

In addition to examining the working conditions of H-2 workers, Griffith examines remittance patterns of these workers in their home communities. His findings are very similar to the findings of many other researchers who have argued over decades that migrants spend their remittances mainly on consumption and invest little money in market-oriented activities. While his conclusions do not depart from the conventional wisdom, Griffith provides a more detailed ethnographic analysis of the social networks of the migrants and demonstrates how social obligations to multiple households make it virtually impossible for the migrants to consider investing in “productive” activities.

Overall, Griffith meticulously documents and explains his arguments and analyses, but let me point out one limitation. In his discussion of the H-2 workers in the United States, Griffith frequently brings up findings from studies on the Canadian Commonwealth Caribbean and Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers’ program. Yet, Griffith does not explain in what ways the Canadian guestworker program is similar to or different from its American counterpart. A brief discussion on the nature of the Canadian program would have allowed the reader to better understand the parallels drawn between the two programs.

By interlacing historic accounts, discussion of policies, and statistical analyses with numerous stories of migrants—men and women—and African-Americans whose jobs are transformed or lost, David Griffith provides a comprehensive portrayal of the lives of guestworkers employed in the United States. He sees hope in the organizing drive by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) among H-2 workers. This organizing drive, according to Griffith “is a step toward acknowledging that the balance of power in these programs will have to shift before we fully acknowledge that H-2 workers are not merely workers but people with parents, children, friends, fears, and above all, basic human rights” (p. 318). I highly recommend this book to scholars, policymakers, and social activists who ponder the issues of temporary migration.

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MARCO PALACIOS: *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*. Translated by Richard Stoller. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Marco Palacios’ account of Colombian history is a must-read for historians, economists, political scientists, and geographers. It is an intricately woven story that highlights the complexities of Colombian history. Palacios discusses each topic in the context of economy, culture, art, literature, physical and human

geography, and the political/legal situation. A rich interpretation of Colombian history is presented with the expressed intent of revealing how the past affects current thinking and events. If your goal is to pick up a book and learn about a particular event or person of interest in Colombia, this book is not for you; however, if you want a deep, imaginative picture of Colombian history, this is the book.

Using literature and the arts to capture the depth and reality of the times, this book will interest a wide audience. Palacios writes: “The *cuadros de costumbres* and novels of the middle and late 1800s, while not very useful for understanding politics as such, provide insights into the thinking of the urban elite and the changes in the way social actors viewed politics.” Music, art, and passages from literature woven into the fabric of the book serve to illustrate how contemporary popular culture viewed events.

Palacios highlights the long-term consequences of some of the early critical decisions made by the Colombian ruling elites and lays much of the blame for the violence in the country squarely at the feet of the elites. Colombia was a country governed by a few for a few. Government policies were not designed with the masses in mind. For example, “As the system (liquor monopoly by the state) became increasingly important to regional revenues, the government’s implicit interest in the growth of consumption encouraged alcoholism.” Import tariffs were originally based on weight rather than value and as a result the poor bore an unfair share of the tax burden. Education policy was a source of contention between the state and the Church. “Despite the rhetoric, the university (National University) ended up training professionals for a tiny market: physicians for the elite, engineers for mining and modern transportation, and lawyers to provide a few judges and counselors to handle the relatively simple cases that Colombian society produced.” The economic policy was designed to further the wealthy without regard for the poor. This explains the unusual combination of export promotion policies that benefited coffee growers coupled with import substitution policies that benefited industrialists while raising the price of consumables for the average citizen.

The underlying theme of the book is the failure of the weak state and its inability to quell rising violence and dissent. Palacios presents the harsh realities of Colombian life throughout its history. He states, “I will leave it to the reader to make his or her own judgments about the achievements and mistakes of Colombia’s ruling classes during the years covered in this book. I will take the liberty of citing one enormous error here: in the 1930s and 1940s large landowners were permitted to block any and all initiatives on land reform.” Throughout the book, the author discusses land reform and its potential impact on peasants

who depended on growing subsistence crops and cash crops, legal and illegal, to supplement their incomes.

Palacios also examines the sources of fragmentation in Colombian society. Colombia is a country composed of four major regions, requiring both regional and national perspectives. Given Colombia's divisive human demography as well as its physical geography, the emphasis on examining regional dynamics is important. Isolationism between urban and rural areas set the stage for many later events. The church also had a role to play as it weakened the state (and even worked against it at times) in remote areas of the country. Palacios scrutinizes each actor's part in Colombia's history, pointing out how the ability to dominate and control resources had much to do with understanding and manipulating Colombia's geography.

This book is excellent at explaining violence and the role it played in the history and psyche of the country. It effectively demonstrates how violence is interwoven into many aspects of Colombian life and culture and illustrates how violence has shaped its history. While Palacios does provide some answers to the violent nature of Colombian history, he also claims that violence does not dominate the historical landscape and should not be used as an excuse to avoid working towards solving the many problems the country faces.

The biggest shortcoming of this book is that it effectively ends in the early 1990s. The title is misleading; it leaves the reader disappointed and wanting more. We can only hope that Palacios will soon provide us with another book using his rich and interpretative style that will carry the history of Colombia through to the present.

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JUAN PABLO DABOVE: *Nightmares of the Lettered City. Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816-1929*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007.

Juan Pablo Dabove es, sin lugar a dudas, uno de los intelectuales latinoamericanos que con más éxito ha explorado en los últimos años la relación que se produjo entre la violencia impuesta por el Estado y la violencia no estatal, durante la fase fundacional de los estados latinoamericanos y la instalación de un liberalismo político sostenido en una economía exportadora. Colocada esta última en los bordes del proceso que viven nuestros países luego de la independencia de España, su adopción representa una suerte de subversión popular que, en una primera fase (la que examina Dabove), se encarna en el bandolerismo. Apoyado