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Pinochet's Funeral: Memory, History, and Immortality

Alfredo Joignant
(translation by Cath Collins)

Augusto Pinochet's demise on 10 December 2006 provoked an intense, albeit brief, historiographical debate in Chile and beyond. At stake was the struggle not only to impose an interpretation of the origins of the dictatorship that he headed, but also to define Pinochet's legacy for posterity. Vigorous commemorative tugs-of-war broke out between those who wanted to portray Pinochet as immortal—constructing an active memory that could outlive his death—and those determined to eradicate the man and his regime from public memory.

Three months after violence marked the thirty-third anniversary of Chile's 11 September coup, one of the two main protagonists of that fateful day died in the Santiago Military Hospital. The death of the man who was a villain to some and a hero to others inevitably produced intense scenes of joy and dismay from his opponents and supporters. It also provoked a major official operation, complete with uncertainties and negotiations over the appropriate funeral rites. Such tussles and misgivings could arise over even such a scripted event because the significance of the death itself became an object of dispute. The funeral of the man who had ruled Chile for nearly seventeen years became the last in a series of literal and figurative battles to fix the meaning of 11 September and of its leader. From the news of his demise through to the completion of his funeral, each stage of Pinochet's death unleashed battles over memorialization in which words became weapons and historical judgments were grandly pronounced. As always in battle,

there were casualties. A number of protesters were arrested, and unscripted interventions during and surrounding the ceremony itself led to the dismissal from the armed forces of a serving general and of one of Pinochet's own grandchildren, at the time an army captain. As noted Chilean writer and diplomat Jorge Edwards observed ten days after the funeral, "we are in the middle of a war of words."¹

Pinochet's death also gave rise to attempts at immortalization, often prompted by a potent mix of high passion and self-interest. Both motivations were in evidence in the elaborate encomia and condemnations produced by chroniclers and analysts, the flood of letters sent to newspaper editors, the obituaries penned by journalists, and the academic judgments passed by historians. Pinochet's death was scrutinized from all possible perspectives, political, social, and historical, entailing the asking of questions such as: "Can the Concertación coalition survive the death of the man who brought it together?" "Was Chilean society irrevocably transformed by Pinochet?" "What will be the verdict of history?" The depth of feeling revealed during Pinochet's final days, death, and cremation show just how far the anticipation and also the reality of his death represented a milestone in Chilean history. Was the final outcome preordained, or could things have been otherwise? Speculation about Pinochet's funeral had, of course, long preceded the actual event. Right up until his London arrest in 1998, a grandiose public ceremony had seemed the most likely bet. The prevailing political climate would have allowed for a simple, and essentially triumphalist, storyline in which Pinochet seamlessly shifted from army commander-in-chief to lifetime senator. His leadership over the political right would have been subtly reasserted and his new role as a democratic legislator gradually normalized, despite the initial vehement objections of some Concertación figures.

But, in the event, the portents were much less auspicious: Pinochet returned to Chile in early 2000 to meet a barrage of impeachment proceedings for human rights crimes, a declaration of dementia by the courts, and the impugning of his honor in the Riggs Bank case.² He became the object of rumors and the butt of jokes. Particularly after the wave of commemorations stimulated by 2003's thirtieth coup anniversary, one could imagine a quite different future in which the funeral would be a low-key, perhaps even a poorly attended, affair. Which of these imaginings proved closer to reality?

The actual December 2006 funeral was undoubtedly a major event with many ramifications. It was, predictably, a media circus from start to finish: the funeral ceremony itself was only one snapshot in a much broader and larger *mise-en-scène*. The death of the former *de facto*

president inevitably raised questions about the future of the Concertación, a coalition based on shared opposition to the dictator. Some held that the Concertación's *raison d'être* died along with Pinochet himself. His demise was also, however, a political event in its own right. Firstly, because his death activated histories and memories, symbolisms and representations, recountings and recollections. The inescapable immediacy of the economic, political, and social transformations brought on by the regime that he headed were once again made evident. Secondly, and at a deeper level, what made this a true political event was the fact of a former ruler being denied, at his death, the status and rituals proper to a former president. Nor, however, was he denigrated as a mere dictator. In fact, Pinochet was finally rendered the honors due to a former army commander-in-chief, which allowed his dignity to be partially salvaged. Compromise was the order of the day. This was, nonetheless, a truly memorable event, not least because Pinochet's death unleashed the possibility of full evaluations of his life and work.

The Uses of Ceremony and the Metamorphoses of the Corpse

Discussion and disputes about the proper staging of Pinochet's funeral had been ongoing since well before the actual date of his death and had given rise to a whole gamut of official guidelines and protocols. The exact content of these documents was essentially unknown, but lack of such knowledge did not, of course, preclude endless press speculation about them even ahead of time. Why such premature attention? Many questions remained to be answered about exactly how, and as whom, Pinochet was to be remembered. Who, exactly, was to be honored? Was this to be a state funeral, a military ceremony, or a family affair? The single underlying question was in which capacity or capacities Pinochet was to be honored. One anonymous serving officer declared that the main imperative should be to "give the remains a dignified sendoff," something for which the exact shape of the funeral rites would clearly be crucial. We should not, however, let the spectacle of the ceremony itself blind us to its deeper significance. Bourdieu's concept of the "occasionalist illusion" warns us that the meaning of a particular situation is never completely encapsulated in the event itself.³

David Cannadine's interpretations of "ceremonial occasions" can also shed some light here, since Cannadine similarly insists that we not restrict our interpretations of such occasions to the terms set by their own internal structures, "*indépendant de tout sujet, de tout objet et de tout contexte*".⁴ Cannadine is interested in modern-day royal ritual and

shows how this needs to be understood with adequate reference to the particular social, political, economic, and cultural medium within which it is carried out. Cannadine uses the notion of a "milieu" to argue that the "localization" of the ceremony or occasion in its context is more than just historical background: it is what allows the process of interpretation to begin. Cannadine studied the rituals of the British monarchy between 1820 and 1977, a century and a half of royal coronations, funerals, and weddings. He traces a steady, almost imperceptible transition from the dull and inaccessible rites of the first three quarters of the nineteenth century towards much grander contemporary equivalents. The changes go deeper than simple shifts in taste or in notions of decorum. The success or failure of the rituals is determined by how well they adapt to their consistently changing medium. Rituals, then, have to be prepared and performed according to the setting for which they are intended. Their splendor and significance are not inherent but created.

Pinochet's funeral was in some senses uniquely controversial, making its attendant rites and protocols of intrinsic interest. Here again, however, the full meaning of the event goes beyond its formalities and trappings, requiring attention to its very particular political and social context. If we frame our analysis within the "socio-history of the short time (*temps court*),"⁵ we see that a full analysis of the funeral recognizes it as a point where "irreducible critical temporalities" converge with the permanent (re)construction of the past.⁶ This sense of the immediacy of the recent past was evoked just three months before Pinochet's death in a press report alluding to the equally recent (August 2006) death of former Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner.⁷ The article claimed that Stroessner's death had reawakened speculation in Chile about how Pinochet's funeral should in its turn be handled. The juxtaposition itself placed Pinochet squarely on the regional roll-call of Latin American de facto rulers. The regional factor is, however, only one aspect of the political context of Pinochet's death and funeral rites. The permanent (re)construction of the past also played its part, with a gradual degradation of Pinochet's image that reached its height precisely toward the end of his life with the widespread presumption of his moral and criminal culpability. This ignominious fall from grace prompted one group of legislators to sponsor a bill that would have prevented the former dictator receiving honors after his death, forcing the legislature to join the debate about his funeral rites and the dignity that should or should not be afforded to him. Underlying the debate were some unstated notions of what "the people" might want and what Pinochet might himself deserve. Thus Senator Eugenio Tuma, of the Concertación PPD party, claimed in August 2006 that an official funeral

would be "undeserved and [would] provoke public irritation". Chile could not, he continued, afford to be seen paying official homage to "someone charged or convicted of multiple homicide". Iván Moreira, an opposition UDI legislator and inveterate defender of the general, was quick to respond in kind, suggesting that if mere allegations were enough, he himself could easily prevent honors being extended in the future to Concertación presidents by making accusations of corruption against them.⁸

The bill did not in the end prosper, not least because the time that elapsed between its introduction and Pinochet's actual death proved extremely brief. It therefore fell to the government to decide what was to happen. Torn, according to commentators, between conflicting desires not to offend either the general's supporters or relatives of his victims,⁹ the government chose to engage in a precarious subsequent balancing act, which explains an apparent decision not to involve President Bachelet directly. She was kept at a prudent distance from the ceremonies themselves. The impossible desire to offend no one might also help explain prolonged governmental uncertainty and vacillation about exactly what form the funeral would take. Prevailing social and political conditions demanded one thing; Pinochet's supporters, another: recognition of the ex-dictator as a former president.

Bachelet had to make a decision. The very same high-profile degradation of Pinochet's legal and public status that made a state funeral unlikely also made it unrealistic to think the event could be circumscribed to a private, family-only ceremony. The government was therefore understandably initially reluctant to commit itself, beyond assurances that it would strictly follow set protocol. This tactic simply put the spotlight on the protocols themselves, whose very existence and contents soon became the stuff of myth and legend. Some said the protocols had been set at least two years earlier. There was, they claimed, a file containing all the details.¹⁰ It seems likely that the fabled file or plan, which some went so far as to physically describe,¹¹ did exist. Why, then, so much vagueness and uncertainty about the content of the ceremony? Because the funeral was inescapably bound to its own particular context and time. Forward planning had perhaps covered some eventualities but could never fully capture the surge of strong feeling and conflicting interests that the death actually provoked once it came.

The apparently ample room for maneuver that remained despite the much-vaunted plan may be partly explained by the existence of at least two additional, preexisting protocols of obvious relevance. On the one hand, the foreign ministry¹² boasted a rule book for public ceremonies,¹³

whose utility was largely guaranteed by the deliberately wide margin it left for interpretation. The army, for its part, had drawn up military funeral regulations¹⁴ that would be applicable were Pinochet to be honored principally in his capacity as a former commander-in-chief.¹⁵ The government was forced to forge a path between these competing, and occasionally contradictory, alternatives. Defense Minister Vivianne Blanlot therefore spoke nothing less than the truth when she claimed that “[t]here is no completely established protocol”.¹⁶ In point of fact, regulations did exist, but the selection of one over another required a decision from the president’s office as to which, if any, of the former ruler’s past titles were to be honored. Meanwhile, opinion polls suggested that most people opposed granting Pinochet the honors due to a former president. These considerations explain the curious metamorphosis that Pinochet underwent during the last months of his life and *a fortiori* after his death. Once it became clear that a quiet family funeral “would not do,” two main possibilities presented themselves. The first was to treat Pinochet as one more former president of the Republic. This status allows its holder the right, during his or her lifetime, to be addressed as “Your Excellency”. Upon the holder’s death, it usually secures declaration of a period of official mourning and the guarantee of a full state funeral. As such, it endeavors to acknowledge some kind of officially recognized, and publicly acclaimed, exercise of statutory authority. The former figurehead is recognized as a sometime repository of absolute political power, exercised in the name of the majority. This type of obeisance is generally not questioned where the continuity of the democratic regime that underpins it is equally unquestioned: the situation in this case, however, was somewhat different.

McEvoy claims that the state funeral differs from other mortuary rites in its fusion of three essential elements: “*a great man, the Republic and posterity*”.¹⁷ These three components must usually coexist if the recently deceased is to be granted admittance into the “Pantheon”—in this case, the Santiago General Cemetery where most of Chile’s dignitaries are buried. Pinochet’s presidential status was, however, acquired by decidedly nondemocratic means. Its legitimacy, rather than its legality, was at issue, since at least two dictatorship-era laws or sets of laws can be considered to have effectively conferred presidential status on Pinochet. These are Military Junta Decree No. 806, of 17 December 1974, and the 1980 Constitution, whose ratification also appears to anoint Pinochet president of the Republic. Iván Moreira is accordingly technically correct when he claims Pinochet as a president of the Republic,¹⁸ as is fellow UDI legislator Marcelo Forni when he

claims that his presence at the military hospital where Pinochet is fighting for his life represents nothing more than an understandable concern for “the state of health of a [former] president of the Republic”.¹⁹ Moreira and Forni both clung to the letter of the law, conveniently skating over the political and social circumstances in which it was made. “Rules,” in this interpretation, “is rules,” and their provenance is irrelevant.

Once the presidential decision not to declare a state funeral was made known, former Pinochet governmental spokesman Francisco Javier Cuadra characterized the decision to deny Pinochet the title of president of the Republic as “mean-spirited”.²⁰ A few days before Pinochet’s death, Catholic priest Iván Wells, presiding over a book launch, used the peculiar title of “captain general,” rather than president, insisting that Pinochet had “brought the country back to greatness”.²¹ On the day of the funeral itself, Pinochet’s children staged a spectacular departure from protocol by placing the presidential sash their father had used on the coffin. The gesture was an overt attempt to restore presidential dignity to the body by commandeering one of the two essential symbols of Chilean presidential office.²²

If Pinochet was not to be treated as a former president, the most obvious alternatives were to honor him as a former commander-in-chief or as a lifetime senator, his most recently acquired title. Ultimately, commander-in-chief was chosen, a status perhaps preferred in part because unlike the others, it had not been self-awarded (Allende himself had appointed Pinochet to the post in August 1973, just a month before the coup). This choice nonetheless also provoked anger, personified in Francisco Cuadrado, grandson of assassinated previous commander-in-chief Carlos Prats.²³ Cuadrado queued anonymously in the line of public mourners at Pinochet’s wake, only to spit on the coffin in a sign of contempt once he reached the head of the line.

Once the nature of the funeral had been decided, the question of the fate of the corpse remained. This question arose very early in the course of Pinochet’s final illness, but it was not a matter that could be unilaterally decided by Bachelet or her government. A full burial, especially in the publicly accessible space of the General Cemetery, could create future commemorations, inventing a new “memorable date” around which Pinochet supporters could gather. At the same time, a grave would offer opportunities for countermemory and be exposed to the possibility of desecration. Both Pinochet’s family and the army seemed only too well aware of the risks.²⁴ The impasse was resolved by what appears to have been Pinochet’s own decision to opt for cremation,²⁵ but the cremation presented its own difficulties. “What is to

be done with his ashes?" asked one journalist.²⁶ An urn, after all, offered almost the same possibilities for commemoration and counter-commemoration as a gravestone would have done. Various options were suggested, ranging from the lodging of the ashes at the national Military Academy (*Escuela Militar*) to their installation at the headquarters of the Pinochet Foundation. The decision was finally made to take them to his private family estate in the countryside, avoiding the problem of public access. The lengthy saga demonstrated yet again the precarious status of the figure of Pinochet, neither a president of the Republic nor a body that could be buried in the usual way. The metamorphosis of the cadaver, as well as the uncertainty about sites for the interment of the body or scattering of ashes, testify to both the significance of Pinochet's death and the degradation of his image, the latter finally rendering it unthinkable to treat him as a former president. This terminal ambiguity shows through in the language of a newspaper editorial at the time: "in practice, yesterday's ceremony took on the character of [a] state [event]. . . . [T]he army, one of the principal institutions of the state, rendered [Pinochet] the highest honor within its power to grant".²⁷ The army's decision however skips conveniently over the very real difficulties caused by the decision to honor a sick man whose corpse became a political battleground even before his physical demise.

Illness, Death, and Immortality

The inherently problematic nature of the figure of Pinochet was evident even before the questions of honors and remains arose. Once his illness was made public, Chile's right-wing parties were forced to calculate the political costs and benefits that were likely to accrue from taking up positions of closeness to or distance from Pinochet. The language of proximity and distance captures the real discomfort that Pinochet's illness produced. This discomfort provoked angry outbursts from Pinochet supporters against leaders of the political right: "Where is the right of this country?" asked the *Pinochetistas* keeping vigil outside the military hospital. This rhetorical question was usually closely followed by accusations of betrayal.²⁸ Particular vitriol was reserved for the UDI, the party historically most closely associated with Pinochet, and for General Juan Emilio Cheyre, Pinochet's second successor in the post of army commander-in-chief.²⁹ This strategic distancing on the part of the official right was defended by UDI legislator Felipe Salaberry, asking where it was laid down that the UDI had to turn out en masse at the military hospital.³⁰ The irate accusations and counteraccusations

exposed the considerable distance between this situation and the usual scenario that surrounds the death of a public figure.

The question of whether or not to visit Pinochet in the hospital became a difficult political conundrum.³¹ Pinochet's dying, which was glossed over or denied for several days owing to overly optimistic reports of his health, was a medical fact rather than a political one.³² At the same time, his illness could not really be separated from its political significance. The right-wing political leadership pursued an avoidance strategy, particularly noticeable in the case of its two most recent presidential contenders, Sebastián Piñera and Joaquín Lavín.³³ Piñera kept well away from any Pinochet-related event, apparently to avoid a drain of votes from the center,³⁴ while Lavín merely sent his condolences without feeling the need to attend the funeral.³⁵ This profound unease was not shared by all: a significant number of business and political figures linked to the right did choose to attend the funeral.

The medical reports issued in the days leading up to Pinochet's death were consistently vague almost to the point of seeming deliberately misleading. A succession of bulletins declared his condition to be "critical but stable". This vagueness was enough to keep dozens of reporters on permanent alert outside the military hospital, and it certainly did not prevent the rumor mill from grinding. It did, however, reduce the focus of attention to the rather prosaic language of doctors' reports rather than the panegyrics that usually accompany attempts to immortalize someone as a great public figure. Only in two senses could the medical bulletins be said to have played into the hands of the would-be immortalizers. Firstly, the bulletins repeatedly ratified the fact of the general's continued existence, feeding his supporters' grandiose claims of "Pinochet: Immortal". Secondly, and more importantly, they defined him as a unique figure, sufficiently strong and attached to life to prevail in the face of old age and illness. This narrative was taken up, in preference to any fuller accounts of his suffering, in order to allow supporters to extol the virtues of a supposedly exceptional man without directly evoking his human condition as someone at the point of death.

This enterprise of immortalization, if it existed at all, can be said to have begun several days before Pinochet's death, in the context of the debate about the status to be awarded to his soon-to-be remains. An account of his illness did play a part, albeit a relatively minor one, in the enterprise. A blow-by-blow account emerged that began with a euphemistic evocation of malaise a few hours before his eventual hospitalization and continued through small, humanizing details in accounts of his being administered the last rites. The former ruler had, it was said, felt "tired and listless" following dinner at his residence and a

visit from some of his children and grandchildren.³⁶ By late afternoon he felt worse, and had taken to his bed for several hours. On attempting to get up, he had become breathless and dizzy until he finally lost consciousness. Admitted to the military hospital at 2 am, and operated on twice after having suffered a heart attack,³⁷ Pinochet received the Sacrament of the Sick from priest Iván Wells. Wells later recounted how Pinochet had opened his eyes and stuck out his tongue, as if to receive communion.³⁸ Others present had told the priest: "He wants to take communion." This was duly administered, in a ceremony during which Pinochet had, it was said, repeatedly attempted despite his weakness to lift his hand in order to make the sign of the cross.³⁹

Although the human dimension of the infirm body is clearly to the fore in these accounts, the descriptions draw a certain veil of privacy over any actual suffering. Malaise is mainly suggested or implied, never described in detail, and there was little sign of any effort to resolve the controversy surrounding his figure, regime, and acts through some attempt to glorify him through suffering. The language used about Pinochet's illness and organs is impeccably technical and medical: a "myocardial infarction"; "angioplasty procedures" for a pulmonary edema.⁴⁰ The list of Pinochet's less immediate, preexisting illnesses and infirmities nonetheless grew steadily in the reports. He was also suffering, it was said, from the accumulated effects of "age-related hearing loss . . . asthma, enlarged prostate, goiter, an abdominal hernia and varicose veins" as well as arthritis of the knee, a ruptured vertebral disc, and diabetes.⁴¹

Passions and Interests: The Illusions of a Funeral

How did Chileans experience Pinochet's dying and his funeral? To what extent did they feel truly involved? Did Chilean society really (re)polarize around the death? Is it possible to talk seriously about a "re-Pinochetization" of Chilean political and social life at the time of his death? How did people feel or claim to feel about Pinochet's funeral, his legacy, his regime? It is always difficult to talk about general feelings or "the opinion of the country" without being unduly swayed by the visible joy of his detractors or the sight of a sea of distraught admirers praying over the general's coffin. All such explanations or interpretations of the impact of his death run the risk of invoking nebulous concepts of the general view or purporting, implausibly, to report majority feeling. In reality, as ever, we know very little about what "most people" feel, think, or are moved by. In a recent study questioning the attribution of sentiments to participants in political celebrations, political scientist

Nicolas Mariot critiques the "disconcerting ease" with which "[social] scientific analyses politicize behavior."⁴² Ultimately, all the researcher can do is transform the passions and interests provoked by Pinochet's illness and death into the stuff of journalistic record, note the demographics of the population, and interpret survey results. It takes considerable effort to avoid the temptation to attribute or project feelings onto "the masses," speculating how many people rejoiced as opposed to how many mourned and what, if anything, it might all mean.

On that front it is in fact interesting to draw an essentially journalistic sketch of the Pinochet supporters keeping vigil outside the military hospital while he was dying. Without a doubt, the sadness and sense of despair were real. The question is how representative, if at all, these people were of the general population. Here it is instructive to recall a historic precedent: the jubilation that gripped many Chileans during the 1974 and 1975 celebrations of the coup of 11 September.⁴³ Those who celebrated back then did so filled with an excess of patriotic fervor: their fears had been allayed and their interests were being taken care of. The crowd outside the military hospital was perhaps not so very different, in that each of its members could likewise cite personal reasons for supporting Pinochet and set forth quite convincing reasons for their own desolation. The only thing missing was the fear: fear, back then, of the Marxist or Communist threat.

Pinochet's admirers cite a host of reasons for their loyalty, ranging from memories of Allende-era dispossession to some notion that a sacrifice had been made in difficult times: "What connects me to Pinochet is that during the Popular Unity [government] they took my grandparents' land"; "I am grateful to the General, because under his government I was able to educate my children [when] before I did not have enough to eat"; "the General gave me all of the medicines I needed to survive"; "I had three children who didn't even get enough to eat, but then came the military coup, and today all my children are professionals".⁴⁴ All of these testimonials smack of gratitude for favors granted, a meeting of needs that is the bedrock of the acknowledgment and the loyalty. This testimony may help us to understand the contents of some of the messages posted on the crush barriers used to keep this community of believers at a safe distance ("Pinochet, thank you for existing")⁴⁵ as well as the chants ("Our General knew how to rule. . . . It was a great government that knew how to give us security and tranquility. Thank you, thank you, Pinochet, you were a great President").⁴⁶

It seems quite appropriate to use the term "community" for this band of followers. True believers in Pinochet's goodness, they formed

an entourage grateful for his selfless work. Beyond the individual interests that each one felt Pinochet had satisfied or defended, the group was united by the desire to hail him as their former ruler. A common bond was formed between a group of strangers; they briefly became a moral community through their shared vigil. This notion of community was strengthened by the way they went about organizing the vigil, sharing out practical tasks among the group. Reporters took note of this “transient camaraderie”: “yesterday one woman was put in charge of collecting money to buy drinking water,” while ten more “spent their first night on the sidewalk, beside a makeshift altar, with a [newly purchased] Christ figure still wrapped in plastic and votive cards of Padre Pío and Saint Teresa of the Andes.”⁴⁷ It would be going too far to consider this an essentially religious gathering, despite the plethora of Christian symbols or even the assertion of one fervent admirer who proclaimed that Pinochet “is God.”⁴⁸ However, it is difficult not to see these people as a moral group united by a common memory of past well-being and even contentment. Shared memories and common feelings are the conditions of entry for the group and serve to keep at a distance those whose acknowledgment is of a different kind. Nationalist or far-right groups also gathered, generally described in the press reports as made up of “young people dressed in jeans, white shirts, and black ties”. These in turn claimed that “they had nothing to do with another contingent of nearby activists, who described themselves as National Socialists”.⁴⁹ As always, any group that considers itself a moral community produces strict conditions of admittance, in this case reserving the right to exclude those who did not express sufficient sadness, grief, or desolation. The extreme-right and nationalist groups may in fact have shared similar sentiments, but they chose to express them in activist rather than sentimental terms.

We can, in other words, identify certain types of feelings or interests from the press reports, particularly from those published around the time of Pinochet’s death.⁵⁰ However, the sadness expressed by ordinary people and by business interests also allow us to draw up a composite picture of what kinds of people lamented the death, to the point where grief sometimes spilled over into anger. Occasional altercations and disputes that took place in the days preceding Pinochet’s death are telling: the air of gloom around the military hospital was evenly matched by joy and even euphoria among his opponents and detractors. The TV coverage homed in, understandably, on this contrast and began to use split-screen coverage of the opposing tendencies. This allowed them to make the most of what Delage has called “the hermeneutic prerogative of the image”⁵¹ to talk about a “renewed [political] polarization” in the

country. The chances of direct contact between supporters and opponents were slim, since the two groups used quite distinct spaces, separated by substantial distances, to give voice to their sadness or celebration.⁵² There were, however, occasional acrimonious exchanges of insults and even blows, and it is to these that we now turn.

One particularly notorious example saw an enraged Pinochet supporter turn her wrath on a series of targets. Luz Gajardo was one of the ringleaders of the verbal attack and hail of plastic bottles that had greeted former army commander-in-chief Juan Emilio Cheyre on his visit to the military hospital. She also allegedly attacked a passing cyclist who insulted her group. Days later she was arrested, having taken a stick to a nearby office building, smashing five of its windows.⁵³ The curious nature of her choice of target was resolved once it became clear that it was not the building but the attitude of a group of construction workers that had incited her wrath. They had apparently broken into a chorus accusing Pinochet of being a murderer (*asesino*).⁵⁴ The resulting charge sheet against Gajardo—aggravated damage, public disorder, and threats⁵⁵—is technically correct but fails to capture the profound class resentment and rage that underlay her actions. Similar rage, again with an evident class component, was expressed by other groups of demonstrators against construction workers on another nearby building.⁵⁶ While there is no denying that the grief over Pinochet’s death was shared by people from a range of social backgrounds, the collective anger against workers suggests an essentially reactionary identity. Discussing the phenomenon of opponents who celebrated Pinochet’s demise in 2006 with a toast—described by some as “barbaric”—an editorial in a mainstream daily newspaper drew parallels with the coup supporters who had popped champagne corks on 11 September 1973 when Allende’s death was announced.⁵⁷

Were these contrasts—joy and sorrow, verbal and physical confrontations—really signs of a “polarized” society, irrevocably split between supporters and critics of Pinochet’s regime and legacy? Surely not, since, firstly, any claim of widespread polarization is exaggerated if one looks at police and press estimates of the numbers of people taking part in the various activities and events. About 50,000 people are said to have filed past the coffin to pay their respects in the days before the funeral,⁵⁸ while around 15,000 people attended the funeral service itself.⁵⁹ On the other side, “numerous spontaneous celebrations [took place] on Sunday afternoon, minutes after the death of the general”; and around 3,000 people are estimated to have gathered in celebration in front of the presidential palace, in response to a call issued initially by the Communist Party.⁶⁰ Secondly, the “numbers game” accounting

tended to conflate the characteristics of visible, mobilized followers and activists with the views of ordinary people, whose interest in the event was more sporadic. Some pointed out the flaws in this thinking. One letter to the editor in *La Tercera* of 15 December asked a series of pertinent rhetorical questions: "Did the country actually grind to a halt? Were routines abandoned, did people not turn up for work? Can we really talk about a 'divided country' on the basis of 9,000 people celebrating in the Plaza Italia, 4,000 sobbing outside the military academy [where the funeral was held], and 50,000 who attended the wake?"⁶¹ Well-known TV and print journalist Fernando Paulsen claimed that the general's critics and supporters had between them managed, for the space of one day, to "reduce the entire country to a photographic contrast between two minorities."⁶²

Politicians, parties, journalists, and more than a few historians conflated the views of a mobilized minority with those of the majority and turned this into "public opinion." Historians and sociologists labored to extrapolate an illusory general state of public opinion from the visible manifestations of grief and joy, even venturing to "explain" how Pinochet's death was being experienced by the younger generations.⁶³ The stridency with which political actors and political parties reacted betrayed an increasing gulf between mobilized opinion, deeply political in nature, and ultimately indifferent opinions based on vague memories and uncertain knowledge. If the death of the former general elicited, contrary to appearances, so little genuinely transversal public reaction, it is because Pinochet had already, years before, ceased to belong to the present time.

A Strange Tribunal

Press coverage of the death took what was little more than a distant echo of mobilized opinion and transformed it into a clamor, treating it as symptomatic of the broader national experience and of public opinion. In doing so, it helped set the scene for a curious kind of historical tribunal at which various historians were summoned to testify, through interviews, accounts, and newspaper articles. Although more than a few were reluctant to answer the call, many historians and even the occasional political actor agreed to try their hand at issuing some kind of vague and impromptu historical verdict on Pinochet just days before his funeral.⁶⁴ Historian Ángel Soto has suggested that this kind of improvised "tribunal" (his term) confers perhaps too much power on historians, given that "history is still being written."⁶⁵ Patricia Arancibia⁶⁶ likewise refused to pass definitive judgment, claiming "The

historian is not a judge to pass sentence, nor is it history's job to condemn or absolve.⁶⁷ In a similar vein, Catholic University historian Ricardo Couyoumdjian contended that "we are not [yet] ready to issue a historical judgment."⁶⁸ Yet what would it mean to be "ready" to issue such a judgment? Does this desire to put off the moment of so-called historical judgment not betray a rather basic understanding of history according to which a certain amount of time has to elapse, at which point a reckoning can be made? Does this attitude not suggest a certain renunciation of the specific challenges of historicizing the present moment or the recent past? There seems to be a certain desire to let time go by in order to let events lose their immediacy and become inert, or at least unexamined, past time.

The apparent solution offered by divorcing history from law, separating out historical explanation from the administering of human justice, is not uncontroversial either. National historian Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt uses Pinochet's death as the occasion to set out a series of preconditions that, according to him, must be met in order for historical analysis to be possible. "Let's demystify him, judge him, and after that, the historians can have their say."⁶⁹ Making the demystification and judgment of Pinochet into conditions in the absence of which the former ruler cannot be thought about historically, Jocelyn-Holt excuses himself from testifying before this strange tribunal. He pleads for a continuance, the postponing to a later time of historical judgment: "no historical judgment can preempt the verdicts proper to our criminal justice system. It's not their job to hand the dead man over to the historians."⁷⁰ This kind of suspension of the writing of history is probably what Jocelyn-Holt has in mind when he claims that Pinochet is "outside of History."⁷¹ But for how long? At what point will Pinochet enter *into* History, become a suitable object for analysis and historical criticism? Undoubtedly, not before justice has pronounced a verdict, although even this might not be sufficient given that Pinochet is an "eternal survivor."⁷² In this approach, the historian conditions his discourse and reflections on a separate resolution of the guilt or innocence of the former dictator, and on the question of a moral definition of his figure and legacy. This is perhaps a rather convenient abdication of responsibility, an escape route that allows the thinking about, and writing, of History to be put off until all legal and moral conditions are met. Under these conditions, there is no doubt that the history of the present becomes a real challenge. Dealing with the past becomes an insuperable difficulty, and we begin to understand why Couyoumdjian suggests abstention. In juridical terms, the existence of a confession was classically considered to render unnecessary the accumulation of actual

evidence. Claudio Rolle not only accepts but embraces this judicial metaphor, likening the function of the historian to that of the investigative magistrate or public prosecutor: to investigate in order to “understand a person’s behavior”.⁷³ Rolle’s words and his bold analogy may in the end offer the prospect of a way forward, in which history is written not with a view to resolving legal and moral dilemmas but in order to help us think and understand.

How, then, should we interpret the affirmation that “History will be the judge”? Several of the historians who did choose to take part in the public tribunal declared themselves incompetent when faced with this particular question. Others confused the judgment of history with the more or less informed pronouncements of supposedly eminent historians, who handed out plaudits or condemnations mostly to satisfy an unspoken demand that they “do history.” Jocelyn-Holt waxes ironic about this demand, referring somewhat disparagingly to the fashion for reenactments of defining moments of national history. He suggests, for example, a “staging of the massacre of Santa María de Iquique⁷⁴ in the street in front of La Moneda,” or “guided tours of old patrician mansions,” and refers to business corporations commissioning books from historians and deciding what they are to write about. More than one honorable member of the profession has, he claims, succumbed to this demand for historical produce and been prepared to churn out the requisite “worthless memorabilia”.⁷⁵ Why should we expect anything different in 2006, on the subject of Pinochet’s death? In this sense, the hunger for history that is plastered all over the pages of the newspapers is the same desire for junk food rather than real nutrition that Jocelyn-Holt implicitly denounces. The only difference is that in the case of Pinochet, historians themselves became the sought-after product.

Once historians declare themselves willing to address a public made up mainly of newspaper readers, they act like practitioners of some sort of applied history, which scrutinizes the future, Pinochet’s posterity, and his legacy in order to satisfy a demand for history that is quite openly also in the business of creating a market for opinions. These historians who choose to act in the tradition of the US public historian, one who claims “implicitly to be in a position to analyze ‘what is’ or ‘what will be’”.⁷⁶ In the Chilean variant of this practice, the historian’s opinion is used to evaluate the past and infer some kind of significance for the future. How should we treat such opinions? We should name them for what they are—opinion—and we ought also to deconstruct their premises and assumptions.

In this way Ricardo Krebs, recipient in 1982 of Chile’s National History Prize, maintains that “history changes when new opinions arise,

and therefore historical judgments are never definitive”.⁷⁷ He goes on to refute contemporary “overseas” criticism of Pinochet, complaining that in many countries “they fail to mention that he obeyed the Constitution and handed over power” in March 1990.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, by taking refuge in the sensationalism of the single or unique case,⁷⁹ Krebs avoids recognizing that this Pinochet is the same one who schemed to launch the 1973 coup, in contemptuous disregard of the 1925 Constitution that bound him to be loyal irrespective of his opinion of the Allende government. The historian Patricia Arancibia likewise enjoins us to think methodically, reminding us that “history seeks to understand, and does so by taking into account the duality of human nature and the circumstances and context of each era”.⁸⁰ It is perhaps uncontroversial to claim, as Krebs and Arancibia do, that historians and their discipline aim to interpret and to understand, in order to explain. Those three aims or moments require much more than a simple description of facts and events. However, if history is to be a producer of knowledge, it cannot either tie itself indefinitely to pronouncements that function like “black boxes” and become, inevitably, reservoirs of ignorance. These include statements that invoke some vague concept of “human nature” or suggest that “historical judgment” must be subordinated to the “maturity and education of the people (*pueblo*),” whatever that means.⁸¹ It may well be true that, as Arancibia also claims, “history is thought of and written from the perspective of the present, with each generation perceiving the past from within its own mental and cultural categories”.⁸² Yet, if we simply give in to or go along with our own particular prejudices and ideologies without at least problematizing them or subjecting them to conscious scrutiny, we prevent ourselves from thinking sensibly not only about the past but also about the present.

Bernardino Bravo Lira (the 2010 recipient of Chile’s National History Prize) suggests that certain conditions should be met before a judgment can be passed: [the historian ought] “to gather representative data; to determine its degree of accuracy; and to reconstruct the facts”.⁸³ These three he believes to be necessary but insufficient stages in moving towards the production of knowledge, a step requiring the additional asset of “the courage to proclaim the truth”.⁸⁴ These three stages may indeed be necessary ones, although their strict fulfillment could quite easily produce a detailed description rather than an explanation. To what, however, does “the courage to speak the truth” refer? This rhetorical invocation of a moral stance to be taken by the historian contains an irreducible conundrum of its own, since it begs the question of how we are to separate wheat from chaff or truth from lies. In calling for the “truth,” Bravo Lira treats truth as something that is simply there

to be found and can be arrived at through some kind of quasi-forensic police examination of facts and events. He forgets that truth is essentially a metaphysical entity of its own, whose discovery requires both rigorous formulation of research questions and a careful consideration of our own habits and categories of thought.⁸⁵

Julio Retamal's judgment stands out from all the rest precisely for its crudeness. Lacking in any methodology and apparently unacquainted with the use of concepts, this is quite clearly mere unadorned opinion. According to this historian, "the good things [Pinochet did]" should be allowed to outweigh the rest, since, after all, no more than "three thousand, maybe fifteen thousand people" suffered. What's more, when it comes down to it the whole thing was "not his fault," something that "the left does not want to understand," since the left is, he says, used "to feeding off ferocity, a constant whipping up of hatred".⁸⁶ His opinion was echoed by another historian, Regina Claro, who acknowledged "[those] human rights [things] (*lo de los derechos humanos*)", but claimed these had been "very minor compared to other dictators such as Hitler, Stalin, [or] Castro".⁸⁷ The completely intemperate use of language and of comparisons indulged in by Retamal and Claro reifies the "left", relativizes horror by introducing some kind of sliding scale of pain, and merges Castro with Pinochet. We might well consider that both Retamal and Claro are perfect examples of a demand for cheap history producing its desired object, a marketplace for opinion that cares little for the content of what is actually said.

There are any number of examples of other public historians who attempt to dress up their judgments in erudite language, treating the public tribunal as a marketplace in which they produce opinions in return for recognition. In some cases, particularly perhaps that of Patricia Arancibia, the opinions at least seem to have some foundation, as when she refers to the different categories that are available to us when we judge the past from the standpoint of the present. In many other cases, however, the historian's opinion becomes a tradeable good once it tacitly endorses a teleological view of history. Of course, all opinions are legitimate as such. But opinions with historical pretensions, issued by historians, are not all of equal value and are open to critique. Historians cannot attempt to elude their particular responsibility in this regard. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote, "all historians, whatever else their objectives, are engaged in this process inasmuch as they contribute, consciously or not, to the creation, dismantling and restructuring of images of the past which belong not only to the world of specialist investigation, but to the public sphere of man as a political being".⁸⁸

Some of our sample of historians were seized by an attack of irresponsibility that placed them in direct opposition to Hobsbawm's vision. This widespread irresponsibility seized some historians and many political scientists when they analyzed the funeral event, and usually manifested itself as either an urge to assimilate or an urge to relativize. Both came about through poorly constructed comparison, whether of leaders, regimes, or actions. The most common assimilation error was to draw parallels between Fidel Castro and Augusto Pinochet, bolstered by the historical irony created by the two suffering serious illness at roughly the same time. But there was also a specific local political flavor, revealed when Minister of the Interior Belisario Velasco referred to Pinochet's death as the classic demise of passing of a right-wing dictator. The epithet provoked a chorus of criticism.⁸⁹ One, perhaps the most talked-about for having provoked a subsequent reaction from the historian Ángel Soto,⁹⁰ came in a newspaper column by political scientist Patricio Navia. Navia refuted the ministerial judgment and made himself at the same time into a spokesman for the whole of Chile, "a country that does not"—according to Navia—"make distinctions between dictators of the right and dictators of the left".⁹¹ In all cases, he says, "right, center, or left, dictators steal, kill, and polarize societies".⁹² This may be true, if one accepts the starting premise that the term is correctly applied to both Pinochet and Castro and their respective regimes. The problem is that not all historians and analysts are willing to accept the label "dictator" to refer to Pinochet,⁹³ preferring to call him a "de facto ruler," "authoritarian leader," or simply "president."

We are forced here to recognize the strong negative charge attached to the term "dictator," often left to stand as a sufficient descriptor while the associated analysis goes on to recount a litany of horrors, reproducing an essentialist conception of evil. Just days earlier Navia himself had chosen instead to comment on the enduring power of Pinochet's and Castro's ideas, the first in the form of an economic model still in force in Chile and the second as the "ideal of equality and social justice"⁹⁴ behind the Cuban revolution. These nuances and distinctions in the realm of ideas are, however, immediately swept aside by the drawing of a bold equation between the two "imposing legacies". This can look like a desire to deny or simply to play down the question of the specific content of each regime. Undeniably, atrocities have taken place in each or, if we choose a slightly different form of words, each has committed human rights violations in the name of the quite different conceptions of justice and well-being that each espoused. But as soon as discussion of these two forms of leadership is reduced to the imprecise terminology of "dictator," and their political regimes lumped together in

a fictional single category of “dictatorships”, they are run together in ways that lend themselves more to unhelpful stigmatization and moral judgment than systematic comparison. We can see a similar dynamic at work in the problematic use by some left-wing thinkers of the term “fascism” to define Pinochet’s regime. Their borrowing of the term empties it of the specific features that characterized Mussolini’s Italy or even Hitler’s Germany. The latter was, according to Ian Kershaw, “charismatic domination” transformed into a system of government, with Hitler gradually acquiring “growing autonomy in the complex play of relationships of power within the Nazi state”.⁹⁵ Kershaw himself criticizes the generic use of the concept of fascism to locate the Nazi regime alongside others, believing it to be tantamount to a form of denialism or “a banalization of the horrors of Nazism”.⁹⁶ The drawing of hasty and somewhat specious parallels between Pinochet and Castro is similarly unwise, since it ignores or denies what is actually specific to “Pinochetismo” and what may be particular to “Castroism”. Likewise, Chile has seen misrepresentations of Allende’s Popular Unity government equating its conscious deployment of political propaganda to the systematic production of misinformation by totalitarian governments.⁹⁷

In fairness, the comparison between Castro and Pinochet has a long pedigree in the world’s media. International press agency EFE, for example, noted that “both have considered themselves saviors of their country and each has forced thousands of their own citizens into exile”. Its account concluded that “together they represent the last vestiges of a bloodthirsty era”.⁹⁸ Leaving aside for a moment the references to pain and to blood, EFE’s “analysis” does not help us towards any greater insight into the specific characteristics of each of these two forms of political organization. Peruvian author and sometime political candidate Mario Vargas Llosa is guilty of the same omission when he suggests that both are little more than “embodiments” (*figuras emblemáticas*) of a single horrific lineage.⁹⁹ Let me be clear: there is no desire here to cast doubt on the reality of the horror that does, concretely, figure in all forms of dictatorship. Nor do I question the comparison between Pinochet and Castro by some appeal to relative scales of death and destruction, chalking up more or less fatalities to each account. My criticism is a deeper one that has to do with a need, often ignored, to take seriously the issue of the specific ways in which adversaries are to be eliminated and, particularly, whether or not actual annihilation is planned. Here it jars to compare Pinochet-era disappearances and executions to mass exile and execution of dissidents in Castro’s Cuba in the same ways, and for the same reasons, that it jars to conflate them with the Jewish Holocaust or Stalin’s gulags. Once we choose to

overlook the question of the meaning of the repression, ignoring differences between regimes and focusing only on the common presence of the person of the dictator, then any and all comparisons and equations are possible: Pinochet, Kim Il Sung, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Somoza, Saddam Hussein, or Duvalier. The elisions may then go further: we lose the capacity to distinguish clearly between authoritarianisms, totalitarianisms and sultanates,¹⁰⁰ or between “lefts” and “rights” that, once taken to extremes, start to find points of contact¹⁰¹ even while some are, or are portrayed as being, “less evil” than others.¹⁰²

The risks of denialism and relativization go even wider. For more than a few historians and newspaper readers, the *bon gré mal gré* acknowledgment that Pinochet-era human rights violations had actually taken place did not prevent their being justified as necessary. We have seen above how Julio Retamal and Regina Claro both acknowledged the violations, but at the same time Retamal seeks to relieve Pinochet of all responsibility while Claro downplays their gravity by irresponsible comparison with “dictators such as Hitler, Stalin, or Castro”.¹⁰³ Many of the newspaper articles, interviews, and readers’ letters that appeared around the time of the funeral made a nod to form, sparing a line or two to mention the human cost of the Pinochet regime, but not a few treated this as an unfortunate “burden that had to be borne”. One reader’s letter suggested that the left was itself no stranger to this logic, choosing only to “hush up the atrocities committed by their Russian and European comrades” . . . “not to mention Cuba”.¹⁰⁴ This imputation of unique or shared criminal culpability to the Chilean left was also used to justify human rights violations per se as “regrettable, but inevitable”.¹⁰⁵ Such explicit justifications were the exception rather than the order of day, but it is noteworthy that such outlandish views were afforded a mainstream hearing.

The Catholic Church did not escape criticism over its own role and discourse around Pinochet’s death and funeral, during which it betrayed a truly magisterial capacity for denial dressed up in the language of forgiveness and redemption. Thus, after visiting Pinochet on his sickbed, Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz alluded to human rights violations without ever quite naming them when he said: “whatever the things that someone might have to be regretful for, one must never forget that we are all children of God’s forgiveness”.¹⁰⁶ The cardinal’s *bon mot* undeniably falls squarely within the Catholic doctrine of forgiveness, according to which all types of harm done or sin committed are commended to the creator’s infinite mercy. Nonetheless, the cardinal went on to perform a much clearer denial and downplaying of the question of harm done when, presiding over Pinochet’s requiem mass at

the capital's military academy, he gave thanks to God "for all the qualities that he gave [to Pinochet], and all of the good [Pinochet] did for our homeland and for his own institution [the army]".¹⁰⁷ There can be no doubt that the Cardinal here adds his own voice to the tribunal, issuing a historical judgment distinctive only for coming under the guise of institutional discourse rather than opinion. This is more than a mere "end-time" discourse or the hagiography typically extended to a former ruler in recognition of the dignity of his office: it is also a funeral eulogy in which the personal merits of Pinochet are extolled. The requiem mass commended to God Pinochet's supposed personal qualities while at the same time consecrating and certifying the supposed virtues of his government and legacy. While the exaltation of personal virtues is somehow understandable in light of the traditional funeral eulogy rendered in Chile to deceased presidents almost as a matter of form, the Church's institutional silence about the harm caused serves the interests of denial. It is not so much that a requiem mass or a homily ought instead to have been used as a pulpit for denunciation or for the expression of other versions of the truth. The problem is that, in this case, the matter of blame or imperfection was glossed over altogether in favor of a totalizing tribute to the former ruler and his work. "The discourse devoted to the dead at the moment of their passing" is indeed, as Bonnet writes, always first and foremost "the rite (*sacre*) of the living".¹⁰⁸ Errázuriz's words are not just any other eulogy, given that they represent the official position of an institution. In this case, the entire Catholic Church, with all the weight of history, tradition, and liturgical solemnity behind it, spoke and passed judgment. For Chile the position of the Catholic Church was, moreover, particularly charged given its previous role as a bastion of defense of human rights during the dictatorship. Errázuriz's choice of words and gesture around Pinochet's death was therefore a particularly stark reminder of the doctrinal and political gulf between the present ecclesial authorities and Cardinal Raúl Silva, who had presided over the Chilean church during the 1980s.

Memories of the Future

What, if anything, remains to be said about Pinochet, his memory, and his posterity several years after his death? Little of note has emerged, other than persistent rumors that he may have secretly fathered a child and increasing public indifference to commemorations of his death by dwindling groups of supporters. Nothing has happened to reverse his steady pre-mortem decline, and few therefore feel called to actively defend his legacy.¹⁰⁹ Already in 2007 and 2008, the first and second

anniversary commemorations of his death were virtually ignored by the press. The mainstream media made do with a few rote obituaries, lacking even the levels of emotional intensity discussed by Fowler.¹¹⁰ A few new documents have come to light, among them a kind of "political testament," whose existence was revealed by the Pinochet Foundation (although details of its content remained obscure). A few days after Pinochet's funeral, there was some talk in the press of renaming a street after him in the uptown Las Condes district of Santiago.¹¹¹ The exact form suggested was "President Augusto Pinochet," a clear attempt to restore the presidential dignity denied to him in funeral protocols. Would that decision, had it gone ahead, have been sufficient to rehabilitate Pinochet and reverse his gradual degradation? It would not: it would have represented at most a local tribute that could not have been extrapolated onto the national stage nor held to somehow represent the collective national will. The idea was later abandoned, or at least has not resurfaced, but it is telling that it was mooted by the local council of one of the capital's wealthier districts. Only if a host of working-class city districts or regional councils were to take up the same idea would it potentially represent a genuine national restoration of dignity in the context of local memory politics.¹¹²

Pinochet's death also began to loosen the inextricable personal association between him and 11 September, a date that had already been stripped of its status as an official public holiday. At the moment of his death that date, 10 December, suggested itself as a possible rival the date of the coup as potentially significant markers around which living memories of Pinochet, Allende, and the "eleventh" (*once*) could converge. Names and dates can of course become magnets for social commemoration even when this is not enshrined in explicit policy measures. Nor do these measures, where they exist, necessarily betray the existence of what Ángel Soto castigates as the "typical repertoire of centrally planned [i.e., socialist] states".¹¹³ For Chile, it is highly likely that multiple (and divergent) memories about 11 September 1973, about Allende and his government, or about Pinochet's "achievements" will persist. This does not, however, mean that all of these memories will be afforded equal weight and value. As ever, there will be memories that predominate while others are subjugated; and commemorations that capture the attention of enlightened, mobilized, and perhaps even public opinion will coexist with eccentric and marginal countercommemorations. In other words, "we have no memories of the future, but we do have imagined memories of the future".¹¹⁴ Some of these could become the source material for collective memory, while others may be

restricted to the immediate circle of those who developed them unless some major shift thrusts them to greater prominence.

Historians register mainstream memories and more rarely manage to also capture some of the more marginal versions often overlooked for lack of an authoritative spokesperson.¹¹⁵ However, and again *pace* Soto, memory is not the “raw material of the historian”.¹¹⁶ The distinct memories that underlie accounts of a date, a funeral, its protagonists and their legacy, certainly inform the practice of the historian, but do not overdetermine it. It is still the case that historians work principally from written archives, oral testimonies, and iconographic documentation (or “relics,” in the sense of Goldthorpe).¹¹⁷ These constitute “objectified” forms of data about which it is always worth asking questions such as for whom and in what form they were originally produced and how they have been received.¹¹⁸

Drawing distinctions between history and memory allows us to understand how it is possible for a historian to develop a narrative about one man, his regime, or his legacy that may be at once appropriately founded on known facts and roundly criticized for going against the grain of received wisdom or dominant memory. This is in fact the perfect situation from which to appreciate that history and memory are indeed made of different stuff and can take separate tracks. When this happens, historical narratives verge on revisionism and are likely to be branded as such depending on the nature of the evidence that is threatened or the demystification that has been attempted. Much will depend on how the alternative versions are received from historians. While the term “revisionism” is not quite appropriate in the Chilean context, we can at least venture the hypothesis that the view of Pinochet and his regime that currently dominates is the stigmatizing and degrading one currently reproduced by the present crop of mainstream practitioners of history. Any revisionism that might emerge would, accordingly, have to be the work of historians presently relegated to the sidelines or simply as yet unknown. This is a far from impossible scenario, particularly if the political changes that have occurred since Pinochet’s death are later seized upon as an opportunity by those who would like to reevaluate him and his work. It is, for instance, instructive to note that, in 2009, then-president of the senate Jovino Novoa had previously served as subsecretary general of the government under the Pinochet dictatorship, and that Marcelo Venegas, the newly appointed president of the constitutional court, had in 1986 been director of DINACOS, the military regime’s principal censorship agency.

These changes offer opportunities to rehabilitate not so much Pinochet himself as the civilian political forces that supported him, and

could certainly serve to inspire or embolden any revisionist offensive being planned by new historians. If the reputation of late nineteenth-century Chilean president Balmaceda could end up being rehabilitated five years after his defeat in a civil war—and subsequent suicide—this was not solely due to the twin effects of his funeral and a rapid electoral recovery by his supporters. It can be explained primarily by the fact that “the Balmaceda-ist historiography was clearly more complete, and more widely read, than that of the victors of 1891”.¹¹⁹ This event is sufficient in and of itself to demonstrate the potential real-world importance of debates among historians. What is more, the very fact that future historians will be called upon to appear before similar tribunals will continue to confirm what is often forgotten: that “the contentious nature of history reflects politics *par excellence*”.¹²⁰ It is also a fact that revisionism over Pinochet’s death in Chile is as likely to come from the left as the right, in the context of very dynamic disputes about memory. As Kershaw reminds us, talking about controversies between German historians over Nazism, “‘revisionism’ is not only an insult, but also a term whose meaning varies and can cause confusion. Some of the staunchest critics of ‘revisionists’ in the seventies were themselves described as ‘revisionists’ in the recent ‘historians’ dispute”.¹²¹

Perhaps what the memory of the future has in store for us is an “equilibrium that blends memory-as-rupture with memory-as-salvation,” which would in turn provide true foundations for a “new dominant collective memory”¹²²—although any such inglorious redemption of a dictator might just require too particular a set of realignments and conditions. A historically improbable future, then, albeit a far from impossible one.

¹ Jorge Edwards, *La Segunda*, 22 December 2006.

² Proceeding from the discovery of millions of dollars in secret accounts held by Pinochet family members at the Riggs Bank in Washington DC, USA.

³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980), p. 98, note 9.

⁴ David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 104-105, in French in the original text

⁵ Boris Gobille, “L’événement Mai 68: Pour une sociohistoire du temps court,” *Annales HSS*, no. 2 (March–April 2008), p. 324.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *La Nación*, 21 August 2006.

⁸ www.noticiasprotocolo.blogspot.com, 23 August 2006, original source *Diario Hoy.net*.

⁹ www.noticiasprotocolo.blogspot.com, 4 December 2006, source *El Morrocotudo*.

¹⁰ *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

¹¹ *La Tercera*, 10 December 2006.

¹² Editors' note: Cancillería is the national equivalent of the US State Department, which in Chile oversees all diplomatic and internal protocol-related matters.

¹³ "Reglamento de ceremonial público y protocolo de la Cancillería."

¹⁴ Contained in the "Reglamento de servicio de guarnición."

¹⁵ The same regulation had been invoked on two previous occasions in recent memory. One was the demise, in 2002, of General Sergio Castilla (ex-army commander-in-chief, 1968–1969). The other, much more highly symbolically charged, was the belated 2004 commemoration of the 1974 death of General Carlos Prats. Prats, a loyal constitutionalist, had been Pinochet's immediate predecessor as army commander-in-chief. Exiled to Argentina, he was assassinated there together with his wife in 1974 on the orders of his former comrade in arms.

¹⁶ *La Tercera*, 5 December 2006.

¹⁷ Carmen McEvoy, ed., *Funerales republicanos en América del Sur: Tradición, ritual y nación, 1832-1896*, (Santiago, Ediciones Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, 2006), p. xv, emphasis in the original text.

¹⁸ www.noticiasprotocolo.blogspot.com, 23 August 2006.

¹⁹ *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

²⁰ Literally, as "péqueñecés," small-minded behavior. *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

²¹ *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

²² The other symbol, whose use would in any case not have been called for on this occasion, is the seal of Bernardo O'Higgins, one of Chile's founding fathers. For more about the significance of the sash, see discussion of its role in the March 1990 handover of power between Pinochet and incoming elected president Patricio Aylwin in Alfredo Joignant, *El gesto y la palabra* (Santiago: LOM-Arcis, 1998). Regarding the subversion of the funeral protocol and manipulation of the presidential sash, see also contemporaneous press reports in *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006, and *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

²³ A spectacular episode that was scarcely publicized by the press: *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

²⁴ *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

²⁵ One of Pinochet's sons, Augusto Pinochet Iriart, suggested that his father had overcome his religiously motivated distaste for the idea of cremation "for the sake of his family and the country." *La Tercera*, 15 December 2006.

²⁶ *La Tercera*, 10 December 2006.

²⁷ *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

²⁸ Expressed in chanted slogans such as "Dormant right, Pinochet saved your life." *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

²⁹ Cheyre held the post between 2002 and 2006, during which time he was responsible for various modernization programs that had entailed taking some strategic distance from the Pinochet legacy. While visiting Pinochet during the latter's illness, Cheyre's car was attacked by Pinochet supporters. Water bottles rained down upon the vehicle, and its occupant was roundly denounced as a "hypocrite", "scoundrel", and "traitor." *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

³⁰ *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

³¹ *La Tercera*, 10 December 2006.

³² *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

³³ The two had competed in 2005 for the right-wing presidential nomination, Lavín for the UDI and Piñera for Renovación Nacional.

³⁴ *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

³⁵ *La Tercera*, 16 December 2006.

³⁶ *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Nicolas Mariot, "Qu'est-ce qu'un 'enthousiasme civique'? Sur l'historiographie des fêtes politiques en France après 1789," *Annales HSS*, no. 1 (January-February 2008), p. 119.

⁴³ On this topic, see Alfredo Joignant, *Un día distinto* (Santiago, Editorial Universitaria, 2007).

⁴⁴ *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

⁴⁵ *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

⁴⁶ *El Mercurio*, 4 December 2006.

⁴⁷ *La Tercera*, 5 December 2006. Saint Teresa, "Santa Teresita" is a local saint; Padre Pío, an Italian Capuchin friar and saint believed to have the gift of healing. Both are common devotions in traditional Chilean Catholic circles. Translator's note

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006. Chile has a small but active neo-Nazi movement, representatives of which were also in evidence at Pinochet's funeral and at a 2012 homage to his memory. Translator's note.

⁵⁰ The funeral itself was a different matter, as press reporting ceased to be about anonymous figures and street groups and focused on the reactions of eminent persons and businessmen explaining why they had chosen to attend the funeral. Their answers alluded to "a personal and private sentiment of 'gratitude' to the former general for his defense and strengthening of property rights." *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁵¹ Christian Delage, "L'image comme prévue: L'expérience du procès de Nuremberg," *Vingtième siècle, Revue d'histoire*, no. 72 (October-December, 2001), p. 74.

⁵² Supporters concentrated around the (uptown) military hospital, while opponents occupied the Plaza Italia, a major marker of the uptown/downtown frontier, and the square in front of the La Moneda presidential palace. (Translator's note: The latter, perhaps not coincidentally, contains a statue to Allende that has become a major focus of left-wing demonstrations in recent years.) *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁵³ *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006. The column provoked an irate tirade from one indignant reader, denouncing the "fallacious" comparison: "Muerte de

Pinochet V,” letter to the editor by Emilia Infante, *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁵⁸ *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

⁵⁹ *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁶⁰ *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

⁶¹ Letter to the editor by Raúl Valdivia Fernández, *La Tercera*, 15 December 2006.

⁶² Fernando Paulsen, “El minuto de las minorías,” *La Tercera*, 16 December 2006.

⁶³ Sociologist Jorge Larraín claimed that young people were experiencing the death of the former ruler with particular intensity, claiming moreover that the explanation for this lay in “characteristics proper to the adolescent stage of life, such as emotionality, viscerality, and passion”. He drew a contrast with older generations who, he felt, had “a greater awareness of what happened and how it happened,” owing to their lived experiences of the coup and aftermath. *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

⁶⁴ “Regarding the historical Pinochet, I believe deep down that a great many years will need to go by before we can really obtain an impartial perspective on his government,” said right-wing (UDI) Senator Evelyn Matthei in “Reacciones,” *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

⁶⁵ Ángel Soto, “Legado y funeral de Pinochet,” *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

⁶⁶ Arancibia, a historian, is also the sister of a Chilean intelligence agent sentenced to life imprisonment in Argentina in 2000 for his role in the 1974 assassinations of Carlos Prats and Sofía Cuthbert.

⁶⁷ Patricia Arancibia, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁶⁸ Ricardo Couyoumdjian, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁶⁹ Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, “Qué despinochetización ni qué perro muerto,” *La Tercera*, 10 December 2006.

⁷⁰ Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁷¹ Jocelyn-Holt, “Qué despinochetización”

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁷⁴ The reference is to a 1907 massacre of between 2,000 and 3,000 striking saltpeter workers in the northern city of Iquique, on the orders of a local military commander but with the tacit support of the government of the day. The event has become an emblematic moment in the history of the Chilean workers’ movement and part of broader Chilean collective memory.

⁷⁵ Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, “El pasado chatarra que consumimos,” *La Tercera*, 7 January 2007.

⁷⁶ Henry Rousso, “L’histoire appliquée ou les historiens thaumaturges,” *Vingtième siècle, Revue d’histoire*, vol.1, no. 1 (1984), p. 111.

⁷⁷ Ricardo Krebs, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ A treatment that was also sought after by media outlets, which were constantly looking to stress the supposed differences between Pinochet and other de facto rulers. We were repeatedly reminded, for example, that unlike his counterparts elsewhere, “Chile’s former ruler received his final sendoff in a military ceremony, surrounded by thousands of supporters and at the center of worldwide attention”. *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁸⁰ Patricia Arancibia, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Bernardino Bravo Lira, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Veyne is accordingly correct to remind us that “conceptual tools are the locus of advances in historiography” to the extent that “having concepts is equivalent to conceiving of things” (p. 158). The historian’s task is “to know how to take a given event and ask more questions about it than the average person would”. This in turn is impossible to achieve without “the formulation of new concepts,” an “operation that enriches the vision” (p. 254). Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l’histoire: Essai d’épistémologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1971).

⁸⁶ Julio Retamal, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁸⁷ Regina Claro, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

⁸⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Not least from former Defense Minister Jaime Ravinet, like Velasco a member of the Christian Democrat party, DC. Ravinet drew up a tally of the respective sins of left- and right-wing dictatorships in which, if anything, the former came off worse: “if anyone wants to claim that the right-wing [dictatorships] are worse I must say I have my doubts”. Interview with Jaime Ravinet in *La Tercera*, 16 December 2006.

⁹⁰ Ángel Soto, “El legado de Castro y Pinochet,” *La Tercera*, 5 December 2006.

⁹¹ Patricio Navia, “Dictadores de derecha e izquierda,” *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Nor, of course, for Castro. Editor’s note.

⁹⁴ Patricio Navia, “Pinochet y Castro en sus horas finales,” *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

⁹⁵ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Un essai sur le charisme en politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 17. Author’s translation.

⁹⁶ Ian Kershaw, *Qu’est-ce que le nazisme? Problèmes et perspectives d’interprétation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 85. Author’s translation.

⁹⁷ The comparison was drawn by conservative historian Alejandro San Francisco in the article “El debate por la memoria histórica,” *La Tercera*, 21 December 2006. For a critique of this strange allusion, see a letter to the editor appearing the next day from Ernesto López entitled “Memoria histórica,” *La Tercera*, 22 December 2006, and San Francisco’s subsequent reply in the same medium, *La Tercera*, 23 December 2006.

⁹⁸ Analysis from the EFE news agency, published under the title “Paralelo con Fidel Castro” in *La Tercera*, 4 December 2006.

⁹⁹ Vargas Llosa, “Las exequias de un tirano,” *El País*, 17 December 2006.

¹⁰⁰ In this regard, see the important book by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *La Segunda*.

¹⁰² Sebastián Abudoj, “Allende y Pinochet,” *La Tercera*, 9 December 2006.

¹⁰³ Regina Claro, *El Mercurio*, 17 December 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Sebastián Abudoj, "Allende y Pinochet," previously cited letter to the editor.

¹⁰⁵ Former Pinochet regime ambassador Miguel Serrano, letter to the editor entitled "Salud de Pinochet II," *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

¹⁰⁶ *El Mercurio*, 5 December 2006.

¹⁰⁷ *La Tercera*, 12 December 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Jean-Claude Bonnet, "Les morts illustres: Oraison funèbre, éloge académique, nécrologie," in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 2 (Paris: Quarto-Gallimard, 1997), p. 1831.

¹⁰⁹ The untidy rump of the unconditional Pinochetista supporter group made its most recent public appearance by organizing a June 2012 homage in a downtown Santiago theater complete with the screening of a hagiographical documentary on Pinochet. The event attracted street protests and some violence, largely unfavorable public comment, and even rumors of possible actions for plagiarism over the inclusion of footage shot by regime opponents. The lasting impression was however one of a dwindling group that did not manage to convince a single leading right-wing politician of the day to attend. See Chapter Four.

¹¹⁰ Bridget Fowler, "Collective Memory and Forgetting: Components for a Study of Obituaries," *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 22, no. 6 (2005), p. 61.

¹¹¹ *La Tercera*, 13 December 2006.

¹¹² Interestingly, perhaps, the capital does boast several "President Salvador Allende" streets, and other kinds of local memory politics are on display in working-class areas. Santiago's Pedro Aguirre Cerda district, under a Communist Party mayor, boasts streets dedicated to "Popular Unity", "Carlos Marx", and iconic union leader "Clotario Blest" all within the space of a couple of blocks. Editor's note.

¹¹³ Soto claims to detect this tendency in Spain's recent "law of historical memory" in his column "¿El juicio de la historia?" *La Tercera*, 22 December 2006. While the enactment of laws undeniably has its origins in state decisions or preferences, these are subject to the scrutiny and approval of [word missing] as are decisions, in Chile at least, to permit the erection of statutes paying tribute to (some) former presidents and political leaders. Those approved include former presidents Jorge Alessandri (law 19.013 of 5 December 1990), Eduardo Frei Montalva (law 19.014 of 17 December 1990), Salvador Allende (law 19.311 of 24 June, 1994), and former right-wing senator Jaime Guzmán, assassinated in 1991 (law 19.205 of 6 February 1993). On this topic, see Katherine Hite, "El monumento a Salvador Allende en el debate político chileno," in Elizabeth Jelín and Victoria Langland, eds., *Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales* (Madrid and Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003), pp. 19-56. These decisions clearly track the political makeup of the legislature of the day. In that sense, they are straightforward examples of sociopolitical decisionmaking that is perfectly democratic, not least because it can potentially be reversed. This is a long way from supposedly "totalitarian" lawmaking.

¹¹⁴ Richard Ned Lebow, "The Future of Memory," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 617 (May 2008), p. 39.

¹¹⁵ Here the historian Gabriel Salazar constitutes a notable exception, recording popular history from below. His recognition operates as an "authorizing" voice giving greater visibility to, for example, social and oral histories of the day of the coup.

¹¹⁶ Soto, "¿El juicio de la historia?"

¹¹⁷ John H. Goldthorpe, "The Uses of History in Sociology," *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, no. 2 (1991), pp. 211-230.

¹¹⁸ Both the oral and written documentation that the historian employs constitutes, at bottom, little more than a collection of tracks or traces, in the sense given to the term by Carlo Ginzburg, *Mythes, emblèmes, traces* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989). They are perhaps fragments of a history that is, inescapably, "mutilated knowledge" (see Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire*, p. 24, author's translation). These documents that become traces constitute the real source material of the historian and must, as such, be critically interrogated. If too many gaps have been left between the traces, these must be addressed through what Veyne calls "retrodiction". This refers to a type of synthesis that seeks to "fill gaps in our immediate comprehension" (Veyne, p.23, note 10, author's translation). If we are prepared to call these principles of historical epistemology "memory," then everything becomes memory.

¹¹⁹ Alejandro San Francisco, "La apoteosis de Balmaceda: Desde la tumba solitaria a la gloria (Santiago, 1896)," in McEvoy, ed., *Funerales republicanos en América del Sur*, p. 193.

¹²⁰ Martin O. Heisler, "Introduction: The Political Currency of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 617 (May 2008), p. 22.

¹²¹ Kershaw, *Qu'est-ce que le nazisme?* p. 429, note 4, author's translation.

¹²² Peter Winn, "El pasado está presente: Historia y memoria en el Chile contemporáneo." in Anne Pérotin-Dumon ed., *Historizar el pasado vivo en América Latina*, p. 27. Electronic book, published at www.historizarelpasadovivo.cl (accessed 20 January 2013).