

Francesca Lessa and Vincent Druliolle (eds.), *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. xviii + 227, £55.00, hb.

Recent years have led to a proliferation of works on the construction and reconstruction of collective memories of the last wave of state repression in Latin America. A recent academic conference at the University of La Plata in September 2012 on one aspect of such state repression, focusing on South American political exile and its long-term impact and crystallising memories, led to the presentation of nearly 100 papers.

The domain is tilted heavily towards the Southern Cone nations of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, and this edited volume reflects that tendency. Like other works, the book stresses how, since the late 1990s, there has been a resurgence of claims of truth and accountability in these countries. More specifically, the book focuses on the persistent weight of the past in the present of these countries, shaping, as it were, long-term transitions – in the words of Emilio Crenzel's short yet effective introduction, 'long presents', or in Henry Rousso's felicitous expression, 'ever-present pasts'. The authors, social scientists and academics in the humanities, converge on such an understanding and offer contributions anchored in several disciplinary approaches as they follow the various manifestations of this extended 'post-transitional' present in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

Some of the contributions provide a focus on relatively novel phenomena; among them stands out Valentina Salvi's excellent analysis of the emergence of new memory entrepreneurs in Argentina, a group distinct from those pro-accountability actors typically coming from human rights organisations, such as individual lawyers, relatives of victims and others demanding justice for those who have suffered past human rights violations. These new memory entrepreneurs rise from other circles, yet still use and (re-)signify the discourse and tenets of the human rights activists as they promote the banner of 'Complete Memory'. Formed by various associations of relatives and supporters of members of the armed forces 'killed by subversion', these new actors (re-)signify the claims of human rights organisations and challenge the hold of the latter over the discourse of human rights and their legitimacy as the sole bearers of their society's collective memory, reshaping the struggle over the configuration of collective memory in Argentina.

Equally interesting is Gabriela Fried Amilivia's study of 'pedagogies of horror' among Uruguayan families, which follows how families have transmitted to their children such pedagogies of living under state terror in the form of narratives that are all the more powerful by virtue of their 'unknowability' (and 'unsayability' in cases of forced disappearances). The study by Alejandra Serpente is on traces of 'post-memory' of state repression both among children of Chilean exiles and, less obviously, children of Argentine economic migrants, living in Britain. As such, her chapter reveals the existence of memories of state repression even among the descendants of those not directly affected.

The book also includes analyses of marks and places of memory in post-dictatorship Argentina. Vincent Druliolle simultaneously approaches the reconstruction of public space in Argentina as a way of questioning the normalcy of daily life, and the visual and participatory practices aimed at transforming society. Through an analysis of queering acts of mourning, Cecilia Sosa claims that the second generation of survivors in Argentina shows signs of projecting an 'idea of community based on the pains

and pleasures of a shared mourning'. A chapter by Michael J. Lazzara on Diamela Eltit's *Puño y Letra* sees it as part of a literature of witnessing; Elizabeth Lira presents a historical analysis of policies and dilemmas concerning Chile's recent authoritarian past; and Francesca Lessa looks at how Uruguay has come to terms with the memory of past violence.

Perhaps most daring and comprehensive in this volume is Vikki Bell's afterword, which ties together the various chapters while making a substantial contribution to the analysis of the 'long present' in these countries. Departing from the observation that even the most cultural expressions of confrontation with the past should be understood as political action, Bell relies upon the hindsight of political theorists such as Plato and Hannah Arendt to stress that many of the struggles over memory are centred on the constitution of political subjects, their relationship to social institutions, and their historical imaginations. Bell also notes that the tremendous shifts in state policies and their contestation by organisations and associations in civil society starting in the 1990s or 2000s, as new generations came of age (and, let me add, as new politicians came to power), are due to the freedom of post-dictatorship that opened room for struggles in a 'long-term present' along with new forms of performative politics, memorials and preservation of sites of detention, torture and extermination.

Although some of the contributions suffer from an overuse of jargon and over-theorisation, overall this book represents a useful collection of studies in a burgeoning and important domain of research. I would recommend it for upper-level courses dealing with the long-term legacies of human rights violations and the protracted democratic transitions in the Southern Cone.

*Wake Forest University*

LUIS RONIGER

*J. Lat. Amer. Stud.* 45 (2013). doi:10.1017/S0022216X13000527

Ana María Bejarano, *Precarious Democracies: Understanding Regime Stability and Change in Colombia and Venezuela* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), pp. xvii + 350, \$40.00, pb.

Ana María Bejarano challenges the conventional wisdom that the pacted democracies of Colombia and Venezuela followed similar regime trajectories since 1958 and are the exceptions to Latin America's regime evolution. She argues instead that the pacts negotiated in each country that year had very distinct motives, characteristics and consequences for democratic progress and erosion in each country. Taking a historical-institutional approach, Bejarano questions both resource-endowment structural explanations and mode-of-transition explanations for the emergence of 'precarious democracies' in these two countries.

Bejarano's goal is to shed light on processes of democratisation and de-democratisation, and she succeeds brilliantly. She aims to understand variations among 'unhappy' democracies – those missing some essential condition of procedural democracy (the familiar elements of universal suffrage, competitive elections, civil rights and liberties, and the absence of external controls or vetoes by unelected actors).

While not the first to focus on political institutions, Bejarano's book does an admirable job of comparing these two political regimes and tracing their path-dependent histories. Beginning with the consolidation of the state and its relationship