

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989–2006. By Steve J. Stern. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Pp. xxxiv, 548. Maps. Notes. Index.

In recent years, scholarly attention to authoritarianism and transitions to democracy in Latin America has yielded many high-quality historical studies. The volume under review, the final installment of Stern's trilogy, *The Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile*, is an important contribution to the field. In this book, Stern traces memory struggles from the beginning of the transition in 1989 to the death of General Augusto Pinochet in 2006. Stern demonstrates the importance of these struggles to the construction of democracy and respect for human rights. Although the process could never be called complete, human rights activists by 2006 had succeeded in undercutting Pinochet's legitimacy and legal protections. Stern's research is innovative and careful, integrating ethnographic and archival sources with audiovisual and digital materials.

The book begins with an analysis of the transition to democracy during the presidency (1990–1994) of Patricio Aylwin, a moderate of the center-left *Concertación* coalition. Stern chronicles the ways in which competing memories shaped the possibilities for *convivencia*, or “living together in peace,” that Aylwin hoped to create (p. 16). A highlight of this section is Stern's fascinating account of the Rettig Commission's Truth and Reconciliation report, completed in March 1991. The process of collecting evidence of human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship profoundly affected participants from across the political spectrum. For family members of the disappeared and executed, the commission validated their memories of loved ones after 17 years of official denial. The stakes involved were high, especially given the efforts of Pinochet and his supporters to derail the proceedings. Despite limitations on the commission, which considered only “extreme” cases, Stern argues that it succeeded in sensitizing the public to human rights and building a documentary basis for future memory struggles.

Competing interpretations of the military coup, dictatorship, and transition produced a “memory impasse” in the mid-1990s. Loyal Pinochetistas, especially within the judiciary, thwarted efforts to punish perpetrators of human rights abuses. Political elites pulled back support for memory projects, forcing grassroots actors to shoulder the burden of such initiatives. Stern shows how this shift produced disenchantment with the Concertación among its former supporters, including members of the Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared. Despite these setbacks, human rights activists completed several memorials during the impasse, including the transformation of the notorious disappearance and torture compound Villa Grimaldi into a peace park. In his discussion of this era, Stern presents a valuable analysis of how economic restructuring, market integration, and consumerism framed memory debates. While Pinochet supporters credited the dictatorship with an economic “miracle,” unequal distribution of economic gains led many to question such success.

The final section of the book chronicles an unpredictable turn of events that generated a new memory climate. A number of “memory knots,” sparked by the detention of Augusto Pinochet in London for crimes against humanity, came to the fore in 1998. Particularly illuminating is Stern’s analysis of *funas*, public outings of torturers by the Chilean Children for Truth and Justice Action. The *funas* constituted a new type of memory work that evaded bureaucratic channels and centered on shaming rituals. These actions, along with support from President Ricardo Lagos’s administration and shifts in military leadership, broke the impasse. One concrete result of the changed political environment was the creation of the Valech Commission, a truth commission on imprisonment and torture. A nagging question remains as to how Pinochet’s loyal base interpreted the military leaders’ refusal to defend the former dictator.

An accomplished scholar, Stern creates novel terminology and conceptualizations to historicize memory. This volume should inspire further research, including an examination of the relationship between memory struggles and the emergence of a consumer-citizen model. Careful to situate the Chilean case within the broader history of transitional justice and human rights, Stern’s work nudges scholars to examine transnational ties between memory actors. The final installment of Stern’s trilogy is a poignant story of Chileans’ reckoning with painful memories, whether in presidential palaces, supermarkets, or in the streets. Thus, Stern has created his own memory script that readers should debate, discuss, and benefit from.

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The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America: A Reader on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights. Edited by Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. Pp. xv, 454. Tables. Figures. Notes. Appendix. Index.

In the past decade, LGBTQ rights have steadily increased in Latin America. These changes have already been decades in the making, but the relevant scholarship—led by anthropologists and cultural studies scholars—has yet to fully interrogate the genealogies of Latin American LGBTQ politics. Enter this important collection edited by Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny, which is both an initial effort toward such an interrogation and a demonstration of the saliency of LGBTQ issues in scholarship on democratic processes in Latin America, as well as in these processes themselves. The editors have brought together a number of previously published articles, essays, and encyclopedia entries, as well as unpublished works on Latin American LGBTQ rights, with a particular focus on the late 1900s and early 2000s. This work, the first English-language reader on Latin American LGBTQ politics, has broad regional representation over its thirty entries.

Strengths of this collection include the writing of both established and emerging scholars, as well as that of Latin American activists, writers, and politicians. Similarly, the