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## Book Review: Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru

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**Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru**

By Kimberly Theidon, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 461 pp. \$75 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0812244502

Civil wars bring with them unique circumstances for state rebuilding in the aftermath of conflict. Enemies cannot simply be expelled and must be reintegrated into whatever new social, cultural and political order emerges. The one-time enemy may also be a neighbor or loved one. Truth commissions are one mechanism that states have used in rebuilding efforts, yet they bring their own set of limitations, including the ethics behind making people remember what they might want to forget and making people remember through certain terms. How are people tasked to remember and narrate their experiences of an internal armed conflict in the context of the truth commission? This is the question that Kimberly Theidon asks in *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru*. An exhaustive life's work, which explores how the Peruvian civil war (the armed phase of the Shining Path Communist Party, approximately spanning a decade beginning in the mid-1980s) is remembered, *Intimate Enemies* considers the limits of "truth," narration, and fieldwork. Theidon, who has had ties to Peru since 1987, collaborated with the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (PTRC) in Ayacucho (a region with deep ties to the Shining Path) in order to understand the kinds of "memory projects" that transpired through the commission.

In Part I, "The Difficult Time," Theidon situates her work against the more conventional understandings of Peru's civil war as one fought between the state and guerrilla forces, trauma as a normative medical frame that posits the universality of the subject, and secular and legal justice. Here Theidon explicates her most compelling points around narratives of violence, silence and locality. Explaining her interest as wanting to explore "how villagers understand the political violence of the 1980s and 1990s, the decision to kill that arose within the context of war, and the communal processes employed to reclaim those who had 'fallen out of humanity' and came around pleading for a way back in," Theidon weaves together various stories (told by academics, politicians, the PTRC and villagers) in order to demonstrate how story-telling is itself a mode of power (11). Critical of the forced linearity imposed through the TRC process, Chapter 2, "Sensuous Psychologies," contends with the methodological questions around the ethics of any process that seeks to "code" trauma in order to determine the causes and effects of violence, "authorize the real," and from such "discoveries" distribute resources. Further, in her attention to the narratives that do not fall into traditional narratives of trauma as solely psychological afflictions, Theidon disrupts the universalizing work of trauma discourses that entrench the "enduring juxtaposition ... [that] some people and groups have 'theory' and others have 'beliefs'" (26). Rather, in recounting the stories told to her by villagers, where painful memories are articulated as embodied and physical pains, Theidon enables her informants to theorize the "cultural logics involved in social strife and repair" (53). Thus even while participating in the PTRC, the author questions her own role in the project of historicizing war, and gestures to all that escapes the formalized processes of state rebuilding through truth commissions.

Part I, then, posits the impossibility of simple causal and linear narratives of "past" traumas, and critiques psychological diagnoses that assume a bounded, sovereign

individual (58). Instead, Theidon offers an approach to “post-conflict social repair” attentive to the ways local idioms and practices both shape and are shaped by officiating discourses of the PTRC. This critical approach to the question of how and what can be articulated in post-conflict projects of social repair is further developed in Part II, “Common Sense, Gender, and War.” Here the author makes perhaps her most compelling claim, problematizing the simple inclusion of “women’s voices,” namely through accounts of sexual violence and rape, in commissioning the “truth” of internal armed conflict (105). Questioning what gets understood as a “gendered dimension of war,” Theidon problematizes the ethics of memory projects that compel women to speak through certain narrative assumptions about their sexual victimization in the context of conflict. Questioning the assumption that speaking out is intrinsically healing, Theidon highlights how the stories of sexual violence recounted to her “insisted on context ... women detailed the preconditions that structured vulnerability” (118). Making an important intervention to conventional rape discourses that insist on the singular importance of speaking out, the author suggests better attention to the silence of rapists in the shadow of the incitement for the speech of victims. Further the ethics of trading stories for reparations (whether in the form of stipends, commodities, or simply recognition or the promise of healing) suggests that “there are questions that we do not have a right to ask and silences that must be respected” (141).

Mapping the narrative spaces through which individuals can speak about their remembrances of conflict and violence, *Intimate Enemies* adeptly navigates the ethical quandaries that arise out of an officiated desire to recount past violence. This attention to the conditions of narration and speech structures the book, which does not follow a linear or causal organization. In fact, the more detailed accounts of key episodes of violent conflict that initiated the decade of civil war do not appear until the latter parts of the book. Instead, Theidon organizes the book through framing questions around the ethics of research, the limits of speech, and the poetics (the “how” of storytelling) of moral chronologies, which provide entry points into Theidon’s self-reflections, insights and reviews of literatures, and villager’s thick descriptions.

Parts III and IV (“Looking North” and “Looking South”) explore the making and unmaking of lethal violence, “the construction and deconstruction of ‘the enemy,’” and the multiple and differing motivations, actions and intents among various actors, including those in areas of the South that had deeper roots with Shining Path (186). In these sections Theidon explores what a redistribution of justice might mean. In contemplating the ethics of compelling rape narratives, a redistribution of justice necessitates redistribution of shame. In untangling the multitudinous motivations and subjectivities that emerged in the context of the internal armed conflict the question of justice and the practices of rehumanizing (moral) communities comes to the fore. Here Theidon contends with the local contexts of communal justice, where multiple legal strategies – a blending of “theology, politics, economics, and law” – shape how villagers “administer both retributive and restorative justice” (229). While the logic of truth commissions moves teleologically from memory to truth to healing to reconciliation, villager’s narratives reveal how the “enduring conditions of social and economic inequality” shape a political economy of forgiveness and reconciliation (268). Villagers define reconciliation as coexistence, not necessarily healing or forgiveness, and Theidon suggests that reparations and

a redistribution of resources to diminish continuing economic inequalities are thus central to “opening up the possibility of a coexistence that is not prisoner to a fratricidal past” (366). Continuing her attention to the limits of memory, remembrance, speech and linearity, Theidon contends that the teleology of the PTRC where there is a clear before and after, beginning and end, to armed conflict cannot adequately capture the ways her informants forge lives in the shadows of violence.

Studies of war and conflict as well as studies of truth commissions tend to imagine and impose a linearity to the remembrance of violence. What Theidon suggests, however, is that such impositions leave too much unaccounted; too much falls away. What does it mean, then, to suggest that there is no getting over something like the war and violence that took place in Peru, particularly when there is no escaping the very individuals who perpetrated that violence? Theidon suggests that the “getting over” or reconciliation of internal armed conflict can never be complete, yet despite this people find ways to live life. Questioning whether conventional notions of justice (as either retributive or restorative) are enough, Theidon instead suggests a kind of materialist alternative where justice is tied to redistributions of land and wealth and not simply the affectively-centered projects of trials and truth commissions. While acknowledging the potential value derived for the state and individuals of truth and reconciliation projects, Theidon nonetheless, with great care, considers the constraints that such projects institute – constraints that not only shape how one can speak of and to violence, but that limit the ways we might envision justice in the aftermath of violence. This is why, despite the fact that the exhaustive-ness of the book might dissuade some from reading it, it adds a much-needed contribution to scholars in political science, Latin American studies, and human rights. While her study is situated in the context of the Peruvian internal armed conflict, her conceptual contributions of rethinking truth projects, expanding justice, and re-evaluating the ethics of speech, narration and research extend well beyond Peru, truth commissions, and civil wars.

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