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### **Review/ Reseña**

Steve J. Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010.

## **Charting the Emergence of a “Culture of Human Rights”: The Chilean Transition and the “Memory Question”**

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Steve Stern’s trilogy, *The Memory Box of Pinochet’s Chile*, has taught us that the “memory question” has been one of the most contentious issues on the Chilean politicocultural scene for nearly four decades. How to construct a narrative of the individual and social traumas that plagued Chile after September 11, 1973; how to build *convivencia* (the ability to live together civilly and peacefully, leaving aside the enmity solidified by the experience of a 17-year dictatorship); how to strive for justice, offer reparations to victims, and achieve some semblance of “reconciliation”: in

short, how to construct a “culture of human rights” rooted in a genuine, non-evasive coming to terms with the past, have been key issues that Chilean society has dealt with, gradually, fitfully, painfully, since 1973. *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile: On the Eve of London 1998* (2004), Stern’s first volume, laid the theoretical groundwork for his two subsequent volumes by giving us a vocabulary for talking about memory in the Chilean case. In that volume, he identified four major emblematic memory scripts that Chileans used to discuss their recent past prior to Pinochet’s 1998 arrest in London: 1) memory as salvation (the military’s well worn line that Pinochet saved Chile from the throes of Marxism and the brink of civil war); 2) memory as unresolved rupture (stories that view the coup as a cataclysmic catastrophe from which victims have never fully recovered); 3) memory as persecution and awakening (narratives that give a positive spin to the idea of unresolved rupture by emphasizing the nonconformist spirit of struggle that helped pave the way for democratic transition); and 4) memory as a closed box (a script proffered by many military regime supporters and even some Concertación politicians who felt it would be better for Chileans to forgive and forget). In book one, Stern showed how individual “loose” memories interfaced with the four aforementioned memory scripts, which proved capacious and flexible enough to accommodate variegated individual experiences. From there, volume two, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet’s Chile, 1973-1988* (2006), painted a very detailed picture of two Chiles—that of the 1970s and that of the 1980s—in which certain dissident “voices in the wilderness” (the Catholic Church, emerging human rights organizations, victims and their families, etc.), shackled by a culture of fear, violence, and censorship, evolved into a more massive counterofficial political movement that would eventually oust the dictatorship in an October 1988 plebiscite. In book two, readers understood that memory (as a political and ethical imperative) didn’t appear out of nowhere in the 1990s, but was already being promoted by a number of valiant civil society actors since the very first days after the coup. Book three, *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006*, moves us forward in time to examine the tensions, frustrations, and negotiations that

characterized the state of “memory” during Chile’s transition to democracy. The story, as Stern tells it, is one of slow but steady progress, of impasse and the unraveling of impasse, whereby Chileans, by 2006 (if not earlier) embraced as “cultural common sense” the idea that “memory mattered—that it brought forth fundamental issues of truth, justice, and morality” (6). Memory impasse, as Stern effectively shows, was never permanent. Standoffs occurred among actors along the way, but every small gain acted as a “wedge” (as Stern puts it) in the politico-cultural fabric that opened new space for a stronger culture of memory and human rights to emerge.

Stern’s latest volume walks readers through Chile’s transition years chronologically, identifying key junctures in which memory ebbed and flowed and highlighting the intricate and often conflictive interplay among civil society and state actors around the “memory question.” The initial chapters pay attention to the “top-down” dynamics that set the climate for memory in the early 1990s, particularly the struggles of Patricio Aylwin’s government (1990-1994) to achieve truth and justice “*en la medida de lo posible*” amid an atmosphere of military saber rattling, Pinochetista judges, and authoritarian shackles on the polity. In that context, the memory issue proved divisive, contentious, and even explosive. However, it was an issue that wouldn’t just go away. Indeed the very moral and ethical foundations of an emerging democratic culture depended on how Chileans would confront their past, write history, tend to the victims, and reckon with the dead—and that moral imperative, at least in the beginning, implied a heavy involvement of political elites. The memory question, as Aylwin knew, was profoundly political insofar as the very existence of the ruling Concertación as a political coalition depended on its commitment to memory and human rights. The state, consequently, had to set the tone for a culture of truth, justice, and reconciliation. Yet in the long run, doing so would prove difficult and dangerous, thus resulting in an impulse to turn away from memory both for the post-*Rettig Report* Aylwin administration and its successor administration, the Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle government (1994-2000). In moments of waning elite commitment, “bottom-up” pressures from civil society actors—despite periods of frustration, retreat, and ambivalence—helped to push memory forward and, on occasion, even

sparked renewed interest in memory among the ruling class. Understanding this push and pull from above and below is crucial to Stern’s narrative and to the overall picture he paints of the Chilean transition. In the author’s words, his book “builds a historicized analysis of frictional synergies among civil society and state actors aligned (at least ostensibly) with human rights memory—the ups and downs and limits of collaboration, the deteriorations that moved tension among partners from the ‘frictional’ to the openly ‘conflictive,’ the exclusions and limitations that fed into sensibilities of frustration and disappointment, the shifting map of social actors as judges, youths, and prisoner-survivors took on distinct roles in the reckonings of the late 1990s and early 2000s” (9).

*Reckoning with Pinochet* directly challenges two facile commonplaces that have often cropped up in analyses of Chile’s transition to democracy. The first commonplace is that Chile, throughout its transition, was a culture of amnesia. Reading Stern’s trilogy proves that this clearly was not the case. Although there were political actors and groups who actively promoted forgetting the past—like the military or big business interests married to Pinochet’s neoliberal project—the past was never really forgotten. Memory erupted in many decisive moments that were both official and unofficial in nature: for example, the publication of the *Rettig Report*; the discovery of bodies at Lonquén; the imprisonment of Manuel Contreras, former head of DINA (or the subsequent imprisonments of other military officers); Pinochet’s detention in London; the Dialogue Table; the public “outing” of torturers (or *funas*); the creation of the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park; the Valech Commission on torture; and the death of Pinochet, to name just a few. Instead of being viewed as a culture of amnesia, Stern argues that Chile’s transition might better be characterized as a period of “contradiction and ambivalence” (361). Particularly for the human-rights oriented memory camp, post-1990 society “yielded not an absence of gains, but a dynamic of hard-fought limited gains—always inadequate, always at risk of becoming the last gain, yet also a potential stepping stone” (361). Memory did not follow a linear path, but by the 2000s even the armed forces and most actors on the political right had changed their tune about Pinochet. Significantly, the script of memory as

salvation that was so prevalent up until 1998 ceased to hold sway in the Chile of the new millennium.

A second commonplace that Stern challenges is the widely accepted idea that the Chilean transition was “pacted,” that is, that it was a transition forged out of accords and consensus-based politics among political adversaries. The notion of a pacted transition gained traction among political scientists in the early 1990s and quickly spread to other disciplines in which reflection on post-authoritarian transitions was happening. The idea had staying power, so much in fact that it is difficult to find studies on Chile that do not invoke it when characterizing the political dynamics of the post-1990 moment. Stern does not reject the idea outright, but rather seeks to “move beyond” the core insight in order to refine it (365). He wants to consider more precisely “the boundaries of pacts, their necessary frictions, and their consequences over time, when placed alongside other social dynamics” (365). Indeed, pacts are part of the founding logic of Chile’s transition, but Stern’s book proves that historical research on the dynamics of memory work can nuance that founding logic considerably. Consensus may have been a major part of the logic of Chile’s transition, but antagonism and “conflictive synergy” were equally important.

In broad strokes, *Reckoning with Pinochet* parses the transition to democracy into four periods, each with distinct characteristics, each with its own memory dynamics: 1990-1994 (the Aylwin presidency), 1994-1997 (characterized by the creation of a culture of ambivalence and memory impasse), 1998-2002 (marked by a renewed interest in memory at the level of political elites and by greater possibilities for legal justice following the Pinochet in London affair), 2002-2006 (characterized by a sense that the transition had left “unfinished work” that still needed to be done and by a new memory script, much broader in reach than previous emblematic frameworks, “memory as national tragedy”). Allow me to address each of these time periods in turn.

Stern writes that the “fundamental objective of Patricio Aylwin’s administration was to build a new *convivencia*—a living together in peace—after a period of immense violence, fear, and polarization, and thereby achieve an irreversible recovery of democracy” (16). Nevertheless, certain

conditions created an environment in which it was exceedingly difficult for this *convivencia* to emerge. The 1980 Constitution assured the military’s tutelary role, solidified and made immovable a binomial electoral system that guaranteed the overrepresentation of the right, and designated senators who would be loyal to the military regime’s ideology. Moreover, to achieve its plan of “growth with equity,” the Aylwin administration (like its successor Concertación governments) would have to figure out how to act with a social conscience and a sense of responsibility to Chile’s poorest people without sacrificing the neoliberal model it had inherited from the Pinochet regime. The government would also have to build accords with the center-right Renovación Nacional (RN), since it was unlikely that the ultra-right Unión Democrática Independiente (UDI) would help it achieve its goals. Specifically on memory issues, the Pinochet regime, as we know, did everything in its power to block truth and justice: destroying archives, packing the courts with loyalist judges, destroying the remains of victims, etcetera. Aylwin, as Stern shows, valiantly challenged the status quo by negotiating away some aspects of the authoritarian inheritance. Military saber rattling and a fear of breaking a fragile social peace, however, resulted in only partial gains.

Of course, Aylwin’s biggest legacy was the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation. Created in 1990 just after Aylwin assumed the presidency, the commission’s mandate was to focus on “maximal” cases of death, disappearance, and torture committed by state agents and their assigns, as well as on other killings committed for political motive (68). Careful not to usurp the job of the judiciary, the Rettig Commission, as it was more commonly known, lacked both the authority to name perpetrators and the power to subpoena testimony. Consequently, much of the testimony the commission gathered came directly from survivors, family members, or human rights organizations. Some lower ranking military also testified. The commission, although not a judicial entity, was able to turn its findings over to the courts, leaving it to the courts to determine whether any further action would be taken.

As is well known, the *Rettig Report* had problems. First, it did not name the perpetrators of human rights violations and, second, it did not

give enough heed to the horrifying experiences of tens of thousands of torture victims whose plight was not detailed fully until the 2004 *Valech Report*. Family members and survivors were wary of how the commission embraced the testimony of people like Luz Arce Sandoval and Marcia Alejandra Merino Vega, who for years had been alienated from leftist militant organizations and parties for being “collaborators” and “traitors.” Furthermore, the truth commission’s final report offered a version of history (carefully drafted by the notoriously conservative historian Gonzalo Vial) that read the 1973 crisis as a function of both the Cold War and an internal conflict for which both the left and the right were at fault. In that sense, the *Rettig Report* diffused responsibility for the coup while at the same time stressing its “probability,” but not its “inevitability.” The report was blunt in spelling out that no degree of political crisis justified the violence, fear, and human carnage that the Pinochet regime wrought upon the citizenry.

The *Rettig Report* was a double-edged sword. On one hand, it brilliantly set the tone for a raised consciousness of human rights that would continue to develop among Chileans over the next two decades. On the other hand, it caused backlash by the military and its cronies who staunchly defended a “salvationist” narrative of the coup despite the shocking history the report revealed. In fact, for many years after the truth commission, Pinochet supporters would continuously stress the need for “contextualization” of the coup (*their own* contextualization, of course). The 1993 *boinazo*, an often remembered act of military saber rattling in which a black beret military unit marched through downtown Santiago in full combat gear, also reminded Chileans that the military remained on the scene and could easily spread panic and revive political instability at any juncture. Consequently, after the Rettig Commission and the official state funeral for Allende in 1990, the Aylwin administration “evinced more caution about high-profile initiatives or publicity related to human rights” (97). While Aylwin certainly raised public consciousness about human rights and fostered “memory” in significant ways, he also knew that he had to proceed with caution lest the transition process become damaged. Symbolic justice was tricky business, and so was creating public

monuments or pushing for judicial redress of human rights violations. By the end of 1994, relations between the Aylwin administration and human rights organizations were even breaking down. Chile seemed to be reaching an impasse on the memory issue. But, as Stern points out, just as memory started to be placed on the back burner of official government business, just as a repeated sense of deadlock emerged, society was inevitably moving forward. Every little gain was creating a horizon of possibilities for future gains despite short and medium term frustration.

Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, a Christian Democrat like Aylwin, assumed the presidency in 1994 in an atmosphere of paranoia that at any moment the transition could become unhinged. Proceed with caution continued to be the name of the game. For Stern, the 1994-1997 period, which takes into account Frei’s presidency up until the time of Pinochet’s London arrest, can be seen as an ambivalent moment in the memory saga. Quite interestingly, Stern notes a tension between “cultural hegemony” and “political hegemony” in those years (144). If the culturally hegemonic belief was that state violence under Pinochet was a massive practice that demanded truth telling and judicial reprisals against the perpetrators, the politically hegemonic belief, to contrary, insisted that the memory box be tightly closed. “Because the memory impasse was so intractable and debilitating, it seemed to dictate prudence, a sophisticated calm and indifference lest one cross into a zone of destructive passion and conflict” (147). The Chile of the mid-1990s was therefore a culture of stalemate, caught between prudence and convulsion.

Frei, a technocratic president interested in riding the wave of neoliberal modernization, took a reactive stance toward human rights rather than a proactive one. As a result, within the state, the burden to address the past shifted from the executive branch to the judiciary. The presence of Pinochetista judges was no longer so onerous, and certain valiant judges managed to secure some convictions that paved the way for a judicial avalanche in later years. At the level of civil society, grassroots activists, artists, and intellectuals, sought new and creative ways to keep memory politics alive in a flagging environment. Stern recalls initiatives like the annual pilgrimage of ex-prisoners, families and friends to Pisagua,



a city in the north that was the site of a notorious detention center. He also gives special attention to the valiant efforts of activists and advocates who created productive synergies with the Concertación to give birth to the Park for Peace at Villa Grimaldi, inaugurated in 1997. In intellectual circles, courageous books like *Chile actual: anatomía de un mito* (1997), by Tomás Moulián, and *El Chile perplejo* (1997), by well-known historian Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt Letelier, opened up the “memory question” and contributed to a public awareness of both dictatorial violence and the transition’s complexities. Moulián, especially, offered an acerbic critique of Chile’s individualistic, consumerist culture, accusing his fellow countrymen of having lost the meaning of the political, of ideology, and of social solidarity. On the eve of Pinochet’s London arrest (October 1998), then, Chilean culture was stuck between a triumphant narrative of Chile as an economic tiger and a success story to be applauded and the extreme disenchantment of those who saw themselves as marginalized and excluded from the neoliberal experiment. It is worth noting, in that vein, that Chile today continues to be one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of wealth distribution.

Nevertheless, even before Pinochet’s October 1998 arrest, things were happening in Chile that contributed to the unraveling of memory impasse. A judicial reform spearheaded by Frei and his minister of justice, Soledad Alvear, played a part in the “demise of the judiciary as a bulwark of Pinochetismo and impunity” (216). The Asian economic crisis and its negative effects on Chile revealed the limits of the transition’s triumphalist economic narrative. The military, under the new leadership of General Ricardo Izurieta, had embarked upon a project of “modernization” that included a distancing from its Pinochetista heritage. In fact, around 1998, all the branches of the armed forces scaled back the pomp and circumstance of their celebrations of the September 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Chilean congress eliminated the celebration of September 11<sup>th</sup> as a national holiday, and it became less of a taboo to invoke Allende’s name publicly. The “new right” was also distancing itself from Pinochet’s legacy, whether for genuine ethical reasons or simple electoral strategy. At the same time, internet sites, books, and the satirical newspaper *The Clinic* posed

challenges to a still very conservative media. Youth culture, despite *niahismo* (political apathy), showed sustained interest in memory. The *funa*, rituals of “outing” and publically shaming torturers, also contributed to a grassroots culture of memory that ultimately pressured elites to revisit the unfinished business of addressing the past.

The biggest detonator for changing the tide of the human rights issues in Chile, however, was Pinochet’s detention in London. The Frei administration, lackluster at best on memory until the unprecedented October day when Scotland Yard arrested the former dictator, was suddenly forced to respond and take a stand. Although the Frei administration’s handling of the Pinochet affair caused mixed reactions in different sectors of society, Stern tells us that 1998 marked several major breakthroughs. First, state actors who had previously retreated from human rights were compelled to revisit the issue with an eye toward making real breakthroughs. The 1999 “Dialogue Table,” which brought the military and the human rights world together in hopes of clarifying the whereabouts of the disappeared, represents a case in point—even though in many ways it left the human rights world cold and served as a reminder that the military was still apt to cover up its crimes. Second, the military and the police finally changed their public discourse about the past, admitting responsibility for human rights violations and straying away from their obsessive need for “historical contextualization.” Third, a more open climate for memory expression that included street protests, new media, and cultural expression also helped to break down impasse. Stern closes his section about the 1998-2002 period by noting an “irony” of the turn in memory culture (264). Just as the reopening of memory and greater possibilities for justice took hold, “the memory question lost much of its cultural and strategic grip” (264). The old ways of talking about memory were wearing out and people were looking for new ways to deal with the past. Stern argues that at this juncture two new cultural narratives emerged. In the realm of political elites, the idea of “memory as a shared national tragedy” took hold. (My question for Stern: Was this, on some level, yet another way of projecting a political wish for “reconciliation”?) In the realm of grassroots activism, the idea of “memory as unfinished work”

seemed to argue that much work was still left to be done to address Chile's recent past (264).

During the 2002-2006 period, the sense that the work of memory was still unfinished gained traction due to several events and developments. Ironically, due to misinformation that emerged from the Dialogue Table, judicial investigations turned up new truths about the dictatorship's crimes that further heightened public awareness. Special judges were appointed to handle and expedite human rights cases exclusively, and in June 2004 the Santiago Court of Appeals upheld the doctrine of "permanent kidnapping" as a legal loophole for sidestepping the still intact 1978 Amnesty Law. The thirtieth anniversary of the coup in 2003 revived the figure of Allende and dignified his legacy (albeit without overtly politicizing the pre-1973 moment). The Ricardo Lagos administration's Valech Commission addressed the "unfinished business" of torture, affirming that torture (and even sexual torture) were official state practices of the Pinochet regime. Stern calls the *Valech Report* (2004) a "citizen testimony" (299) whose powerful contribution to a burgeoning culture of human rights was staggering. In those years, too, Judge Juan Guzmán was pursuing Pinochet, facts about Operation Condor were coming to light, and Pinochet's financial crimes were making people realize that the former dictator was both an assassin *and* a crook. Curiously, Pinochet's financial crimes drove the right even farther away from Pinochet in its public discourse. Memorials and monuments that before were so difficult to construct were now becoming more commonplace, and places like the former torture house at Londres 38 represented interesting new ways of engaging debates around "memory sites."

Among Stern's most interesting observations about the 2002-2006 period is his idea that under Michelle Bachelet's administration (2004-2010, but especially between 2004 and the time of Pinochet's death in December 2006) the memory saga entered yet another new phase in which it expanded to include critiques of neoliberalism and socioeconomic injustice. This is not to say that these critiques weren't very prevalent among activists and intellectuals prior to 2004, but perhaps it is fair to say that before 2004 the overall memory culture and the very idea of "human

rights” were largely and rather narrowly defined around the murders, disappearances, and exiles perpetrated by the Pinochet regime. To talk about human rights meant to talk about killings. It wasn’t the usual course of events for the government to associate “memory” with socioeconomic injustice. Bachelet, the daughter of a “constitutionalist” air force general who was killed by the regime and who herself had been held for a time in Villa Grimaldi, emblemized a new Chile that would embrace tolerance, diversity, and equality without losing sight of the past. But curiously, aside from the creation of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights (an episode that falls beyond the temporal scope of Stern’s study) memory as such was not central to Bachelet’s agenda. Instead, Bachelet took on other challenges like reforming the social security pension system or calling for educational reform in the wake of massive student protests. Both of these initiatives constituted direct attacks on Pinochet’s neoliberal legacy. Yet memory, Stern argues, became less and less strategic to the government’s agenda. New issues unrelated to memory like divorce, women’s reproductive rights, and mass transit reform occupied the place that memory once held on the government’s docket.

Following his discussion of the Bachelet administration’s approach to memory, Stern concludes that “memory mattered in 2006 and beyond, but not in the same ways” as it did before (347). But despite the fact that, as Stern contends, the memory question was no longer “strategic to the politicocultural future,” that did not mean that Chile’s dictatorial past (and the years leading up to the dictatorship) ceased to be a point of volatility. Pinochet’s death in December 2006 was yet another “memory knot” or juncture at which old passions erupted. Clearly the Pinochet loyalists were a minority, but the controversy surrounding how the dictator would be laid to rest, which Stern examines in detail, proved that old animosities and memory scripts were still alive (though perhaps modified) in some sectors of the population. Stern draws a distinction in his book between memory as a political issue and memory as a moral issue. His assessment of the 2004-2006 moment suggests that memory had lost its political weight, while maintaining its moral weight. I would question Stern on this point. Reading *Reckoning with Pinochet*, I occasionally had the sense that in addition to

tracing Chile's memory saga, Stern was also, in some sense, telling us the story of the death of the Concertación, of the end of a particular political moment in Chilean history and of the end of a particular chapter in the struggle over memory. Although I find his approach intriguing, I feel that Stern's "ending" to the story should be seen as an invitation to engage in further research on the transformations and metamorphoses of the "memory question" in the late-Bachelet and post-Concertación moments. Although Stern's book ends with the death of Pinochet, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, new debates around Londres 38 and other sites, the engagement with "memory" around Chile's bicentennial, the linkages between memory of the past and new social movements, and the deployment of memory in indigenous struggles, prove that memory continues to matter as *both* a political and moral issue in Chile, even if it has somewhat faded from the agenda of political elites. As a great admirer of Stern's work and keen analyses, I very much hope that a couple of years from now he will do an updated version of this book that will tell the post-2006 history and further muse upon his conclusions.

Another question that arose as I read Stern's book stems from his commentary on director Andrés Wood's 2004 film *Machuca*, which the author reads as an important "memory knot" that signaled a "freer climate of curiosity about a semitaboo topic: pre-1973 Chile" (313). Again, I am in agreement with Stern's idea that *Machuca* was an extremely important film whose massive distribution and brilliant narrative strategy (telling the story of Allende's Chile and the coup through a child's eyes) helped to reach many Chileans as well as an international audience. Practically for the first time, Chile seemed willing to look back upon the Allende years and discuss them. Nevertheless, a willingness by Chileans to revisit the pre-1973 period may be a good and healthy starting point, but *how* we revisit that past also matters immensely. While some approaches are nostalgic or, like *Machuca*, reflective of what Stern calls the narrative of "shared national tragedy," other approaches are more rigorously analytical and geared toward thinking about what Popular Unity really meant for Chile and the world both politically and ideologically. *Machuca* is one approach to the Allende years, but there have also been several publications and other films that

have circulated in Chile (particularly documentaries from the time of Popular Unity that have been shown in festivals) that have given an even more complex, more *political* view of those years and their real ideological content. To my mind, the question of Allende’s Chile and Chileans’ “willingness” to confront its real meaning still remains open to debate.

A third question that lingers for me after reading *Reckoning with Pinochet* has to do with whether a true “culture of human rights” has actually emerged in Chile. In other words, what constitutes a “culture of human rights”? Is such a culture one in which people are simply aware of the others’ rights and respect difference? Is such a culture one in which “memory” is granted central importance and talking about the past is no longer taboo? Or would a “culture of human rights” imply a more radical overhaul of society, a lessening of inequality, and an increase of tolerance and equal rights that are, according to Stern, only recently being incorporated into a broadened discourse on memory? In short, I am wondering whether Chileans have constructed a culture of human rights, or whether it is more accurate to say that a basis has been established for an emergent culture of human rights that is still in formation, still a challenge, still a question.

In his conclusions to the book, Stern notes that between the 1970s and the early 2000s “world culture passed through a major epistemic and practical shift...on matters of human rights and memory reckoning after times of atrocity” (380). In this shift, transnational actors became another key ally in the struggle to create a culture of human rights. The Chilean case was of utmost importance in this context. Stern’s summary is beautiful and illustrates the importance that Chile has as a “case study” in a wider, global scope:

*Symbolically and politically*, [Chile] was a cause that inspired transnational human rights activists during the foundational 1970s and persisted into the 1980s and 1990s and which generated an international icon of dirty war. *Socially and culturally*, it was a source of witness testimonies, solidarity activism, and professional knowledge that fed the new networks of transnational solidarity, in part because so many Chileans fled into exile after a formative era of social and political mobilization, and adapted their activism to the emergency back home and to their own politicocultural learning. *Legally and institutionally*, it was a highly notorious case of human rights repression creating new vehicles of accountability and

precedent, from the United Nations culture of investigation and debate in the 1970s, to the emphasis on the primacy of international law and on new routes to criminal justice via international tribunals and universal jurisdiction theory in the late 1990s. (380)

*Reckoning with Pinochet* is an elegantly written, comprehensive account of Chile's memory struggle during its transition to democracy. The book, and the trilogy of which it is a part, should be required reading for all students of Latin America who are interested in contemporary political and historical issues, particularly in processes of authoritarian backlash, democratization, and memory construction. Steve Stern is a master storyteller who manages to combine rigorous historical analysis with first-hand knowledge of Chile that is so detailed the context is palpable. When I think about his three books together, I am filled with intellectual admiration for both the breadth and depth of this massive undertaking. It is no small feat to tell the story of Chile's memory saga, and Stern does it artfully and with extreme complexity and nuance. As a scholar who also writes on the topics Stern treats in his three volume series, I am grateful to him for writing these books. They are sure to occupy a prominent place in my library for many years to come.