism class. The roundtable lacked any noticeable insistence on the exceptionalism of the Mexican situation, or an acknowledgement that recent levels of violence might throw longstanding frameworks of understanding into question. Published in a semi-popular magazine sold on Mexican newsstands, the *Cuartoscuro* roundtable was obviously distant in purpose and level of theoretical ambition from the book-length studies of atrocity photographs discussed above. Nevertheless, I take the normalizing,



professional character of this discussion as an implicit rejection of those accounts of violent photography whose underlying conviction is that the truths of medium and form are to be found only at the furthest reaches of the representable. In the *Cuartoscuro* roundtable, as in the studies of Mexican photojournalism already discussed, we find a commitment to positioning the most violent of imagery within lengthy historical continuities, thus preserving the pertinence of those themes and frameworks through which Mexican photojournalism has long been understood.

The strongest sense that photojournalism in contemporary Mexico might be different from elsewhere or from an earlier time comes from books, most of them in English, which offer themselves as dispatches from a war zone, from places like Ciudad Juárez. Some of these dispatches celebrate the heroic efforts of news photographers working under extraordinary risk. The more common impression conveyed, however, is of a practice and a profession rendered all but impossible. Charles Bowden's *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields* is not principally about photojournalism, but the blocked or corrupted ambition of news photographers is a recurrent theme. His description of Ciudad Juárez as a place where "the dead are counted but not photographed"¹⁷ captures the gradual disappearance of news photographs from the city: from news archives (because they are removed), from cameras (because they are confiscated), and from



newspapers themselves (which are increasingly afraid to publish them.)

In John Gibler's *To Die in Mexico*, we encounter a profession whose sense of time and achievement inverts that of the photographers rendered heroic in the two films with which I began this essay. While the photojournalists in those documentaries rushed to be first at a crime scene, those in the most violence-ridden parts of northern Mexico have learned to arrive last. To reach a murder scene first is to face the risk that killers will return, to confirm the deaths or retrieve clues left behind. Photographers who are already there face execution. Gibler quotes a photojournalist named Pepis: "Trying to get the exclusive shot is a thing of the past here for us. We've had to put a stop to that, to self-censor. Now when there is an event, we'll go, but we try not to get there before the authorities."¹⁸ Mexican photojournalism, in these examples, has not grown more extreme in those contexts in which violence is most prevalent; rather, it has retreated and shrunk.

Notes

1 El Diablo y la Nota Roja, directed by John Dickie, UK/Mexico, 2008; Vice Magazine, VBS.TV, "Alarma!," Parts 1-3, <http://www.vbs.tv/watch/vbs-news/alarma-1-of-3>.

2 My translation. The Spanish title for this chapter is "Un concepto en crisis: De la obsoleta 'nota roja' al periodismo de seguridad publica y justicia penal," Marco Lara Klahr and Francisc Barata, Nota[n] Roja: La vibrante historia de un género y una nueva manera de informar, (Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2009), 49.

3 See, for example, Susana Vargas Cervantes, "Alarma!: Mujercitos Performing Gender in a Pigmentocratic Sociocultural System" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2013); Armando Bartra, "Photographic Narrative in the Mexican Press," Luna Cornea 18 (1999): 181-198; Will Straw, "Nota Roja and Journaux Jaunes: Popular Crime Periodicals in Quebec and Mexico," in *Aprehendiendo al delincuente: Crimen y medios en América del norte*, ed. Graciela Martínez-Zalce, Will Straw and Susana Vargas (Mexico City: CISAN/UNAM and Media@McGill, 2011), 53-70.

4 Alexis Salas, "The Photography of Enrique Metinides in Circulation," in *Experience*

Culture: The Museum and Contemporary Art, ed. Jesper Rasmussen and Rune Gade (Copenhagen: The Novo Nordisk Foundation, forthcoming).

5 See, among many others, Jesse Lerner, *El impacto de la modernidad: Fotografía criminalística en la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Turner, 2007); Alberto del Castillo Troncoso, *Rodrigo Moya: Una Mirada Documental* (Mexico City: Ediciones el Milagro, 2011); Raquel Navarro Castillo, *Héctor García en ojo! Una revista que ve* (Mexico City: Centre de la Imagen, 2012); Rosa Casanova and Adriana Konzevik, *Luces sobre México: Catálogo selectivo de la fototeca nacional de INAH* (Mexico City: Arquine and RM, 2006).

6 "Enrique Metinides is our new favorite photographer," *Vice.com*, http://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/enri-v14n7. See also Sean O'Hagan, "Enrique Metinides: Photographing the Dead for Mexico's 'Bloody News'," *The Guardian*, 21 November 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/nov/21/enrique-metinides-photography-dead-mexico>.

7 See, for example, William J. Hannigan, *New York Noir: Crime Photos from the Daily*

News Archive (New York: Rizzoli, 1999).

8 For a detailed analysis, see Julien Mercille, "Violent Narco-Cartels or US Hegemony? The Political Economy of the 'War on Drugs' in Mexico," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 9 (2011): 1637-1653.

9 See, for example, in addition to those discussed here, Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, eds., *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London: Verso, 2012); Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005); Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg, eds., *Trauma and Visibility in Modernity* (Hanover, N. H.: Dartmouth College Press, 2006); Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, eds., *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007); Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

10 See, for example, the recent special dossier on forensic photography in *Ciel Variable*,

and in particular the introductory essay by Vincent Lavoie, "Forensique, representations et regimes de vérité," *Ciel Variable* 93 (January 2013): 8–20.

11

Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 39.

12

Jean Franco, *Cruel Modernity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 212.

13

Leonard Folgarait, *Seeing Mexico Photographed: The Work of Horne, Casasola, Modotti, and Álvarez Bravo* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 12.

14

Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 268.

15

See, for one example among many others,

Daniel Magilow, *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany* (Philadelphia: Penn. State University Press, 2012).

16

Carlos María Meza and Anasella Acosta, "Violencia & fotografía: Publicar o no, he ahí el dilemma," *Cuartoscuro*, 10 February 2011, <http://cuartoscuro.com.mx/2011/02/violencia-fotografia-publicar-o-no-he-ahi-el-dilema>.

17

Charles Bowden, *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 118.

18

John Gibler, *To Die in Mexico: Dispatches from Inside the Drug War* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2011), 69.

