

Church started to put cracks in the edifice of power. Other journalists found creative ways around censorship to deliver news of continued disappearances and played forbidden political music until the Pinochet dictatorship formally ended after 17 long years. Even so, Chile still struggles with the legacy of the coup. “Its diverse politics have never fully returned,” Armoudian writes, “and its media today has largely been consolidated under large businesses.”

Hovering above it all is the specter of global warming. As the subtitle suggests, *Kill the Messenger* addresses how the manipulation of the media has created a false debate over global warming at the precise moment when the people of the earth need to take action in order to address the ecosystem as Armoudian charts how the oil industry’s media strategy planted the seed of doubt within people’s minds as to the urgency of addressing the issue. Public opinion polls chart the decline as the pillars of corporate media—its penchant for scandal, false balance “objectivity,” and questionable sourcing—played all too easily into the trap.

It is in that critique of those structures that Armoudian looks to alternatives. As opposed to corporate for-profit systems, she cites numerous models of delivering information to the public including trust-owned, non-profit, open source, and cooperative institutions. The diversity would lend to counterbalancing the formation of a dangerous hegemonic narrative, to which increasing corporate consolidation poses a perennial threat. Rich in its historical background, concise with its analysis, and diverse in its suggestions for a better media to shape a better world, *Kill the Messenger* is an important contribution in its field and holds the very “candle to the darkness” that it asks journalism to do. **Z**

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## José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology

Edited and translated by Harry E. Vanden  
& Marc Becker

*Monthly Review*, 2011, 480 pp.

### Review by Seth Sandronsky

I first heard the term “Indo-American” in a forum on California’s higher education crisis. Then I read the same term in a new anthology by José Carlos Mariátegui of Peru (1890–1934) for English-language readers. He uses it to refer to Peruvians especially and Latin Americans generally throughout *José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology*.

He was an unabashed Marxist in theory and practice. A socio-historical approach clarified the concrete realities of his place and time: post-World War I and the Russian Revolution amid poverty and inequality. In hindsight, we know this systemic social problem birthed a financial panic and global Great Depression.

Editors and translators Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker divide Mariátegui’s writing into nine sections, including one at the end that has his writing on women, feminism and politics.

He links their emancipation to human liberation in no uncertain terms.

Mariátegui analyzes the history of “primitive accumulation” of land and labor in Latin America and other regions of the so-called Third World. In this way, Mariátegui fleshes out the causes and effects of this European ruling class-driven exploitation, especially imperial Spain’s brutality against the original people of Peru. Mariátegui’s Peru was but one of the regions that regimes such as the Spanish Crown milked like a cow. The Caribbean was another. He writes of what that violent process of foreign intervention meant for Haiti and its people.

As Mariátegui explains without cant, Peru’s coastal areas and highlands bore unique impacts of the European invasion. Maldevelopment was the rule of the day. He fleshes out the unique ways that this colonialist enterprise pummeled Peru for the benefit of a tiny minority. As Conrad did in fiction, Mariátegui wrestles in nonfiction with class, gender and race conflict among and between Europeans and native peoples.

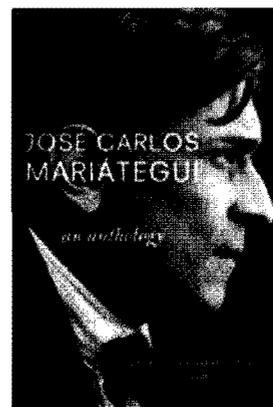
“Despite the lack of credit afforded the materialist conception of history, it is not possible to ignore the fact that economic relations are the main agent of communication and articulation among peoples,” Mariátegui writes. Then and now, capitalist globalization revolutionizes how people live and work, establishing a common culture. He contextualizes that tendency a century ago.

Crucially, Mariátegui highlights the central conflict of the Peruvian people: the land-less versus the land-rich. Accordingly, those closest to the soil, the indigenous populace, are at the center of his revolutionary analysis. Their culture of communalism is a vital ingredient in a transition from capitalism to socialism. Throughout the book, a vision of liberation animates Mariátegui. For him, Marxism is the tool to free human beings from oppression under a social system that privileges the accumulation of capital over every human need.

When you look at Latin American nations shaking off their colonial shackles, from Argentina to Bolivia and Venezuela, Mariátegui’s insights intrigue. In using a Marxist social analysis, Mariátegui considers writers from Sigmund Freud to Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Lenin, Henri de Man, Magda Portal and Rosa Luxemburg.

Lenin is a major influence on Mariátegui. The Russian revolutionary’s take on finance capitalism, amid its current rampage to conquer the national governments of the world, teems with relevancy in Mariátegui’s day and ours. His aesthetics come into play as well. For instance, Mariátegui points out the strengths and weaknesses of realism and surrealism. In his view, art and revolution dovetail. An essay on the originality of Charlie Chaplin’s comedy sparkles with insight.

Section eight illuminates Mexico, its modern history of revolution and reaction. I learned much from this book. It’s a small gem that should get a wide readership. **Z**




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*Seth Sandronsky lives and writes in Sacramento.*