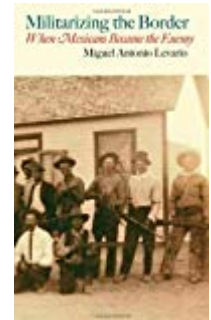**Miguel Antonio Levario.** *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012. xiv + 195 pp. $38.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-60344-758-4.

Reviewed by George T. Diaz

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Commissioned by Benjamin H. Johnson (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee)

Miguel Antonio Levario's *Militarizing the Border* offers readers a gripping analytical narrative of U.S. state policing of ethnic Mexicans in the far west Texas and the New Mexico borderlands from 1893 and 1933. While the "when" in the title refers to the critical years of growing U.S. immigration controls and Prohibition, it is more accurate to say that the book examines *how* border people's perceived transgressions against Anglo authority linked the Mexican community with criminal activity in the minds of officials in Austin and Washington. Levario argues that these perceived transgressions in turn prompted extreme, if not murderous, reprisals by American law enforcement, vigilantes, and the U.S. military, effectively transforming ethnic Mexicans into an enemy who needed to be policed.

Levario begins by examining how increased Anglo entry into El Paso (the focus of his study) placed new settlers into conflict with local ethnic Mexicans. Unauthorized activity, such as rustling, challenged Anglo authority and linked the border to criminal activity in which ethnic Mexicans be-

came the focus. In response, local Anglos employed Texas Rangers to settle disputes and enforce U.S. sovereignty (i.e., the "Salt War" of 1877). Such violent encounters between ethnic Mexican borderlanders and the instruments of state/Anglo authority prompted reciprocal waves of bloodshed. For example, Texas Rangers answered the assault of "bandits" against the Brite Ranch in December 1917 by lining up and shooting fifteen Mexican men and boys in Porvenir (p. 29). Repeated conflicts such as this, Levario argues, cemented the ethnic Mexican image as an enemy in Anglo minds and led the U.S. government to militarize the border with federal and state police patrols that viewed suspects with prejudicial scrutiny.

Militarizing the Border provides a persuasive argument on the origins of the criminal image of ethnic Mexicans in the United States. Although not the focus of the book, it would have been fascinating to read more on the local ethnic Mexican perception of Anglos and community notions of Mexican American identity in the midst of greater policing. Still, Levario's assertions are convincing.

Such processes as the chemical delousing of migrants in El Paso early in 1916 provide Levario the opportunity to examine U.S. xenophobia and the stigma ethnic Mexicans carried as dirty and inherently suspect. Such tragedies as the explosion that claimed the lives of over a dozen ethnic Mexicans following their "kerosene baptism" are treated as more than horrific examples of the consequences of prejudice, but as the causes behind riots and international incidents, like Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico, in March 1916 (p. 60). Villa's raid in turn prompted the U.S. government to mobilize various state militias into a National Guard, thereby further militarizing the border.

Militarizing the Border makes a substantial contribution to borderlands, migration, and Mexican American history. It also balances recent scholarship by Monica Perales and José Ramírez, which focus on Mexican American efforts and successes in asserting rights as U.S. citizens. As Levario points out, Anglo prejudice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were such that merely being Mexican made one suspect and a possible target for state violence. Moreover, Levario succeeds at making his work both vivid and succinct. Fine writing and powerful photographs make *Militarizing the Border* difficult to put down. A border native, Levario adds a personal touch throughout the book that shines, particularly in the epilogue where he points out that the issues he considers have not simply gone away. Armed citizen militias still engage in border patrols for migrants, despite the fact that the apparatus for state policing has never been stronger. With changing demographics in the United States, rekindling latent xenophobia, and the "War on Terror" providing a pretext for increased militarization of borders, Levario's book shows readers that today's problems are not new.

: When Mexicans Became the Enemy

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