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## Visions from finis terræ: Chilean voices in the United States. Pablo Arriarán, ed

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***Visions from finis terræ: Chilean voices in the United States.*** Pablo Arriarán, ed, with a foreword by Peter Hakim, preface by Ambassador Mariano Fernández, Washington DC: Inter-American Dialogue. 2008. 248pp.

Cristián Doña-Reveco\*

Arriarán's book is comprised of speeches, talks, fragments of journal articles, scholarly presentations and one short story written by Chilean politicians and academics for audiences in the United States. The main objective of this book is to introduce Chile to the broader U.S. public. The objective, however, is not to present Chile's geography or landscapes or culture, but to establish Chile as a country that thinks globally and that participates interdependently in the world. The Chile that is presented here by the different 'voices' is the country of global policies and politics--a country that is in constant conversation with its own traumatic past, and seeks to contribute meaningfully to the concert of nations.

This book is divided into eight sections that cover a wide range of topics regarding foreign policy: The future of Latin America, international security, the state and future of Chilean economy and foreign investment, the intersection of energy policies and development, gender and human rights, and the arts and sciences. Although Arriarán includes a wide range of topics about Chile, he does not provide justification for the organization and inclusion of each section, speech or article. Arriarán is a silent editor who does not introduce the topic (i.e. Chilean "authorities" speaking in the United States) nor provides coherence and continuity to the book. The only clear thing is that they were all written between 2006 and 2008.

As a presentation and representation of Chile, the editor does a good job of introducing the main policy lines that have defined the governments of *La Concertación*, the conglomerate of parties that has been in power since the return to democracy in 1990. One group of policies presented is those that have continental or global effects. A case in point is the relevance of strong multilateral organizations for Chile. The Chilean Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz argues; "If we are to succeed as a world community, we must address both the old and the new global threats, with the United Nations as the core instrument for common action" (77). Other examples include the promotion of economic development with a human face, the importance of open regionalism and regional integration in the Americas with its pitfalls and opportunities, and the participation of Chilean military forces in peace keeping and peace building missions—particularly in Haiti.

A second group of policies deals with national policies that are presented as examples to the world. One example is the manner in which Chile has dealt with the human rights abuses during Pinochet's dictatorship. As the former president Ricardo Lagos argues when writing about the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture: "I do not know of any other country that has dared pursue this issue... [but] a country's tomorrow exists only after you settle its account with the past...in many Latin American countries, this is still a challenge that needs to be tackled" (26-27). Other examples include establishing gender parity in the higher echelons of government, the need to expand the country's energy sources, the financial impacts of integration, the role of the military in post-dictatorial Chile, and national cultural policies.

Finally, a third group of writings engages only indirectly with policy building and policy promoting or does not deal with policies at all. Ariel Dorfman's short story, for example, is about a Chilean exile couple who are swindled while visiting Spain which leads them to ask themselves if they have become *gringos*, that is, if they have assimilated to the United States. Other works in this group present such varied topics as an analysis of oil politics in Latin America, the biodiversity of Easter Island, the clearness of the skies of northern Chile and astronomic research, and the craft of the writer, particularly the writer as an exile who lives constantly engaging with two cultures.

The editor's lack of voice, as I mentioned above, hinders this book's opportunity to introduce Chile. Since we are not told the structuring logic of this book, I raise the question: Does this book represent all Chilean voices in the United States? It is difficult to ascertain. Among all the politicians present in this book, only one is a member of a current opposition party--a small party that was once part of the governing conglomerate. I question whether no member from any of the major opposition political parties has given a speech in the United States during this period. On a similar note, in the section on the arts, there are no works by Isabel Allende. Regardless of one's

appreciation, she is arguably the most recognized and popular Chilean voice in the United States.

Additionally, we do not know how the pieces were selected for inclusion in the book, or why they were placed in each section. Also, there is no continuity in the types of writing selected. There are speeches, fragments of journal articles and literary works. Dorfman's story is a good example of this problem. Perhaps it would have been better to choose one of this author's political essays. For example, Dorfman has written extensively on the parallels between the events of September 11, 1973 in Chile and 9/11 in the United States.

In general, an introduction by the editor would have helped set the tone for the book. It would have mitigated most of the critiques I present here. It would have also provided the reader with a bigger picture--a context. As a consequence, this book missed the opportunity to really introduce Chile to a broad U.S. audience. The main contribution of this book, however, is the documents which, by themselves, can help the scholar who is trying to understand some of the Chilean policies with regards to, and within, Latin America.

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