

bien señala la autora, ese proceso no dejaba de ser disputado: Valentín Alsina le señalaba a Sarmiento que su procedimiento erigía en “clases” a lo que no dejaban de ser “excepciones y rarezas”. A esas voces que no se resignaban a aceptar esas “excepciones y rarezas” como definidoras de la identidad rioplatense podría agregarse la de Juan María Gutiérrez, que describía a los personajes de “El matadero” de Echeverría, como “croquis, bosquejos”, que no habían sido escritos para ser publicados tal cual habían salido de la pluma del autor, como lo probaban “la precipitación y el desnudo realismo” con el que estaban redactados. Más severo era todavía el análisis que Gutiérrez hacía del *Facundo* y los tipos sarmientinos: “todo hombre sensato verá en él una caricatura: es este un libro como las pinturas que de nuestra sociedad hacen a veces los viajeros por decir cosas raras: el matadero, la mulata en intimidad con la niña, el cigarro en boca de la señora mayor, etc., etc. La República Argentina no es un charco de sangre [...]. A cada momento veo que el autor del *Facundo* no conoce sino uno de los patios interiores de ese magnífico palacio donde hemos nacido por fortuna.” Los rasgos definidores de las nuevas comunidades constituirían entonces nuevos campos de disputa en el mundo letrado hispanoamericano.

Los dos capítulos seleccionados son sólo una muestra de la riqueza conceptual y la productiva apertura de nuevas agendas de investigación que todo el volumen ofrece a los lectores interesados no solo en la historia del concepto de comunidad en la América Latina del siglo diecinueve sino en su historia política y cultural en términos más generales. Sin duda, la obra está llamada a convertirse en un indispensable primer paso de consulta para quienes quieran incursionar en esos temas.

Eduardo Zimmermann

Universidad de San Andrés, Buenos Aires

ADAM BAIRD. *From South Central to Southside: Gang Transnationalism, Masculinity, and Disorganized Violence in Belize City.* Temple University Press, 2024.

From South Central to Southside: Gang Transnationalism, Masculinity, and Disorganized Violence in Belize City by Adam Baird (a researcher with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research) is a valuable contribution to the understudied field of social life in Belize and Central American/Caribbean cultural studies, with a foreword written by the esteemed cultural and medical anthropologist Philippe Bourgois. Baird examines the social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to gang violence in Belize. Asking the question, “Why does transnational gang culture successfully take root and grow in some communities

and not others?” (p. 2). Baird argues that the answer is not as straightforward as it seems. He suggests that the deportation model of transnational gangs, which proposes that gang members who are deported continue the gang culture and activities in their country of deportation, does not provide a complete picture of transnational gang activity in Belize. In the subsequent five chapters, Baird makes the argument that gang violence goes beyond “rigid violent male identity” (p. 19). Race, ethnicity, and language must also be taken into account when analyzing the rise of transnational gang activity in Belize City.

The first chapter outlines the arrival of the Crips and Bloods, two major gangs that originated in Los Angeles, California, and explains how deportees brought both gangs to Belize City. The chapter is divided into two sections: “Homelands,” which focuses on the origins of transnational gangs, and “Newlands,” which focuses on gangs in Belize City since the 1980s. Baird offers an explanation of gang transnationalism, grounded in an analysis of transnational masculinity. Transnational masculinity suggests that transnational gang activity can be understood through the lens of cultural connections between local settings of urban exclusion.

Chapter Two identifies how the state and government responded to gang violence in the 1980s, recognizing postindependence problems that contributed to the rise in gang violence. Baird highlights the government’s varying responses to gangs, including the use of gangs to garner votes and political allegiance from community members. At the same time, the government employed the police force to target gangs and used discriminatory practices to incarcerate Creole men. Conditions that foster gangs include the continued sociohistorical failures of the economy, ineffective government policies, and the disenfranchisement of Belizeans living on Belize City’s south side.

In Chapter Three, Baird examines the rise of gang-related homicides in Belize City in the early-to-mid 2000s, noting that during this period the larger gangs began to disband into smaller gangs. At times, these new, smaller factions warred with one another, and at other times, they formed short-lived alliances. Gangs remained on the fringes of cocaine trafficking, although access to guns and ammunition remained steady. The rise in gang-related homicides cannot be attributed to the transnational drug shipping trade, because, as Baird notes, gangs on the southside of Belize City are “disorganized, weapons-rich, and drug poor” (p. 93). The rise in gang violence is mediated by the continued marginalization of people who live on the south side of Belize City, along with the “hyperfragmentation of gangs,” which leads to more discord.

In Chapter Four, Baird fleshes out masculinity and its role in gang life. Recognizing the role of cultural syncretism—the blending of distinct cultures to build a new one—he argues that the Bloods and Crips in Belize are not exact

replicas of the Bloods and Crips of South Central Los Angeles. Instead, they have adopted the cultural practices, cues, and behaviors of Belizean people, particularly Belizean Creoles. Baird suggests that when transnational gangs take on cultural syncretism, they then become posttransnational gangs.

Along with taking on the cultural norms of Belizean Creoles, members also take on the cultural norms of traditional gangs, such as gold chains, clothes that suggest gang affiliation, parties, drinking and drugs, women for sexual gratification, and the use of violence, all of which Baird describes as masculine capital. Masculine capital includes the traits that define masculinity within a culture. In this case, Baird is referring to the masculinity defined by the gang culture in Belize City. As gangs in Belize City transform from transnational gangs to posttransnational gangs, the gendered hierarchy remains.

Chapter Five focuses on unsuccessful interventions. Baird suggests that “racialized class-based colonial history” (p. 162) contributes to the disempowerment of the Creole people who live on the south side of Belize City. For anti-gang programs to be successful, they must encourage a culture of masculinity that promotes anti-violent behavior, along with social support programs that address the community’s social ills. In the concluding chapter, Baird provides a comprehensive review of each chapter.

Gang activity has been understudied in Belize. *From South Central to Southside: Gang Transnationalism, Masculinity, and Disorganized Violence in Belize City* is a notable contribution to the field and will be of interest to scholars in gang studies, cultural studies, and other social science disciplines. Baird presents both a compelling and refreshing reconsideration of transnational gang activity in Belize City that goes beyond the traditional notion that the rise of gang activity is tied to international drug trafficking. Baird makes a clear and compelling argument that suggests that the intersection of masculinity and cultural marginalization contributes to gang activity on the south side of Belize City. Baird provides a robust discussion of the impact of postcolonial independence, social class, and racial identity and explains how those factors contribute to gang activity. The use of qualitative research methodologies allows for an in-depth exploration of the topic. The book’s incorporation of the participants’ voices adds depth and breadth, providing rich context that would not have been captured with quantitative methods. Future work in this area would benefit from examining the role of women in gang activity in Belize City as gender roles begin to change globally.

Kiesha Warren-Gordon

Ball State University