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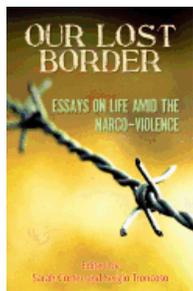
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Our Lost Border: Essays on Life amid the Narco-Violence

Edited by Sarah Cortez and Sergio Troncoso. Arte Publico (www.latinoteca.com), \$19.95 trade paper (280p) ISBN 978-1-55885-752-0

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This eye-opening collection of essays details struggles of Mexican and American citizens affected by drug cartels along the Mexican-American border. Editors Cortez (Walking Home) and Troncoso (Crossing Borders) shift between the journalistic and the personal, depicting those paralyzed by a systemic plague of violence. Oscillating between gruesome and hopeful, the collection "was born of a vision to bear witness to how this violence has shattered life on the border," yet is imbued with optimism. The book's first half provides a backdrop for the "unacknowledged civil war", illustrating quotidian terrors. Beginning with Nixon's 1971 declaration of war on drugs, cities along the border become a battleground for warring factions, leaving behind a wash of maimed and murdered bodies, charred vehicles, and facades so damaged by gunfire they crumble to reveal arches from centuries past. Amid rampant violence, citizens begin to grow numb and the notion of death gets sublimated. The book's latter half chronicles the reclamation and recognition of this sense of loss, a reminder that hope is attainable in a hopeless environment. Indeed, these essayists posit that widespread hope for the region begins with the involvement of the individual: "This should be our struggle." (Apr.)

Reviewed on: 04/15/2013

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