

INTRODUCTION

Journalism, Satire, and Censorship in Mexico

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Risky criticism, satire, and censorship have a long history in Mexico. As soon as Hernán Cortés captured Tenochtitlan the first libels appeared, daubed daily on the whitewashed walls of his Coyoacán headquarters. They ranged from artfully composed verse to the unprintable “palabras que no son para decir en esta relación” (words inappropriate for this account), and Cortés’s reaction was first to match wits with his scurrilous critics, then to disdain them (“pared blanca, papel de necios,” white wall, fools’ paper), and finally to ban them.¹ Bernal Díaz del Castillo is silent as to what happened next, but the assumption—given the timely deaths of various of those inconvenient to Cortés—must be that the threats worked to silence the dissidents.² Thus began some five centuries of censorship. Churchmen burned books (and occasionally their authors); kings banned printing presses and treatises on indigenous people; dictators deployed violence both improvised (Santa Anna) and systematic (the penitentiaries of the Porfiriato, with their presidential suites for journalists).³ The revolutionary governments took an evolutionary step forward, coercing less and co-opting more. To that end, politicians used multiple subsidies ranging from the formal (lavishly paid adverts, cheap newsprint, generous loans) to the informal—but inspirational—payoffs to individual hacks. The Mexican rulers of the *dictablanda* smoothly and comprehensively censored the twentieth-century media: happily handing out *pan* to an oft-complicit press, prepared when needed to pick up the *palo* (stick). In short, the arch-Machiavellian Cortés might well be painted as a *precursor intelectual* of the arch-Machiavellian Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI).

So, at least, runs an old and powerful story, which until recently ended on an uplifting

note with the democratization of the print press in the 1980s and '90s.⁴ Yet as the contributors to this book argue, such an emancipatory narrative no longer holds. These authors come from varied professional backgrounds. Many are historians, drawn to examine the complex roots of the contemporary situation. Some, like Judith Matloff and Rafael Barajas, are journalists forced by necessity to ponder the old assurances of press liberalization. Others, like Javier Garza and Jacinto Rodríguez Munguía, combine investigation of the past with concern for present-day problems to bridge both professions. Finally, scholars such as Everard Meade and Paul Eiss have turned from history to contemporary cultural commentary to discern patterns and dislocations in our new and shocking reality. The diversity of approaches, methodologies, and assumptions is inevitable and self-evident. Yet amid that diversity, the chapters are linked by three common observations, which also structure this book.

First, as even a cursory glance at newspaper headlines suggest, journalism is more dangerous, and consequently more constrained, now than at any other point in modern Mexican history. Since the early 2000s reporters have been murdered at a far greater rate than at the PRI's peak.⁵ There is no longer a liberal story of press democratization with a happy ending.⁶ Second, the new scrutiny and a shift from memoir and polemic to history have knocked the linchpin out of any simple dichotomies of domination and resistance from an earlier print world. A world in which an authoritarian conservative president (Gustavo Díaz Ordaz) helps bring the most influential opposition journalist (Julio Scherer) to power; or where a conservative Mexico City mayor (Ernesto Uruchurtu) props up a genuine opposition outlet (*Política*); or where another unpopular president (José López Portillo) funds an opposition daily (*Unomásuno*) is a world considerably more complex than any just-so story can tell.⁷ (Perhaps, as Everard Meade suggests in this volume, it is one in which both liberal teleologies and Gramscian imaginaries break

down.) Third, this empirical shift toward a new narrative complexity parallels comparative and conceptual shifts in studies of the media in other times and places. It is now clear that globalized media competition does not inevitably translate into more democratic flows of information or newly empowered consumers. The press in the United States is no historical yardstick, bent as it is by its own pressures of commercial imperatives, state co-optation, “fake news,” and violence.⁹ Above all, censorship is not a solely political phenomenon, existing in Manichaeian opposition to freedom of expression. As authors in this volume demonstrate, censorship can also be market-driven, or criminal; it involves complex relations of “complicity, collaboration, and negotiation” between censors and the censored.¹⁰ In Ana María Serna’s description in this book, it is “a cultural-political practice emerging from a multiplicity of sites, voices, and subjectivities.”

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OLD STORIES, NEW HISTORIES: MEXICO’S PRINT CULTURE UNTIL 1910

Since the early 2000s, Mexican historians have begun embracing what Robert Darnton terms the “new history” of communication.¹² Delving into Mexicans’ relationships with printed texts, they have started to chip away at old liberal certainties.¹³ The Inquisition, for example, was depicted by liberals such as Vicente Riva Palacio (in both papers and novels) as an efficient machine of totalitarian censorship; in reality inquisitors lacked enough copies of their lists of banned books to cover New Spain (and only updated them every twenty years anyway).¹⁴ At the other end of the colony, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were times of widespread enthusiasm for France’s revolutionaries and evil-minded attacks on Spaniards, bureaucrats, and churchmen. Across the hierarchies of this increasingly literate culture, readers got their hands on the newspapers, gazettes, and satirical pamphlets that transmitted new and dangerous ideas. Some publications, newspapers, and tracts were explicitly political; others were spaces of

backdoor commentary, such as the medical journals in which doctors and healers discussed innovative ways to view society, or the thin religious booklets with commentaries on and prayers to unsettlingly heterodox saints.¹⁵ People read them together in the new spaces of Enlightenment sociability: the Masonic lodge, the economic society, the café, the reading group.¹⁶ The printed word traveled well beyond the page and the literate, as authors both drew on and developed a critical vernacular culture through the cries of the pamphleteer sellers, the carefully rehearsed rhetoric of public readings, and the plays, songs, gossip, rumors, letters, and libels.

This public sphere swelled dramatically during and after the wars of independence. Tumultuous discussions of autonomy, democracy, and the church echoed through the newly established town halls, and a newborn electorate—which initially included poor people, indigenous people, and Afro-Mexicans—responded with votes, insurrections, and manifestos.¹⁷ A new, vocal, and often contrarian generation of newspapermen and pamphleteers emerged in both the capital and the provinces.¹⁸ They were met from the start with tides of censorship, which ebbed and rose according to regime.¹⁹ Article 17 of Agustín de Iturbide’s constitution ordered writers to make “a rational sacrifice of the right to think and manifest ideas freely, neither attacking nor alluding to, without prior censorship, the Catholic religion, ecclesiastical discipline, the moderate monarchy, the emperor’s person, independence, and the union.”²⁰

Journalists deserved stiff jail sentences, Antonio López de Santa Anna decreed twenty years later, because Mexico’s ruinous condition was attributed to “the continuous and scandalous abuse of freedom of the press.”²¹ Such legislation was backed up by force. Between 1831 and 1832 numerous printing shops were closed and editors arrested; in the late 1830s journalists were incarcerated in Mexico’s nastier jails, such as San Juan de Ulúa.²² Censors, though, could still be evaded: under Santa Anna *Le Trait d’Union* used an improbable combination of French and

fashion commentary to criticize the president.²³ Such satire ran too deep in Mexican culture to eradicate with legislation; it was the dominant tone of pamphlets from the beginning, its targets running across society, its power to harm recognized in laws that specifically targeted nicknames, sarcasm, and ridicule.²⁴ Even priests, it seemed, were satirists; in Tabasco one padre was murdered for his verses mocking the governor.²⁵ During the Reform era, satire only intensified, including both the Horatian mode of irony and mockery (often general) and the Juvenalian tradition of bitter vituperation (often personal). Satire was seen in written polemics and in the first political cartoons, which took up one of the four pages of *Mi Sombrero*, launched in 1860 and later rebaptized *La Orquesta*, and which quickly spread to other papers.²⁶ With the liberal party triumphant, political debate between relatively large, established newspapers such as *El Siglo XIX* and *El Monitor Republicano* peaked.²⁷

The story of the Porfiriato is a long one of the death of these press freedoms through persecution and subsidy: the suppression of juries devoted to assessing cases of press freedom, the serial jailings of journalists, the closure of mainstays such as *El Monitor Republicano*, and the unfair competition of the larger, cheaper, commercial papers that received extensive official subsidies.²⁸ As Pablo Piccato notes in this volume, however, “the influence of the press did not diminish.” There was, as even Daniel Cosío Villegas has noted, a continual rumble of criticism across the period, from both liberal and conservative editors—why else, after all, the prison suites?—and as Claude Dumas and Zamudio Vega observe in their study of the main conservative newspapers, there was “the slightly chaotic but constant existence of an opposition press” (*La Voz de México, El Tiempo, and El País*).³⁰ Battles still broke out, as when *El Demócrata* reported the Tomóchic massacre in the guise of a novel.³¹ Cartoons survived and grew more refined; coverage of and commentary on social issues and crime provided half-hidden

critiques of the dictatorship. (Not always disguised either: one José Guadalupe Posada cartoon in *El Diablito Rojo* explicitly rebuked Díaz for the Creelman interview.)³²

Beyond the broadsheets of the capital, censorship was even less complete. In the poorer suburbs, workers-turned-journalists resisted patronizing official discourses and sought to create alternative and critical stories of working-class culture and masculinity.³³ Their discourse traveled far beyond the capital: by 1906 the popular satirical newspaper *La Guacamaya* (which styled itself a “newspaper of gossip and good humor, agile and a teller of truths, not puffed up or snobby, scourge of the bourgeoisie and defender of the Working Class,” according to its masthead) had a print run of 29,000 and was sold in Orizaba, San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, Toluca, Parral, and Guanajuato.³⁴ Alongside these imports, radical newspapers emerged in the provinces and borderlands, tapping Reform era traditions of criticism, exposure, and debate.³⁵ Revisionism concerning the incomplete nature of Porfirian censorship is not, perhaps, all that surprising; the same roundabout but effective communication systems—gossip, songs, libels, pamphlets, the gutter press, Kremlinological signs in the big papers—and the same weakened grasp of provincial information flows are evident in other states where authoritarian dreams outpace reality, such as ancien régime France.³⁶

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VISIONS OF THE MORE RECENT PAST

While authoritarian dreams were likewise hard to realize under the postrevolutionary governments, a similar reassessment is only just beginning in studies of twentieth-century Mexico’s newspaper industry, traditionally subject to profoundly normative and negative evaluations. That postrevolutionary press, commentators have held, was “submissive and unconditional”; newspapers were “factual deserts” and “timid, over-sensational, often influenced

by official optimism and possibly more concerned over profits than honest and objective presentation of the news.”³⁷ Technology was primitive, and many publications lacked “the installations, the humans, or the equipment that modern newspapers need.”³⁸ Print runs were so short that many owners “neither competed for readers nor formed public opinion independently.”³⁹ Owners were businessmen first and editors second, principally concerned with using their papers to further their commercial ends. *Novedades*’s owners were “car salesmen”; Rodrigo de Llano, the editor of *Excélsior*, was more publicity agent than newsman; Regino Hernández Llergo, the owner of *Hoy*, was “very intelligent but extraordinarily corrupt”; the media mogul José García Valseca was immortalized as Carlos Fuentes’s revolutionary-turned-plutocrat, Artemio Cruz.⁴⁰ The journalists were apparently even worse: lazy, unprofessional, ill-educated, profiteering drunkards, whom Mexicans colloquially dismissed as coyotes, blackmailers, *pícaros* (blaggers), *lambiscones* (brownnosers), journalism merchants, and gangsters.⁴¹

Although commentators held that institutional and coercive forms of censorship were rare, they argued that the official control of newspapers was effectively absolute. The press was “one of the sectors of the country where subordination to power was most obvious.”⁴² Shared ideological positions about anticommunism, national progress, and economic stability united officials, editors, and journalists.⁴³ Financial incentives, including discounted newsprint, government advertising, cheap loans, and regular payoffs—the *sobornos* (bribes) known in slang as *igualas* (fees), *embutes* (bribes), *sobres* (envelopes), or *chayotes* (squashes)—tightened these bonds.⁴⁴ Formulaic press releases laid down clear party lines; the stories wrote themselves.⁴⁵ In Mexico’s newsrooms, “censorship extended and implanted itself as something natural”; all journalists knew “the limits of what they could write”; and self-censorship was the rule,

something like the “scissors in the head” of East German writers.⁴⁶ Empty praise, fawning, and the flattery of officials were all commonplace, while the “core features of the political system—presidential authority, official corruption, state violence and electoral fraud etc—were decidedly off limits.”⁴⁷ If journalists occasionally transgressed the boundaries, owners and editors silenced or sacked them.⁴⁸ At best, the print media were “a free press which does not make use of its freedom”; at worst, freedom of expression was a “great lie” that “was subject to so many limits, it does not exist.”⁴⁹

As a result, the political influence of newspapers was perceived as extremely limited. They were echo chambers *avant la lettre*. “The mass media were in essence ineffective, they persuaded those already persuaded and could inhibit those still on the fence, but they did nothing more.”⁵⁰ State control, high prices, elitist subject matter, and an obscurantist, overly elaborate prose alienated the majority of potential, if semiliterate, readers.⁵¹ The press acted as little more than elites talking shop, “read by politicians for its hidden messages, used by the government to float controversial ideas and exploited as a forum for infighting between different political mafias.”⁵² Public opinion was “the patrimony of the initiated,” a small, exclusive section of the privileged class; in short, the public sphere was not all that public.⁵³ If Mexicans outside the inner circle did read the newspapers, they either imbibed a one-way stream of “unified messages and symbols reinforcing regime legitimacy” or they did so with cynicism.⁵⁴ Writing in the 1970s, Cosío Villegas argued that the “incredulity of the immense majority of readers” was such that Mexicans “didn’t simply judge journalists as liars, but took it as a rule to believe exactly the opposite of what they wrote.”⁵⁵ One popular dictum held that “the person who reads nothing is better educated than the one who only reads the newspapers.”⁵⁶ If everyday Mexicans did exchange political opinions, they did so through rumor and gossip, around the water fountain, in

the market, over a coffee, or within their families.⁵⁷ If they sought to challenge state authority, they did so not through print media but rather through rituals, ranging from choreographed riots to savvy disruptions of official celebrations, “spaces in which people could express ideas that were not allowed in the public sphere.”⁵⁸

Such negative assessments of the press have considerable weight—and some empirical backing. Large parts of the story, however, rest on political polemic, normative approaches, and questionable comparisons. Right-wing critics have drawn on a romanticized teleology of Western press freedoms to denigrate the Mexican press for its technological backwardness, moribund commercial policies, lack of professionalism, and political subordination.⁵⁹ In the twenty-first century such an approach has been bolstered by theorists of media democratization, who argue that it took increased commercialization and competition to bring innovation, professionalization, and a new level of public debate on power.⁶⁰ For observers on the left the story is more political and individual than commercial, centering on the role of Julio Scherer and his generation in combating state control. For influential writers like Vicente Leñero, Carlos Monsiváis, and Elena Poniatowska, the pivot was *Excélsior*'s challenge to the state from the 1968 student massacre until the 1976 expulsion of Scherer and his allies from their newsroom.⁶¹ One unintended consequence of this governmental coup against Mexico's only serious independent newspaper, which cartoonist Rius called the “Pinochetazo of *Excélsior*,” was the launch of several new opposition publications. Scherer founded the pathbreaking weekly *Proceso*; other “civic pioneers” founded the dailies *Unomásuno* and *La Jornada*; and these, finally, guided Mexico to the sunlit liberal uplands of free print media.⁶²

Although right- and left-wing narratives of oppression and emancipation differ on process and details, they share three flawed assumptions. First, they exaggerate the coherence

and power of the state. Even with its pomp, the PRI's grasp on Mexico was weak, the regime a dictablanda by necessity. Regional autonomies, central factionalism, and a fundamental shortage of money and manpower all made totalitarian press control impossible.⁶³ The laws governing information flows were aggressive, but went largely unenforced. There was only one dedicated censorship agency, the Comisión Calificadora de Publicaciones y Revistas Ilustradas (Assessment Commission of Publications and Illustrated Magazines), which was set up to deal with the moral threat of comic books. It subsequently expanded to include sports, *nota roja* (crime), and soft porn magazines, yet it was rarely effective, and what censorship did take place came on an ad hoc basis from the Ministry of the Interior.⁶⁴ Second, they are heavily based on Mexico City's broadsheets, the self-declared *gran prensa*, and the writings of their stalwarts. The hegemonic narrative of oppression and (post-1968) resistance has given Julio Scherer (among others) what Arno Burkholder terms a "mystifying halo"; this undermines critical study and condemns the rest of the press to accusations of state control, corruption, and civic irrelevance. Whether coming from before '68 or from outside the city, other print media are generally ignored or dismissed.⁶⁵ Provincial newsmen, Monsiváis wrote, were devoted to "banality, adulation, local credulity, and parochial anticommunism."⁶⁶ Critical newspapers like *Por Qué?* were "tabloid" and "exaggerated," their denunciations the "fruits of desperation and not careful reflection."⁶⁷ The *nota roja* enthusiasts of tabloids and crime magazines were "sensationalist" and "bloody."⁶⁸ Yet these media did provide forums for criticism and debate; they constituted a fourth (not Cosío Villegas's "fifteenth") estate.⁶⁹ As Piccato notes in this volume, "The trade still involved many of the values of nineteenth-century periodistas de combate: integrity, concern about reputations, and a close relationship with readers." Finally, critics of all stripes notably underestimate the strength of Mexican civil society under the PRI. Censorship was widely

deplored (even by the censorious), and its ultimate manifestation, the murder of journalists, was politically perilous, toppling regional politicians from mayors to governors.⁷¹ The net effect was the survival of a broad range of media, consumed by readers who did not always know much about political journalism but knew what they liked.⁷²

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TOWARD A NEW HISTORY OF THE PRESS, 1910–1970

This book is a collective history of that broad range of print media. The authors collectively apply the revisionist scrutiny of earlier periods to the twentieth century, above all to the time of the PRI, 1929–2000. In doing so, they do not throw the baby out with the bathwater; on the contrary some contributors convincingly reinforce parts of the traditional narrative. Press manipulation and journalistic self-censorship were rife. The single intelligence document that Jacinto Rodríguez Munguía unpacks, a carefully considered proposal for subtle and total press manipulation, lends a new weight to belief in the Orwellian fantasies (though not capacities) of sectors of the ruling class. Andrew Paxman’s case study of the Puebla press is a detailed substantiation of how some of those fantasies were realized by hard-line governors. In other chapters, however, old suppositions go down the drain. Some of the contributors (Pablo Piccato, Benjamin Smith, Michael Lettieri, Paul Gillingham, Roderic Camp, Javier Garza, and Everard Meade) make it clear that provincial newspapers, syndicated cartoons, metropolitan crime pages, newsmagazines, and even trade publications collectively provided considerable political news and critical commentary.⁷³ Renata Keller’s chapter on *Política* depicts a powerful leftist magazine that until 1967 took on any and all comers, including, in defiance of “the so-called unwritten rules of Mexican journalism,” the president. On the other side of 1968, Vanessa Freije shows how censorship frequently intensified rather than silenced controversy. The sum is a book

that recognizes ambiguities and considerable temporal and geographical variation in the interactions of press, politicians, cultural managers, and readers. Starting and finishing with the tragic stories of the press of our time, however, the volume raises unsettling questions: at the structural level of how much politically controversial debate goes on in the public sphere, has all that much changed? In extremis, has change run in the opposite direction, from debate to diversion and silence? Are there more limits to what can be written in a formally democratic Ciudad Juárez, or Michoacán, or Acapulco, or Veracruz than there ever were under single-party rule?

Ambiguities, of course, are nothing new in this history. The revolutionaries wrote press freedom into the 1917 Mexican Constitution, making it illegal to shutter or destroy printing establishments or to close down papers for defamatory articles. They also wrote the 1917 press law, which made it illegal to even “covertly” criticize individuals, and a penal code that promised up to two years’ imprisonment for any journalist threatening the public peace through “discrediting, ridiculing, or destroying the fundamental institutions of the country” or “insulting the Mexican nation or its political entities.”⁷⁴ Yet for all the repressive aspects of the press laws after the death of President Francisco Madero, who had been savaged mercilessly by the papers he initially protected, and even when set against revisionist versions of Porfirian press history, the revolution was, as Serna and Piccato demonstrate in this volume, a clear rupture. By the 1920s popular demands were “channeled through both formal and informal routes, . . . [and] journalism acquired its primordial function as the intermediary between public opinion and the state.”⁷⁵

During the revolution and the decades immediately following, radical workers’ newspapers flourished; voicing their demands was the key to success.⁷⁶ But so too did their

opponents: Catholic organs, like the earnest Cristero newspaper *La Epoca*; their vituperative hard-line conservative successors; the tabloids *Hombre Libre* and *Omega*; and the mouthpieces of the regional bourgeoisie, like *El Siglo de Torreón*, *El Dictamen*, *El Diario de Yucatán*, and *El Porvenir*.⁷⁷ The expanded industry of mass-produced national publications, like *Excélsior*, *Novedades*, *La Prensa*, and *El Universal*—which walked a delicate line between official support and overt criticism—also flourished. As flagships of the revolutionary state’s liberal credentials, they were often given a long rope. But this could be yanked fairly aggressively, particularly at times of political tension, to keep them in line.⁷⁸ While journalists changed, so too did the structure of media ownership. By the early 1940s it had undergone its own revolution: the old owners, like the aristocratic Rafael Reyes Spindola, had gone, and ambitious businessmen from the lower middle classes, like José García Valseca, had taken their place. Moreover, two of Mexico’s biggest dailies, *La Prensa* and *Excélsior*, were owned by worker cooperatives.⁷⁹

If the early postrevolutionary decades witnessed an overhaul of press discourses and structures, it was the midcentury that saw a genuine sea change in print readership. This had multiple causes: education, better communication, a soaring birth rate, relative prosperity, and comparatively little competition from other media forms. Revolutionary schooling and literacy programs paid off: in 1940, 42 percent of adults were literate; by 1970, the number was 76 percent. These new readers lived in towns and cities of a new size—the 1960 census found more Mexicans in town than country—where newspapers, often local, were readily available.⁸⁰ Both local and national papers traveled farther and quicker on the new road networks, often by using the free second-class mail granted to the press by President Lázaro Cárdenas.⁸¹ Print media now reached far beyond the immediate environs of the printshop. Economic growth also mattered. Increased advertising gave owners greater financial support: between 1963 and 1970 annual

spending on advertising increased from Mex\$1,600 to Mex\$3.935 million.⁸² For some, the big sixty-centavo broadsheets remained out of reach, but for many the twenty-centavo or thirty-centavo tabloids and local eight-page weeklies did not cut too far into rent and food. Finally, while other media made inroads during this time, they had yet to dominate the market. Radio listening, intense since the 1930s, complemented rather than supplemented newspaper reading. Television, the future, was limited to Mexico City and provincial capitals until the 1970s, and until then Televisa's newsreaders tended to repeat the front pages of the newspapers anyway.⁸³ The sum of these changes was a veritable explosion of newspaper production, far outpacing population growth. In 1930 there were 44 dailies in Mexico; by 1974 there were 256.⁸⁴

Their readers were not evenly spread across class or place. The capital's three main broadsheets—*Excélsior*, *El Universal*, *Novedades*—lost ground in relative terms, their readership growing slower than the population and much slower than that of the tabloids.⁸⁵ While they faced competition from new broadsheets, they also failed to reach much beyond middle- and upper-class *capitalinos*. Dull subject matter, limited sports and crime, clunky language, oft-impenetrable columns, and a distinct air of snobbery put off manual workers, students, teachers, taxi drivers, and clerks. In 1970 an Informex survey concluded that even Scherer's *Excélsior* rarely penetrated beyond professionals, merchants, and industrialists.⁸⁶ But Mexico City tabloids like *La Prensa*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, *Últimas Noticias*, *Ovaciones*, and *Tabloide* saw circulation soar. "We are the main newspaper in Mexico," claimed *La Prensa*'s editor as early as 1942, "because in reality we are [a] truly popular newspaper and can sustain ourselves without great problems."⁸⁷ By 1960, the twenty-centavo *Tabloide* allegedly sold over 150,000 copies per day.⁸⁸ Ten years later, *La Prensa* had a certified circulation of 185,361, and *Ovaciones* was outselling *Excélsior* by more than two to one.⁸⁹ Content was key: scandal, sports, crime, and celebrity news

sold. But so was language. Roberto G. Serna, the editor of *Zócalo*, insisted that his journalists employ a style that “was colloquial, anecdotal, seasoned with jokes and wordplay,” using “the greatest amount of popular terms but without losing grammatical form.”⁹⁰ These papers were designed for Mexico City’s working class, and they worked.

Provincial newspapers were also often success stories. Scholars have regularly denigrated the regional penetration of the press, using statistics which show that per capita readership at the national level was relatively low, around one issue per ten inhabitants.⁹¹ Changes in villages and hamlets are difficult to see, and some anthropology studies suggest minimal (if politically important) readership.⁹² But taking into account the urban-rural divide, more focused approaches reveal a burgeoning regional industry—a genuine readers’ revolution. In cities across the country owners claimed to produce more papers than there were households. Even allowing for deliberate overestimates of sales in the hinterlands, the figures are startling. In 1967 Monterrey’s five dailies produced around 241,000 copies for 114,000 households. In Mérida notarized counts of *El Diario del Sureste*, *El Diario de Yucatán*, and *Novedades de Yucatán*’s circulations totaled 101,900 copies for 28,000 households.⁹³ In the same year, an extensive US government survey estimated that 79 percent of urban Mexicans read their local newspapers regularly.⁹⁴ If you were literate and you lived in a town or city, you read the press.

The precise extent, rhythms, and mechanisms of state censorship are still to be established. That the state attempted to control the press is beyond doubt. Initially attempts were ad hoc and comprised a distinctly dictablanda mix of personal approaches, bribery, threats, and violence.⁹⁵ By the mid-1960s, as Rodríguez Munguía demonstrates in this volume, there were those in government who sought to construct “an invisible tyranny” through conscious, subtle, and total manipulation of the mass media. Many owners, editors, and journalists embraced this,

both for ideological reasons and for financial gain.⁹⁷ In the national broadsheets some targets, like the president, and some themes, like military violence, were forbidden.⁹⁸ And particularly after 1948 print satirists were sparse, incomprehensible, or nonexistent.⁹⁹

But this fails to tell the whole story of pressure on print media. Private enterprises also tried their hands at censorship. Up until the 1960s the powerful Monterrey group had a censor at *El Norte*, who would redact or change sensitive stories on strikes and workers' rights.¹⁰⁰ (In the twenty-first century, as Javier Garza and Rafael Barajas argue in this volume, such pressure has increased, far outweighing the censorship attempts of the state.) Furthermore, even during the mid-twentieth century official censorship was far from complete. In the provinces local governments lacked the cash to accomplish anything near "an invisible tyranny." Instead they relied on irregular bouts of dirty tricks, violence, and intimidation to shut up or punish the critical press.¹⁰² As Paxman argues in this volume, even when they succeeded the process was lengthy and open to some haggling. Faced with the Ávila Camacho *cacicazgo*, for example, *La Opinión de Puebla* took years to bend entirely to Maximino's will.

Because censorship was irregular, spaces for criticism, debate, and popular input were relatively commonplace. In the nationals, the crime news, cartoons, and to a lesser extent photographs served these roles. By the 1940s most broadsheets and all the tabloids ran the *nota roja*, though *Excélsior*, "wanting to cooperate with authorities and educational centres of the country oriented toward the popular classes" had piously forsworn bloody crime news in 1930.¹⁰⁴ The crime pages were implicitly political. They probed suspicious murders, exposed government corruption, and suggested links between the upscale restaurants of the "lawyerocracy" and the spit-and-sawdust cantinas of professional hitmen.¹⁰⁵ As Piccato has argued, "crime news was the terrain on which civil society addressed the separation between truth and justice, the disjuncture

between people's knowledge about the reality of criminal acts and the state response to these acts."¹⁰⁶ The crime pages also encouraged popular interaction. They experimented with readers' polls; letters pages were stacked with amateur detectives' theories; and crime magazines ran collaborative columns like "You Are the Judge."¹⁰⁷ As the Sonoran crime journalist Cesar Vallejo made clear, "I believe the crime page has the most contact with the people, with reality. I believe that it is the most human, the nearest to the problems of the people."¹⁰⁸

During the immediate postwar era, anticommunist cartoonists dominated the national newspapers. Most cartoonists condemned perceived left-wing movements, including the 1958 teachers strike, the 1959 railway workers strike, and the 1968 student movement. In 1954 the US National Editorial Association even employed Rafael Freyre to support US intervention in Guatemala.¹⁰⁹ But even as the organization did this, it also mercilessly mocked the regime's claims to revolutionary policy. In *Presente*, Antonio Arias Bernal's cartoons not only lampooned the president's cronies but also critiqued Miguel Alemán directly. He was less Mr. Colgate, the beaming president, and more a buck-toothed buffoon locking up the constitution.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile more radical, left-leaning cartoonists were emerging. By the 1950s, illustrated satire had taken over from written press or stage versions of the genre. Abel Quezada led the way with complex and scathing cartoons, images that drew on Posada's tradition of the visually grotesque while pioneering the multiple boxes and long texts that characterized his successors. Quezada's fifty-year career in many ways epitomized the censorship of his times. His contribution to *Ovaciones* on June 10, 1950, savaged the self-censorship of the reporters accompanying a presidential tour:

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Of course [the journalists'] patriotism, combined with the excellence of the banquet, led them not to see, for example, that on Sunday, May 21, in Ixtepec,

Oaxaca, while they were eating opulently in Alemán's company, soldiers were marshaling a queue outside of people piling up to eat the leftovers; and neither did they see, perhaps through studying too closely the president's smile, a banner that was displayed on the 5th of June in Motul, Yucatán, which read "Mr. President, we the *ejidatarios* of Motul are dying of hunger."¹¹¹

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After the ensuing ten days of attacks from his colleagues, Quezada resigned with an elegant final cartoon on the absent press freedoms; within months he was back at work, unabashed; in 1976 he was expelled along with Scherer and company from *Excélsior*; in short order he was at work once more.¹¹²

Eduardo del Río, also known as Rius, followed, earning a living wage in the tabloids *Ovaciones* and *La Prensa* before running scathing cartoon supplements in left-wing magazines like *Política*, *Sucesos*, and *Por Qué?* and publishing his own comic book, *Los Supermachos*. In his autobiography the cartoonist admitted that in *Política* he "published some of the most violent cartoons that post-revolutionary Mexico had ever seen." By 1968 he and three other cartoonists set up a cooperative, which put out *La Garrapata*, *El Azote de los Bueyes*, a supremely critical selection of pro-student cartoons.¹¹³ Even more *oficialista* (officialist) cartoonists started to undermine state policy. Jorge Carreño's frontispieces for *Siempre!* "contribut[ed] to the gradual erosion of presidentialism."¹¹⁴ And by the 1960s caricature had become "the foundation for the creation of popular political culture."¹¹⁵

Photographs could also offer counterhegemonic versions of contemporary news. By their very nature they were more open to interpretation than were written texts. Although editors tried hard to control the visual presentation of controversial events through apposite selection and

calculated caption writing, they were not always successful. Alberto del Castillo Troncoso's careful studies of photographic representations of the student movement in 1968 reveal that even the most bourgeois broadsheets occasionally acknowledged students' demands through oversight or deliberate error. After soldiers used a bazooka to open the doors of the National Polytechnic Institute (Instituto Politécnico Nacional), university rector Javier Barros Sierra led a student march through Mexico City. Even the notoriously conservative *Heraldo de México* acknowledged the march's popular support, showing the applauding people hanging out of the Miguel Alemán housing complex in the center of town. Similarly, on August 31, 1968, the newspaper included a picture of two older women walking down the street with crossed arms in support of the student strike. There was no caption. Readers were free to interpret the photograph, including seeing it as demonstrating that civil society was beginning to back the revolt.¹¹⁶

If space within the *gran prensa* existed but was somewhat limited, other print media were much less controlled. Provincial newspapers ran the gamut from exceptionally officialista (and dull) through the strictly commercial (and apolitical) to a degree of focused political radicalism unthinkable in the Mexico City dailies. This was due to the federal government's drive and ability to control the capital's public sphere, but also to the lesser importance of electoral politics there. There were no elected positions to fight over in Mexico City, whereas the oft-bitter competition for state and municipal offices in the provinces made local politics and its coverage far more significant. The provincial press was consequently far less docile or predictable than traditionally thought and distinctly more willing to enter into personalized opposition—in the main against regional politicians, but also concerning the president.¹¹⁷ The growing number of papers in the García Valseca, Bercun, and Healy publishing chains did make coordinated central

influence easier, but even they periodically entered into local politics with a critical vigor; meanwhile some independent newspapers were genuinely independent. A 1960 Ministry of the Interior survey of regional papers could not find overt government influence in 41 percent of the titles, and the agents classified the editorial stance of 50 percent as either independent or oppositional.¹¹⁸ Some critical papers were sober centralist broadsheets, such as Guadalajara's *El Informador*; others were radical tabloids, such as *La Verdad de Acapulco*, the port's left-wing stalwart for some twenty years. All used their editorials for virulent political attacks; some extended this criticism overtly into their reporting, while others used "structural slyness"—the meaningful juxtaposition, the mock-innocent aside—to undermine their oficialista coverage.¹¹⁹ They exercised an everyday, qualified but meaningful press freedom that was absent in Mexico City.

Right-wing and left-wing magazines also provided ample space for relatively free, informed journalism. The Partido Acción Nacional's paper, *La Nación*, was much more than a party political organ. Coverage of electoral fraud was particularly acute, revealing how dirty tricks and violence curtailed the PAN's popular candidate for the Baja California governorship in 1959 and Salvador Nava's independent run for the San Luis Potosí position two years later.¹²⁰ On October 15, 1968, the paper ran an extremely bloody front-page photograph, which showed three dead students at Tlatelolco, above the headline "Huichilobos Returns to Tlatelolco."¹²¹ Left-wing magazines were also overtly critical. As Renata Keller argues in this volume, *Política* broke all the "unwritten rules of the press," attacking Adolfo López Mateos's treatment of workers, supporting political prisoners, revealing the increasing repression of opposition, and openly ridiculing presidential candidate Gustavo Díaz Ordaz.¹²² In the mid-1960s, *Sucesos* under Mario Menéndez took up the role of countercultural critic, publishing investigative reports into

official corruption and providing a road map for radical change in the form of extensive, favorable interviews with Fidel Castro and guerrillas in Venezuela, Guatemala, and Colombia.¹²³ Finally, in early 1968 Menéndez started *Por Qué?*, a sensationalist tabloid weekly replete with bloody nota roja visuals of state violence.¹²⁴ These magazines transformed politics, becoming required reading for a generation of students and opposition activists.¹²⁵

Union magazines also provided forums for debate and critique. During the late 1950s the electricians' publication, *Solidaridad*, became what José Luis Gutiérrez Espíndola terms “a tribune of the labor insurgency.” Tips on tactics were exchanged, and strikes were offered sympathetic coverage and support. Such open discussions were well liked. Backed by monthly union dues, the magazine hit an estimated print run of 10,000–12,000, more than Vicente Lombardo Toledano's increasingly official *El Popular*.¹²⁶ As Michael Lettieri demonstrates in this volume, *El Informador Camionero* likewise provided a relatively open, critical forum for the nation's bus workers.

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REFORM AND GOOD-BYE, 1970–2000

During the 1970s, relations between the state and the national print media changed. President Luis Echeverría announced a new period of “political opening” and encouraged “independent, honest and timely journalism.” “If he means it, this would be [a] clear departure from what currently exists in Mexico,” observed the US ambassador.¹²⁸ His press secretary, Fausto Zapata, reiterated the shift. “We don't want to supplant our reality with rigged information. . . . The government doesn't want to disguise problems but resolve them.”¹²⁹ This was partly theater. During the *sexenio* (six-year term), Echeverría's government used state pressure or allies in the private sector to close down *Por Qué?*, usurp control of *El Universal* and García Valseca's *Sol*

chain, and most famously harass and then take over *Excélsior*.¹³⁰ But the statement was not wholly spurious either: privately, Echeverría confessed to *Excélsior*'s head, Julio Scherer, that he thought too much censorship “thins the blood, weakens the juices, and makes a real man a eunuch.”¹³¹ Echeverría's successor, José López Portillo, took a similar line, reforming Article 6 of the Mexican Constitution to include the “public's right to know” and starting a debate on the state's relationship to the mass media.¹³²

Such opinions shaped the new tone of national newspapers. Political columns in particular started to offer greater space for public discussion. These had started as elitist, money-making enterprises. Salvador Novo had punned on their name and termed them *calumnias políticas*, “political calumnies.”¹³³ Carlos Denegri's “Miscelánea” in *Excélsior* provided the model. Described by Scherer and Monsiváis as “a flatterer without scruples, precious beyond measure, and a specialist in the abuse of power,” Denegri sold his column to the highest bidder.¹³⁴ During the early 1970s, however, more critical writers came to the fore. As Vanessa Freije has shown, columnists like Manuel Buendía, Miguel Granados Chapa, and Julio Manuel Ramírez (the pen name for the combined skills of Julio Scherer, Manuel Becerra Acosta, and Fernando Ramírez de Aguilar) revealed government corruption, denounced poor policy, and increasingly included popular voices in their columns. Even the “front pages of the mainstream press could be quite confrontational.”¹³⁵

The work of these writers also opened space for the expansion of a more independent, left-wing press. At first this consisted of relatively marginal magazines like *Punto Crítico*, *La Fragua*, and *El Causa del Pueblo*, which were established by former 68ers and members of the Communist Party. There were also publications linked to specific movements, like the Colonia Rubén Jaramillo's *Frente Popular* and the Chihuahua Comité de Defensa Popular's *El*

Martillo.¹³⁶ But by the 1980s this media segment also included large-scale, industrially produced newspapers and magazines with national reach like *Proceso*, *Unomásuno*, and *La Jornada*.¹³⁷ Even if they failed to acknowledge it, most were inspired by Menéndez's *Por Qué?* They were written in a simple, accessible language, engaged with the actual problems of Mexico's working classes, and paid attention to the competing voices of civil society. They embraced civic journalism; *El Martillo* even contained a special section devoted to the "denunciations" of the people, which, its editors argued, "laid bare the classist character of the actual system."¹³⁸ Like *Por Qué?*, the new publications often aped the format and concerns of the *nota roja*, continuing the tradition of using crime news to expose politicians' corruption, repression, and criminal collusion.¹³⁹ This led to accusations of *amarillismo*, or yellow journalism. It also meant they were read.

In the provinces, the critical spaces afforded by local newspapers endured and broadened. As Javier Garza shows in this volume, even the big, industrial regionals were increasingly linked to the country's growing democratization movements. In the late 1970s, Coahuila's *El Siglo* and *La Opinión* gave ample coverage to opposition politicians and investigated claims of electoral fraud. Freed from control by the Garza Sada family, Monterrey's *El Norte* did the same. In 1985 the newspaper pioneered the system of placing unaffiliated observers in polling stations. These observers countered the official party's claims to a clean sweep and offered in-depth coverage of the losing PAN candidate's protests that there was vote rigging. In fact, the ongoing abrasive quality of regional newspapers both foreshadowed and helped create change at the national level. These publications provided editors, journalists, and stringers unencumbered by traditions of self-censorship or close relations to metropolitan elites; they printed stories from the frontiers of state repression; they provided spaces for national journalists' more subversive critiques; and at

times they even provided cash backing. *El Norte*'s Junco family started up the national *La Reforma*; Jorge Alvarez del Castillo, the owner of Guadalajara's *El Informador*, gave Scherer the start-up money for *Proceso*.¹⁴⁰

By the late 1980s such changes had shifted the press coverage even of national elections. In 1970 only the PRI's candidate had appeared on the news pages of the major nationals. *Excélsior* averaged around three mentions per issue; the more obsequious (and indebted) *El Universal* averaged around eighteen. Opposition candidates went virtually unmentioned.¹⁴¹ By 1988 reporting had changed. The press now reflected the more plural, democratic elections. The proportion of coverage given to each party was almost the same as their proportion of the popular vote. The PRI, which had received around 90 percent of the mentions in 1970, now garnered 55 percent, only 4 points higher than its share of the vote. By the end of the decade the print segment was by far the most independent of the mass media. In comparison, television stations focused over 90 percent of their coverage on the PRI candidate.¹⁴²

Yet while political constraints on the print media fell during democratization, cultural and commercial constraints rose. Television replaced newspapers as citizens' primary source of information. Ownership had increased: by 1990 over 90 percent of households had access to TVs.¹⁴³ So had TV watching: by the last decade of the twentieth century Mexicans watched more television than people in any other nation.¹⁴⁴ And so had television's role as a means of delivering the news. In 1958, only 50 percent of urban Mexicans had ever watched a TV, and only 11 percent got their news from the device. In comparison, 72 percent read the news. Thirty years later, the roles had reversed: 89.6 percent of Mexicans got news from the TV; less than 50 percent read papers or magazines.¹⁴⁵ Not coincidentally, television's triumph overlapped with the creation of a rival to Televisa's monopoly, TV Azteca. The new broadcaster brought a degree of

pluralism to the small screen even as it put pressure on the newspaper business. In the twenty-first century, the popularity of another technological innovation—the internet—would generate another, even more significant revolution in how Mexicans received the mass media, and it too threatened the printed press.

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MEXICO'S CONTEMPORARY PRESS, 2000–2017

A good story might end here, perhaps on election night 2000, after more than two decades of increasingly independent national journalism marked by the liberties taken by the writers of *Proceso* or *Reforma* or *La Jornada* in attacking *priistas*, or the cartoon savagings in El Fisgón's popular collection *El sexenio me da risa*, or the gleeful coverage of the *pistoleros*, psychics, and Swiss bank accounts of the president's brother, Raúl Salinas. Yet the spaces for reporting and debate that opened up during democratization have proved to be a lot less open or secure than seemed possible on that ecstatic night; there is no happy ending.

Instead, contemporary print journalists face four major pressures. The first is commercial, founded on problems that newspapers face everywhere in the twenty-first century: as Javier Garza points out in this volume, “digital technologies have changed reading habits; advertising budgets are being allocated in other media; and newspapers have not found a way to monetize their websites and digital products.” The second is cultural: the internet provides a multiplicity of new routes from event to report at the same time as it sucks money and consumers out of professionalized “old” media. The third is political: the rise of powerful, autonomous governors (or what political scientists term “subnational authoritarianism”) and the return of authoritarian practices in many places outside Mexico City.¹⁴⁷ The fourth is criminal: journalists trying to do their job face unprecedented violence from cartels and compromised politicians. As Judith

Matloff reports in the foreword to this volume, “many Mexican media professionals have stopped reporting on the violence” because “impunity is so rife, and the collusion between organized crime and law enforcers so profound, that only self-censorship saves lives.”

On the surface, Mexico’s newspaper industry appears economically robust. A glance at a Mexico City newsstand shows five established nationals, a handful of more specialized or regional titles, and a range of editorial perspectives. Yet circulation is in decline, and Mexico’s largest newspaper, *Reforma*, sold fewer copies in 2015 than *Excélsior* did in 1970.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, these dailies, as in the past, do not enjoy truly national distribution: Mexico City represents 49 percent of *Milenio*’s circulation, 60 percent of *Reforma*’s, 76 percent of *Excélsior*’s, and 85 percent of *El Universal*’s.¹⁵⁰ And perhaps most important, the fragmentation of the newspaper industry is endemic. The more successful nationals share readers and advertising with a host of smaller, less-independent organs. Since revenue is spread so thinly, most are forced to rely, at least partially, on government funding.¹⁵¹

While the relationship of the national print media to politics is less overt than that of the broadcast media, regional papers still rely on government subsidies and advertising, and in many cases more than before because businesses have substantially cut the commercial advertising that supported some independence.¹⁵² Moreover, with journalists’ pay abysmally low—averaging around \$650 per month—economic pressure is not just institutional, but also individual.¹⁵³ As Rubén Espinosa observed, penury is as responsible for stifling free expression as are narco traffickers.¹⁵⁴ The result is a new censorship, exercised by politicians of all stripes. In a Kafkaesque case in 2015, the governor of Baja California reacted to critical coverage by taking out full-page newspaper ads (in the regional newspaper chain that had criticized him) announcing that his administration would no longer take out newspaper ads.¹⁵⁵

At the cultural level of technological consumerism, internet journalism actually helps make this censorship possible; while *Reforma* was quick to adopt a paywall for its portal, the net effect of the explosion of online-only news sites has been to defund the print press. Yet their competitive success is not based on advertising alone. Unlike in the United States, where the websites *Huffington Post* or *Slate* are less important than those of print publications like the *New York Times* or the *Atlantic*, in Mexico online-only news sites host some of the best reporters and columnists. Nationally, *SinEmbargo* and *Animal Político* are widely read and influential. On a regional level, internet news sites such as Puebla's *Lado B*, Veracruz's *Plumas Libres*, or *Valor por Tamaulipas* provide important material in places where criticism is particularly difficult. Access to these sources, however, is limited to the relatively well-off: though smartphones are starting to penetrate, less than half of Mexican households have internet connections, and these are far more prevalent in cities than in the countryside.¹⁵⁶ Web-only outlets also face the same problems of charging for their work as do newspapers, and consequently they struggle to sustain their journalists and business. Some come up with creative solutions: *Animal Político* allows readers to contribute via “subscriptions” of eighty pesos per month, which fund prizes for their reporters.¹⁵⁷ Yet much of the best work is unpaid and hence of uncertain longevity.

Parallel to the growth of formal online journalism, the internet has driven the expansion of informal citizen journalism. In some cases this feeds stories to traditional media, as when a cell-phone video captured a federal official's daughter threatening to have her father close a restaurant (a threat which was made good).¹⁵⁸ More important, such images combine with reporting to fuel blogs and social media crucial in exposing corruption and human rights abuses. At its peak the most notable, *El Blog del Narco*, had 25 million visitors a month and a greater readership than *La Jornada* or *Milenio*. The blog, founded by a journalist known only as “Lucy”

and an unnamed computer scientist, posts anonymous reportage and gory images of violence; it neither censors nor (understandably but disturbingly) verifies. At times, it has lived up to its origin story of fearless citizen journalists filling the vacuum created by violent censorship in the provinces; nationally it is to some extent an aggregator, at times reproducing without attribution articles from mainstream media, which in turn use the blog as a source. As Paul Eiss argues in this volume, websites such as *El Blog del Narco* provide a space where old and new media converge, where “violence and pressure . . . generate the context and impetus for a new form of news media production, arguably of a reach equal to or even greater than conventional mass media journalism.” The crowd-sourced nature of such production, though, means that it flows not just from the keyboards and cell phones of the citizenry, but also from those of state and criminal actors. Narcos do not automatically despise citizen journalists; they also use them, whether to strike poses, to threaten, or to issue press statements.

Among the chaff the rise of internet journalism has also provided a lot of wheat, particularly significant given the political pressure on traditional media. In the twenty-first century, journalists have enjoyed far greater latitude to launch targeted, specific attacks on abuses of power at the highest levels. Yet censorship has endured and increased. In 2011 President Felipe Calderón came to an arrangement with media outlets, including *El Universal* and *Excelsior*, to set highly restrictive “editorial criteria” for narco reporting, justified as silencing the cartels’ efforts at public relations. In Tijuana, President Enrique Peña Nieto’s administration stopped releasing information on drug war homicides or policing, and subsequently launched a national “Nueva narrativa en material de seguridad” (New narrative on security issues) encouraging the press to attribute all violence to narcos and to avoid criticism of state violence.¹⁶⁰ Such measures are indirect effects of crime; politicians have also engaged in

editorial censorship with the more direct function of self-interest. The most prominent example was the Carmen Aristegui case, in which an investigation into a construction company's exchanges of favors with Peña Nieto led to the reporter's firing. This backfired, generating yet more negative publicity and giving Aristegui additional platforms, including a more popular website, international speaking tours, and new newspaper columns. Aristegui, however, was already one of the most visible journalists in Mexico before the scandal; her success was unsurprising. Provincial journalists have been less fortunate. In extremis, the drug wars provide cover for old-fashioned political killings. In Veracruz, for example, it is highly improbable that the seven journalists who have been disappeared and the eighteen who have been murdered since 2010, many of whom were covering corruption and social movements, were all victims of narco violence.¹⁶¹ While Veracruz is notorious, it is not all that distinctive; according to one sample, half of the recent violence reported against journalists came from state and not criminal actors.¹⁶²

It is also provincial journalists who have borne the brunt of criminal censorship. Precise quantification of the violence is difficult since the motivations for some killings are murky while lesser acts of violence go unreported, but the Committee to Protect Journalists' count of twenty-nine murders during the period 2006–2017 is probably conservative. Of these a mere two were with the national media.¹⁶³ In Nuevo Laredo, for example, *El Mañana* has had its editors and publishers kidnapped and four of its staffers killed or disappeared. Sustained violence has led to new sets of unwritten rules about what can and cannot be reported. (These vary from place to place: in Culiacán and Tijuana, there was—at least until the 2017 execution of Javier Valdez Cárdenas—more open coverage of narco trafficking in the weekly newspaper *Ríodoce* and the magazine *Semanario Zeta*.) After a second of *El Diario de Juárez*'s journalists was killed in 2010, the editor famously ran an editorial acknowledging the cartels as the “de facto authorities”

and asking them to “explain to us what you want from us, so we know what to abide by. . . . It is impossible for us to do our job under these conditions. Tell us, then, what you expect from us, as a newspaper.”¹⁶⁵ Following the editorial, *El Diario de Juárez* stopped covering drug-related topics, a decision mirrored by *El Mañana* and other papers. National media and civil society organizations have been relatively disinterested in the crisis, in part due to Mexico’s marked metropolitan-provincial divide, in part due to historical disdain for journalists in general. Yet as Paul Gillingham and Javier Garza demonstrate in this volume, freedom of information was once stronger in the states than in the capital. With the inversion of that past a substantial part of Mexico’s public sphere has gone dark.

As this book is being finished in late 2017, Mexico is ranked 147th in Reporters without Borders’s World Press Freedom Index, the lowest in mainland Latin America. By this algorithm journalists in Nicolás Maduro’s Venezuela and in Rafael Correa’s Ecuador enjoy greater liberties both to publish and to be damned. The combined effect of political, commercial, and criminal censorship leaves Mexico allegedly outcompeted in press freedoms by Afghanistan, Burma, Russia, and Zimbabwe.¹⁶⁶ When mixed with revisionist work that recovers earlier press freedoms, this is an end point that is really no end point at all. The history of the Mexican press does not, in fact, conform to any of the standard plots. It is not a story of overcoming a monster, or a heroic quest, or a rebirth, or an inevitable rise followed by decline and fall. It is certainly no comedy; neither, despite the contemporary crisis, is it an unalloyed tragedy. However its similarity to the broader, ambiguous, and messy narrative of modern Mexico has not escaped the contributors to this book.

¹ Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 418.

² They included Moctezuma; Cortés’s first wife, Catalina; and the disputatious king’s treasurer,

Julián de Aldarete.

³ Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe*, 273. In less than two months of 1893 twenty Mexico City journalists were jailed; Filomeno Mata went to Belén{**Pls. confirm the spelling. I'm finding a number of variations online, including Belem, which is used elsewhere in this book**}

Penitentiary thirty times; Inocencio Arriola went one better by losing count. Cosío Villegas, *El Porfiriato*, 1:563, 557; Knight, *Mexican Revolution*, 1:39; Piccato, *Tyranny of Opinion*, 36–39, 185.

⁴ Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate*; Hughes, *Newsrooms in Conflict*.

⁵ Between 1940 and 1960, nineteen journalists were murdered, nearly half of them between 1959 and 1960; since the late 1990s as many as ninety have been killed, although it is not always possible to link their murder to their work. Smith, “Stories from the Newsroom,” ch. 5; “Libertad de prensa o demagogia,” *El Chapulín*, Jan. 10, 1960; Matloff, this volume.

⁶ As Garza and Paxman demonstrate in this volume, there has also been a marked growth of commercial and political censorship.

⁷ Burkholder de la Rosa, “El olimpo fracturado,” 1343–44; Keller, this volume; Vanessa Freije, pers. comm., Aug. 6, 2014.

⁹ Meade, this volume. The United States currently ranks 43 in the World Press Freedom Index, one place below Burkina Faso. Reporters without Borders, “2017 World Press Freedom Index,” <https://rsf.org/en/ranking#> (accessed Aug. 1, 2017). John Nerone and Roger Streitmatter emphasize that violence has curtailed US press freedoms, in particular those of radical papers, while Timothy Cook has explored the state’s role in financially supporting the mainstream. In such a context, Mexico’s history of the press looks closer to those of the United States or Western Europe than previously allowed. Curran and Park, *De-Westernizing Media Studies*; De

Burgh, *Making Journalists*; Nerone, *Violence against the Press*; Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution*; Cook, *Governing the News*. For critiques of the myth of US press freedom, also see Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*; Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*.

¹⁰ See Garza and Barajas, both this volume; Darnton, *Censors at Work*, 234.

¹² Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?,” “An Early Information Society,” and *Forbidden Best-Sellers*. Two key nodes of this shift have been the Instituto Mora’s Seminario de Historia de la Prensa, now run by Ana María Serna Rodríguez, and the edited collections of Celia Del Palacio Montiel, including *Siete regiones*, *Rompecabezas de papel*, and *Violencia y periodismo*.

¹³ Piccato, *Tyranny of Opinion*, 23–26.

¹⁴ Ortiz Monasterio, *Historia y ficción*, 244, 309; Nesvig, *Ideology and Inquisition*.

¹⁵ For an overview of this historiography, see Piccato, “Public Sphere”**{there are two different sources in bib that could match this short title. Pls. specify which you mean}**; Uribe-Uran, “Birth of a Public Sphere”; Annino, Castro Leiva, and Guerra, *De los imperios a las naciones*; Guerra et al., *Los espacios públicos*; Torres Puga, *Opinión pública*; P. Ramírez, “Enlightened Publics for Public Health”; Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images*, 49–52.

¹⁶ Uribe-Uran, “Birth of a Public Sphere”; Guerra et al., *Los espacios públicos*.

¹⁷ Guardino, *Time of Liberty*, 156–222; Fowler, *Forceful Negotiations*.

¹⁸ By 1831 there were three major opposition newspapers in Mexico City and six in the provinces. **{Add full cite to bib}**Ríos Zúñiga, “Una retórica para la movilización popular,” 756–57. Also see Coudart, “Función de la prensa,” 93–104; Clark de Lara and Speckman Guerra, *La república de las letras*.

¹⁹ There was a certain correlation between conservatism and increased press curbs.

²⁰ **{Add full cite to bib}**Rojas, “El panfleto político,” 36–37.

²¹ Piccato, *Tyranny of Opinion*, 36–37. **{Is it just a coincidence that these pg nos. are identical to those in the previous note?}**

²² See Ríos Zúñiga, “Una retórica para la movilización popular,” 756.

²³ Covo, “La prensa,” 698–99.

²⁴ **{Add full cite to bib}**Rojas, “Una maldición silenciada,” 38; Piccato, *Tyranny of Opinion*, 39.

For the colonial roots of satire, see **{Add full cite to bib}**Greer Johnson, *Satire in Colonial Spanish America*.

²⁵ Rugeley, *River People in Flood Time*, 107.

²⁶ Leal, “El contenido literario,” 330–31. The historiography of political cartoons is dense; see Gantús, *Caricatura y poder político*; Barajas, *El país de “El Ahuizote”* and *El país de “El Llorón de Icamole.”*

²⁷ Pérez-Rayón, “La prensa liberal,” 145–70; Cosío Villegas, *La República Restaurada*.

²⁸ This was especially true of *El Imparcial*, with its peak circulation of over 100,000 copies daily. Buffington, *Sentimental Education*, 11, 240.

³⁰ Cosío Villegas, *El Porfiriato*, 2:525–27; Dumas and Vega, “El discurso de oposición.”

³¹ Piccato, *Tyranny of Opinion*, 53.

³² *El Diablito Rojo*, Mar. 16, 1908, reproduced in Buffington, *Sentimental Education*, 120.

³³ Buffington, *Sentimental Education*; Díaz, “The Satiric Penny Press.”

³⁴ Díaz, “The Satiric Penny Press,” 502–4; Buffington, *Sentimental Education*, 9.

³⁵ Lomnitz, *The Return*, 82–89. For skepticism as to how deeply the opposition messages in cartoons actually penetrated, see Gantús, *Caricatura y poder político*, ch.1.

³⁶ In the mid-eighteenth century France’s chief censor did not know how many cities outside Paris had inspectors of the book trade to enforce censorship. (The answer was two.) Darnton,

Censors at Work, 59–60; Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, 131.

³⁷ Rodríguez Castañeda, *Prensa vendida*, 13; Stevens, *Protest and Response*, 34; Cline, *Mexico*, 185–86.

³⁸ Cosío Villegas, *El sistema político*, 75.

³⁹ Riva Palacio, “Culture of Collusion,” 22.

⁴⁰ Scherer García and Monsiváis, *Tiempo de saber*, 19–20; Gómez Arias, *Memoria personal*, 123; Fuentes, *The Death*.

⁴¹ Castellaños, *México engañado*, 37–41; Luquín, *Análisis espectral*; Nichols, “Coyotes of the Press”; Rodríguez Castañeda, *Prensa vendida*, 13; G. Ramírez, *Los gangsters*.

⁴² Volpi, *La imaginación*, 34.

⁴³ Servín, “Propaganda y guerra fría.”

⁴⁴ Bohmann, *Medios de comunicación*, 285–95.

⁴⁵ Monsiváis, *A ustedes*, 54.

⁴⁶ Granados Chapa, “Aproximación,” 49–50, Darnton, *Censors at Work*, 84.

⁴⁷ Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate*, 25.

⁴⁸ Riva Palacio, “The Nightmare,” 109.

⁴⁹ Cosío Villegas, “The Press,” 279; Miguel de Mora, *Por la gracia*, 34.

⁵⁰ Carlos Monsiváis quoted in Secanella, *El periodismo político*, 121.

⁵¹ Ibarguengoitia, *Instrucciones*, 91–92, 101–2; {Pls. give Ortega’s full name}Ortega, “Como se hacen las columnas políticas,” *Por Qué?*, Sept. 10, 1970.

⁵² Alan Riding quoted in Adler, “Media Uses and Effects,” 84.

⁵³ Monsiváis, *A ustedes*, 48.

⁵⁴ Hughes, *Newsrooms in Conflict*, 50.

⁵⁵ Cosío Villegas, *El sistema político*, 76.

⁵⁶ Granados Chapa, *Nava Si! Zapata No!*, 33.

⁵⁷ Cosío Villegas, *El sistema político*, 79.

⁵⁸ Lomnitz, “Ritual, rumor y corrupción,” 35.

⁵⁹ Many of the early studies of the Mexican press adopted this tone, for example, Erlandson, “Press of Mexico.” One of the first US works to buck this trend was the pathbreaking Cole, “Mass Media of Mexico.”

⁶⁰ Hallin and Mancini, “Media, Political Power,” 91; Calmon Alves, “From Lapdog to Watchdog,” 183–84.

⁶¹ Leñero, *Los periodistas*; Scherer García and Monsiváis, *Tiempo de saber*; Monsiváis and Poniatowska in Brewster, “The Student Movement,” 171–90.

⁶² Rodríguez Castañeda, *Prensa vendida*, 135–77; Hughes, *Newsrooms in Conflict*, 120–21; Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate*, 66–69.

⁶³ Gillingham and Smith, “Paradoxes of Revolution.”

⁶⁴ The commission brought only seven publishers to court between 1944 and 1953, and only four paid any fines; one editor of a pornography magazine simply refused to meet with the agency and went unsanctioned. The commission’s weakness may have been in part because under President Alemán it lost its office in the Ministry of Public Education, furniture, files, and office equipment. It was, however, later used to shut down critical magazines in 1969, 1974, and 1986. Rubenstein, *Bad Language*, 117–18; Loret de Mola, *Denuncia*, 140–50; “Mexico’s President Admonishes Media Sector for Exalting Violence,” WikiLeaks, Kissinger Cables, Sept. 6, 1974, https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974MEXICO07626_b.html; “Revistas picardías mexicanas,” June 3, 1969, AGN/DGIPS-2959A.

⁶⁵ Burkholder de la Rosa, *La red de los espejos*, 16; Piccato, this volume.

⁶⁶ Monsiváis, *A ustedes*, 60.

⁶⁷ Trejo Delarbre, *La prensa marginal*, 115–16.

⁶⁸ Erlandson, “Press of Mexico,” 2, 103.

⁶⁹ Gillingham, this volume; Piccato, “Murders”; Cosío Villegas, *El Porfiriato*, 525.

⁷¹ For example, the murder of *El Mundo*’s editor, Vicente Villasana, caused the fall of the Tamaulipas governor and the collapse of the Portes Gil *cacicazgo*. Informe, Apr. 9, 1947, AGN/DGIPS/794/exp. 9; *El Mundo*, Apr. 10 and 14, 1947.

⁷² What editors thought those preferences to be is clear in the promises of mastheads, which were designed to pull in readers and which from the Porfiriato to the PRI hawked the independence, truthfulness, courage, humor, and zeal of their papers.

⁷³ All translations in this book are by the contributors unless otherwise indicated.

⁷⁴ Castaño, *El régimen legal*, 80–130.

⁷⁵ Serna Rodríguez, “Periodismo, estado y opinión pública,” 57.

⁷⁶ Garcíadiego, “La prensa”; Piccato, this volume; Lear, *Picturing the Proletariat*. For a full bibliography, see Serna Rodríguez, “Prensa y sociedad.”

⁷⁷ Curley, “Anticlericalism”; Del Palacio Montiel, “La prensa católica”; Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 201; Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation*, 8, 29; Borrás, *Historia de periodismo mexicano*, 148–56; Fallaw, “Politics of Press Freedom”; Nolan, “Relative Independence”; Esquivel Hernández, *El Norte*.

⁷⁸ Tactics ranged from financial pressures to the murder of editors. Burkholder de la Rosa, “Construyendo una nueva relación” and *La red de los espejos*; Armistad, “History of *Novedades*”; Fernández Christlieb, *Los medios*, 22–23.

⁷⁹ Serna Rodríguez, “Prensa y sociedad,” 126.

⁸⁰ INEGI, *Estadísticas históricas de México* (2000), CD-ROM.

⁸¹ Erlandson, “Press of Mexico,” 137–38.

⁸² *Crónica de la publicidad en México*, 24; Annual Marketing Report 1970, Thomas Sutton Papers, Duke University, Durham, NC; Ferrer, *Cartas de un publicista*, 143.

⁸³ In 1967 the US government surveyed 9,411 inhabitants of over thirty Mexican towns and cities: 87 percent of the upper and upper middle class, 79 percent of the middle class, and 57 percent of the lower middle and lower class got their national news from newspapers. In the same year, only 50 percent of households in Mexico City owned televisions. **{Where can this source be found? Or, if it has been published, give full cite}** *Directorio de medios* (Aug. 1967); González de Bustamante, *Muy buenas noches*, 33; “Effectiveness of Newspaper Supplement,” 1967, NARA/ RG306/MX-6702.

⁸⁴ The total number of current affairs and news publications increased from 244 in 1940 to 1,249 in 1970. **{Where can this source be found?}** *Anuario estadístico compendiado* (Mexico City, 1942–1974).

⁸⁵ For detailed readership figures, see Smith, “Stories from the Newsroom,” ch. 1.

⁸⁶ Jiménez de Ottalengo, “Un periódico mexicano.”

⁸⁷ Quoted in Piccato, *History of Infamy*, 71.

⁸⁸ *Medios Publicitarios Mexicanos* (May–Aug. 1960).

⁸⁹ The **{Which “two editions” do you mean?}** two editions sold a total of 337,900. Cole and Hester, *Mass Communication*, 17.

⁹⁰ Sánchez García, *El Plumaje del Mosco*, 165–66.

⁹¹ González Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico*, 89; Bohmann, *Medios de comunicación*, 127–32;

Rodríguez Castañeda, *Prensa vendida*, 154.

⁹² Of 800 residents of one small Morelos village, no more than 10 regularly read newspapers.

Fromm and Maccoby, *Social Character*, 46.

⁹³ The figures for circulations and households are drawn from *Directorio de medios* (Aug. 1967).

⁹⁴ “Effectiveness of Newspaper Supplement.”

⁹⁵ Smith, this volume.

⁹⁷ The best introduction to the means of control is Rodríguez Munguía, *La otra guerra secreta*.

⁹⁸ In the most extensive quantitative analysis, Louise F. Montgomery in “Stress on Government” found that both *Excelsior* and *Novedades* almost never criticized the president between 1950 and 1970. An example of the control of coverage of the military is the suppression of reporting on the La Trinitaria massacre in 1955; see informe, Aug. 24, 1955, AGN/DGIPS-2014B.

⁹⁹ Smith, this volume.

¹⁰⁰ Esquivel Hernández, *El Norte*, 59–61, 67–68.

¹⁰² Smith, “Stories from the Newsroom,” ch. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Sloan, *Death in the City*, 114.

¹⁰⁵ “Lawyerocracy” comes from Bernal, *The Mongolian Conspiracy*.

¹⁰⁶ Piccato, “Murders,” 195.

¹⁰⁷ *Guerra al crimen*, Sept. 1952; Piccato, “Murders,” 197–99.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Robles, *Retrato hablado*, 210.

¹⁰⁹ Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 95–96.

¹¹⁰ Smith, this volume.

¹¹¹ *Ovaciones*, June 10, 1950.

¹¹² *Ovaciones*, June 20, 1950. Quezada was also a target of private censorship, as when a

bullfighter outraged by his mockery tried to beat him up (but got the wrong man). *Ovaciones*, Mar. 1, 1950.

¹¹³ Del Río, *Rius*, 166–70.

¹¹⁴ Zolov, “Jorge Carreño’s Graphic Satire,” 13.

¹¹⁵ Barajas, *Sólo me río cuando*, 19.

¹¹⁶ Del Castillo Troncoso, “El movimiento estudiantil,” 76, and “Fotoperiodismo y representaciones,” 153. See also Mraz, *Looking for Mexico*; Del Castillo Troncoso, *Rodrigo Moya and Ensayo*.

¹¹⁷ Gillingham, this volume.

¹¹⁸ “Relación de periódicos de las diferentes entidades federativas de la república,” June 11, 1960, AGN/DGIPS/1279.

¹¹⁹ Gillingham, this volume.

¹²⁰ “Rosas Magallón: Gobernador electo,” *La Nación*, Aug. 6, 1959; “San Luis Potosí: Un pueblo escarnecido,” *La Nación*, Sept. 24, 1961.

¹²¹ **{give author’s full name}** Medina Valdés, “Huichilobos vuelve a Tlatelolco,” and **{give author’s full name}** Ortega, “El PRI coloca a la Cámara como cómplice de la represión,” both in *La Nación*, Oct. 25, 1968. “Huichilobos” is the term the Spanish conquerors applied to the Aztec war god, Huitzilopochtli.

¹²² See also Sánchez Sierra, “Crisis mística.”

¹²³ For example, Mario Menéndez, “Basta ya,” *Sucesos*, July 8, 1967.

¹²⁴ Del Castillo Troncoso, “La visión de los vencidos.”

¹²⁵ Keller, this volume.

¹²⁶ Gutiérrez Espíndola, *Prensa obrera*, 55; “Report on prensa latina,” Aug. 20, 1960,

NARA/RG59/1961-1963, box 22.

¹²⁸ US embassy report, June 7, 1971, Subject Numeric Files, Culture and Information, NARA/RG59/1970-3/PPB, M1-1-70, box 431.

¹²⁹ Rodríguez Baños, *Libertad de expresión*, 32.

¹³⁰ “Figueroa Kidnapping Case,” *Por Que?*, in WikiLeaks, Kissinger Cables, Sept. 13, 1974, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974MEXICO07855_b.html; “Conversation with Fausto Zapata,” WikiLeaks, Kissinger Cables, July 31, 1976, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976MEXICO09834_b.html; Fernández Meléndez, *Nadie supo nada*; Burkholder de la Rosa, *La red de los espejos*.

¹³¹ Scherer García, *Los presidentes*, 129.

¹³² Borrás, *Historia de periodismo mexicano*, 76–77.

¹³³ Novo, *La vida en México*, 27.

¹³⁴ Scherer García and Monsiváis, *Tiempo de saber*, 148.

¹³⁵ Freije, “Secrets and Revelations,” {**There’s a source in the bib called “Exposing Scandals, Guarding Secrets.” Is that what you mean? If not, pls. add full cite for “Secrets and Revelations” to the bib**} 380.

¹³⁶ Trejo Delarbre, *La prensa marginal*.

¹³⁷ Sánchez Ruíz, “Los medios de comunicación,” 416.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Trejo Delarbre, *La prensa marginal*, 121.

¹³⁹ Trejo Delarbre, *Mediocracia*, 167.

¹⁴⁰ Hughes, *Newsrooms in Conflict*, 120; Freije, this volume; Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa, “Males y (re)medios,” *Proceso*, Nov. 2001.

¹⁴¹ Secanella, *El periodismo político*, 157–58.

¹⁴² Sánchez Ruíz, “Los medios de comunicación,” 428.

¹⁴³ Correspondence with Andrew Paxman, Sept. 2016.

¹⁴⁴ Paxman, “Cooling to Cinema.”

¹⁴⁵ International Research Associates, “A Study of Audience Opinions of ‘El Mundo en Marcha,’” 1958, NARA/RG306/IRI Mex, 20; Durand Ponte, “La cultura política.”

¹⁴⁷ Gibson, *Boundary Control*.

¹⁴⁹ In order of **{Is this annually? daily? monthly?}** circulation according to the National Registry of Print Media (PNMI): *Reforma* (133,446 copies), *La Jornada* (107,659), *Milenio* (86,825), *El Universal* (57,594), and *Excélsior* (26,983). Also important are *El Norte* (131,138, principally in Monterrey), *El Financiero* (91,923), *El Sol* (67,190), and *El Economista* (35,291). Data from PNMI, SEGOB **{Pls. spell this out}**, and **{Give full cite}** “Radiografía de la prensa.”

¹⁵⁰ As in the past, tabloids and sports papers all sell better: *La Prensa* has the highest paid circulation in the country (over 276,000 copies) and is growing.

¹⁵¹ See Andrew Paxman, “El Heraldo: Parte del problema,” *Arena Pública*, June 15, 2017, <http://arenapublica.com/blogs/andrew-paxman/2017/06/15/6042/el-heraldo-de-mexico-la-prensa-en-mexico-periodicos-mexicanos>.

¹⁵² Garza, this volume.

¹⁵³ Matloff, this volume.

¹⁵⁴ “Interview with Rubén Espinosa,” **{This link does not lead to the interview, and I can’t find a search function at the website. Can you provide a better link?}** <http://rompeviento.tv/RompevientoTv/?p=2003> (accessed Sept. 6, 2016).

¹⁵⁵ “Mexican Politicians Accuse Media of Extortion,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Mar. 13, 2015, **{This link does not work. Can you provide a better**

one?}http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/mar/13/tijuana-frontera-extortion-media-payments-governor.

¹⁵⁶ “Mexico: Country Report,” Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2014/mexico> (accessed Sept. 6, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ In January 2015 the site announced a competition for three grants of Mex\$20,000 (approximately US\$1,300) for investigative reports, with the final selection occurring via an online poll of the contributing subscribers. “Conoce los tres reportajes que financiarán los Amigos de Animal,” *Animal Político*, Mar. 9, 2015, <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2015/03/conoce-los-tres-reportajes-que-financiaran-los-amigos-de-animal>.

¹⁵⁸ In the wake of the video, the father was forced to resign. Damien Cave, “Bad Reviews for Patron at Restaurant in Mexico,” *New York Times*, Apr. 29, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/world/americas/restaurant-patrons-behavior-is-panned.html?_r=0.

¹⁶⁰ Eiss, this volume; Adela Navarro Bello, “Mexico between Politics and Organized Crime,” public lecture at University of California, San Diego, Apr. 23, 2013, <https://vimeo.com/66334672>.

¹⁶¹ “Attacks on Journalists in Veracruz, Mexico,” Trans-Border Institute, <http://sites.sandiego.edu/tbi-foe/attacks-on-journalists-in-veracruz> (accessed Sept. 6, 2016).

¹⁶² Matloff, this volume.

¹⁶³ Committee to Protect Journalists, <https://cpj.org/killed/americas/mexico> (accessed Aug. 1, 2017). The CPJ’s rigorous protocols make its estimates lower than those of Reporters without Borders or the International Federation of Journalists.

¹⁶⁵ “‘Explain to Us What You Want from Us’: Juárez Newspaper Publishes Editorial Addressing Cartels after Another Reporter Gunned Down,” *Democracy Now*, Sept. 23, 2010,

http://www.democracynow.org/2010/9/23/explain_to_us_what_you_want.

¹⁶⁶ “2017 World Press Freedom Index,” Reporters without Borders, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> (accessed Aug. 1, 2017).