

Transatlantic Practices of Fascism(s) and Populism(s) from the Margins

The Cultural Politics of “Us” versus “Them”

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The Battlefield of Culture

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Introduction

A fundamental characteristic of authoritarian regimes in modernity has consisted in their ability to combine the enforcement of anti-democratic politics with a specific authoritarian language and rhetoric. While Victor Klemperer and Dolf Sternberger observed this prominently regarding the imposition of a particular “language of the Third Reich” in the case of Nazi Germany,¹ other well-known studies by authors such as Theodor W. Adorno and Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman have focused rather on populist rhetoric and techniques during the 1930s on both sides of the Atlantic.² Without being able to go into detail of these seminal works, suffice it to say that authoritarian language not only aims to construct the image of an essentialist other by using an “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric; it also inverts considerable efforts into creating linguistic constructions that help to disguise the abject dimensions of their ideological programmes and violent political actions. These politics of authoritarian language most often are not limited to the period of authoritarian rule itself but, as the observations on the long-term effects of Nazi vocabulary in the mentioned publications have highlighted, they normally precede the instauration of authoritarian regimes and play a fundamental role within post-authoritarian societies.

The examples of numerous authoritarian regimes in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century, as well as the (ongoing) memory conflicts in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, illustrate this aspect too. For the case of Chile, whose authoritarian experience under Augusto Pinochet (1973–90) will be the centre of this chapter, this holds particularly true. The Chilean military and its supporters have commonly addressed the overthrow of the democratically elected president Salvador Allende in 1973 as a “pronunciamiento militar”, framing a narrative of a supposedly legitimate and necessary “uprising” to save the *Patria*.³ On the other hand, even the term “military dictatorship” seems not appropriate to fully apprehend the historical reality of authoritarian regimes such as those of the Southern Cone; for it is, as recent scholarship has highlighted with regard to the Argentinian case, “being increasingly abandoned in favour of other more complex terms that more closely reflect the reality of a bloc that was formed by civilian, military, business, and Church elements” (Verbitsky and Bohoslavsky 2). However, this terminological turn, increasingly favouring the use of concepts

such as *dictadura cívico-militar* (civic-military dictatorship), goes beyond a merely linguistic question. It implies new efforts of transitional justice, that is, an effective legal prosecution of “civilian, economic, and Church accomplices, whose contributions enabled, facilitated, or improved the efficiency in the commission of such crime” (Verbitsky and Bohoslavsky 4).⁴

Notwithstanding the importance of this expanded scope on institutional and civil accomplices and perpetrators within the realms of economy, church, and media, the sphere of culture has received considerably less attention within these revisions of the authoritarian periods in twentieth-century Latin America. This is even more astonishing, as the military takeover in Chile (as well as in Argentina) did not limit itself to intervene on a merely political and institutional scale; rather, it was, in terms of Pinochet himself, a “revolutionary project” aiming to realise a far more radical *cultural* purge. As Luis Errázuriz stated in a seminal study on this aspect:

one of the main goals of the military coup consisted in radically eradicating the sources of infection that disintegrated the moral body of the fatherland. With this finality, the clean-up operation is set in motion representing symbolically, on the one hand, the disinfection of the Marxist past and, on the other, the promotion of a militarized notion of an everyday aesthetics, characterized by features such as purification, order and the fervent restauration of patriotic symbols.

(152)⁵

Following Errázuriz’ notion of the military takeover as an “aesthetico-cultural coup”, this chapter pursues three main objectives: firstly, it argues that the ideological bases of Pinochet’s authoritarian regime could build on a strong conservative and nationalist imaginary rooting in discourses on social and cultural decadence present in Chile (and throughout Latin America as a whole) since the beginning of the twentieth century. The argument is that the ideological project of the military dictatorship shared important discursive features with a far-reaching genealogy of modernist reactionary and fascist discourses⁶ in Chile, Latin America, and Europe (even if the regime itself hardly could be classified as fascist and quickly favoured a new form of authoritarian neoliberalism).⁷ Secondly, the article will draw on this essentially transnational (and transatlantic)⁸ dimension not only of modern(ist) nationalist and fascist imaginaries⁹ but also of the “authoritarian wave”¹⁰ in the 1970s. Thirdly, and building on the aforementioned importance of an extension of scope regarding the perpetrators of the dictatorship, some of the cultural key figures of Pinochetism will also be analysed too, as they shaped the symbolic and linguistic universe and practices of the regime and contributed, in a very practical sense, to its “success”.

Decadent Modernity and Regenerationist Dreams: Populism, Nationalism, and Fascism in Chile (1900–50)

The phenomena of an essentialist “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric in Chile and Latin America, as well as a new nationalism based on the figures of cultural decadence

and national regeneration, date back to the turn of the twentieth century and the rise of genuinely modern mass societies throughout the region. This experience of radical social, economic, and demographic upheavals, mass immigration, and new geopolitical (and neo-imperial) constellations led to a generalised notion of national and continental crisis. Consequently, it triggered a search for new identitarian concepts, in which intervened a new caste of intellectuals, that is, writers, journalists, and historians. This constant discourse of crisis enabled, as Julio Ramos has argued, the emergence of a modern intellectual and literary field in Latin America (Ramos 309).

Two aspects can be identified here that will be crucial for the analysis of culture as a political battlefield throughout these first decades of the century. First, the fact that the multiple problems and crises modernity entails for the Latin American nations are generally attributed, in the first place, to a *cultural* crisis – and to a much lesser extent to rather materialist, economic, and social disparities. From the leading *modernistas*' essayists onwards – José Martí, José Enrique Rodó, etc. – the problem of a lack of *espíritu* (spirit) constituted a sort of master trope within Latin American cultural discourse. This is the reason why culture itself would be considered the crucial place for social and political battles to be fought. This explains, secondly, the specific political self-perception of modern Latin American intellectuals. While they claim, on the one hand, a new form of autonomy from the sphere of the political and the economical, they attributed to themselves, on the other, a novel sort of authority to intervene directly into these “zones of power whose relation to the project of modernization had been criticized before” (Ramos 320).¹¹ Consequently, Latin American modernity featured a general tendency of aestheticisation of politics, as well as a very practical and direct engagement of writers and intellectuals within the political sphere.

This holds particularly true for the context of new nationalist and identitarian projects throughout the continent during the first three decades of the century. Authors such as Leopoldo Lugones and Ricardo Rojas in Argentina,¹² as well as the educational project of José Vasconcelos' “cosmic race” in Mexico, are examples that prove the importance of cultural discourse and intellectual empowerment in the context of a new nationalist (and continental) rhetoric of order. In the case of Chile, this search for new identitarian concepts was reflected, among others, in the rise of literary *criollismo*. This current turned overtly against cosmopolitan (as well as liberal and elitist) tendencies in favour of a

populistic and more “national” narrative that focused on lower-class people [...] [in the sense of] a new portrayal of national life – a democratized one that challenged the legitimacy of the Parliamentary Republic's aristocracy and oligarchic establishment by devaluating their cultural precepts.

(Barr-Melej 77–78)

A key feature of the *criollistas*' populistic programme was the glorification of the *roto*, the mestizo Chilean under- and working-class member, as a nationalist archetype. It was similar figures, such as the *gaucho* in Argentina and the *caboclo* in

Brazil, all of them fulfilling the function of offering new forms of “incorporation of the Other, of the barbarian, of the alterity of the republican imaginary of the nation, in the sense of a new ‘us’” (Subercaseaux 225). Furthermore, these discourses set the tone for the cultural and political disputes to come, that is, a specific “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric based on strong affects and a glorification of nationalist symbols, customs, and landscapes. At the same time – and this proves the somewhat paradoxical dimension of modern Latin American nationalism – the emergence of these new nationalist paradigms bore a strong racist element. The “them” of this rhetoric fluctuated depending on the specific backgrounds throughout the countries of the region. However, mestizo constructions were generally considered superior to indigenous and black populations. At the same time, they played an important role within these new nationalist and populist imaginaries as an identitarian counterpart to the foreign (and often strongly endogamic) economic elites in these countries. In Chile, the racist and antisemitic pamphlet *Raza chilena* (*Chilean Race*, 1918) by Nicolás Palacios embodied this specific combination of modern European race theories and works on mass psychology, highlighting once again the crucial transnational dimension of this sort of circulation of ideas at the time. Palacios (and other contemporary works, such as Francisco Encinas’ *Nuestra inferioridad económica* (*Our Economic Inferiority*) from 1912) combined the critique of Chile’s economic backwardness and cultural decadence with eugenic phantasies and visions of new political authority to make possible the regeneration of the “sick nation”.¹³

This is the broader historical and ideological context in which, in 1932, arose the *Movimiento Nacional Socialista de Chile* (National Socialist Movement of Chile, whose members called themselves *Nacistas* to mark the difference from German National-Socialism). It was, as Roger Griffin has stated, part of those “fully fledged non-European fascisms” (149), inscribing itself into the

genesis of Fascism in Latin America [that] saw itself justified by the assessment of a lack of immediate exits out of the liberal and republican experience. Actually, Latin America was a region where Fascism was a fundamental ingredient in the context of the search for new options within the political interwar-period.

(Grecco and Gonçalves 40)¹⁴

Led by the lawyer Jorge González von Marées, the *Nacistas* follow the idea of a primarily *cultural* change of society, as they pursue the objective “to carry out in Chile ... a moral revolution of an anti-materialist and anti-rationalist kind similar to those aimed at by European fascists” (Sznajder 273–74). Establishing a radical “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric, equally directed against Liberalism and Marxism, they not only adhere to the *Führerkult* (cult of the leader) of European fascism, but also create a specific narrative of national history that would be crucial for all authoritarian discourses of order in twentieth-century Chile: the idea of an authoritarian presidential republic dating back to former Chilean minister Diego Portales and his 1833 constitution. Jorge González von Marées recurs to the myth

of Portales as the guarantor of political, social, and economic order in his book *El mal de Chile* (1940), where he aims to adapt the authoritarian principles of *Portalianismo*, perceived as a historical antidote against the threat of anarchy and chaos in post-colonial nineteenth-century Chile, to the polarised national constellation a hundred years later.¹⁵ Regardless of the fact that recent critical historiography in Chile has deconstructed the myth of *Portalianismo*,¹⁶ its importance for imaginaries of authoritarian nationalist rule throughout the past 150 years in Chile can hardly be overstated. This sort of political-historical myth, that can be regarded as a key tool in the context of every “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric, should not leave aside the fact that the *Movimiento Nacional Socialista* from its beginnings relies on direct violence through its own militia, whose activities should culminate in an attempted *coup d'état* in 1938. Not only fails this overthrow, but more than 60 militia members are killed in the so-called *Matanza del Seguro Obrero* (Seguro Obrero Massacre). Despite the failure of this Coup, resulting from “a combination of fascistic warlike ideals and a completely vertical political command-structure, demanding total obedience and rejecting the principle of decision by deliberation and agreement” (Sznajder 286), it acquires an enormous importance for the extreme right’s mythmaking during the following years. The best example of this certainly would be the figure of Chile’s (and probably Latin America’s) most famous fascist writer, Miguel Serrano.

Born in 1917 in Santiago de Chile as part of a bourgeois family, whose most renowned member was his uncle Vicente Huidobro, Serrano turned to fascism precisely after the occurrences in 1938, the same time when he began to rise to his status as a literary star in his homeland and one of the leading authors of the famously named *generación del 38* (Generation of '38).¹⁷ While contributing significantly to the geopolitical imaginary of Chile’s claims for the Antarctic territories by his early travel literature,¹⁸ Serrano would become internationally famous from the 1960s on due to his esoteric folk stories, on the one hand, and the creation of what he called “Esoteric Hitlerism”.¹⁹ By creating a hybrid between Hindu and Western esoteric elements, Serrano, who spent many years in India as Chilean ambassador, draws on a long tradition of global occultist thinking characterised by its manifest critique of Western modernity and its leading principles of rationality, subjectivity, and democratic secularism. Serrano subscribes himself to an antimodernist imaginary characterised, as Eric Kurlander writes, by a specific “mix of racism and cosmopolitanism, science and the supernatural” (Kurlander 17), aspects that equally characterised the ideological geopolitics of the Nazis. It comes as no surprise that Miguel Serrano’s concept of “Esoteric Hitlerism” then is strongly influenced by racist theories and authors such as Arthur de Gobineau and Nicolás Palacios, as well as by occultist icons like René Guénon and Julius Evola.

Serrano’s *Weltanschauung* is characterised by a Gnostic and Manichaeic cosmogony as base of his “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric. According to his racist and antisemitic world view, the agents of evil are the Jews in opposition to a mythical caste of the so-called Hyperborean Aryans. The latter, as Serrano states in numerous of his works, have migrated from Northern Europe to the South Pole and South America long before Columbus’s arrival to the continent. This imaginary, first

articulated by the French Nazi-writer and former SS-member Jacques de Mathieu (Goodrick-Clark 183–85), allows Serrano to create a mythologically grounded alternative history and enables him to conceive of (South) America as an originally racially “pure”, that is, Aryan continent. In line with this conception of white supremacy, the “racial decline” of South America would have begun with the fatal “cross-breeding” of racially inferior Spanish colonists and indigenous American people (Serrano 27–28).

Thus, Serrano’s discourse follows the same dialectical principle of decadence and regeneration, characteristic for all modern “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric, even if his redemptionist conception of history visibly exceeds many of the rather “rationalist” prospects of his authoritarian predecessors. Serrano cherishes the hope that the White Gods, hidden in the secret cities of the Andes, in the hollow earth, and in Antarctica, will return to redeem America (and the world) from modernity’s scourges, that is, the global Jewish conspiracy, the human alienation, and the domination by capitalism and technology. The “them” in Serrano’s rhetoric, thus, radicalises the antisemitic tendencies already present throughout the racist discourses of the earlier decades by identifying the Jews as the main enemy and the reason of the nation’s decadence (rather than the indigenous people who were of less importance to him due to their lack of real economic and political power). At the same time, he differed from the praise of the mestizo race by privileging a racial genealogy of whiteness. It is this mixture of “classical” antimodernist racism, antisemitism, and white supremacy on the one hand, and elements of esotericism and occultism, such as a mystic conception of language and landscape, the existence of parallel universes, UFOs, and secret places like the hollow earth, on the other, that characterise Serrano’s syncretistic and overtly fascist project.²⁰

However, Serrano’s esoteric, as well as any other sort of fascism must be considered as phenomena on the fringes of Chile’s political system after 1945, when “The combination of the defeat of the Axis powers in Europe, and the emergence of the Radical-Socialist-Communist alliance in the shape of the Popular Front robbed the *nacionalistas* of any vestiges of electoral legitimacy” (Grugel 116). Even if the imaginary of nationalist authoritarianism keeps to be fed by certain nationalist circles after 1945, such as Jorge Prat Echaurren’s magazine *Estanquero* (*Tobacconist*, informed, once again, by the myth of Portales)²¹ and his rather short-time movement *Acción Chilena*²² (obviously inspired by Charles Maurras’ *Action Française*), it is not until 1970 and the rise of Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular that the next (and far more radical wave) of authoritarian nationalists will gain ground.

Propagandists, Bureaucrats, Torturers: The Cultural Coup and Pinochet’s Literary Footmen

It may come as no surprise that in Chile “two of the rising periods of *nacionalismo* ... correspond to periods of rapid popular mobilization (the 1930s and the early 1970s)” (Grugel 116). To begin with, this second phase of mobilisation, culminating in the election of Salvador Allende as president in 1970, must be considered in the context of a wider transnational panorama in Latin America and in the sense of

what was perceived as an assault on the very bases of social and economic relations within the capitalist state systems. What Guillermo O'Donnell states with regard to Argentina and Brazil can be adapted for the Chilean context as well. That is, the fact that these state systems

are shaken in their deepest reality, what unleashes the most primordial fears of the bourgeoisie, as well as of the social sectors and institutions (among them, the Armed Forces) that usually alienate with the latter to try to restore "order" and "normality".

(55)²³

Similar to the social and political polarisations of the 1930s, this conflict entailed symbolic and cultural, as well as direct forms of violence. The latter was forwarded in Chile by paramilitary right-wing groups such as *Patria y Libertad* (Fatherland and Liberty), "postulating sabotage and terrorism in order to overthrow the government" (Grugel 116), as well as by a new transnational right-wing alliance promoted by the United States in the context of the Cold War. The U.S. government and the CIA "facilitated the spread of repressive methods and death squad operations in the Southern Cone" from the 1960s on and created the "infrastructures" and the "environment in which [Operation] Condor – a multinational, cross-border hunter-killer force –" could emerge a decade later (McSherry 54 and 58). At the same time, further hemispheric "knowledge transfer" took place in the context of the formation of the so-called Chicago Boys, a group of Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman, who would later apply their neoliberal "shock-therapy" after the military takeover.²⁴

These forms of violence and ideological training, however, were part of a much larger project of cultural "regeneration" that has to be analysed more in depth, as

without the aesthetic-cultural coup ... and a campaign of restoration, that would confer the military regime greater ideological support and historical sense, it would have been difficult – if not impossible – to maintain the dictatorship on the sole base of violence and repression.

(Errázuriz 154)²⁵

In this sense, it is important to note that Augusto Pinochet himself highlights this cultural dimension in his message to his fellow generals the day before the Coup on 11 September 1973, by claiming a "moral, political, and economic crisis of the country" (*Camino recorrido* 286), putting this *moral* dimension first. As Errázuriz further argues, the *operación limpieza* (Operation Cleansing), initiated immediately by the militaries and literally *cleaning* the presence of the Unidad Popular's legacy in the public space,

was not only interpreted by the population as a political and military event but also, in a certain sense, ... in its socio-aesthetic dimension, through the

alterations and changes that took place in divers realms of the visual, sonorous and spatial culture.

(137)²⁶

This cultural logic of the Coup can be described as twofold: on the one hand, there was, particularly in the days after the takeover, the logic of assault, aiming at a sensual and emotional shock of the population – a point highlighted by Pinochet himself in his memoirs when he writes about his decision to accept General Leigh’s offer to bomb La Moneda, “as it is well known that the harder an action is realized, the faster a decision is reached as a result” (*Camino recorrido* 280). The second, long-term dimension of this project of “cultural regeneration” is what Errázuriz describes as a “recuperation of the cultural heritage and the revindication of the ‘chilenidad’ with a nationalist objective” (138).

Thus, the field of cultural politics was crucial to the Chilean military rulers, as it was before to Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular. It comes to no surprise then that writers and cultural agents assumed important tasks in this context. Beyond book burnings in the days after the Coup (Edwards) and the immediate closure and renaming of the UP’s cultural and literary politics’ most important vehicle, the Editora Nacional Quimantú (now Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral), other numerous efforts of the cultural field were made to justify and ideologically strengthen the *Junta Militar*. A key element was quickly printed book series for civic education, such as *Nosotros los chilenos* (*We Chileans*), where – as, for example, in the publication *Símbolos patrios* (*National Symbols*) by Luis Valencia Avaria – the Chilean flag, anthem, and other symbols and key events of Chilean history are directly linked to the presence of the new military regime. The historical narrative created by this publication suggested a continuity between the nineteenth-century glories of Chilean national and military history to the present, while erasing completely the Allende years that are virtually marked out of Chilean history. This sort of erasure can be considered the logical continuation of the “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric that the regime adopted by using medical metaphors of the “extirpation of the Marxist cancer”, recurring visibly to nineteenth-century metaphors of an organicist idea of the state as a collective body.

Beyond such a cultural re-education of the broad population, other examples can be found in the context of this new wave of nationalist praise, such as the texts included in the anthology *Pensamiento nacionalista* (*Nationalist Thought*), edited by Enrique Campos Menéndez in 1974. Campos Menéndez, who – according to Juan Cristóbal Peña’s unique journalistic investigation on this subject – came closer than any other cultural agent to Pinochet,²⁷ gathered a series of essays by different writers and intellectuals, among them Miguel Serrano, who celebrated the Coup as a glorious action of military pioneers. They considered it a nationalist awakening, a regeneration after Marxist decadence, thanks to a mixture of Schmittian decisionism and the working of Providence in what Campos Menéndez coins “the magic phenomenon of September 11” (Campos Menéndez 9).

Campos Menéndez, whom Pinochet makes the Junta’s “cultural assessor” with the mission of creating a new nationalist, conservative cultural politics, defines the

task of culture, and particularly of literature, in Latin American dictatorships as “the unavoidable obligation to ensure that the moral values that inspire individuals as well as the goals of the national community be directed toward those great ideals that the government has chosen for the benefit of the entire nation” (9). The intellectual’s mission was, according to Campos, “a constant search of the real world by the intellectual leader in order to transplant it into the mentality of his people” (15). Enrique Campos Menéndez embodied this new kind of cultural agent faithful to the regime like no one else: he not only became the head of the *Biblioteca Nacional* and won the Chilean National Prize for Literature in 1986, but also steered the regime’s cultural politics and contributed, as denotes Peña (122–26), decisively in the re-edition of Augusto Pinochet’s book *Geopolítica* (*Geopolitics*, 1974) as an attempt of the beginning construction of Pinochet himself as a kind of intellectual ruler, something the general was obsessed with.²⁸

Though Campos was the most prominent face of the Junta’s cultural politics, there were numerous other cultural agents collaborating on far less visible but equally important levels on these ideological and cultural dimensions. The historian and journalist Gonzalo Vial, for example, was the author of the so-called *White Book on the Change of Government in Chile* (better known as “Plan Zeta”), that played an important part in the ideological justification of the extermination of opposition members. Even more important was a man almost forgotten today: Álvaro Puga Cappa was named director of the *Oficina de Asuntos Públicos de la Secretaría General de Gobierno* (Office of Public Affairs of the General Secretariat of Government) right after the Coup. Puga, the son of a Chilean playwright and fostering literary ambitions himself, had no higher education and spent several years working in the retail business in Argentina, before returning to Chile and becoming a well-known newspaper columnist. Under his pseudonym “Alexis” he started to write crude anti-Marxist columns during the Unidad Popular. As he was, furthermore, a boyhood friend of Coronel Manuel Contreras, the head of Pinochet’s secret police DINA, the way to the inner circle of the new military power was a short one. Actually, Puga became the man who wrote the military *bandos*, the official communiqués during the first days and months of the new regime, among them, as he proudly said, the one about Allende’s “death”. But Puga not only was a gifted wordsmith; he also participated actively in the collaboration with Pinochet’s Intelligence DINA and in the creation of lists of culturally and politically important persons of the Unidad Popular,

because the militaries did not know well who was who in the Unidad Popular. I did. We made this list together with intelligence people of the Navy, the Air Force and the Army. ... I did not make lists of prohibited books, the only thing I did was a list with persons who were persecuted.

(Peña 110–11)²⁹

If Puga had a strong anti-Marxist ideological position, other key figures in the cultural realm of the dictatorship could be rather labelled as a sort of amoral beneficiaries of the changing political circumstances. This was the case of Fernando

Emmerich Leblanc, another writer of high influence during Pinochet's regime and nearly forgotten today as well. Emmerich, as he stated in an interview with Peña, was neither an active supporter nor an enemy of the Unidad Popular. He worked as a university professor of Spanish literature in Valparaíso and was going to sign a contract to publish a novel with Quimantú the very same day of the Coup. After losing his job at the university, Emmerich quickly engaged with the new regime: he was hired as a secretary to the directors of Editorial Andrés Bello, which would become the preferred publishing house by the new rulers and Pinochet himself. Emmerich's most important task, which would open him the doors to a career within the field of culture and cultural politics of the dictatorship, appeared when he was assigned to revise Pinochet's memoirs of the Coup, finally published under the title *El día decisivo* (*The Decisive Day*) in 1979 and becoming a real best-seller in Chile. During the 1980s, the close relationship to the dictator paid out for Emmerich who received several literary prizes and was appointed cultural attaché of Chile in Germany. Regarding this career, Emmerich can be considered rather as a specific sort of writing cultural bureaucrat, adjusting smoothly to power but without participating actively in the persecution of "enemies" of the regime (later, Emmerich, as he proudly stated in a 1996 interview, even managed to convince Pinochet to abolish censorship of fictional publications and advocated for different writers returning from exile, as for example in the case of famous Chilean poet Gonzalo Rojas). At the same time, this sort of boasting about his close relationship with Pinochet makes ring hollow his intents to play down his role under the Junta, as well as the laments of his marginalisation in post-dictatorship Chile.³⁰

Another figure to be mentioned as part of this cultural-literary complex of Pinochet's dictatorship would naturally be the pope of literary critique of the 1980s in Chile, Ignacio Valente, who was later transformed into the protagonist of Roberto Bolaño's novel *By Night in Chile*, a book that equally deals with one of the most noteworthy and cruel cases of collaboration between the cultural field and the repressive apparatus of Pinochet: that of Chilean writer Mariana Callejas. Her case is well-known today thanks to the literary work of Bolaño and Pedro Lemebel: Callejas worked along with her American husband Michael Townley as an agent of Pinochet's intelligence service while being a sort of starlet of the literary scene of Santiago in the 1980s. Apart from the texts by Bolaño and Lemebel, there is also a Chilean TV-series (*Mary y Mike*, 2018) and a play written by Nona Fernández (*El Taller* [The Workshop], 2012) about this case that, in a way, has overshadowed the actions of many other figures, such as Puga and Emmerich, whose stories obviously lack the overt cruelty of her female fellow writer: as it is well documented, Callejas and her husband kidnapped and tortured opponents in the cellar of their house in Santiago, the same home where Callejas held literary soirées attended by young authors like Carlos Franz and Gonzalo Contreras, who would later become part of the young Chilean literary scene, the *Nueva Narrativa Chilena* (New Chilean Narrative), in the 1990s. The case of Callejas and Townley is singular in that they are the only ones of all the named collaborators who were formally charged after the end of the criminal regime they served, concretely for their participation in the murder of former Chilean commander-in-chief Carlos Prats in Buenos Aires

in 1974. The others – many of them, like Puga, Emmerich, or Valente being still alive – fell more or less to oblivion after Chile’s return to democracy in 1990, when not only politics but also the cultural establishment preferred to ignore these figures of the past, who, on their part, do not retract from their positions and actions. As Álvaro Puga stated: “I do not regret absolutely nothing of what I did, on the contrary: I regret not having done more” (Peña 112).³¹

Conclusion

Recent years have seen a return of revisionist politics all over Latin America – and with it a renewed wave of “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric similar to its historical predecessors of the 1930s and 1970s. This proves the longevity of these sorts of discursive patterns and the fact that they can be reactivated in the context of changing political situations. In Chile, this became visible during the social mobilisations in 2019 and its aftermath: the social claims of the protesters were identified by the political right-wing establishment in terms of anarchism and Marxist chaos, conjuring the phantasma of a supposed leftist “overthrow” and harking back to very similar formulas as in the 1970s. At the same time, recent mass immigration to Chile from other Latin American countries (particularly Haiti, Colombia, and Ecuador) has led to new waves of xenophobic and racist discourses. Consequently, claims of social justice and the presence of immigrant populations have been melded together by right-wing politicians such as José Antonio Kast to create a new “Them”.

This phenomenon is the most recent proof of what this chapter aimed to show: the deictic “us” and “them” are shifting signifiers. This holds particularly true for the “them”: the concept of the enemy may change according to different historical contexts – Jews, immigrants, indigenous people, Marxists – but it has been of crucial importance to mobilise political affects and create semantics of national unity for the past 150 years. At the same time, the realm of culture is again the crucial political battlefield for contemporary political actors and movements, as it was before to nationalist and reactionary rhetoric and imaginaries of the twentieth century. Once again, protesters for social justice and immigrants are identified as, primarily, *culturally* alien elements unwilling to accept the traditionalist cultural, political, and economic rules of the *Patria*. At the same time, cultural forms – street art, poetry, memes – have been a central sphere of dispute during the mobilisation, highlighting the importance of the realm of aesthetics.³²

It is in the light of these discursive “revenants” that a critical perspective on Latin America’s cultural history and the reactionary genealogies in the region can help to shape understanding of the role and forms of historical and current “Us” versus “Them” rhetoric. This article, with its panorama of the Chilean of twentieth century aimed to show, too, that such reactionary rhetoric and imaginaries go hand in hand with determinate cultural practices, in the sense of very concrete political actions executed by cultural agents.

Our historical case study of Chile has tried to point out that, beyond ideologists like Miguel Serrano and their over-aestheticised realm of fascist ideas, it may

be well worth remembering that there exist rather “banal” forms of evil, to use Hannah Arendt’s famous formula, represented by those inconspicuous but efficient collaborators, such as Álvaro Puga and Fernando Emmerich Leblanc, their networks, and the very practical support they realised over many years for the Chilean dictatorship. This is to bear in mind when it comes to deal with new reactionary and authoritarian forms of (cultural) politics in Latin America (and beyond), even if their mediatic forms and ideological targets obviously have changed.

Notes

- 1 See Klemperer’s *LTI* and Sternberger’s *Dictionary of a Barbarian*.
- 2 See Adorno’s analysis of the radio speeches of Martin Luther Thomas and the study by Löwenthal and Guterberg on the “american agitator”.
- 3 In Argentina, the military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983 killed and disappeared more than 30,000 people and used a similar, if even more abject terminus by naming these politics of extermination “Proceso de reorganización nacional” (National Reorganisation Process, or just simply “El proceso”).
- 4 There certainly exist considerable differences between the respective post-authoritarian countries in the Southern Cone regarding the effectiveness and the scope of this sort of “transitional justice”. While in Argentina legal persecution and the construction of collective forms of memory have been particularly strong with regard to the traumatic past, this has not been the case in Chile where, due to the far more controversial and complex return to democracy in the context of the so-called “transición pactada” (negotiated transition), many of the civilian-economic-military complicities remain to be persecuted or were protected by laws of amnesty (on the treatment of this subject in contemporary cinema see Loy, “Fascist World Literature from Latin America”).
- 5 “... uno de los principales objetivos del golpe militar consiste en extirpar de raíz los focos de infección que desintegran el cuerpo moral de la patria. Con este propósito, se pone en marcha la operación limpieza que representa simbólicamente, por una parte, la desinfección del pasado marxista y, por otra, la promoción de una noción militarizada de la estética cotidiana, caracterizada por rasgos tales como la depuración, el orden y la restauración fervorosa de los símbolos patrios”.
- 6 See Loy, “The Reactionary Genealogies of Latin American Literature”.
- 7 On this term, coined originally by Hermann Heller in 1933, see, for the context of the 1960s and 1970s, the recent study by Chamayou.
- 8 On the transatlantic dimensions of fascism, see the seminal study by Finchelstein.
- 9 For a recent discussion on fascist movements in Latin America, see the book edited by Grecco and Gonçalves.
- 10 See Hirschman on the concept of “reactionary waves”.
- 11 “zonas del poder cuya relación con el proyecto modernizador se había problematizado”.
- 12 See the study by DeGiovanni on these “texts of the fatherland” in early twentieth-century Argentina.
- 13 On the productivity of this political rhetoric of disease in modern Spain and Latin America, see the study by Aronna, on the specific dimension of eugenic discourses in Chile the recent study by Walsh.
- 14 “la génesis del fascismo en América Latina se vio justificada por la constatación de la falta de salidas inmediatas de la experiencia liberal y republicana. En efecto, Latinoamérica fue una región donde el fascismo fue un ingrediente fundamental en el despliegue de nuevas opciones en el campo político en el período de entreguerras”.
- 15 It is not possible to offer here a deeper analysis of González von Marées’ praise of Portales (18–28). However, it is noteworthy that this authoritarian fantasy of a popular and charismatic, though incorrupt, leader in the sense of an “illustrated dictator” can be

- found not only in the thinking of other Chilean writers of the time (such as in Joaquín Edwards Bello's *Nacionalismo continental*, 1935) but throughout Iberian modernity in Spain and Portugal as well (for example, in the expression of the "cirujano de hierro" – "the iron surgeon", as coined by Joaquín Costa, one of the leaders of Spanish *regeneracionismo* at the turn of the century).
- 16 See for example, the study by Salazar.
 - 17 On this generation and particularly their extremist discourses, see the study by Figueroa.
 - 18 See Fischer's reading of Serrano's writings on Antarctica in the context of Chile's geopolitical claims of the time.
 - 19 For an extensive study of this sort of "Fascist World Literature" and Serrano's work, see Loy, "Fascist World Literature from Latin America".
 - 20 On Serrano's ongoing reception and his problematic position within the Chilean literary canon, also see Loy, "Fascist World Literature from Latin America" 220–24.
 - 21 See the collection of Echaurren's writings edited by Díaz Nieva, as well as on *Estanquero* the observations in Grugel 113–16.
 - 22 See on this aspect the study of Díaz Nieva and Valdés Urrutia.
 - 23 "Es el sacudimiento de esas relaciones y, con ellas, por lo tanto, del Estado en su realidad más profunda, lo que desata los temores más primordiales de la burguesía, así como de los sectores sociales e instituciones (entre ellos las Fuerzas Armadas) que suelen alienarse con aquélla para tratar de reinstaurar el 'orden' y la 'normalidad'".
 - 24 On the Chicago Boys, see the study by Fuentes.
 - 25 "... sin el golpe estético-cultural (operación limpieza y corte) y una campaña de restauración que le confiriera mayor soporte ideológico y sentido histórico al régimen militar, hubiera sido más difícil – por no decir inviable – mantener la dictadura apoyada fundamentalmente en el poder de la fuerza y la represión".
 - 26 "... la intervención de las fuerzas armadas no sólo fue interpretada por la ciudadanía como un acontecimiento político y militar sino que además, en alguna medida, fue subjetivada y/o percibida en su dimensión estético-social, a través de las alteraciones y cambios que tuvieron lugar en diversos ámbitos de la cultura visual, sonora y espacial".
 - 27 "Pocos escritores consiguieron tanto en dictadura como Campos Menéndez. Pocos supieron sintonizar tan finamente con Pinochet como lo hizo él" (124).
 - 28 Pinochet's four-volume memoirs offer rich insights into his self-perception as a sort of "intellectual" military. See Pinochet, *Camino recorrido*.
 - 29 "... porque los militares no sabían exactamente quién era quién en la Unidad Popular. Yo sí sabía. Esa lista la hicimos junto a la gente de inteligencia de la Marina, la Aviación y el Ejército. ... Yo no hice listas de libros prohibidos, lo único que hice fue una lista de personas que eran buscadas".
 - 30 See his affirmations in the interview with Dardel.
 - 31 "Yo no reniego absolutamente de nada de lo que hice, todo lo contrario: lamento no haber hecho más".
 - 32 See the numerous articles on this in Ganter et al.

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