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RAFAEL SAGREDO BAEZA\*

THE END OF “THE” CHILEAN HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY\*\*

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PATRIOTIC BALANCE

The fundamental characteristic of recent research into nineteenth-century Chile conducted over the last twenty five years is the notion that *the* history of Chile is over.<sup>1</sup> In a period that saw the end of the dictatorship and the politics of consensus, actors who were previously invisible have emerged in the historiography and demand the right to form part of history, to dissent, to be heterogeneous. The appearance of these diverse, suffering, dispersed, and anonymous Chileans has transformed *the* history of Chile—as glorious, edifying, singular, monolithic, and unalterable as its nineteenth-century foundations—into one of multiple visions and interpretations. In this more diverse history, the concept of “nation” includes more than a single community. The Mapuche national history, for instance, calls (perhaps still only rhetorically) for the incorporation of new voices. The state, the nation, and the public sphere are no longer the only central subjects. Historians increasingly look to ordinary Chileans and their everyday lives, distant from the heroic battles and the spectacular triumphs that generations of school children were forced to learn. They now focus on the arduous struggle to survive that has characterized the experiences of most Chileans during every period of the community’s evolution.

This article is the fruit of reflections on Chile and its historiography. The result of experiences, conditions, interests, possibilities, and writings, it is a “patriotic balance,” to use a term from a recent homage to critical voices.<sup>2</sup> It discusses deeply rooted notions regarding the components of “patria,” nationality, and Chilean identity—terms which, for purposes here, are synonymous. In light of historiography (not to mention studies of cultural patrimony) from the last twenty years that has highlighted mutability, I am par-

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\*\* Translated from the Spanish by Robert Weis.

<sup>1</sup> The scope of this essay is limited to books published in Chile. With some noted exceptions, it does not address historical studies of Chile published abroad, most of which appear in specialized journals. A future review that identifies and evaluates works written outside of Chile, even comparing them with Chilean historiography, would be a welcome contribution.

<sup>2</sup> During the 17th Congress of the History of Chile, in Pucón in October 2007, organizers from the Universidad de la Frontera invited me to present a paper titled “Patriotic Balance: Chilean Historiography after the Dictatorship.” That was the first time I discussed the end of Chilean history in this sense proposed here. In the August 1925 edition of *Acción. Diario de purificación nacional*, the poet Vicente Huidobro shocked “self-complacent” readers with his brutally frank “Patriotic Balance.” The historian Mario Góngora rescued this forgotten text in his 1981 essay *La noción de Estado en Chile. Siglos XIX y XX*.

ticularly interested in interrogating the notion that these components arise from a natural order and are therefore unchanging.

This essay is also a balance in that it offers a panorama of the state of the field. Although it discusses topics of recent works more than their contents, it implicitly addresses the general situation of an increasingly formal and institutional historiographical reality that has contributed to historical understanding and to history as a discipline and a community. As the twentieth, thirtieth, and fortieth anniversary commemorations of the 1973 military coup reveal, historiography remains sensitive to social stimulation. This balance is also patriotic because it grapples with the ways in which a community has related to, studied, and understood its past. It discusses how this community has used the past— as well as how it has generated memories in order to make the past co-exist with a present that demands information, comprehension, and antecedents on a human scale.

Upon organizing this text, I pondered the need to mention authors and titles after every commentary and reference and decided instead to provide a bibliography, ordered thematically according to perhaps questionable categories.<sup>3</sup> Attentive readers will note that throughout this essay I allude to the titles of the works discussed, with the hope that these references will identify them.<sup>4</sup> A future historiographical review will hopefully include more publications from outside the capital in keeping with a growing trend over the last twenty-five years.<sup>5</sup> Regional academic centers will contribute to the decentralization of knowledge, which itself is an example of the widening view within historiography regarding what constitutes the Chilean territory.<sup>6</sup> Historians, and certainly ethno-historians and anthropologists, have ceased to equate Santiago with Chile. The inclusion of names such as Trapananda and Tunupa, not to mention Atacama and Patagonia, in the titles of recent histories of Chile reflect this reality.

#### HISTORY AND SOCIETY

That *the* history of Chile has ended is eloquently clear in recent works that deal with the nineteenth century— the century of independence, the organization of the republic, the

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<sup>3</sup> The annotated lists of published books on Chilean history featured annually since 1961 in *Historia* a journal published by the Institute of History of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, is a useful guide to historiography on Chile.

<sup>4</sup> Given the rather small size of the field, most Chilean historians know each other, or at least are aware of the work of others. Hence, often a word or an allusion to a concept may suffice to identify whom and what one is talking about. I recognize that readers outside this environment and its peculiarities may find this approach difficult, though not impossible, to follow.

<sup>5</sup> The bibliography provided below does not do justice to the historical studies published in regions beyond the capital. My insufficient knowledge of this work explains, though can hardly justify, the oversight. If the National Library and system of public libraries fulfilled their charge, their collections would include works from the entire country for the use of researchers.

<sup>6</sup> Researchers in Arica, Valparaíso, Chillán, Concepción, Temuco, Valdivia, and Punta Arenas conduct systematic historical research with varying levels of institutional support. In places such as Iquique, Antofagasta, La Serena, and Osorno, the work of historians, even those affiliated with universities, seems to spring more from personal enthusiasm and dedication than from institutional policy.

construction of the nation, and territorial expansion. These processes and their manifestations were once central to almost all research conducted on the so-called history of Chile. The study of women or the private life of Chileans, therefore, points to a significant historiographical shift. Needless to say, if historians have accomplished such a turn for the paradigmatic nineteenth century, they have also done so for both the colonial period and the twentieth century.

Whereas previously the only visible social subjects, beyond the creole aristocracy that led the independence effort, were hacienda peons and mine workers, now the unemployed, vagrants, and deviants have become central actors in history. At the same time, works on the twentieth century include an ever growing cast of characters: women, children, victims of state torture and assassination, marginalized masses and their experiences with vulnerability, peasants, students, workers, and a series of other subjects who, depending on the topic in question, dispute the predominance of politicians and military men. Their transformation into historical protagonists is a clear sign that *the* history of Chile no longer exists. Diversity, the endeavors of people far from the public sphere, different rhythms and urgencies, rural environments, haciendas, local practices and customs, that which human consciousness rebukes, the unworldly, and even spirits, among many other topics, are now part of the history of Chile.

Another characteristic of recent historiography is the interest in documenting the experiences of what are now known as “social movements” (what used to be called “indefinable malaise”) that have been transforming the community—the citizen-consumers, actually—into an increasingly empowered population. Actors who have emerged so forceful in the present also claim their place in the past, in history, in order to legitimize and project themselves into the future. Education and health, two topics that have received notable scholarly attention recently, suggest that the conditions we associate with “crisis” in fact constitute a secular situation of inequality. These findings increasingly erode the notion of a past of abundance. Much like the effect of violence that history from a gender perspective reflects, they underscore not only the structural problem of inequality in Chile but also the vulnerable living conditions of the vast majority of the population—aspects previously hidden behind the celebration of institutional triumphs. Studies of the work of Claudio Gay and the conception behind his *Physical and Political History of Chile* show that *the* history of Chile—with tropes such as the “fortunate copy of Eden” and the “sanctuary against oppression”—perpetuated by elites as part of the organization of the republic, was also a strategy, a political operation.

More distant from the powers that once shamelessly shaped it, Chilean historiography is increasingly written by academics.<sup>7</sup> Research, including work into the twentieth

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<sup>7</sup> *Everything* published abroad on the history of Chile is carried out by professional historians in academic centers. Of course, this hardly guarantees *a priori* the quality of the work. Indeed, there are abuses, poor and repetitive works, plagiarism and self-plagiarism erroneously attributed to the “system” and to the pressure to publish in recognized journals. In reality, such problems are the consequence of individual practices and lapses in professional etiquette. In my experience with FONDECYT, the journal *Historia* of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and diverse editorial committees (that actually function as such), the systems of peer review, evaluations, and other measures that aim to ensure the originality and quality of research and publications have improved the level of publications and, therefore, the historiography on Chile. Certainly, doctoral research is another source of original research.

century, is conducted by specialists in universities who have access to competitive grants that require hypotheses, methodologies, sources, and knowledge of the field. They are engaged with national and international networks that encourage dialogue with researchers in other countries. They participate in specialized conferences. They are “forced” to publish in recognized journals and presses. In addition to being professional historians, they value contact with their peers and the opportunity to receive criticism and orientation. For centuries, these have been the characteristics of the academic centers that have been our key references. They constitute the core of “academia,” even in the postmodern age.

One consequence of this situation has been specialization, a fundamental aspect of every type of knowledge since the nineteenth century. Viewed by some as inconsistent with the role of history in national pedagogy, specialization has yielded monographs, articles, and books dedicated to problems that once seemed too local, partial, or even “irrelevant” to the broader context. Subjects such as criminals and deviants –previously anonymous and best forgotten for the good of *the* history of Chile– have been transformed into central historical actors. Specialization has deepened our knowledge and understanding of the past, of the history of Chile, which now appears as a more “humanized” community. It has made history more comprehensible, more resonant for contemporary readers, and doubtlessly much closer to things as they actually happened and further from the idealized past.

This work has put into question the long-standing discourse –perpetuated even during the dictatorship– of Chile’s exemplary democracy. The private life of Chileans, social relations, the family, labor, and gender, among other topics, show that violence and inequality have always been structural characteristics in all areas of Chilean society. How could political and institutional life be separate from this history of power and subordination? After 1973, history reflected this everyday reality of our society, which, in our view, explains what has until recently been inexplicable.

This critical vision is also present in the media through the so-called manifestos of historians, in which the interpretation of the nineteenth century, or of the events that occurred in that century, are always present. These manifestos have appeared particularly in opposition to apologists of the dictatorship who insist on defending its memory, inflicting a sense of violence against public consciousness. They have also favored heterogeneous causes that civil society has taken up, such as the environment, vindication of native populations, and the movement to return Bolivia’s access to the sea.<sup>8</sup>

This panorama is very different from that of twenty-five years ago, when historians equated the history of the elite with the history of the country. Now, this solid unit has begun to vanish before the impulses of the social evolution of the country and the world. Problems, dilemmas, and challenges have become questions, topics, and queries that allow us to uncover antecedents and better grapple with everyday reality and its demanding requirements. The historiographical panorama of nineteenth-century Chile

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<sup>8</sup> At the cost of idealizing the history of our society and its trajectory as a republic, we might include *Historia del pueblo chileno*, as well as the work that denounced the falsification of Portales, among the manifestos and protest against the dictatorship.

is now replete with studies that highlight the shift toward the most diverse subjects, groups, phenomena, and social processes: from rural workers, peons, and proletarians to the diverse social subjects and general strikes; from men to women; to essays on Chilean women and the profiles of midwives, prostitutes, women workers, wives, daughters, and mothers; from the strength of the lower-class “*roto*,” to the people born to die, who live to suffer; from adults with wrinkled foreheads to the occasionally happy and footloose children and youth; from the public sphere to intimate and private life; from the patriotic or royalist aristocracy to the lower classes who were neither but were protagonists in nineteenth-century phenomena such as rural banditry, games, and entertainment; from the supporters of independence to the counterrevolutionaries of 1810; from the political organization to the social construction of the nation; from government chronicles to political practices; from tradition to modern representation; from the celebrated institutionalism to militarism and coups; from national to regional history; from consensus to tensions among power centers; from inclusion to exclusion; from the Araucanians to Mapuches; from Indians to indigenous peoples; from actors viewed as individuals to forms of sociability; from Catholicism to secularism; from an omnipresent God to one with a particular place in the republic; from the tangible to the intangible; from the objective and rational to the subjective and the sensitive; from text to image; from material to immaterial; from the nationalist competency to regional complementarity;<sup>9</sup> from the history that separates us to the history that unites and separates us; from war to peace; from Chile as *finis terrae* to Chile in the world. In sum, what was previously condemned and censured is now acknowledged and studied. Still, however, no one has written about, explained or understood, among other latent possibilities, the life and actions of José Antonio Vidaurré, leader of the 1837 revolt against the all-powerful Diego Portales. Historians could well make this villain into a hero, or at least into a thorough republican. This would be no small task, for it would mean accepting forms of opposition present in our recent history that current Chilean society does not wish to accept, much less, make into a model.

The topics in these studies represent greater knowledge of each of the subjects and methodological innovation regarding sources and research techniques. Many studies also revisit deeply rooted notions that, too often, were foundational myths of the nation, partial representations, selective memories, mechanisms of power and control that ensured the preeminence of the elite. In virtue of these shifts, we now know, for example, that the children of vice and sin, the abandoned and the illegitimate (*huachos*) who constitute the “*bajo pueblo*,” are also part of history and of Chile.

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<sup>9</sup> In the Grande Norte, the Araucanía, and Magallanes, there are solid examples of supra-regional historical research that goes beyond borders and provides perspectives that complement realities previously examined only from local and national angles.

## FROM EPIC TO HISTORY

Perhaps because Chile now enjoys a condition (i.e., a per capita income close to \$USD 20,000) that apparently places the country at the doorway of development, its historical endeavors have always been, and most consciously so since the period of republican organization, associated with epic tales; with grand public actions and heroic protagonists; with glorious feats that deserve to be memorialized and sung in poetic verse; with legendary or fictitious events that have been transformed into models, values, and paradigms for society; with events that reach dramatic status through narratives that focus on individual or collective heroes, whose feats are worthy of being known, remembered, transformed into community patrimony, into history. Hence, “the” history of Chile is a history plagued with useful myths that lend cohesion to the nation. In keeping with the sixteenth-century heroic narrative *La Araucana*, the history of Chilean nationality and the great state-building project of the nineteenth century has been full of drama and struggle, sacrifice, pain, fearless actions of audacity performed by brave, intrepid, undefeatable heroes challenged by indomitable warriors.

The circumstances in which the first history of Chile was written constitute an eloquent manifestation of how the epic became part of the national project. The French naturalist Claudio Gay began writing his monumental *Physical and Political History of Chile* at the behest of the Chilean government in 1839. The work is the origin of Chilean historiography. Recent studies on the social history of scientific practices in nineteenth-century Chile have made clear that history was understood as political. Perhaps history has always been political; however, during the first half of the century, as was the case in other developing countries, it was free of challenges and counterbalances. Amid the national euphoria that arose from Chile’s victory in the war against the Peru-Bolivian Confederation in January 1839, the Ministry of Culture and Public Instruction sponsored Gay’s work. Encouraged by the military success and stimulated by popular enthusiasm and patriotic fervor, the government embraced the benefits of a dignified history of Chile that would reflect the stature of a republic that had recovered its glory on the battlefield. As recent work has shown, the heroic struggle provoked hymns that celebrated the lower-class “*roto*,” patriotic feelings, and emotions that fed the nationalist imaginary and the collective memory of the nineteenth century.

Upon being offered the task, Gay first asked whether Chile’s past had any meaning for the concert of civilizations. The government leader’s quick response set the route for the historian and the subsequent national historiography. Had the three hundred-year Arauco War not inflicted a mortal wound upon the concept of Castilian imperialism? Were the battles at Chacabuco and Maipú, decisive for America’s liberty, not fought in Chile? Was Chile not the only organized country in Spanish America, ruled by a political regimen respectful of the republican system? The notion of Chile’s exceptional history in the American concert was predominant among elites as early as the 1830s, even before Gay drafted the first national history. It flowed from their appreciation of the local and international context, which elites had experienced with dramatic intensity through the war of independence, the organization of the republic, and the war against the Confederation. Immediately after independence, the society that had been a marginalized, isolated, and poverty-stricken colony began to ponder its extraordinary



accomplishments of stability and republican order amid the convulsion of the rest of the continent.

Gay's sponsors instructed him that writing "the" history of Chile was a national necessity. The study of the remarkable and glorious evolution since independence was to constitute the foundation of national unity. The urgency to build an imagined community through the invention of tradition—to give continuity, through historical understanding, to the new republican reality with an adequate past—required a history of Chile. But, as the government made clear, not just any history. In the name of the state (that is, of the elites), it decided what knowledge was useful. Plagued with myths, the resulting historiography reflected the propaganda of the Chilean state and its deeds more than the history of the community of which it formed a part.

Certainly, a celebratory tendency runs through the historiography of practically all nations. However, in Chile, for what might be called "matters of state," history glorified, became epic, and, through its pondering, dramatized deeds and actions that potentially constituted the national. Claudio Gay not only understood this; he acted accordingly when he took on the Chilean past. He conceived of Chile's history as a progressive journey toward the situation in the first half of the nineteenth century. He organized the material in such a way that the past, in constant comparison with the present, diminished in the face of the accomplishments of independence and the organization of the republic. These were the true glories that history needed to tell. Independence, subject today to revisionism, thus became the foundational landmark; the epic, in the sense of the heroic, memorable, and glorious, became intimately associated with the historical and with the evolution of Chile as a society. As a result, everything that did not validate this perspective was of little importance for the historiography.

As Chileans, we have reasons to feel satisfied with a historic evolution that, despite outbursts of violence and structural abuse in many areas, shows an increasing capacity to integrate subjects into the system. Perhaps the mere existence of the republic, the state, and the nation, as well as the current institutional stability and sustained economic growth, demonstrate the community's success. Nonetheless, it is also true that this history—so intimately related to the state and the nation, to what is public and institutional, conceived as civic pedagogy—has also hindered our understanding of aspects that have shaped and characterized the development of a community. The historiography of the last twenty-five years, perhaps more than ever, has complemented, and often questioned, the most deeply rooted notions regarding the history of this natural and social reality that has been called Chile since time immemorial. It has contributed understanding and interpretations regarding aspects essential to the population such as health and education. It has identified behaviors, sentiments, and expressions that reflect manners of social relations although they do not always seem to be as edifying as the valued history of institutions or macroeconomics. There is now no single history of Chile. Heterogeneity, edifying or not, is now part of this community.

By going beyond the public sphere, into culture, mentalities, collective behavior, and self-representations and widening the temporal framework of historical analysis, recent historiography has found keys to write about actors who resist playing the part assigned to them. It has questioned the supposedly exceptional history by pointing out, for example, that the 1973 coup d'état disregarded citizens' capacity to live according to republi-



can values. It thus becomes clear that there are historical continuities beyond those twin “monsters” created by and creators of modernity –the state and the police– which could be sought, for instance, among the elements of ordinary existence of Chileans throughout history.

#### BETWEEN HISTORY AND TABOO

From its inception, Chilean history has been an instrument of celebration and complacency. The discourse is so repetitive that we need not dwell on it; the histories of the nineteenth century fixed and confirmed its basic contents. The history of Chile became synonymous with the chronicle of political and military events, the trajectory of politicians and their deeds, the celebration of military men who battled for liberty, the patria, and the nation. The satisfaction with which most history books present the nation’s evolution transforms almost any new topic, or problem related to Chile’s history or reality viewed from another perspective, into an object of reproach. Any angle that questions or criticizes the idea, the image, or the notion that institutions or people have of themselves, of others, or even of the national history, could be objectionable. As the case of Arturo Prat has shown, when historians humanize a personage by removing him from a pedestal and make heroic efforts more comprehensible, the reaction is immediate.

Due to reasons related to national prestige, when dealing with the image of the state, the nation, its leaders or whatever else, there is always a preference to omit less edifying aspects of our national history, as if these aspects jeopardized its existence and that of the republican regime, not to mention the predominance of the elites. This is hardly surprising. For far too long, “the” history of Chile has essentially served as an instrument with which to construct the republic, the nation, and the state, to strengthen institutions, state powers, the military, and the Church. History has been the foundation of laudable, exemplary trajectories. It has conferred prestige and legitimacy to the actions of social groups, usually dominant groups such as the governing elites. It exalts figures cast in bronze, military heroes, the organizers of the republic, and practically all public men in the government, the Church, and the military.

Hence, from its origins in the nineteenth century, the study of Chile –be it of the history of the nation, an individual, a social group, or an institution– has not been conceived as a way of approaching problems, as it is today. Rather, it has been a vehicle to underwrite an identity, to gain legitimacy, to obtain power, authority, public respectability, and even privileges. In such a context, any exploration, regardless of its significance, of the unknown history of figures, or of public and private institutions that constitute our society, becomes taboo. It is seen as an attack, an attempt to publicly discredit the figure or institution studied. The same happens with any expression that does not fit within what is socially and commonly accepted, within what is known and repeated by everyone, that shows weakness or an unbecoming fact, however well known it may be, even if the findings are well grounded and everyone predictably proclaims the desire to follow the truth wherever it may lead. Is it possible to deny that from 1810 on, numerous interest groups have been determined to exalt only certain aspects, values, and models of our reality?

In addition to its efficacy as an instrument of nation-building, history has acted as a means to ponder the actions of elites within the national history, a tool to spread their objectives and interests, such as order and stability, and, certainly, as a mechanism of political and social control. Otherwise, how can we explain that any intention or initiative to reveal other social models, men and women of other conditions, and other characteristics that have had a significant role within new historical topics, has been largely ignored, if not censured and criticized? By valuing personalities beyond the dominant groups who exert power by defining what Chilean history is and who its protagonists are, such initiatives imply a subversion of the values and principles that predicate our order.

A quick glance at the historiographical production of the last twenty-five to thirty years, or at Chilean historians' engagement with the Bicentennial, will suffice to show the battles over historical memory. If the celebrations around the two hundred years of independence achieved anything, it is that they opened a public space for debate and contemplation of our reality as a society. It became clear that there are at least two broad interpretations of our historical evolution: a "memory of fortune," which ponders our successes, and a "memory of misfortune," which shows the frustrated efforts of a society unable to create a truly republican community. In this sense, the history of Chile is not only fragmented into the multiple possibilities offered by the social history of gender, minorities, popular movements, and regional history, among others. It is also clear that the history of Chile can longer be seen as an exceptional evolution. In too many moments and for too many social sectors, it has represented only exclusion, precariousness, and pain.

Historiography is finally examining the reality of the emergence of new social actors who, now engaged as active social subjects, claim their place in history, often in counter-position to history's traditional protagonists, the dominant groups. It thus offers a historical reality that is less edifying but as plural as contemporary society: the "histories in and of Chile." An example of this is how historians study the actions and conditions that place the country near the bottom of the list of western nations in terms of income distribution, inequality, segregation, and social cohesion and analyze the ways in which inequality and hierarchy, which are fundamental to Chile and its traditional historiography, become naturalized.

In the world of globalization, there are few studies that examine Chile's international relations, the creation of its territory and boundaries, and its international conflicts, among other lacunae involving the nineteenth century. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' relations with Peru and Bolivia are so "delicate" that access to official archives is restricted. This situation not only hinders historians' ability to understand and explain fundamental events and processes; it also limits our ability to understand relations with our neighbors and address them in a more dynamic and constructive manner. This situation may explain why the Minister of Foreign Affairs recently repeated the old line, though now without euphemisms, that there could be no return of the coastal access to Bolivia. Or why his counterpart during the Piñera administration declared that treaties are intangible and untouchable and, therefore, cannot be discussed. Chauvinistic statements abound; studies that provide historical antecedents are practically absent. Whoever

wishes to use a map of Chile, historic or not, must undergo the common practice of requesting (indeed, sometimes begging for) authorization from the Office and Borders and Boundaries for its publication, whether or not the matter lies within its jurisdiction.

#### THE END OF "THE" HISTORY

It is often said that Chile is a "land of historians." This notion perhaps reflects the existence of numerous historical panoramas. Indeed, considering the number of commercially successful works, Chile has a relatively rich historiographical tradition. The phenomenon may also arise from the nation's need to assert itself in the nineteenth century and from the institutional crisis of the twentieth century. In any case, Chilean historiography has shown remarkable evolution over the last twenty-five years. Recent general works include a study that privileges the Chilean people and their expressions within social processes and structures. Another seeks to explain the social and institutional crises by examining the collapse of consensus and its manifestations in the twentieth century. A "general" study attempts to identify broad historical currents and meanings in literary, poetic, intellectual, and cultural manifestations such as myths and legends.

In part because it strengthens my argument, it is impossible to pass over the fact that three of the "magnum" works on Chile either did not come into fruition or have failed to produce new volumes in the last ten years. Could it be that they were born too late, too far behind recent historiographical trends, and that their authors wisely understood that their efforts were condemned to indifference? For, among other factors, common people have been social agents within civil society for quite a while now and the lack of consensus and certainty is a characteristic of our time. In the postmodern age, what could be "general" or have "meaning" as its organizing principle when heterogeneity and plurality now are valued and paradigms are themselves objects of historical examination? How, for example, could these authors have possibly addressed the call to "Listen, Winka (white man)!" and other recent expressions of historiographical plurality born from the desire to offer a national history of the Mapuches?<sup>10</sup> We may never know.

Its traditional pretensions unattainable in an era of fragmentation that emphasizes the particular, the unique, and the singular, *the* history of Chile has been displaced by synthetic and interpretive works. These show a panorama, a notion of what has been the historical evolution of the community, from a perspective that values, highlights, summarizes, and glosses the often long research experience of their authors. They include "contemporary history" and social history; works of political history that examine the panoramic republican vision; that explain this vision as a consequence, even in the late twentieth century, of Hispanic capitalism; and that present the history of Chileans ins-

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<sup>10</sup> Studies of what are today known as indigenous peoples [in Spanish, *pueblos originarios*], previously known as "Indians" (including Mapuches, previously known as Araucanos), have experienced a clear analytical development in recent decades. These works—which follow mostly anthropological and ethnographic approaches, but also develop historical, archeological, and literary perspectives—deserve their own analyses. Suffice for now to provide some foundation titles of a "school" that is grappling with forms, characteristics, practices, protagonists, and consequences of the original contact between Spaniards and indigenous peoples.

stead of the history of Chile. Struggling against the grain, the evidence, and the new historiographical approaches, the conservative version of history continues to limit Chilean history to the arrival of the Spaniards.

Social history, with results that vary among different works, grapples with historical problems such as the organization and legitimization of politics and the citizenry; the identity and expressions of social actors in historical events; the structural vulnerability of the Chilean economy, together with the predictable consequences for the development and living conditions of the vast majority of the population; the historical construction of the masculine and the feminine, as well as the experience of childhood and youth in Chile. These topics are unprecedented in Chile. Although they often yield monographs that address a specific subject rather than a broad panorama of history, they are certainly contributions. A brief history of Chile, published in 2014 as part of an international series, seeks to explain the essential processes that have shaped Chile's historical development. The author posits interpretations that complement, and sometimes question, the most deeply rooted notions associated with this history. What this essay regards as a function of nineteenth-century Chilean historiography, the book interprets as a history of the community. Successful or not, the fact that the author has openly made such a proposal is a sign of the times.

Finally, recent works have situated Chile in the historical context of Latin America, be it as a particular case or as an instance of supranational structures, regional historical conjunctures, or processes and general periods. The manner in which they thus dilute a history that previously remained excessively local is another manifestation of the world we live in.

#### MEMORY OF THE COUP OF "73" AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The era of independence and republican organization continues to offer novel insights—no small task considering how much historians have examined the period. In the last twenty-five years, monographs and general texts have addressed diverse aspects of the phenomenon and the period that began in 1810 and, according to some works, extended well into the nineteenth century. A list of some of the subjects, together with a brief characterization of the persistent traditional vision, will suffice to underscore some of the new proposals and thus appreciate some of the accomplishments.

Recent works have shown that independence was a phenomenon not entirely removed from the old regime. The process involved tradition as well as reform—that is, tradition as well as modernization. Essential components included new forms of representation and communication technologies that propagated republican ideas of independence. The phenomenon also had its counter-revolution. Most people remained essentially indifferent, though not entirely alien, to the process. Bickering and political interests continued even after the dates selected for patriotic commemorations. Perhaps more importantly, elites reserved political rights as full citizens but at the same time cultivated a sense of national belonging that sought to embrace ordinary Chileans, with the exception of native peoples. The preeminence of Santiago had its vicissitudes with regard to its rival Concepción. Always guided by men with imposing styles, the elites showed a passion

for order. Clearly, though, the republican organization cannot be attributed to a single personality. Portales and his institutional efforts are a historical falsification, even if the social and political reality that regarded him as a leader of the elite is not. The “weight of the night,” the tendency to obey, effectively functioned and the dominant group unequivocally appropriated the state, confounding its interests with those of the state.

Historians need to do more to identify and characterize this oft-mentioned elite. However, an increasing number of monographs are examining individual members of the elite, such as Andrés Bello, as well as their actions and their public and private conduct. Works examine their divorces, their practices of piety and charity, and the strategies they used to secure power. Other recent topics of analysis include the politics and the ideas behind the construction of the republic, politics and secularization, nationalist imaginary, polemics and politics, forms of sociability, expansion of the franchise, even the musical chords and the symbols (including, of course, a history reflective of Chile’s self-determination, and its political interests and objectives) that the patria needed to become a nation.

Nonetheless, the two hundred years of independence and the twenty, thirty, and forty years since the military coup, including Pinochet’s detention, left deep marks in the historiography. The dates attracted intense media coverage and made it possible to face our past free of many of the restrictions, myths, and limitations that shaped it. Among other factors, after the satirical magazine *The Clinic* analyzed and described the present without euphemisms –calling the dictatorship a dictatorship and the dictator a dictator– historiography was compelled to grapple with topics from different, wider, less conventional perspectives. Scandalized or surprised, the public read and congratulated itself because it was finally beginning to face reality. It watched super-productions on television that showed the human, passionate, and sexual dimensions of the heroes of our community. And, much to the chagrin of the establishment, that same public selected Salvador Allende as “the great Chilean of our history.” After all this, how could we continue to approach history in the same way?

Events, phenomena, and processes such as the detention and trial of Pinochet in 1998, the “explosion of memory” related to the 1973 coup and the ensuing dictatorship, the election of the first woman president of Chile, globalization, and the change within Chilean society, all shaped the visions of our past in new ways. Amid the independence bicentennial celebrations, the commemoration of the September 11 coup, and the contradiction that the coup meant for Chile’s valued republican history that began in 1810, even the foundational event, the national celebration and the basis for national historical memory, was subject to revision.

This is not a flight toward the past in an effort to idealize the past and our history as a community, but rather a wave from the present toward independence and its protagonists. It is a re-examination of a phenomenon that was practically petrified, whose heroes and social models had become veritable fossils, obstacles to the identification and understanding of new models and social values that better reflect the national history of the twentieth century. The many who confronted the dictatorship also deserve entrance into the pantheon of the republic since they renewed the republican principles that, supposedly, are celebrated in honor of September 18, 1810, the beginning of the war of independence.

Still, September 18<sup>th</sup> and the meanings traditionally associated with it, hold tight to their privileged position. Year after year, practically since 1811, the same speeches, images, and metaphors have been repeated over and over; the same principle actors remain the only valid and unchanging reference points. Still, we see perspectives that question the republican, democratic, and egalitarian quality of the memory of September 18<sup>th</sup> and the overall meaning of the celebration. Moreover, there is the insinuation at least that, in addition to fostering a sense of belonging to a national community, the 18<sup>th</sup> has been used to legitimize a certain political and social order, to justify the predominance of a sector of society, to try to suppress the existence of a more plural, egalitarian, and democratic society—one of twentieth-century Chileans' essential aspirations, as is repeated despite evidence to the contrary. Some have even concluded that the meanings attached to independence and its celebrations function as veritable chains that contain Chilean society. They do not kill it, but they do hinder its movement toward a fully republican society. They erode, dent, lacerate, and debilitate the supposed aspirations of liberty and equality that, as is repeatedly argued, stimulate national development.

As recent historiography has established, Chile was organized "from above." Now we understand that the elites preserved their leading role, even as they underwent a shift in the social control they exercised from colonialism to republican legality. In the process, the patriotic celebrations fulfilled their functions. Through the creation of a collective identity—a national sentiment—they helped disguise the incoherence offered by a political system that, once organized into a republic, often ignored republican principles such as popular sovereignty. In exchange for the consolidation of the republic, the elite formed the people by making them participants of the nation. As recent studies show, there was a counter-revolution against independence; the construction of the state dispensed with democracy of the "peoples" in favor of citizen militarism and an oligarchy willing to stage coups in order to defend its position. The social construction of the community included some Chileans more than others.

In addition to the option of a celebration that evoked a civil act such as the democratic municipal council (*cabildo abierto*) over a military one, it seems clear that the elite's preference for September 18<sup>th</sup>, as the only commemorative celebration of the patriotic struggle, was related to the definition of independence as the central event that gave birth to Chile as a republic. The phenomenon hardened with the arrival of conservative sectors and the consolidation of their power in the late-1820s. An accomplishment of the creole elite, independence became the foundational moment in a trajectory that, by the 1830s, appeared to have been as successful as its depiction in *the* history of Chile that Gay began writing around the same time. Thus, the circumstances of the moment—Chile's celebrated institutional stability in the context of a Latin America overrun by caudillos, militarism, revolts, and dictatorships—also had a role in the process of unveiling the 18<sup>th</sup> as the only commemoration of the separatist struggle.

Since official festivities effectively reaffirm a certain social order, it is no surprise that independence celebrations have aimed to conserve the status quo, especially in terms of the predominance of the governing elite. In this sense, the national celebration also highlighted the hierarchies present within society, for only the participation of the dominant sector found expression in the event. On account of the meanings attributed to it and its status as an annual ritual, the official celebration became a didactic instrument,



a formidable means of social control, due to, among other factors, the symbolic message it transmits. In this interpretation, it is celebration –ritual and politics– as an instrument that legitimizes power. It is a celebration of the elites' efforts to achieve the institutional, social, and material success in the national development from independence on. That, at least, is what *the* history of Chile shows, especially when it exalts the order that characterized the republic. If order and stability were requirements for the existence of the new state, the patriotic celebration was an instrument of its preservation.

None of this should seem remarkable. Chilean elites have had such preponderant power that they have, on occasion, managed to transform their own interests and objectives into the foundations of national character. In this light, we can appreciate why the War of the Pacific (not to mention events of more recent history) is Chile's most important international conflict. As a well-researched text has recently demonstrated, the governing class advocated a policy of confrontation and territorial expansion as the most viable solution to the economic crisis in the 1870s. The incorporation of saltpeter into the Chilean patrimony thus became a permanent solution. The role of entrepreneurs and politicians –or of the “politician-entrepreneurs”– was fundamental to the “creation and diffusion of a demand that, arising from private interest, soon became a national task.” The study into the origins of the conflict shows that, “in actuality, there were no major differences between the interests of country and those of the ruling class.” We could well apply this conclusion to many phenomena and events in the history of Chile.

One way to appreciate the contributions of recent historiography is to understand what type of historical understanding it complements, rebuts, and of course, combats. The narration of essentially political, juridical, and military elements –details of events that shaped the creole independence movement, identification of the subjects who formed part of it, recreation of their actions and military struggles, their sacrifices for the patria, and the glossing of judicial documents that delineate the republican regime, among others– has constituted historical knowledge since Claudio Gay wrote his opus on Chile.

This is not an innocuous reality. The prevailing traditional conception of history contributed to the widespread acceptance of the authoritarianism that so violently affected Chile from 1973 to 1990. It is a notion of history that taught generations of Chileans that the core of historical evolution was political struggle, that rulers made history, that there was no continuity between successive stages, that each government started from scratch, disregarding the actions of previous administrations. The privileged place within traditional history for the respect for order, and the resulting authoritarianism that made it possible, confirms this assertion. This conception of history persisted despite the electoral reforms (begun in 1964 and deepened by Salvador Allende in 1970) that compromised the situation and the interests of the groups that, as history had taught, had a natural predominance. Deeply rooted among Chileans, these notions facilitated the acceptance of the authoritarian regime and the prolongation of a dictatorship, of which sectors of the Chilean elite were enthusiastic supporters and fortunate beneficiaries. Could the emergence of a government whose essential function was to erase the past and establish the country anew seem strange? Could the rise of a leader willing to eliminate vestiges of a supposedly rotten past seem incongruent?



THE FRAGMENTATION OF HISTORY<sup>11</sup>

Existing historiography related to the nineteenth century includes works on varied topics, protagonists, and areas. Another characteristic is that many of the new historiographical perspectives applied to Chile and its components are published in multi-author volumes. Collective books, which often introduce a vision or an object of study, quickly become necessary references. They illustrate an original or overlooked aspect addressed in more than a single period. There are studies of Chilean culture in its most diverse expressions and angles; the history of art and painting (though usually too closely linked to perspectives from art academia); social and urban history, for instance of the history of Santiago and few other cities (an angle that still offers multiple possibilities); regional and local history, especially of distant areas; the relationship between Chilean fiction and the formation of nationality; the basic facts and topics related to railroads; the evolution of elections, including presidential elections, forgotten for decades and now interpreted in more or less well-sustained but rather “naïve” approaches; national identity, uncovering an increasingly wide array of situations and manifestations that express and highlight heterogeneity; relations with Argentina (though still in a preliminary situation that has yet to address the transcendence of the matter); infancy and other life stages, showing that not only the actions of adult, male, urban, public heroes make history and that statesmen had lives and conditions before and after their public presence; historiography and other epistemologies (also in a very incipient state, as if it were impossible to deal with knowledge and its expressions in Chile); ecology and natural sciences, a clear expression that “all history is contemporary history”; censuses and statistics; cartography; the evolution of bureaucracy, as well as the instruments and mechanisms that bolstered public administration (these studies are provocative but scarce, given the breadth of the matter); the justice system, usually through a few emblematic cases rather than through a comprehensive vision that could explain its deplorable conduct (rooted in the marginalization of royalists by patriots in 1810) during the dictatorship; the Church in society, beyond its institutions and key public figures, relevant actions or the earthy manifestations of God; wars against Peru and Bolivia now in a less chauvinistic and more comprehensive social and political context; and “nature,” that is, of society’s relationship with it, in Chile.

Historians have also begun to grapple with, though in fragments, the history of the body in Chile, following trends developed in Europe (as is the case of the history of private lives and women). The body of Chileans—which historians of Chile had never before considered to be a “historical source”—confirms the corporality of the hypotheses proposed throughout this essay in relation to the objectives and topics of revisionist historiography.<sup>12</sup> The study of the body belies the notion that Chileans constitute a social,

<sup>11</sup> What we value today in our historiographical reality was once subject to criticism in other countries and in regards to other histories. See François Dosse, *La historia en migajas. De Annales a la “Nueva Historia”* (Valencia, Edicions Alfons El Magnànim, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> The violation of human rights and the persistent demands for justice in Chile, successive situations during the last forty-seven years, have transformed the body—whether wounded or disappeared—into a subject-object and a primary source. Sites of memory, to use a current term, are also expressions of this drama.

cultural, physical, and homogeneous body. Despite ethnic mixing, the persistence of social-ethnic-genetic groups has fostered the conditions for the social-cultural inequality characteristic of Chilean society, most eloquently visible in education and public health. This social-genetic stratification explains, in part, the country's social segregation, despite the fact that, as recent research has shown, 99% of the Chilean population has some indigenous ancestry.<sup>13</sup>

Historians continue to conduct economic and social history of the nineteenth century, though not at the pace commensurate with an era whose manifestations continue today. Monographs, usually one or two on a given topic, address such topics as the practices and agents of domestic and international commerce; rural society; the expansion of mines and industrial development; pragmatic protectionist policies; banks and their role in the marketplace; state-run monopolies and the commercial stock market; businessmen and politicians, merchants, entrepreneurs, and capitalists. These studies also deal with the historical problem of the poor; the expressions and organization of popular movements; mechanisms of labor discipline such as whips, wages, and laws; the sources of wealth such as minerals, haciendas, workshops, and factories; the wine industry; the prison system and mechanisms of coercion; the exportation of goods, especially minerals; mechanisms of foreign trade; commercial modernization; tastes and styles of fin de siècle high society; relationships and strategies of reproduction among lower-class families; the links between rural power and social structure; the technology applied to state-owned railroads; elite practices of charity that also reveal the needs of the poor; health and healthcare, diseases and plagues; the development of the middle class (the study of which has only recently begun and deserves much more attention given the importance attributed to it); and studies of particular regions in relation to such problems as how their geographic and political situation impacts commerce.

Works that study prostitution, spaces of death, the world of the family, crime and justice, divorce, and the vital action of giving birth uncover problems and topics related to everyday life, emotions, family institutions, transgressions, and social and cultural structures. Most of these studies are still focused on the urban reality of Santiago; however, following local history, the field has been expanding in recent years.

The topic—or rather, the problem—of saltpeter and its influence on the economy and society offers fundamental texts that have identified its main events, moments, and protagonists; some of the stages of its industrial evolution; the situation and identity of workers in the nitrate fields; the British influence on the activity; and the fundamental context of the economy as revealed through basic indexes of prices and salaries within the nitrate cycle.

Historians have begun to study systematically the essential traits of culture, education, art, and intellectual life during the nineteenth century through the history of education and fundamental institutions such as the University of Chile and national museums. They have studied elementary and secondary education, curricula, teaching practices; the production of knowledge; the endeavors of protagonists (albeit the same ones as

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<sup>13</sup> Victims of human rights violations, as well as their perpetrators and torturers, are also eloquent reflections of society and its endemic inequality.

always) such as Andrés Bello, Mariano Egaña, José Victorino Lastarria, and Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna; scientific and intellectual schools of thought; as well as the press, literature, and popular poetry.

Recent works have added to our understanding of the nineteenth century by addressing the expansion of suffrage, positions regarding women's citizenship, practically forgotten political practices such as presidential trips, and the political rise of military men in the late 1880s. Another contribution to recent historiography is the interpretation of the War of the Pacific as a type of political-institutional laboratory for Chile. In fact, the study of the War of the Pacific has yielded works that complement old chronicles by both explaining antecedents and interpreting consequences. Topics such as the heroic image, the role of women, and the lot of veterans and war orphans have all surpassed the traditional visions. Images, stories, and valuable sources such as battle testimonies have been published, though they retain the nationalist slant.

The study of the historical evolution of Chile in relation to that of its neighbors and other Latin American countries has also emerged in recent years. Although these studies have not relied on a comparative framework, they have striven to uncover other historical realities that, as antecedents, better explain our own evolution. Perhaps above all, they help us to appreciate the history of others, especially that of our neighbors. These works deal with the image of "the other" in relations between Argentina and Chile; state and nation in Chile and Brazil; the history that unites and separates Chile from Peru; the dialogue between the historical trajectories of Colombia and Chile; the political, economic, and cultural developments of Chile-Peru, Chile-Bolivia, and Chile-Argentina. These are pioneering efforts to understand the history of the national trajectories of the countries involved and of the conflicts that continue to resonate today.

A new genre of pseudo-history has arisen from casual essays, often compilations of previously published opinion columns and contemporary commentary that contain a few references to history, processes, and structures of the "national" evolution for analytic density. These are popular and digestible "histories" for the masses, which the "critical mass" would have overlooked were it not for their continual dissemination in the media that elevate them to the status of necessary reading for anyone who wishes to understand Chile today. Soon enough, when the media discovers the "latest trend," these histories will make their way to the shelves of used-book stores where they will aspire to become sources for a future history of Chile at the turn of the twentieth century.

The last quarter century has also been the era of the so-called "turns" —cultural, linguistic, historiographical, and reflexive, among others— that have drawn researchers' attentions to thematic, methodological, and theoretical innovations. In part, this has been a response to a multidisciplinary view that contributes analytical possibilities of and for historiographical practice. Chile has had its share of practitioners dedicated to the study of the nineteenth century. However, perhaps their only "novelty" resides in what we might call a postmodern "stylistic turn" that defines literary form and style as necessary conditions for historical writing, regardless of the merits of the research and the treatment of sources. Its manifestations are often easy to identify: brief, very brief, minimalist books with elegant covers; supposedly sharp and definitive essays with often shallow analysis, research, sources. Unable to sustain ideas, they offer a "poetic delirium" that their authors are obviously unable to see as fallacy. It is no accident that these

are often self-published editions. These works are a stark contrast to the bulky, lengthy, often carelessly written, weighty volumes of “muscle-toning history.”

We do not want to overlook primary-source collections (which we have compiled and published with great interest), which are particularly valuable when they make available material that is otherwise inaccessible or unknown in Chile. Such efforts have a long tradition within the public sphere. Now private companies, unions, publishing houses, foundations, universities, educational establishments, private individuals, and local and municipal governments also publish materials with the understanding that documents that register the past also reaffirm their identities.

Indeed, by now it should be clear that the chronicles of naturalists, photographs, etchings, collections of paintings, coins, and stamps, maps, letters, sheet music, patriotic symbols, vanity albums, postcards, callings cards, gestures, words, translations, natural species, landscape, advertisements, writings on common subjects, the narrative Pampas or the poetry of Tarapacá, reports from fiscal inspectors, memos from the prison system, unsent letters from insane asylum inmates, among many other sources used recently, are useful for researchers.

The variety of works and primary-source initiatives related to nineteenth-century Chile has widened the concept of document. It has also confirmed that sources are the necessary condition for new findings and plausible, convincing interpretations. Popular poetry, cartoons, photography, cartography, sheet music, local customs and practices, artistic manifestations, prices indexes, divorce trials, charity, emotions, sensibilities, affection, illnesses, placebos, birth, vital statistics, machines, instruments, techniques and professions, oratory, political practices, ceremonies, rites, trips and their architecture, explorations, flora and fauna, Andean passages, translations, language and orthography, gastronomy, recipes and banquets—these are only samples of the innovations proposed by recent historiography. Indeed, recent research has broadened the concept of historical. Above all, it has pulled back the curtain and dared to analyze the social and institutional reality of the nation during a century that culminated in civil war.

Changes in the historiography of the nineteenth century reflects the impact of the recent history of the dictatorship, the systematic human rights violations that characterized it, the need to understand what happened, the voices that break the silence and offer testimony, justice (as far as it is possible) for victims, and the impunity of many. These present realities reveal the authoritarian architecture that included persecutions and all kinds of abuses— as well as mass “pardons” and amnesties that eased the forgetting of deplorable acts and favored political reconciliation. Nonetheless, history has shown that such reconciliation is often a mirage, a representation of what we want to be, not in the past, but rather in the present that we live.

Another topic of recent historiographical development is the identification, appreciation, and study of scientists, professionals, and technicians whose writings introduced Chile, as well as its human and natural resources, to the outside and thus helped to delineate our reality and to promote growth and economic development. They also registered the shortcomings and problems during different moments and stages of our history. Most studies approach the topic from the perspective of the social history of science; as such, they tend to emphasize scientific practices and the contexts in which scientists have worked in South America. These studies allow us to appreciate the evolution from

imperial to national science, from natural to national history. Along the way, they have expanded the timeframe beyond the narrow confines of the nineteenth century in order to examine processes rooted in the eighteenth. Historians have rescued from anonymity writings by naturalists and explorers such as Claude Gay, Charles Darwin, Ignacy Domeyko, Rudolph Philippi, Amado Pissis, Carlos Reiche, Hans Steffen, William Cox, and many others who found in Chile the object of their curiosity. Even Humboldt, who never came so far south, constantly refers to this part of the continent in works such as *Cosmos*, his essay on the physical description of the world that was recently published in its entirety for the first time in Spanish by the Chilean Administration of Libraries, Archives, and Museums.

Another recent trend relates to work carried out in the context of international, inter-institutional, and interdisciplinary research groups that focus on the history of science. These efforts yield conferences and open up publishing opportunities that transcend local borders, within Latin America at least. Their contributions include new editions of writings by Alejandro Malaspina, Charles Darwin, and Robert Fitz-Roy. The 100-volume collection *Biblioteca Fundamentos de la Construcción de Chile* is part of an initiative that reflects the increasingly common practice among researchers to group and connect diverse entities, personalities, researchers, scientific fields, areas of knowledge, techniques, professions, capacities, geographies, and temporalities in an effort to understand our historical development and contribute to the broad perspective of the Science-World.

The *Biblioteca Fundamentos de la Construcción de Chile* brings together the works of scientists, technicians, professionals, and intellectuals who imagined, created, and depicted Chile. They brought attention to the value of certain regions and natural resources; they analyzed socioeconomic, political, and cultural problems; they proposed solutions to the challenges they encountered. The series showcases indispensable perspectives and important findings regarding Chile and the evolution of its components. It promotes the culture of science and technology, multidisciplinary education, and the formation of citizenship that are basic requirements for economic and social development. It also provides the educational system with an attractive and innovative way to help students appreciate scientific, technical, and professional endeavors such as research and exploration. History –as epistemology, education, and an element of cultural diffusion– has also begun to address these objectives systematically. This aspect of recent Chilean historiography is reflected not only in research and published works, but also in school curricula and in the programs carried out by history institutes.

Significantly, the social history of science has made Chile and its situation into a problem that goes beyond the national boundaries that have always restricted it. The numerous subjects addressed –the presence of scientists in South America, including its most southern tip, the research they conduct, the descriptions and comparisons they make, the study of local nature from the perspective of science and general classifications, the theories, methods, and instruments they use– all situate developments that historiography has often viewed as unique and unprecedented within a context of broader efforts, within a process of global recognition that also found expression in Chile. The study of scientific practices in their diverse scenarios, eras, and situations has made it possible for local and foreign researchers who live in Chile to research systematically

and write on subjects linked to other geographic and historical realities. Although currently this trend is the exception, it may well become another characteristic of historical work produced in Chile given the growing number of Chilean students in postgraduate programs abroad.

In some cases, recent research has addressed the behavior and interests of distant subjects. From the history of mentalities, it has identified the social parasites in the era of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico, who were as marginalized as their contemporary Chilean counterparts. From the perspective of cultural history, it has examined identities in cases such as Germans in Chile and Chileans in Germany during the nineteenth century. Addressing sociocultural factors, it has studied “decent people” in Lima during the early-republican period. This historiography goes far beyond national essences. It examines the forms of social discrimination, the meaning of travel as a universal experience, the role of the press, the justice system, and conflicts as mechanisms of power.

Given the conventional Latin American historiography that identified the history of each country as an essential element that formed its own national “character,” the invitation a few years ago to “Follow me to distant Spain” was extraordinarily refreshing and stimulating. It remains entirely current today. Another problem that has interested historians in recent decades is the study of intellectuals from the United States who began the systematic study of Hispanic topics in the nineteenth century. Studies examine how the definition of the “national” derived from knowledge about and contrast with “others.” They offer diverse ways of approaching history –historiography, the history of ideas and culture, and intellectual history– that help explain the formation of the national. At the same time, from a methodological perspective, they survey the state of the field and identify, order, classify, study, and interpret sources as they relate to historical problems. Finally, they contain a laudable social dimension, for they offer an eloquent appreciation of “history as experience” and grapple with issues of contemporary significance such as intellectual networks, globalization, and the reciprocal influences related to “local history,” the vision and comprehension of the other, and, the mechanisms of imperial expansion.

#### VISUAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC MEMORY

Another area that has undergone extraordinary development in recent decades is research into photographs, etchings, illustrations, cartography, and other aspects of the graphic vision of Chile, its inhabitants, and its natural and material components. This “visual memory” is evident in numerous publications and reproductions that, unlike those of other eras, include within the category of “Chileans” native peoples and all the other social sectors captured in images. It represents animal and mineral species, material works, buildings, views of towns, cities, landscapes, and everything else related to the graphic dimension of this portion of humanity and nature.

The numerous and varied texts may be divided into two groups. On the one hand, there are books produced randomly, born from an amateur’s enthusiasm or a passing initiative. Without providing historiographical analyses, these titles feature primary sources such as collections of stamps, coins, medals, machinery, dresses, weapons, and any



other objects the reader might evoke, organized as if in a museum display case. There are also images of railroads, bridges, plazas, markets, streets, and *animitas* (spontaneous memorials that commemorate victims of violent deaths). These are valuable as historical sources. They constitute real, if unconscious, contributions to the arduous work of broadening the concept of what a document is and its diffusion as cultural patrimony. On the other hand, there are works that spring from systematic research, in which images are compiled as part of a process of recognizing, understanding, and explaining. They combine sources and historiography. Books such as *Human Zoos*, which features photographs of people from Tierra del Fuego and Mapuches in nineteenth-century Paris, reflect interpretations, desires, and purposes that go beyond the simple presentation of the existence of a reproduced object. Their images are intimately associated with texts that address, among other topics, identity, forms of production, work, exploitation, local practices and customs, a state or situation of a particular moment, as well as photographic and scientific practices.

Such works are able to accomplish these objective because, among other antecedents, there have been previous discussions about photography as document, materiality, aesthetics, practice and technique, definitive epistemology— all materialized in numerous articles and interdisciplinary books in which images act as connectors of knowledge, giving rise to a visual perception that complements conventional historical understandings. Authors have referred to such works as “stories of the eye and the camera.” They offer ethnic identities, images and imaginaries from the end of the world, visual anthropology, representations of otherness in the Norte Grande, portraits of power, landscapes, and photographs, among other matters of interest and still other proposals and foundations for historical research. Photography has been addressed at length here because it is perhaps the support-document-text-technology-art that has been most discussed and analyzed in recent years from the perspective of aesthetics, anthropology, ethno-history, history, and even ethno-aesthetics. Moreover, as the expansion of work that focuses on photography makes clear, photography offers an increasing number indexes and collections edited by author, series, and topics that contribute new categories and criteria of study and selection.

Other materials that have also seen remarkable recent development include historical cartography, drawings, paintings, etchings, and watercolors that represent the territory and the landscape of this natural, social, historical reality called Chile. They have not been subjected to the same degree of systematization and analysis as photography, but they are the product of research in archives throughout the world. This effort has brought together dispersed artifacts that are often not catalogued and difficult to access, such as the cartography of Chiloé, Valdivia, and Magallanes, as well as the more modest and less rigorous collections on Santiago, Valparaíso, and other Chilean cities. Cartography in general is still in a stage of exploration, recompilation, and identification—necessary steps of efforts that promise to yield rigorous studies and interpretations. Nonetheless, there is a sufficient quantity of indexes, catalogues, maps, and graphic collections to begin to delineate the itinerary of how observers have viewed the Chilean landscape. These materials also show that the historical cartography of Chile is part of a process, ways of viewing, ways and incentives to occupy, colonize, and exploit. They also reflect a reality or a plan. Both the representations of the landscape and cartography are



necessary to understand such phenomena as territorial consolidation and the forms and rhythms of representing nature and society associated with Chile and its components.

The publication of collections of drawings and stamps from the National Historical Museum, etchings from the Malaspina Expedition of the late eighteenth century, Gay's *Atlas of the Physical and Political History*, photographs from the Scientific Commission of the Pacific from the 1860s, and *Illustrated Chile* by Recaredo Tornero all bring together a significant corpus of representations that cover a century and offer the systematic configuration of Chile as an image and as a subject-object. In their diversity of angles and contents, these publications underscore the heterogeneity of the material, social, and institutional realities that written texts, documents in the traditional conception, and historiography have previously represented as homogeneous, uniform, and even monolithic.

#### THE EXTINCT STAR

The star on the Chilean flag and on the national coat-of-arms represents the situation of the country found at the edge of South America. It points to the unitary system that has characterized the country since 1810. The so-called "solitary star" also refers to the republican regime and the liberty that patriots struggled for at the time of the flag's creation in 1817. The intensity of these aspirations was of such magnitude that the star came to signify the state and the new nation. Transformed by the artifact of material expression into an omnipresent reality throughout the territory, republicanism and liberty also reflect the plan, the program, and the aspiration of the organizers of the state who regarded them, together with order and stability, as the only way of life and a guarantee of the new community's survival. Subsequently, most representations of Chile speak (evidence to the contrary notwithstanding) of how Chile fulfilled the destiny spelled out by the so-called "fathers of the nation." This is the nation that Chileans have interpreted fervently as the "fortunate copy of Eden" and the "sanctuary against oppression" since the establishment of the National Hymn in 1847.

Nonetheless, in the light of what historiography has revealed systematically during the last twenty-five years, the notions of Chile, summarized metaphorically in these verses, belong to a long-dead, distant star whose light nonetheless still shines. It is part of an imaginary "stellar landscape" –the pondered history of Chile– that does not exist in reality, not at least in its most edifying versions. Nonetheless, the light continues to travel. It was a useful representation, perhaps necessary for the cohesion of the nation in the nineteenth century, which allegedly guaranteed Chile's viability as a republic. However, by examining concrete subjects and living conditions, historiography shows that the reality that made the star possible no longer exists. Not only is it extinct; it never really existed, except as an aspiration, a program, a placebo. It was a self-perception, a fictitious Chile that justified independence and the organization of the nation. But the study of the evolution of history beyond the public sphere shows that it either never existed or has gone out, even if it continues to shed light. The representation evolved light years away from the people who make, suffer, and confront the reality of their material life.

Like a light in space that still shines despite the extinction of its source, traditional historiography's concept of Chile continues to travel, giving rise to a sky full of myths

and phantoms, of notions about an entity that never was. The arduous struggle for survival; modernity and its complexities; globalization and its challenges; and the growing inequality that the model has been unable to ameliorate all reveal that such a Chile never existed. Unlike the edifying vision of a national history, a large percentage of the population experienced history, much as it does today, as a series of objective living conditions, despite the extraordinary accomplishments that Chile has reached as a community throughout its passionate history.

The concrete events and the actual situation of people do not fit into the edifying representations. Chile's trajectory has made it possible to understand the history that identifies, reveals, and explains the everyday life and the hard existence of the people who shaped the republic, the state, and the nation called Chile. Historiography has studied the elements that have shaped Chile's history and its development as a society. It has helped explain our situation and perhaps the social malaise we experience. By revealing the elites in front of a mirror and the sentiments that have motivated them in certain periods, by showing the path of capitalism in Chile, historiography has identified factors of *longue duree* that shed light on the dominant sectors' resistance to change, as well as their attitudes and behaviors that explain the vulnerability and the inequality in Chile's economic structure.

Many changes of this era –the country's historical evolution, its insertion into globalization, the strengthening of local identities, the painful lessons of human rights, the necessary respect for minorities, the empowerment of consumers, the political system's lack of legitimacy and representation, the expansion of an informed middle class, the rise of new actors such as children and women, and of course the varied subjects who make up the people, the elderly and the youth– have expanded the scope of social actors within Chilean history. They have widened, nuanced, diversified, and explained how the country developed into its current form, how Chileans experienced the process, and how it shaped them as they confronted the concrete challenges of life through knowledge of their history. No longer seeking uniformity, this history is enriched by fragmentation and heterogeneity. It no longer purports to summarize a single national history; rather, it reveals the path of the diverse actors who have developed in Chile. It apprehends diversity, different rhythms, variety, richness, and the possibility that each of these dynamics offers.

The appreciation of plurality and the acceptance of differences is, perhaps, the main transformation the country has undergone at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as the historiography that studies its trajectory. The change has been slow, structural, often difficult to understand, but forceful. Among its multiple manifestations, none has been as spectacular as the visions through which traditional history pondered the heroic struggle of the state in order to form the nation. New ways of writing Chile's history arise from the need to study subjects of varied conditions and situations. The protagonists of the present –masses, consumers, citizens, sexual and racial minorities, and civil society– are also the protagonists of history. This is a contemporaneity that, we hope, will someday be historical, and not a shooting star, or even a dead star such as the conception of the past that, for far too long, has prevailed in Chile.

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Recent overviews include *Historia de Chile. 1808-1994* (España, Cambridge University Press, 1988) by Simon Collier and William F. Sater; Brian Loveman's, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (USA, Oxford University Press, 2001); *Historia de los chilenos* (Taurus, 4 vols., 2006-2010) by Sergio Villalobos; Gonzalo Vial's overview, *Chile. Cinco siglos de historia. Desde los primeros pobladores prehispánicos, hasta el año 2006* (Zig-Zag, 2 vols., 2009); and *Historia mínima de Chile* by Rafael Sagredo Baeza (Mexico, El Colegio de México and Turner, 2014).

*Historia de América Latina* edited by Leslie Bethell in Cambridge University Press (Barcelona, Crítica, 16 vols., 1990-2002); *Historia general de América Latina* by UNESCO (España, Trotta, 9 vols., 2000); and Marcello Carmagnani *et al.*, *Para una historia de América* (Mexico, El Colegio de México, 1999), also approach Latin American history in the context of processes and periods viewed from diverse perspectives.

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<sup>14</sup> Since most of the works listed were published in Santiago, only other places of publication are provided. Given the impossibility of providing a list of articles, almost all are books. Works written by the author that are mentioned and addressed in this essay include: "Elites chilenas del siglo XIX. Historiografía," in *Cuadernos de Historia*, N° 16, (1996); "Chile: de *finis terrae* imperial a 'copia feliz del edén' autoritario," in José Carlos Chiaramonte, Carlos Marichal and Aimer Granados (eds.), *Crear la nación. Los nombres de los países de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2008); "La Independencia de Chile y sus cadenas," in Marco Palacios (ed.), *Las independencias hispanoamericanas. Interpretaciones 200 años después* (Bogotá, Grupo Editorial Norma, 2009); and *Historia mínima de Chile*.

<sup>15</sup> When the first volume of *Historia de la República de Chile: el fin de la monarquía y los orígenes de la República, 1808-1826* (ZIG-ZAG, 2013) was published in 2013, editors Juan Eduardo Vargas and Fernando Silva announced that the series would go up to 1973. Previously, volumes dedicated to Chile had been published as part of the series *América Latina en la Historia Contemporánea* (Madrid: Mapfre/Taurus, 2010-2014). The volumes published so far include "1808-1830. Crisis imperial e independencia," "La construcción nacional" (1830-1880); and "La apertura al mundo" (1880-1930). Despite good intentions to feature original contributions, so far both series are collections of monographs that deal with well-trodden topics, some of which were written by authors mentioned in the bibliography.

In the last twenty-five years, there have also been several specialized journals of varied publishing schedules, quality, and impact. Influential publications no longer published include *Nueva Historia* (London, Asociación de Historiadores Chilenos, 1981-1989) and the special 1990 edition of *Proposiciones* of SUR dedicated to "Chile, su historia y el bajo pueblo." Currently published journals that have had some impact, albeit on specific topics, include the *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de la Historia* (Academia Chilena de la Historia, since 1933), *Historia* (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, since 1961), *Magallania* (Universidad de Magallanes, since 1970), *Cuadernos de Historia* (Universidad de Chile, since 1981), *Revista de Historia*, Universidad de Concepción, since 1981), *Diálogo Andino* (Universidad de Tarapacá, since 1982), *Dimensión histórica de Chile* (Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación, since 1984), and *Historia social y de las mentalidades* (Universidad de Santiago de Chile, since 1999). A relatively new journal is *Bicentenario. Revista de Historia de Chile y América* (Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, since 2002). All of these journals feature aspects of, and occasionally significant contributions to, the historiography of Chile. *Historia*, the only journal indexed by ISI, features a webpage with digital versions of all issues and the annual bibliographic lists.<sup>16</sup>

For a more in-depth view of historiography and sources, and of Chile's development in the world of digital information, see the country's main cultural website [www.memoriachilena.cl](http://www.memoriachilena.cl) coordinated by the National Library.

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<sup>16</sup> Also deserving mention is the journal *Chúngara. Revista de Antropología Chilena* (Universidad de Tarapacá, published since 1972), which periodically publishes historical research on the nineteenth century.

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