


With *Cien años*, Pérez Ricart joins a growing number of academics who want their research to reach more readers than specialist publications can hope for. As with any scholarly output, the book's ability to raise awareness and promote change is uncertain. But the work serves as a reminder that writers should always aim to become better storytellers and find more meaningful ways of engaging with citizens.

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Jennifer Adair, *In Search of the Lost Decade: Everyday Rights in Post-Dictatorship Argentina*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, 208 pp.; hardcover \$85.00, paperback \$34.95, ebook \$34.95.

In Search of the Lost Decade is a deeply researched and highly readable exploration of an understudied period in recent Argentine history. The title signals how scholars frequently draw a direct line from the 1970s to the 1990s, connecting the way neoliberal policies began to form alongside the political violence of the last military dictatorship (1976–83) with the consolidation of these policies during Carlos Menem's presidency (1989–99). Adair focuses on the period between these decades to understand the tensions that accompanied this transformation during the 1980s. This analysis demonstrates that the rise of neoliberalism "was neither as seamless nor as inevitable" as many scholars and students of this period may posit (6).

In her analysis of Raúl Alfonsín's presidential campaign and presidency (1983–89), Adair examines negotiations of what democracy and human rights meant in Argentina in the first decade after the country's last military dictatorship. As she notes, the book intervenes in the broader scholarship on the topic, which has focused more on electoral politics and political groups than on the everyday navigations of political and economic systems. Adair argues that Alfonsín's focus on social issues, specifically hunger, was as much a part of his platform as the political and juridical components of his broader human and political rights agenda. By focusing on quotidian life—neighborhood, household economies, and the marketplace—Adair demonstrates that voters in the 1989 election evaluated Alfonsín's presidency as much on his ability (or failure) to make good on his promises to address hunger as his promise to reestablish democratic representation. She draws on a growing body of foodways scholarship to show how access to food not only was a social and economic issue but also became a "litmus test of

democracy” (5). This analysis connects reactions to Alfonsín’s presidency with the turn toward deepening neoliberal politics during the next presidency of Menem.

Many scholars of recent Argentine history and politics have noted the ways that human rights and memory politics shape electoral contests. However, Adair moves beyond this observation to explicate how human rights discourse emerged as a force beyond a specific response to the torture and forced disappearances of the last military dictatorship. One of her key findings is that “human rights became a multivalent political language that revived historic struggles for social justice dating to the emergence of state-led welfare at midcentury” (4).

Chapters on the political and economic violence of Argentina’s last military dictatorship and Menem’s neoliberal agenda bookend the analysis, with the four core chapters largely focused on how Alfonsín’s policies responded to the aftermath of the military dictatorship and operated within the space of growing fixation on debt and privatization.

The first chapter includes a succinct discussion of the successive issues that brought about the end of the last military dictatorship in 1983, with a particular focus on the economic policies that led to growing inflation. Adair’s analysis of this period departs from many studies, which usually underscore the central role of the Malvinas (Falklands) War, noting that these narratives “tend to overlook the domestic events leading up to it and the central role that Latin America’s impending debt crisis played in hastening the fall of the military regime and creating expectations for the return of democracy” (16). The observation itself is not new; scholars of this period previously have understood the Malvinas War as at least in part motivated by increasing inflation and growing economic instability. However, Adair’s work underpins this understanding with more detailed analysis of how these conditions were shaped not only by national economic policies but also by regional patterns. Moreover, her discussion of the neighborhood level of response—marches, soup kitchens, and community uprisings—and its longer-term impact is indeed a novel intervention, particularly in English-language scholarship on the period.

The four core chapters of Adair’s study analyze Alfonsín’s social agenda and food politics using multiple methodologies to build a larger interpretation of their successes and limits. The second chapter, “The Campaign for a Democratic Argentina,” focuses on Alfonsín’s 1983 campaign. It sets the stage for Adair’s broader argument about the importance of social issues during this period and attends to the ways Alfonsín blended social, economic, and political ideas into a human rights platform. The use and analysis of sources in this chapter is notably effective, particularly the inclusion of campaign materials and speeches.

The third chapter, “With Democracy One Eats,” focuses on the *Programa Alimentario Nacional* (PAN, National Food Program) to show how Alfonsín’s government “sought to distinguish itself from the dictatorship not just by restoring political institutions and civil liberties, but also by guaranteeing certain minimal social rights, the right to eat being foremost among them” (47). It complicates narratives of the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR, Radical Civic Union) as a political

party focused on middle-class interests and unable to compete with Peronist social interventions.

“Chernobyl Chickens” is the standout fourth chapter in the book. The memorable title references an inflated rumor about possible contamination of the food supply that Adair analyzes to parse out a complex political and economic history. Using the framework of the contamination of 38,000 tons of state-bought chicken in 1986 and 1987, Adair manages to weave discussions of IMF loan negotiations, debt repayment, inflation statistics, monetary reform, and development and dependency theories into a highly readable chapter. It would be an effective addition to many undergraduate history and political science syllabi.

The fifth chapter, “Dear Mr. President,” shows how constituents made connections between infrastructure, safety, and democracy and framed economic justice and social well-being as part of a broader program of human rights. Adair’s analysis of letters to Alfonsín focuses on those from Buenos Aires Province and may serve as a model for future scholars to analyze the significant number of letters from other regions of Argentina. The final chapter, “Democratic Pasts, Neoliberal Futures,” focuses on the end of Alfonsín’s presidency and Menem’s rise and offers a clear articulation of how World Bank decisions and economic forces in Argentina combined to undermine Alfonsín’s economic policies intended to limit inflation. A brief epilogue considers the legacies of Alfonsín’s presidency, as well as memories of his political platforms after his death in 2009.

In these six short chapters, *In Search of a Lost Decade* both intervenes in the historical scholarship on the period in a significant way and remains remarkably accessible for an undergraduate audience. The endnotes and the bibliography bear out Adair’s deep engagement with Argentine scholarship, and Adair balances accessibility with occasional brief deeper dives into Argentine history most relevant for specialists. For example, in the third chapter, she effectively connects Alfonsín’s platform with the longer twentieth-century history of the UCR. Scholars of Argentine labor history will find her discussion of the renewed labor mobilization by the General Confederation of Labor in 1981 a useful connection to earlier union politics. Likewise, her summary of Alfonsín’s political trajectory during the three decades before his election helps to contextualize his presidency in longer histories of UCR politics amid decades of Peronist and military dominance. Her connection between the PAN of the 1980s and UCR’s previous attempts to use food (“*pan radical*”) as a way of building patronage networks across the twentieth century is particularly interesting. Adair includes these more thorough analyses strategically to maintain a good level of readability for a broader audience.

The longest chapter of *In Search of the Lost Decade* is a succinct 22 pages, and the average length of the 6 chapters and introduction is a wonderfully assignable 18 pages. The chapters are in clear conversation with each other, but every chapter reintroduces just enough relevant information and context that a typical undergraduate reader in a survey class would be able to understand the central argument and how it is supported with evidence. The clarity of the final 2 chapters would make either suitable for an undergraduate reader perhaps just learning about import substitution

industrialization or neoliberalism in a survey of Latin American history or politics. Moreover, throughout the book, Adair effectively draws comparisons with other national contexts, including Chile. This pattern is helpful for scholars of the broader region, as well as students who might encounter the book in a classroom.


Although Adair positions the book as a social history of the transition to democracy, she also makes effective use of the tools of cultural history, especially in the second chapter, with her analysis of how Alfonsín's campaign materials and speeches resonated. She uses a similar approach in the fifth chapter in her reading of letters to his administration to show how people understood democracy as both political and economic. Her clear explications of how the speeches or letters gained meaning within specific historical and political contexts offers a fantastic example for students and emerging scholars. The discussion of these campaign materials is complimented by documents from the Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (DIPPBA) archives, newspapers and magazines from Quilmes and Buenos Aires, congressional records, audiovisual materials from the Archivo Histórico de Radio y Televisión Argentina, and personal interviews that support her analysis.

The focus on Greater Buenos Aires, especially Quilmes, effectively demonstrates the strengths and limits of Alfonsín's social platform. As Adair notes, his administration launched PAN in Quilmes as a part of a "strategic effort to build on the Radical Party's momentum deep in the heart of Peronist territory" (57). The reception of Alfonsín's policies in provinces more distant from the capital is less explored, and greater discussion of the hunger or food policies in Mendoza or Tucumán that Adair mentions in passing may have offered a more complete picture. For example, Adair notes that when black beans were included in the PAN boxes in central regions, they were rejected because of their connotation as Indigenous food (58). This may prompt additional questions; among them, how did race and class intersect in the way that recipients of the PAN boxes understood their identities within broader Argentine society? Additional attention to the program in northern and northwestern provinces may reveal the importance of race and ethnicity in understanding the program's reception, as well as perceptions of Alfonsín's presidency.

Alongside the primary argument about how Alfonsín's social policies were central to his broader human rights platform, *In Search of a Lost Decade* includes a second, parallel analysis of how the transition to democracy "was not much of a transition at all, but rather a new phase of ongoing contests to define the contours of democracy, rights, and citizenship in the twentieth century" (7). At times, Adair productively explores the tension between change with democratic transition and continuity with previous periods of military dictatorship. The discussion of debt and fears about political mobilization in the sixth chapter is a good example of how this tension strengthens her analysis. At other times, the analysis seems to minimize the political significance of the transition to democracy as a way of underscoring the importance of social policies. Likewise, the discussion of Alfonsín's social policies at times seems to posit the social and political goals as distinct, whereas in

other places Adair makes the more compelling case that they were bound together as part of an emerging and broadening understanding of the meaning of human rights during the transition to democracy.

To be clear, the limits of this analytic tension would not be visible without Adair's incisive analysis in multiple places. The book's willingness to enter into the complex, challenging, and at times literally messy tensions that marked the transition to democracy is one of its central strengths. Through her examination of the ways Alfonsín's platform and policies attended to both social and political rights, as well as her attention to how the meanings of human rights shifted and expanded during the 1980s, *In Search of the Lost Decade* makes a valuable contribution not only to the teaching of Latin American history and politics, but also to scholarship on Argentine democracy, political economy, and rights discourses.

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Claudia Bacci and Alejandra Oberti, eds., *Testimonios, géneros y afectos. América Latina desde los territorios y las memorias del presente*. Villa María: Eduvim, 2022. Figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index, 428 pp; paperback: 4030 (ARS).

In *Testimonios, géneros y afectos*, Claudia Bacci and Alejandra Oberti, both professors at the University of Buenos Aires, take up a 2017 conference session organized in the context of the XIII National Conference on Women's History–VIII Ibero-American Conference on Gender Studies, to compose a heterogeneous and insightful book that gathers the separate disciplinary fields of memory studies, women's writings, and gender studies. Bacci and Oberti express it neatly when, in the book's introductory chapter ("Un diálogo sobre testimonios, género y afectos"), they state that the book's criteria are rather "un modo de leer, una perspectiva, antes que una temática" (10), and therefore, that the proposed organization ("I. Memorias y legados (33–154)," "II. Políticas de la experiencia (155–304)," "III. Visibilidad, cuerpo y afectos (305–420)") could be organized otherwise, under a different perspective rather than the thematic organization. In their own words: "La perspectiva que los atraviesa y unifica no es disciplinaria" (10).

The first chapter of the first section is Nora Domínguez's "Diálogos del género o cómo no caerse del mapa. Una vuelta," in which the author, also a professor at the UBA, takes up as well a 2000 paper published in the journal *Estudios Feministas* to interrogate the situation of Latin American women writers and their translations by what nowadays is called the Global North. Rapidly, from acknowledging the improved translated position of those writers in comparison with 20 years ago (the