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Latin American Perspectives 2012 39: 218

DOI: 10.1177/0094582X12446603

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Book Review

Recent Scholarly Publications on Chile 1970–2010

by

Adriela Fernández

Silvia Borzutzky *Vital Connections: Politics, Social Security, and Inequality in Chile*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002. 300 pp.

Tanya Harmer *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 400 pp.

Liesl Haas *Feminist Policymaking in Chile*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 240 pp.

Sophia A. McClennen *Ariel Dorfman: An Aesthetics of Hope*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. 408 pp.

Eden Medina *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011. 312 pp.

Pablo Policzer *The Rise and Fall of Repression in Chile*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009. 242 pp.

Julie Shayne *They Used to Call Us Witches: Chilean Exiles, Culture, and Feminism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009. 281 pp.

Despite the fact that Salvador Allende's election to the presidency of Chile took place 39 years ago, topics associated with his election, his demise, and their aftermath reappear time and again in the social sciences literature. This persistent fascination with the life and death of Allende and his Unidad Popular (Popular Unity—UP) is found today in films, plays, fiction, and nonfiction. For example, according to John Dinges (2004), when the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón indicted Pinochet in 1998 a new jurisprudence in international relations was born; the New York screening of the film *Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up?* in December 2011 featured an interview of Allende by Saul Landau; and a course offered for the summer term 2012 at the University of California, Davis, promises among other highlights to “figure out why Chile's political and historical experience over the past 40 years is so important on a global scale and intimately intertwined with US history.” The books reviewed here add to the inquiry into the social processes that have taken place in Chile from 1970 to 2010 both within and outside academia. While there is a great deal of diversity in these books, both in historical period and in subject, collectively they help us understand the trajectory of Chilean history and politics from Allende to the present. They also offer an explanation for the persistent relevance of Chile, a country whose influence is totally out of proportion to its geographic location, size, and natural resources.

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LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 185, Vol. 39 No. 4, July 2012 218-224

DOI: 10.1177/0094582X12446603

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Tanya Harmer points out in *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (2011) that, in terms of academic and popular interest, Allende's only peer in the Americas in terms of lasting impact on his country and his region is John F. Kennedy. Allende and the UP coalition created a pivotal event for Chile, and any effort to study Chile today requires a review of the events from 1970 to 1990. Harmer's is an insightful contribution to the study of Chile and of bilateral and multilateral relations in the Americas. Starting with the intrigue of "them vs. us" created in the Americas by the United States, actively pursuing cold-war scenarios and potential threats in the region, in the 1960s, the story really takes off at the time of the Chilean presidential election in 1970. From then on, every event and policy action in Chile, Cuba, the United States, and Brazil that relates to the Chilean case—from the election of Salvador Allende through the "Chilean Path to Socialism" to the reactions in the various capitals involved to the bitter realization by the UP leaders that their experiment was to be short-lived—is analyzed through the lens of what the United States and the USSR saw as necessary for fighting their cold war. The UP had powerful enemies within and outside the country and was an obstacle to the forces attempting to reshape the region's future within the bipolar arrangement of the cold war.

In placing this period for analytical purposes in the context of the cold war, Harmer shows that it was one battle in an ongoing war. Her contribution is to give this well-known series of events a dynamic context, a logic, to anchor it in the framework of this war that was fought not on Soviet or U.S. soil but in the developing regions of the world, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The bodies were provided by the citizens of Third World nations, the funding and the arsenal by the two polar powers. This approach gives the student of this period a better understanding of how a small country without military prowess that could threaten anybody ended up with a brutal dictatorship, supported by the United States, that lasted almost 20 years. It is a sobering glimpse into the MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) era and its mad protagonists. Of all the pieces Harmer presents, the least known to social analysts outside of the Americas is the role of Brazil's generals in funding, aiding, and abetting the counterrevolutionary forces in the region. Brazil worked with the United States to facilitate the transformation of a large number of Latin American countries into military dictatorships with well-armed armies terrorizing entire populations. This is expanded in Dinges's work when he cites from his copious evidence that Pinochet told Kissinger "You are our leader," in the same month in which he (Pinochet) gave the go-ahead for an assassination in Washington. The winner-take-all approach to foreign relations morphed into the imposition of the starkest forms of capitalism, particularly in Chile.

Another argument for more study of this period is provided by Eden Medina. Her *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile* (2011) tells of one aspect of Allende's political project that is unknown to most Chileans and students of Chile's politics—the idea of using cybernetics to help implement the socialist program. Revealing, surprising, and engaging, the book presents Allende and his economic and technical advisers as both very modern and naïve in their hopes for computer technology. But perhaps Allende and his team of cyber-revolutionaries were ahead of their time. Fred Turner (2006) argues that in the 1960s and 1970s computers haunted the popular imagination, especially in the United States, and were seen as rigid and unyielding tools of the cold war, but with the dawn of the Internet in the early 1990s they began to represent a very different kind of world: a collaborative and digital utopia for the common good.

The first aspect of Allende's program, the political, has been well studied, but Medina shows how committed to the success of its implementation he and his team were. They proposed a pacific approach to socialism, and to fulfill it they needed the best information available in real or near-real time. These two objectives coalesced in a project called Cybersyn that was conceived as a synergetic, integrated, high-speed

web of information exchange, a very early computer network. Medina describes the construction of this unconventional system, shows how its structure reflected the socialist ideology of the Allende government, and documents its contributions. Allende's team contacted the British academic Anthony Stafford Beer, who was best known for his work in the fields of operational research and management cybernetics; that he came to Chile in 1970 shows the ability of the UP's project to evoke the intellectual curiosity of some of the best basic (not only social) scientists of its day. Under Beer's guidance the Chilean team, made up of economists, statisticians, computer scientists, management experts, and others, designed cybernetic models of factories in the nationalized sector and created a network for the rapid transmission of economic data between the government and the factory floor. The objective of Cybersyn was to "network every firm in the expanding nationalized sector of the economy to a central computer in Santiago, enabling the government to grasp the status of production quickly and respond to economic crises in real time." Beer called the project "the People's Project" and "Project Cyberfolk" because he believed that the information acquired would enable the government to respond rapidly to public demands. In the end, he felt, it failed because it was not accepted as a network of people as well as machines, a revolution in behavior as well as in technology. In any case, in 1973 Allende was overthrown by a military coup and the history of the Cybersyn project disappeared from Chilean memory—until Eden Medina rescued it from obscurity.

Medina uses archival records and personal interviews to recreate and critically examine the project. In bringing to life Allende's dream, she reminds us that technology, especially cybertechnology, is both a tool for organization and a tool for control. Those two can easily blend in a powerful tool for oppression, and this is what some critics of the project feared. She also reminds us that technology is history written in mechanical code, of necessity a synthesis of an era but nevertheless only a compressed version of events. Her thought-provoking book gives us a new perspective on social processes and is a must for those interested in history and philosophy of sciences, communications in the age of Twitter, anthropology, and political economy.

Sophia McClennen's *Ariel Dorfman: An Aesthetics of Hope* (2010) is a study of the life and work of Ariel Dorfman, one of Latin America's best-known writers and one whose work bridges the three historical periods considered in this review. From his groundbreaking cultural criticism (with Armand Mattelart) in *How to Read Donald Duck*, written in 1972 in Chile under Allende, to his confronting Pinochet's repression and its aftermath in works such as *Death and the Maiden* in 1990 to recent work contemplating his personal transnational experience, he has been a powerful voice for the Chilean oppressed and exiled. In fact, it was his channeling the voices of those left behind that marked his entry into mainstream literary consciousness in the Americas. Dorfman is widely known as a provocateur who does not hesitate to shake the literary and social establishments. While much has been written about his work, this is the first book-length English-language work to focus on the writer. McClennen rises to the occasion, producing a valuable addition to the field of cultural and literary studies.

To any student of Latin American literature Ariel Dorfman is a familiar intellectual presence. He has published in all the major literary genres—novel, short story, poetry, and drama—and has adopted diverse literary forms including the picaresque, epic, noir, and theater of the absurd. Moreover, he has produced an enormous amount of cultural criticism. Students read and professors regularly assign his works, which have become part of the canon of Latin American bilingual, cross-cultural, and ethnic writing. Many of these pieces inform academic discussions as essays on human rights, as meditations on exile, and as examples of the literature of displacement. McClennen suggests that there is a coherent line that unifies his work that she calls "the aesthetics of hope." There will be counterarguments in the years to come, but this is a bold contribution that insures that the exchange will be rich and vigorous.

McClennen makes a compelling case for the value of a writer who can translate for the public some of the most difficult moments of human existence—torture, exile, and the destruction of the self that the collapse of a society can bring in its wake. Extremely well written, this book is a lyrical and well-reasoned invitation to glimpse the creative space of a fully engaged global citizen.

If Allende's political program is still fertile ground for social scientists, studying Chile under Pinochet's repression has also been a high-yield endeavor, as Pablo Policzer's *The Rise and Fall of Repression in Chile* (2009) shows. Policzer's main thesis is that political repression is a more complex and multifaceted process than has been assumed. This is an original contribution that raises as many questions as it answers. Policzer poses new research questions and develops new theoretical tools for the study of political repression and dictatorial regimes.

Taking Pinochet's reign of terror in Chile as his subject, Policzer brings into sharp relief the approaches adopted by dictatorial regimes in pursuing their multiple objectives and preparing for the domestic and international reactions to them. One of the many insights the reader gains from his book is that even in fairly open democracies there are what he calls "coercive institutions" such as the police and military that tend to be secretive and mistrustful of efforts by other agencies or the public, "outsiders," to gain information about their plans and operations. He uses organization theory to develop a comparative framework of analysis of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes. He goes on to highlight the use of torture and death in the early years of the Pinochet regime, when a reorganization of the secret police took place. He explains, for the first time, why the Dirección de Informaciones Nacional (Office of National Information—DINA) was replaced with Central Nacional de Informaciones (National Center for Information—CNI). The change, he shows, was implemented in three stages. Immediately after the coup in 1973, all the branches of the armed forces (army, navy, air force, and police) participated indiscriminately in the repression, with mass arrests, torture, and executions. In 1974 a second stage began with the creation of the DINA, a single secret police force with tight control over all of the armed forces that conducted more selective repression. The last stage began in 1977–1978, creating the CNI, under which the arrests and executions significantly diminished.

In his critical analysis of these agencies and their tasks, Policzer shows that the dictatorship's reorganization of its security apparatus corresponded in suggestive ways with efforts to resist and denounce it both inside the country and by international human rights watchdogs outside. He provides an interesting comparison between the Chilean case and those of Argentina during 1976–1982, East Germany between the late 1950s–early 1960s and the fall of the regime in 1989, and South Africa during the apartheid era. Original, compelling, and engaging, his book will appeal to students of political repression.

An important component of the interest in Chile in the wake of the coup d'état is highlighted by Julie Shayne in *They Used to Call Us Witches* (2009). This is an informative account of the role played by Chilean women in exile during the Pinochet dictatorship. Using her training as a sociologist, Shayne looks at the movement organized by exiled Chileans in Vancouver, British Columbia, to denounce the dictatorship and support those who remained in Chile. She uses extensive interviews to organize this inspiring and informative story from the perspective of these exiled Chilean women. The culture and emotions that inspired and sustained these women's activism take center stage. She argues that UP had many sympathizers, especially students, workers, artists, and intellectuals, who identified with this project and were politically and emotionally engaged with the idea of creating a more just society for all Chileans. As this social and political movement grew, so did the pressure on the social structure, which reflected an order in which only a few could benefit. Consequently, the elites, feeling threatened, fought back with the bigger and more lethal tools that they had at

their disposal, and economic sabotage, organized chaos, and eventually a coup ensued. This climax to the crisis era ended the life of President Allende and of the UP government. Pinochet's dictatorship forced into exile thousands of Chileans who had participated and believed in the UP project, and according to Shayne this culture, with its political histories and personal and social emotions, emigrated to other lands and regrouped under the banner of exile, eventually forming the basis for the creation of an international movement against the dictatorship in exile.

Shayne's contribution is to approach as a case study, systematically, consistently, and longitudinally, the incubation of both a resistance movement in exile and its companion, a movement of international solidarity. As the refugees from the dictatorship established an exile community, forging personal linkages with new friends, neighbors, and relatives, they spread the message rooted in the bitter pain of exile. These women played an important role in teaching children about Chilean traditions, dances, and songs. Emotions, gender, and culture were foundational in the solidarity movement. Shayne shows that these cultural activities and productions were a form of political resistance. In her eyes the projects of the Chilean exiles constituted a "transactional movement," articulating feminist agendas in exile and allowing women to participate in politics. These women played an important role in the solidarity movement and applied their skills to the establishment of a major feminist movement.

Creatively using theories of social movements, this book points to the role of these women exiles in the powerful international resistance and solidarity movement that put pressure on governments to isolate and denounce Pinochet as a pariah in the community of nations. Through Shayne's lens we can see also the role that culture played in the formation of that movement. The themes of mourning, survival, solidarity, and shared pain and the music, verses, crafts, songs, and stories all helped to articulate and support the resistance outside and inside Chile. This book is a well-presented history of social movements and of Latin America and the Americas and an example of methodological excellence in women's studies, feminism, and cultural studies.

The study of the country that emerged from the dictatorship guided by the Concertación is also fertile soil, as Silvia Borzutzky's *Vital Connections* (2002) shows. This book offers a timely and important contribution to the examination of social security that is relevant for Chile and for the countries that have studied and adapted the so-called Chilean model in Latin America: Argentina (in 1994), Bolivia (in 1997), Colombia (in 1993), Costa Rica (in 1995), Dominican Republic (in 2003), El Salvador (in 1998), Mexico (in 1997), Panama (in 2008), Peru (in 1993), and Uruguay (1996). While there have been a number of articles on this subject in English, this is the first book on the evolution of social security in Chile. It starts with its inception in 1924 and goes on to discuss its privatization under the dictatorship in 1981 and its restoration in the 1990s. Borzutzky's analysis highlights three historical periods that have been pivotal to the system: the mid-1920s, the 1960s, and the early 1970s. In each of these key epochs, Chile experienced social and political turmoil that prompted a reform of its socioeconomic organization and, consequently, of its social security system. Borzutzky's thesis is that proposals for comprehensive social reform are always fought to the death by the elites in control of Chile. In a well-organized, coherent, and fluid account, she posits that Chile's social security system was a key component of a "storyline" that portrayed the country as a unified society with an accountable, responsive, and therefore legitimate political system. But Chile was and still is one of the most unequal societies in Latin America. As Petras and Leiva (1988) argue, this exclusive character of Chilean society was built into the future governments of the Concertación as early as 1986. That year the opposition forces shifted toward an electoral regime that would preserve the status quo as Chile emerged from the Pinochet era. Thus, as Chileans

tried to obtain the social safety net promised [to] them by the passage of legislation, they threatened the status quo, and the powers-that-be reacted defensively, creating a social and political crisis.

Armed with a remarkable amount of detailed past and present information to support her arguments, Borzutzky refutes the often-invoked notion that privatization of social security worked in Chile. Furthermore, she demonstrates the fallacy of traditional analyses of Chilean political processes and outcomes. A clear refutation of those analyses is found in Peter Winn's (2004) *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973–2002*, where he argues (in the introduction) that Chilean workers were the key input to the economic growth of that period. Without social protection of any kind or the right to organize, they worked upwards of 10 hours per day in addition to long commutes in public buses to and from work.

Using qualitative historical analysis that uncovers the symbiotic nature of the relation among politics, policies, and the allocation and distribution of resources, she shows that this relation insures that every attempt to make the system less unequal will work minimally, creating just enough change for the status quo to continue unchallenged. The role of the state in introducing reforms to relieve some of the social pressure on the system is clearly presented. In the major moments of transformation of 1924, 1964, and 1973, the state was a protagonist, whereas in the dictatorship period (1973–1990) it was subsidiary, minimal, and detached. The first and second Concertación presidencies, those of Aylwin and Frei, worked to preserve the social security system created during the dictatorship. Students of Chile's social insurance system, retirement system, and other components of social policy owe Borzutzky a debt of gratitude for her lucid and engaging contribution to this area of social study.

Along the same lines, *Feminist Policymaking in Chile (2010)*, by Liesl Haas, uses the election of Michelle Bachelet as president of Chile in 2006 as a centering event for her analysis of feminism in Chile. Women emerged from the dictatorship period in Chile informed, motivated, and engaged but not a leading factor, as a feminist movement, in the transition to democracy. In other words, they were mobilized but not under the banner of feminism. With the benefit of a decade of work on the topic, Haas can take the long view and follow her subject as the Chilean feminist movement becomes immersed in the new political reality of the democratic transition and the consolidation of a limited democracy under the Concertación. She uses extensive interviews and archival work to provide an insightful analysis of the politics of feminist-inspired legislation on divorce, abortion, and violence against women in Chile.

Haas examines this embryonic feminist movement in terms of feminism and the law. In her case study of feminist policy making from 1990 to 2008, she examines a broad range of gender equity issues, from labor and marriage legislation to educational opportunities and health and reproductive rights. A total of 63 bills were put forward in the Chilean legislature as a result of the work of the feminist movement and its allies. These bills elicited expected reactions from the feminist movement's political opposition, in particular the political right and the Catholic Church. This is not surprising to the readers of Julieta Kirkwood (1982), who argues that for women in Chile to confront authoritarianism, even military authoritarianism, is to tread on familiar terrain. Rightly arguing that the election of the first woman to the Chilean presidency gave new strength and visibility to pro-feminist legislative proposals that were either in the preliminary stages or languishing in the courts, Haas studies each of the 63 pieces of legislation from conception to defeat or successful passage into law, identifying the conditions under which these proposals were most likely to succeed. From these she has developed a theory of policy success whose predictive capability will undoubtedly be tested in Chile and elsewhere in the region in the years to come.

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