

Memory Symbolics in Chile: Manuel Guerrero Antequera, Cultural Memory and Political Consciousness

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38 years after the September 11 “golpe de estado” and 22 years after the restoration of democracy, Chileans continue to explore various ways to represent authentically their painful and conflicted memories of Pinochet’s lengthy dictatorial reign. Pinochet’s legacy continues to reverberate strongly 6 years after his death. Even Heraldo Muñoz, Chile’s former Ambassador to the United Nations and current Permanent Representative, and certainly no apologist for the dictator, acknowledges “Pinochet’s long shadow,” recognition of the ruler’s deep but highly contested historical repercussions, especially in the economic arena (299-314). As sociologist Macarena Gómez-Barris suggests in her recent book, *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile* (2009), the transition period between dictatorship and full democracy has led to many distinct manifestations of what she terms “memory symbolics,” efforts that in their own way tell of the dictatorial past and its often unfortunate aftermath (5). Examples of memory symbolics might include truth commissions,

memorials, museums, commemorative parks, witness statements, documentary films, and the visual arts (5-7). Such open and shared representations and acknowledgements of state violence embody a form of cultural memory, implies Gómez-Barris, drawing upon the work of Holocaust historian Oren Baruch Stier, “where the persistence of the past makes itself felt in the present” (7). A complete inventory of memory symbolics would be vast, especially after 2003, the thirtieth anniversary of Allende’s overthrow, a year when “the floodgates of what had been a taboo public topic were thrown open in all forms of commemoration, tribute, [and] memorial display” (Gómez-Barris 30-31). On the one hand, memory symbolics can be state-led strategies “that assist in the process of smoothing over painful memories on the path toward national unity,” writes Gómez-Barris; on the other hand, they can follow an alternative path by challenging and casting doubt on “these limited [state] renditions by suggesting that memory-making is complex, fluid, unending, and incomplete” (5-6). In any case, regardless of their genesis, memory symbolics are representations that explore the ambiguities and challenges for those “living with the presence of the past,” especially those who live in societies that only recently have emerged from a history characterized by state-initiated violence (Gómez-Barris 157).

Gómez-Barris and other scholars who investigate both the history of the dictatorship and contemporary responses to the Pinochet era have focused appropriately on concrete, visible, clearly identifiable signs and records: museums, films, public displays, books, and the arts. Public memorials that commemorate the victims of Pinochet’s regime have appeared throughout Chile, in many cases constructed upon a site where beatings, torture and murder earlier had occurred.¹ Another potential area

¹ One such site, perhaps the most well known of all, is Villa Grimaldi. Once a lush, opulent Spanish-style villa, complete with gardens and pools, Villa Grimaldi became during the early years of Pinochet’s regime a concentration camp where prisoners were beaten, tortured and interrogated. Several hundred prisoners were disappeared or lost their lives while in custody. Today on the grounds where the Grimaldi mansion once stood there is the Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi, an homage and memorial to the victims of the dictatorship (Gómez-Barris 37-73). The Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi’s location in a quiet Santiago suburb belies its past as one of the Pinochet regime’s sites of unspeakable terror inflicted upon Chilean citizens.

of memory symbolics that has shown amazing vibrancy, fluidity and resistance to state control has been the Internet through social media, especially with dedicated websites and blogs. Manuel Guerrero Antequera is one in particular who has devoted the last several years developing a dynamic and extensive blog (*manuelguerrero.blogspot.com*) that uncovers the dictatorship's systemic brutalities as well as incisively critiques Chile's current economic, political and social reality. As the son of a murdered *desaparecido*, someone who as a child actually witnessed his father's second (and ultimately fatal) state-sanctioned abduction, Manuel Guerrero Antequera blogs with particular acuity and personal insight into an era that, for better or for worse, continues to weigh heavily on contemporary Chile's collective imagination. His personal connection to Chile's progressive movements—through his father and his own commitments—gives him a certain measure of insight when dealing with Chilean political history. This study examines how Manuel Guerrero Antequera's blog critically assesses Chile's present and past political and social landscape, suggesting that a Latin American blog can function not only as a memory site for the dispossessed and oppressed but also as a catalyst for change. In this sense, blogs, as well as other Internet-based social media, may inherit the traditional Latin American testimonio's role to lay bare conditions crying out for social and political justice.

Text: The Legacy of a Classical Testimonio

Manuel Guerrero Antequera's background and personal experience persuasively inform his particular contributions to Chile's shared memory of the dictatorship. In many ways, as we shall later see, his blog continues the work of his late father, Manuel Guerrero Ceballos, a twice-disappeared teacher and political activist whose second abduction in 1985 led to his murder. Guerrero Ceballos' body was found along with two others on the outskirts of Santiago, their throats cut and bodies disfigured. This notorious event, known locally as the "caso degollados," caused such enormous public outcry throughout Chile that Pinochet felt compelled to remove the top leaders of the Carabineros, the state police force that also ran a secret police group known as Dicomcar [Dirección de

Comunicaciones de Carabineros] (Muñoz 151-2). Heraldo Muñoz points out that several witnesses were able to identify fourteen operatives who worked for Dicomcar who were willing to testify (151). General César Mendoza, junta member by virtue of his leadership of Carabineros, resigned under pressure (Muñoz 152). However, despite Pinochet's ostensibly conciliatory gesture, that such acts of such brutality would occur in front of witnesses in plain daylight suggests that even as late as 1985, only three years before the popular referendum that marked the beginning of the regime's end, Pinochet still ruled Chile with a mixture of terror, repression and impunity. As always, the dictator took no personal responsibility for the crimes, blaming the murders and desecrations on the political left or possibly foreigners, despite the ostensible lack of motive and logic for leftists to kill their staunchest supporters (Muñoz 151).

Almost immediately after being released from his first abduction in 1976, Manuel Guerrero Ceballos sought refuge with his family in Sweden, where he published an account of his first disappearance. His testimonio, *Desde el túnel; diario de vida de un detenido desaparecido*, was republished in Chile by his son Manuel Guerrero Antequera in 2008, 23 years after his father's death. In the "Palabras iniciales" to the second edition, son Guerrero Antequera says that one of the functions of this testimonio is to construct a collective social memory of Chile's recent past: "Este libro de Manuel Guerrero Ceballos, simplemente, trata de exigir y practicar nuestro derecho ciudadano a construir una memoria social, a no dejar nunca de conmovernos con lo ocurrido, a repensarlo una y otra vez para redescubrirnos" (9). Guerrero Ceballos' testimonio, what he identifies as a "memoria social," is perhaps another example of what Macarena Gómez-Barris identifies as a memory symbolic. Son Guerrero Antequera acknowledges that the testimonio's function is to preserve the memory of people and events that otherwise might go unrecorded (8). In the "Prólogo del autor," Guerrero Ceballos dedicates his testimonio to all the "presos políticos desaparecidos," writing, "que ninguno de ellos se nos olvide; recordemos sus vidas y aportes" (12). Memory of past atrocities is a necessary requisite for social justice today, and *Desde el túnel* evokes

powerful images of a Chile veritably crushed under the weight of an onerous and pernicious dictatorship.

Desde el túnel; diario de vida de un detenido desaparecido is, in many regards, emblematic of classic Latin American testimonios, a narrative genre with deep roots and many historical and contemporary manifestations. Manuel Guerrero Ceballos joins the ranks of such iconic testimonial writers/informants as Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchú and Argentine Jacobo Timerman as he reports the often incredible violations of human rights that government agencies committed against him. His text describes his capture, imprisonment, torture and final release. In *Desde el túnel*, Manuel Guerrero Ceballos punctuates his story with meditations on economics, politics, and society, commemorating some of his generation's heroes: Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda, singer/songwriter Víctor Jara, political activist José Weibel, and of course Salvador Allende. Kimberly Nance, in *Can Literature Promote Social Justice? Trauma Narrative and Social Action in Latin American Testimonio* (2006), points to three fundamental traits that characterize most testimonios, all of which *Desde el túnel* embodies: "a first-person narrative of injustice, an insistence that the subject's experience is representative of a larger class, and an intent to work toward a more just future" (2). These qualities position the testimonio as a textual version of a memory symbolic, as Gómez-Barris defines it, since the testimonio joins with other "forms of memory that capture, disentangle, subdue, refuse, dilute and otherwise tell the story of an authoritarian past and its legacies" (5). Testimonios traditionally emerge from an individual representing an oppressed group or class, such as the indigenous Guatemalans in Rigoberta Menchú's story who have lost their communal lands to the Spanish-speaking *ladinos*. The testimonio's narrator thus functions as a metonymical representative for a larger group that shares her concerns.² In her book, Gómez-Barris does not deal directly with written texts as potential loci of societal importance, perhaps in the way

² John Beverley, one of the most informed critics of the Latin American testimonio, writes, "Testimonio is a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian form of narrative in the sense that it implies that any life so narrated can have a kind of representational value. Each individual testimonio evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences" (34).

physically-constituted memorials might, but neither does she dismiss the possibility that a text could in fact function as a memory symbolic in a way similar to a visible, tangible entity. She writes, “One of my epistemological claims is that objects *and texts* can often function to constitute social contexts, most clearly in the use of public spaces like memorials [my emphasis]. That is, textual sites not only exist as independent sites of meaning making but constitute social meanings as well” (164). The presence of the book, in this case *Desde el túnel*, stakes out a powerful position of resistance to state-sponsored oppression.

From Text to Hypertext: Testimonio and Resistance in Cyberspace

Desde el túnel clearly informs and empowers the author’s son to work in the same testimonial vein as his father, though with a far more dynamic and contemporary medium: websites, blogs and other manifestations currently present in cyberspace. And if a written testimonio like *Desde el túnel* can, like a museum or public memorial, represent a locus of social memory which preserves the remembrance of torture, its virtual analog in cyberspace can perhaps make a similar claim: it too is a “textual site,” albeit one that changes form and content with regularity.

Despite its at times rambling structure, often unpredictable audience, and constantly shifting content base, the blog, especially as Manuel Guerrero Antequera constructs his, has enormous potential as a memory symbolic. Performance-studies scholar Diana Taylor highlights the inherent representative power of such Internet-based phenomena, predicting that “[d]igital technologies will further ask us to reformulate our understanding of ‘presence,’ site (now the unlocalizable online ‘site’), the ephemeral, and embodiment” (4-5). While bloggers comment upon an almost infinite variety of topics (political and otherwise), scholars immediately recognized the dynamic potential of bloggers to both occupy and possibly transform contemporary political landscapes. In his essay “Blogs, Journalism, and Political Participation,” Communication Studies scholar Homero Gil de Zúñiga writes that between 2004 and 2008, politically-centered blogs increased significantly in number and also frequency with which they are visited (109). Furthermore, he argues that

“it’s becoming increasingly important to see this new interactive media and communication tool as central to understanding the modern political landscape” (109). Gil de Zúñiga concludes:

[B]logs are emerging both as an alternative and as a complementary channel for people to be informed about public affairs and current issues and to discuss, reflect and deliberate. Thus, blogs may facilitate the creation of a common public sphere—a space that, albeit virtual, contributes to a better-informed citizenry and a healthier democracy. Perhaps the first stone to this foundation has been established, as there is a clear relationship between using informational blogs and casting votes, donating money to candidates, or simply participating at a higher level in the current political process. (117)

Similarly, Michael Margolis and David Resnick, in a section of their book (*Politics as Usual: the Cyberspace “Revolution”*) titled “The Great Democratic Hope,” write:

Citizen interaction in cyberspace has the potential to affect both the formation of public opinion and the conduct of democratic politics. The Net provides new ways for citizens to connect with each other. It has fostered “virtual communities,” groups whose members meet only in cyberspace, and some of the communities carry on a lively civic life. The Internet provides a new public space—an electronic agora, if you will—that facilitates participation in democratic politics adapted to advanced postindustrial societies. (100)

At its very best, cyberspace invites a kind of “communitarian democracy” that stresses “mutuality”; Margolis and Resnick believe that “[i]n theory, civic life in cyberspace may consist of purer, less bigoted interactions than those that commonly take place in the real world, where citizens interact face to face. In this regard, cyberspace has the potential to foster a higher order of democracy than has been achieved elsewhere” (101). Margolis and Resnick also suggest that the democratic ideals potentially implicit in Internet-based communication—blogs, primarily—have yet to materialize in significant political movements, yet they nevertheless firmly believe that “the Internet is having an impact on politics and social life” (103).

Harvard Law School’s Yochai Benkler is one of the most passionate voices among current scholars studying the political, social and cultural implications of networked communities on the Internet. His observations about the democratizing effects of free information exchange complement Manuel Guerrero Antequera’s impulse to continue his father’s legacy of

commitment and dedication to progressive causes. Benkler notes that in a web-based information environment, “we are witnessing a fundamental change in how individuals can interact with their democracy and experience their role as citizens.” (272).³ Much like with the traditional Latin American *testimonio*, the networked *agora*, website, or blog allows an individual with no particular claim to power or privilege to contribute significantly to issues of public concern, to engage actively in political discourse: “[citizens] need not be limited to reading the opinions of opinion makers and judging them in private conversations. They can be, instead, participants in a conversation” (Benkler 272). Benkler writes in his typically aphoristic style: “The network allows all citizens to change their relationships to the public sphere. They no longer need to be consumers and passive spectators. They can become creators and primary subjects. It is in this sense that the Internet democratizes” (272). Not unlike Margolis and Resnick, Benkler’s views are perhaps overly utopian, particularly in light of the hostile and provocative discourse often found connected to political websites; anonymous letter writers, for instance, frequently make profane *ad hominem* attacks for which there is no personal accountability. Anonymity is a protective veil behind which anyone can hide and still spew forth venomous, toxic commentary with few consequences. The inherently democratic structure of the Internet emerges in all directions by inviting all voices into the public sphere, progressive and conservative alike, in a sort of free-for-all exchange of ideas, opinions and positions on a whole host of topics. Needless to say, many contributors represent a thoroughly radicalized position on both the extreme left and right, and readers are left to themselves to discern what they consider valid and meaningful discourse.

As a *concejal* (alderman) for the Santiago community of Nuñoa, and someone obviously quite fluent and adept in blogging (“neterate” to use Aaron Barlow’s term [95]), Manuel Ceballos Antequera seems particularly interested in creating the virtual agora to promote the type of communitarian democracy through a common public sphere that Margolis,

³ Benkler’s recent book is also freely accessible on the Internet (www.climate-change-two.net/wealth-of-networks).

Resnick, Zúñiga and Benkler optimistically predict that the Internet will eventually engender and support. And because of an unrelenting devotion to his father's story of abduction, murder and crass injustice throughout the Pinochet regime, *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* joins with other public memorials in Chile as a memory symbolic wherein past tragedies weigh heavily upon present sensibilities and consciousness. *Manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* thus functions as both a reminder of Chile's recent authoritarian history as well as an example of certain segments within Chile to democratize more fully its current political process. Manuel Guerrero Antequera seems intent not only to remark upon the political realities of the day; he also appears eager to shape political discourse through the commentaries, reporting, and links that he supports on his website.

Guerrero Antequera's appropriate fascination with his father's story and of the Pinochet era in general perhaps suggests that he is venturing into the arena of postmemory. Postmemory—a field of Holocaust studies—refers to how traumatic events affect later generations that were not directly involved in the experiences that scarred their parents and older family members.⁴ As Marianne Hirsch writes,

At stake is precisely the “guardianship” of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a “living connection” and that past's passing into history. At stake is not only a personal/familial/generational sense of ownership and protectiveness but also an evolving theoretical discussion about the workings of trauma, memory, and intergenerational acts of transfer... (104)

The victims' stories become somewhat appropriated by their descendants, and thus the second (or third) generations feel at times enormous responsibility to both archive and communicate their ancestors' often painful and tragic stories. The later generations' “memories,” therefore, are the result of received stories, images or messages so deeply imbedded in family and/or cultural life that they seem real enough to mimic authentic

⁴ Hirsch points out that post-memory is not limited to the Holocaust: “Other contexts besides the Holocaust and the Second World War in which intergenerational transmission has become an important explanatory vehicle and object of study include American slavery, the Vietnam War, the Dirty War in Argentina, South African apartheid, Soviet and East European communist terror, and the Armenian and the Cambodian genocides” (104).

memories (Hirsch 107). “Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch 107). Although Manuel Guerrero Antequera was present during his father’s second abduction, much of his “memory,” especially of the early Pinochet years, seems to derive from his father’s testimonio, *Desde el túnel*, as well as from a host of other cultural, familial and historical archives, as his blog reflects quite clearly. Hirsch writes, “Thus less-directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory, which can thus persist even after all participants and their familial descendants are gone” (111). Postmemory “recollections” are therefore quite valid commentaries on how subsequent generations respond to the commonly horrific realities of their ancestors.

Postmemory and memory symbolics work in a similar fashion by operating as a “collective imaginary” constructed of both public and familial stories (Hirsch 114). Guerrero Antequera’s plaintive cry in the prologue of *Desde el túnel* regarding Pinochet’s political prisoners, “que ninguno de ellos se nos olvide; recordemos sus vidas y aportes,” (12) indicates clearly that the son is concerned with preserving the memory of his father’s generation. Manuel Guerrero Antequera’s blog deftly incorporates postmemory-infused stories of the father and his contemporaries while listening to stories from Chile’s current and aging progressive community, a diverse group whose deep intellectual roots in the Allende era are almost always evident. The blog (as one of many Internet-inspired forms) is a useful social medium for addressing issues that arise in postmemory commentary. And as a memory symbolic, a blog’s formidable but fluid representational power makes it a particularly effective modality as both a marker and tool of social and political change.

In most ways, *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* resembles such well-known blogs that are linked regularly to politically-textured websites like the *Huffington Post*, *Politico.com*, or virtual versions of mainstream publications like *The New York Times* or *Washington Post*. It is characterized by its multi-faceted format (images, videos, sound files, texts, links), interactivity (readers are invited to share their opinions), and reports and editorial commentaries by the principal author(s)/editor(s), in

this case Manuel Guerrero Antequera. There are links to Twitter feeds and Facebook, and anyone is invited to join his virtual agora as a reader and fellow participant in dialogue. Guerrero Antequera bolsters his credibility to assess Chile's social and political reality by identifying himself as an academic sociologist and Nuñoa alderman, two traditional vocations that underpin his contemporary calling as an Internet-based commentator (not to mention the authority he derives from his father's legacy and, in a postmemory sense, inherited remembrances). Although a description of an active blog quickly becomes out of date due to its ever-changing, user-based content, there are a few fundamental traits of *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* that have remained fairly constant through time.

One such constant is that Guerrero Antequera will not let go of the past and as a result, many of the commentaries included on his website (some his, others from contributors) reflect upon Chile's history. The frequent return to his father's story, either directly or indirectly, functions as a powerful postmemorial desire to keep Guerrero Ceballos' legacy alive. His blog's archives, dating from 2005, contain many stories and references to his father's life, work and untimely death. An example of this memory symbolic appeared on March 12, 2008 in an essay titled "Un nuevo 29 de marzo con memoria y alegría" as Manuel Guerrero Antequera commemorated the anniversary of his father's disappearance and death:

Hace 23 años, el 29 de marzo de 1985, mi padre, el profesor Manuel Guerrero Ceballos, junto al sociólogo José Manuel Parada y el artista plástico Santiago Nattino, fueron secuestrados de las puertas de mi colegio, hechos desaparecer por un día, para luego aparecer degollados en un camino rural de la comuna de Quilicura a las afueras de Santiago....Comparto con ustedes una invitación amplia, sin exclusión, para que junto a nuestros hijos y mayores, en familia, compartamos una jornada de memoria colectiva el próximo 29 de marzo.

Guerrero Antequera goes on to list three sites where gatherings would occur that day to honor not only his father but all the victims of Pinochet's regime: kilometer 18 on Avenida Américo Vespucio, the place where the three "degollados" were found (a site he alludes to in other entries); Plaza Brasil in downtown Santiago, a popular space for social and political demonstrations; and the front yard of the Colegio Latinoamericano, the

location of his father's kidnapping. Each place was obviously chosen as a memory symbolic for his father and other desaparecidos because those areas represent a fairly precise historical, cultural and political context. Despite the violence and tragedy connected with this date, Guerrero Antequera completes this entry on a sanguine note, honoring those in the past who sacrificed for today's generations: "Compartamos con las nuevas generaciones el recuerdo de quienes nos abrieron al presente, ¡sigamos con memoria y alegría, siempre adelante por la vida!" In this way, Guerrero Antequera overtly attempts to relate cross-generationally to younger Chileans who have no personal recollection of the era in question and thus who may feel alienated from this instrumental phase in Chile's recent history, connecting perhaps on the level of postmemory, as Marianne Hirsch has shown with descendants of Holocaust survivors. And the highly neterate Manuel Guerrero Antequera is probably aware that any meaningful dialogue on political matters with a significant number of younger readers will occur in cyberspace, not in traditional classrooms or at large rallies, and certainly not through a print-based testimonio. The younger generation is wired, and Guerrero Antequera meets them in the electronic agora he has created through his blog.

Guerrero Antequera alludes both directly as well as indirectly to his father's story. For example, in an entry dated December 22, 2010, Guerrero Antequera includes a link to a report on the opening of a new kindergarten in Quilicura, normally a non-controversial, even innocuous occasion hardly worthy of recognition. However, this particular school was named Jardín Infantil Manuel Guerrero Ceballos in honor of his father's work and support of public education throughout Chile. Also, the *comuna* of Quilicura is where his father's body was found. As a working-class sector of the city, this neighborhood was subjected to its fair share of political violence during the dictatorship. Guerrero Antequera was one of the many dignitaries invited for the grand opening, and his remarks on that day again underlie an optimism for the future resulting from an investment in today's children: "En la ceremonia también participó de manera muy especial y simbólica, Manuel Guerrero Antequera, Concejal de la comuna de Nuñoa, hijo de Manuel Guerrero, quien se manifestó muy emocionado y orgulloso

por este reconocimiento: ‘Mi padre era un hombre responsable, un hombre comprometido y jugado por los derechos humanos.’” By virtue of its location and particular name, the kindergarten itself becomes a potential memory symbolic, standing in a place and with a name of substantial historical significance. The *jardín infantil* operates not only with its intended function but also as a representative *afterlife*, to use Gómez-Barris’ term, “of political violence as the continuing and persistent symbolic and material effects of the original event of violence on people’s daily lives, their social and psychic identities, and their ongoing wrestling with the past in the present” (6). Names from the past continue to weigh heavily upon contemporary sensibilities in a postmemory sense.

Other memorials have been constructed to honor not only Guerrero’s father but also the others of the “caso degollados,” and *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* has recorded the events, typically inviting commentary from his readers and contributors. One of the most visible and dramatic memorials in Santiago is dedicated to the three *degollados* and is located on the site where the bodies were found along the busy Americo Vespucio thoroughfare, another symbol of the political violence that typified much of Chile’s daily life through the 1970s and 1980s. This particular memorial, widely publicized and documented throughout the progressive cyberspatial agora in Chile, is made up of three thirty-foot high metal chairs, each representing one of the three victims. Manuel Guerrero Antequera has frequently alluded to this particular site in Quilicura and often invites his readers to gather there as an act of remembrance and respect for the *degollados* and for other casualties of the military regime.

Perhaps the single most salient historical reference in *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com*, apart from the many homages to his father, is an ongoing critique of Augusto Pinochet: the individual, his crimes, his impact on Chilean economics and politics, and his legacy. It is possible that the strongest case for the blog as a memory symbolic, how today’s Chileans live with the “presence of the past,” can be seen with how Guerrero Antequera deals with Pinochet. There are probably dozens of entries and links to Pinochet by Guerrero Antequera and others, but they are all bound

together by the same trope: that Pinochet was a merciless dictator who brutalized Chile for nearly two decades.

One such entry, dated March 12, 2007, is “Violencia política y memoria en Chile.” This very lengthy essay is both a meditation and documentary record of Pinochet’s use of torture as a political device. Before he weighs in on the ethical concerns of using torture as a political tool, Guerrero Antequera, with a social scientist’s precision, documents clearly four historical phases of the Pinochet regime and the different purposes that state-sanctioned torture had within each stage:

- a) Fase del terror masivo paralizante y disciplinante de intimidación generalizada. Identificación de un Otro a eliminar como forma de purificación de la Nación. (11 de septiembre 1973 – mediados de 1974)
- b) Fase del exterminio físico del Otro. La purificación de la Nación mediante la aniquilación de la Nación: La tortura (Mediados de 1974 y comienzos de 1978)
- c) Fase del Control y Registro de Información (Entre 1978 y 1983)
- d) Fase de obtención de información. Intimidación Pública y Destrucción operativa de grupos paramilitares (1983-1990)

Guerrero Antequera offers a thorough analysis of torture, complete with definitions, psychological repercussions for both perpetrators and victims, and how the memory of torture persists into the present. He concludes accordingly:

Pero, por sobre todo, el testimonio de la tortura nos ha abierto a la comprensión que precisamente porque el poder, a través de la tortura, ha dejado huellas que no se dejan hablar completamente, no es posible “superar” u “olvidar” lo acontecido, situación que atenta contra la posibilidad de perpetuar el estado de cosas que han intentado eternizar las dictaduras. Pues si bien son huellas que fueron infringidas en un momento finito, vinieron para quedarse y no se irán más. Por lo que habremos de aprender a vivir con ellas, pero por sobre todo, habremos de hacer lo posible para que ellas vean la luz cada vez más, de modo de alertar acerca de su materialidad y verosimilitud, para que el nunca más, más que una promesa, sea un imperativo ético ineludible para cada vez mayor cantidad de personas en el mundo. Es algo que se lo debemos a nuestros muertos, pero aún más, a nuestros vivos.

This specific entry, therefore, becomes a memory symbolic that acknowledges the enduring remembrance among many thousands of people in Chile today of often unspoken violence.

Guerrero Antequera's focus upon Pinochet continues to this day. The blogger refuses to allow time or neglect to erase the dictator's memory. For example, a few days after the fifth anniversary of Pinochet's death (December 11, 2006), Guerrero Antequera re-posted what he wrote almost immediately after the dictator's demise, "Adiós General." Guerrero Antequera blogs as if he were writing a letter to Pinochet, somewhat following the style of Marco Antonio de la Parra's 1998 work, *Carta abierta a Pinochet: monólogo de la clase media chilena con su padre*. Not surprisingly, Guerrero Antequera's entry exhibits the anger of a son still suffering the untimely loss of his father: "A pesar de tu propia amnistía ya estás condenado por siempre al castigo mayor al que jamás un ser humano podrá ser sometido tras de tí: ser Augusto Pinochet. Adiós General, que disfrutes del infierno" (December 13, 2011).

The many responses to this particular post reveal the extent to which blogs have the capacity to create a forum for free, unedited expression. A few hours after Guerrero Antequera originally posted his commentary on Pinochet's death, 60 anonymous readers voiced their opinions on Pinochet and his legacy. Most reflected this sentiment:

Saludos en este día en que hay un gusano menos en nuestro pueblo. Pena por no haberlo visto tras las rejas, pagando por sus asesinatos, alegría por la muerte del TIRANO. Queda su familia que no tendrán paz, mientras queden presos políticos, mientras todavía queden tantos desaparecidos, mientras los robos y los crímenes no los paguen con cárcel no nos quedaremos con los brazos cruzados. Compañeros, debemos reflexionar la tarea que hay en adelante, murió Pinochet pero no sus crímenes, hay mucho por hacer. La muerte del dictador no soluciona nada, la derecha por fin se lo sacó de encima, a todos les estorbaba AHORA, nosotros somos los que seguiremos hueveando para hacer justicia.⁵

However, not all of the responses that day were critical of Pinochet. A blog such as *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* functions as a site for open

⁵ Note the absence of diacritical marks, typical of unedited commentaries throughout the blogosphere.

exchange of ideas and opinions, and there were many people in Chile that day who not only lamented Pinochet's death but continued to defend him:

Manuel:

Yo estoy en la otra vereda. Y me siento tranquila de lo que MI QUERIDO GENERAL NOS SALVO, pero es todo, mi esposo fallecio por culpa de los tristemente famosos upelintos era oficial de ejercito, uno de tus adorados compañeros lo asesino. Es cierto mi pena sigue siendo inmensa pero sin rencor y sin necesidad de tener un blog para seguir eternamente lleno de odio,y llenando al resto del mismo, dedicate a vivir tranquilo Manuel, intenta canalizar tu odio por buen camino no sigas esparramando odio, de ese manera tu tambien iras al infierno y mas encima quizas hasta te encuentres con mi general ¿quien puede saber? ¿o no? Esa es nuestra gran diferencia ¿eres feliz escribiendo con tanto rencor ? entonces sigue haciendolo, todos tenemos derecho a ser felices de cualquier forma. Con cariño recibe un saludo. M. Elisa

To be sure, a fully democratized and pluralistic agora will invite input from representatives from opposing viewpoints. Such a tendency toward openness and inclusion is one of the most powerful indicators that blogs have the capacity to help construct what Gil de Zúñiga refers to as a "healthier democracy" (117). Of course, such inclusion runs counter to Pinochet's years of censorship and secrecy.

Manuelguerrero.blogspot.com is, of course, much more than an ongoing homage to a deceased father and other victims of the era or an occasion to excoriate Augusto Pinochet. The blog also provides space for Guerrero Antequera and his many followers and contributors to critique Chile's current neo-liberal economic policies as well as President Sebastián Piñera's conservative politics. Considering that Chile's main newspaper, *El Mercurio*, generally defends Piñera's political and economic policies (and to some degree defended Pinochet's government), such blogs function as a viable alternative to mainstream media outlets (radio, television, newspapers) controlled primarily by business interests. In an article dated January 6, 2011, for instance, written by renowned Chilean architect Miguel Lawner, the author takes issue with an appearance by President Piñera in the earthquake-damaged city of Talca. Piñera was there ostensibly to celebrate the reconstruction of some homes, the result of his government's "Programa de Reconstrucción" created to address some of the damage caused by the highly destructive 2010 earthquake. Lawner criticizes not

only Piñera but also the media for reporting a pseudo-story of half-truths and multiple omissions:

No se trata de viviendas construidas en el marco del proceso de reconstrucción, sino que de viviendas correspondientes a un programa regular de vivienda social, que se asignaron a familias damnificadas sin sitio de Talca. Los medios de comunicación se prestaron a esta acción, sin indagar la veracidad de los hechos. En la ciudad de Talca se registra un número de 6.500 viviendas dañadas por el terremoto del [27 febrero] entre aquellas totalmente destruidas y las que deben ser reparadas, por lo cual publicitar la entrega de 23 viviendas carece de toda importancia, ya que corresponde a una cifra que apenas cubre el 0.27 % de las necesidades de la capital del Maule.

To be sure, Lawner's article indicates that Guerrero Antequera's blog, like any other, usually attracts like kind; this form of hyper-political cyber-expression makes no attempt to narrate "objectively." Lawner was one of many professionals jailed and/or exiled during the dictatorship (in his case, to the notorious Isla Dawson among other places) and most probably represents a perspective more in line with Allende's progressive intellectual descendants than with Piñera and his center-right government. Lawner's commentary is thus interwoven into a larger thematic tapestry of social and political consciousness and underscores quite dramatically a blog's capacity for making highly trenchant observations about government policies and practices.

There are many examples where *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* incisively critiques Piñera's economic philosophy, in some very specific ways a continuation of Pinochet's legacy of economic reforms based on free-market theories adapted from Milton Friedman and his legendary "Chicago Boys." It also takes a more global perspective and looks at world events, though nearly always through a progressive lens that often views US foreign policy critically. A post of 4 April 2011, for example, criticizes both the US and UN for the attack on former Libyan leader Omar Gaddafi:

Expresamos: Nuestro repudio por el afán de conquista energética por parte de los EE.UU. con la complicidad de los países de la coalición parcial de la ONU.

Nuestro rechazo por la política actual de Europa y Estados Unidos que, insensible a los sucesos catastróficos que vivimos, invierte en destrucción y muerte, en vez de promover planes de cooperación internacional y ayuda.

Exigimos: El cese inmediato del ataque y la intervención de la coalición de la ONU en Libia, así como la retirada de las fuerzas extranjeras de la región.

La toma de responsabilidad de aquellos medios de comunicación que difunden de modo consciente la propaganda bélica y la xenofobia contra la cultura islámica.

La creación de una comisión internacional de intermediación que, a requerimiento de un movimiento civil, pueda ejercer el papel de mediación de conflictos por vía pacífica y no violenta.

Exhortamos: A la opinión pública, instituciones y organismos sociales a posicionarse y manifestarse en contra de este ataque a Libia, igual que se hiciera en el pasado respecto a la guerra de Irak.

Guerrero Antequera appears to be the author of this entry. His alliterative demands offer a perspective that commercially-based media (in both Chile and the US) might likely overlook. This article not only blasts the US/UN mission in Libya; it also directly attacks the media itself for its alleged complicit role in spreading propaganda about Islamic culture. Guerrero Antequera here assumes the position of a public essayist, a role with deep roots and influence in Latin American intellectual history.⁶ His medium—a blog in cyberspace—gives him potentially far greater range than his predecessors ever had, though the long-term impact of cyber-critiques has obviously yet to be determined.

As a cultural mnemonic, a blog's fluid character by nature differentiates it from more concrete manifestations of collective memory, such as museums. At first glance, *manuelguerrero.blogspot.com* shares little in common with, for example, Santiago's new Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos (2010) or with one of the many memorials to desaparecidos found today throughout Chile, not to mention other

⁶ See, for example, José Miguel Oviedo's chapter in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature, Volume 2: The Twentieth Century*, "The Modern Essay in Spanish America," for a comprehensive inventory of nineteenth and twentieth-century Spanish American essayists, including such writers as Andrés Bello, José Martí, José Enrique Rodó, and José Carlos Mariátegui, to name just a few (365-424). *The Cambridge History* was published in 1996; a thoroughly contemporary literary history accounting for essays should include contributions from cyberspace.

countries with recent experiences living under dictatorships.⁷ One type of memorial, found in cyberspace, is virtual and dynamic in both content and form. The others, generally made of concrete, steel and glass, are firmly situated in time and space. The financial investment to sustain a blog is obviously miniscule compared to what a modern museum requires. Yet despite the apparent differences between a blog and a museum (or other tangible forms that represent cultural memory), their underlying premise and motives are remarkably similar. Both are cultural sites of often excruciatingly painful memories that are intended to accomplish the same goal. As the *Visitor's Guide* for the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos states, "The Museum of Memory and Human Rights is an invitation to reflect upon the violations to the life and dignity of Chileans committed between September 11, 1973 and March 10, 1990 in order that such events will never happen again and with the intention to establish a permanent respect for human rights." I think that it is fair to say that all forms of memory symbolics in Chile today (books, blogs, memorials, films, etc.) strive to achieve the same objective: to enlighten the public to a particular past that should never be repeated.

Manuel Guerrero Antequera's blog therefore functions to link a present-day modality with a narrative tradition deeply embedded in Latin America's social consciousness. Clearly, there are significant distinctions between blogs and classical testimonios, most especially the dynamic immediacy afforded by modern digital technology as well as the almost unlimited reach of the Internet. And virtually anyone with access to a computer can at least participate in dialogue with an end towards political, social and economic assessment and change. Websites like Guerrero

⁷ Both Miguel Lawner and Manuel Guerrero Ceballos are featured prominently in the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos. Shortly after his custody on Isla Dawson, Lawner completed from memory dozens of sketches of the barren landscape, the primitive dwellings the prisoners occupied, and the overall bleak conditions of Chile's most remote (and possibly harshest) concentration camp. It was located in southern-most Chile in the frigid Patagonia region. Dozens of these sketches are on display in the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos. Likewise, the "caso degollados" story is also told in the museum. Pictures, testimonios, newspaper articles and videos recount the history of Santiago Nattino, José Manuel Parada and Manuel Guerrero Ceballos. *Desde el tunel; diario de vida de un detenido desaparecido* is for sale in the museum bookstore.

Antequera's represent a step toward greater democratization of the public square by virtue of its radical inclusiveness; all voices are invited to be heard, no one is excluded, a far cry from the censorship that Pinochet's government routinely practiced for the better part of two decades.

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