Occupying and Reclaiming a National Historical Monument

The Casa Central of the Universidad de Chile

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Conceptual and ethnographic examination of the ideology that has given form to one of Chile's most representative national historical monuments, the Casa Central of the Universidad de Chile, indicates that monuments are a complex social construction of historically situated ideologies and practices and that, simply by being artifacts, they are always at risk of never achieving unanimity as to their truth. The controversial nature of the monument's meaning presents us with a problem with regard to its verisimilitude and its incorporation into a shared history. It may be suggested that the historical meaning of a monument is manifested in its commemoration and in corporal uses and practices.

Un examen conceptual y etnográfico de la ideología que le ha dado forma a la Casa Central de la Universidad de Chile—uno de los monumentos históricos nacionales más representativos del país— revela que un monumento es una construcción social compleja de ideologías y prácticas situadas en un contexto histórico y que, simplemente por ser un artefacto, siempre correremos el riesgo de nunca alcanzar unanimidad en cuanto a su verdad. La naturaleza controvertida del significado del monumento nos plantea un problema con relación a su verosimilitud y a su incorporación en una historia compartida. Podemos decir que el significado histórico de un monumento se manifiesta en su conmemoración y en usos y prácticas corporales.

Keywords: *Monument, Heritage, Commemoration, Public education, Chile*

This study proposes to read the ideology that has given substance to one of the most representative historical monuments of Chile, the Casa Central of the Universidad de Chile, the nation's first public university and an objective testament to its republican history. The university was "thought of as a monumental

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work, of solid masonry, to last for all time" (*El Ferrocarril*, April 1, 1863). Its first rector, Andrés Bello, sought to make knowledge and public education the articulating pillar and nucleus of the nation's progress.

Nevertheless, history indicates that the erection of a monument always carries a challenge regarding its significance as heritage. Although heritage serves to unify a nation, the inequalities in its construction and ownership require that it be analyzed as an area of material and symbolic struggle between classes and social groups (García Canclini, 1999: 18). This means that a monument must be seen as a complex social construction of historically situated ideologies and practices. At the same time, what is constituted as heritage belongs to the nation and contains an idea of history that needs to be defended. Historically, its establishment has been the role and privilege of the state and its institutions.

This study asserts that, because of its being an artifact and especially because of its beauty, size, and placement, a monument may evolve into a provocation and risk not achieving unanimity as to its truth. As an area of economic, political, and symbolic conflict, heritage is penetrated by public and private agents and social movements through discursive and performative action (Taylor, 2015). The contradictions in its use and disuse are shaped by the relation between these sectors in each historical period (García Canclini, 1999: 19). The controversial question of meaning raises the issue of authenticity of the monument and of its incorporation into a shared history. As a hypothesis, we propose that the construction of historical truth is always risky. The meaning of the form is fixed in the patrimonial archive, but it is realized through celebration, commemoration, and corporal practices. Nationality is exercised through discourse and performance.

What we are trying to understand, conceptually and ethnographically, is precisely the contestation and realization of the truth of the foundational past expressed through heritage, its concrete present, and its possible futures. As García Canclini (1999: 22) warns, despite the immense importance of preserving and defending the nation's heritage, the more challenging problem today is its social uses. It is here that we must concentrate our efforts of research, reconceptualization, and cultural policy. A comprehensive investigation of these issues will require analytical and empirical discussion of the monument's territorial setting, aesthetics, archival discourse, and commemorative and performative practices. The analysis presented here is based on the premise that places of memory are the product not of the fading of memory, as Pierre Nora (2001) states, but of its excess. It is the excess of memories that allows us to analyze the Casa Central of the Universidad de Chile as a place of contested collective memories. As memory is linked to facts and places, the city is necessarily transformed into the locus of the unfolding of that collective memory (Rossi, 1971: 226).

THE STUDY AND ITS METHOD

The research that forms the basis of this article has as its premise that cities and their monuments are in constant discourse through writing, rewriting, and the incarnation of their signifying forms. Andreas Huyssen (2003) points out

that the reading of cities as texts is as old as the literature on modern cities. When memory is integrated into this textual polyphony, multiple readings of the city emerge. But, as Diana Taylor (2015) warns, an understanding of cities also requires us to reorient the traditional way of studying social memory and cultural identities in the Americas. Literary and historical documents have lost their meaning-making monopoly, Taylor states; instead, it is necessary to look through the lens of the body's performance. Examining only literary documents and historical archives presents significant limits to the search for comprehensive keys to understanding cultures, cities, and patrimonies. Instead the task should be to observe performance behavior that is not always recognized in texts and documents but nevertheless has an important role in the conservation of memory and the consolidation of identities. Examples of this are the dances held in front of the Universidad de Chile, which not only operate as dynamic ceremonies of transference, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity (Taylor, 2015: 28–34), but also present the possibility of the transfiguration and appropriation of the patrimonial symbol that is this institution of higher learning. When the past is in the process of disappearing, the challenge is to try to revive it, situate it, and democratize it.

The methodological focus of this study is qualitative and has two foundations: the heritage narrative of the state, a complex group of signifying structures linked to the orientation and recognition of a monumental history that stems from archival practices, and the narratives of the "other," corporal commemorative expressions in which residents of the city recognize the political and cultural model in this heritage narrative (de Castro, 2005; de Certeau, 1990). This study is situated conceptually and methodologically in these two dimensions. It investigates the materiality and form of the monument through the processes and narratives imbedded in the archives of state heritage. It also examines the monument through the meaning embodied in objects and the practices of citizens. The characterization of a patrimonial performance incorporates an understanding of the institutional framework that orders and orients the decisions of creation and recognition of the monument's form (systematization of the archives of the Consejo Nacional de Monumentos) and the staging of the objects, landmarks, uses, commemorations, and social mobilizations in which the discourse on monumental buildings, memory, and imagination take place. To achieve this, we conducted an ethnographic study that took two years and included 40 interviews with patrons and casual users of the Universidad de Chile.

MONUMENT, MOBILIZATION, AND DEMAND

During the first months of 2006, Chile was surprised by a million secondary school students taking to the streets and occupying its buildings. This was the largest social demonstration since the antidictatorship protests of the 1980s. Dressed in their uniforms and wearing their backpacks, these students took over the great avenues of the historical center of the city, and Chilean society nicknamed them "penguins" for their blue-and-white school uniforms. In a week the mobilization had embraced the whole country and gradually

Figure 1. Student demonstration in front of the Casa Central, May 8, 2014. (Photo Francisca Márquez, 2014)

expanded to include university students. Its demands ranged from free public transport to the annulment of the Organic Constitutional Law on Education promulgated by Augusto Pinochet to privatize the educational system. Currently, 10 years after the mobilization and 25 years after the dictatorship, huge banners hung on the façade of the university proclaim that the memory of those students is still alive and that they still demand the right to a free public university offering a high-quality education.[1]

In this exercise of demands and demonstrations, the historical monument became a node of obligatory encounters that united and coordinated the marches and mobilizations of these student groups. In front of this building, rows of students danced and sang, carried banners, and drew graffiti that expressed their demands. Departing from the Plaza Italia, the navel public space of the city, the students paraded along the Alameda in the direction to La Moneda, the presidential palace. The *batucada* dance troupes, with their drums and whistles, gave rhythm to the parade of colorful squads organized by university, political party, or association. Alongside, in the rear, or dispersed in the crowd, masked youths waited for their turn to address and display their fury at the city and its materialism.

The continuation of the promenade and the performances in front of the university (never at the more conservative Pontíficia Universidad Católica, which is also on the avenue) suggested that only Chile's primary public university could contain the students' demands. Overall, it was very clear that the declarations and letters directed at the authorities had proved insufficient, making it necessary for these young people to reinvent their language and keep on marching, dancing, and occupying the public spaces of the city (Figure 1).

As Bernardo Subercaseaux (2014) states, opposing the "clothed" (or perhaps "disguised"?) memory that enveloped the university during the decades of the dictatorship was a "naked memory" constituted by the cathartic investigation and expression of new possibilities of realization of that primary and foundational truth. Could these young people have made themselves heard in a "literate city" (Rama, 2004) without these displays of their bodies and artifacts? Could these marches, dances, and calls for a public education have found a

Figure 2. Façade of the Casa Central with graffiti. (Photo Gonzalo Peña, 2013)

more symbolic place than the university, in the civic hub of the city? The university has become the epicenter of the movement—its occupations, marches, slogans, and demands. The walls of this grand building have served as both chalkboard and stage for the call for education for all: "The National March for Nationalization and Democratization," "Free Education Now!," "Let's Stop Profits with Education," "Welcome, Santiago, the Capital of Public Education 2013," "Student Struggle," and "In Occupation" are some of the expressions that can be read on the building's main facade. Located in the center of the Alameda, the university and its walls were also marked by demands in addition to those of the students—an indication that the discontent and anger went beyond matters of education and boiled over into other domains such as those of affordable housing, animal rights, feminist claims, and abortion rights: "Struggle Is Accomplished Daily," "My People Rise in Rebellion," "National Association of Mortgage Debtors (ANDHA)," "ANDHA Chile in Struggle," "Freedom for Dogs," "Revolution, Don't Vote," "Say Yes to Abortion!," "Suck It, 'Mi Cabo' Law," "Woman, Your Liberation Is the Revolution!!!," "We Are All Juan Pablo Jiménez," "Revolution to the Streets, Destroy the Establishment," "Look at Yourself . . . You Are Not Free," "Hey! . . . The Nation Is There, Waiting," "I Tell You to Sit Down or What?" (Mafalda) (Figure 2).

Although the environment surrounding this institution of higher learning overflows with pedestrians and movement, very few people enter it. Those who walk by recognize, however, in its façade the republican idea of a public education, and therefore it is "not only our monument but everyone's." Interviews with pedestrians allow one to see that those who visit and observe this monument tend to notice two features: the form and color of the façade and the social uses that the students have bestowed on it with their bodies, their banners, and their graffiti. The architectural form appears in dialogue with the social attributes that surround it. The monument informs, instructs, thereby becoming, by definition, a pedagogical possibility for those who observe it, perceive it, use it, and occupy it. The form of the Casa Central and its ochre color speak of a past era, a history that one would want to protect because it has not yet been attained. The Universidad de Chile, in these terms, is a façade, a

place, but, above all, it expresses and symbolizes the civic spirit of those who are occupying it and giving it life.

Strategically placed on the Alameda Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins, the university is, even now, a privileged witness to political demands, political struggles, and the daily labors of the capital's residents—the Instituto Nacional behind it (the most prestigious public school), the statue of its first rector, Andrés Bello, in front, the university's archives to the east, the old libraries to the west, and right in front of its door the Universidad de Chile metro station. At this station more than 95,000 passengers disembark daily (Metro, 2007), making this point a place of convergence and incessant movement. With the informal commerce and bartering on its wide sidewalks, the workers coming and going from their jobs, the students engaged in conversations in its vicinity, the homeless embodying the remains of the city, and the improvised kitchens with their steaming foods, the university is never alienated from urban life or from the great commemorations of the nation. In its surroundings, urban life bubbles, and while the bookstores and used-book kiosks are an obligatory stop for every citizen in search of literature, its wide sidewalks also permit university students and merchants to live together in a complex amalgam of conversations and exchanges. The diverse uses of the walls of this institution of higher learning—providing shade for a car or a market stall, a backdrop for banners and graffiti, a shelter for dogs, shade for pedestrians suffering from the heat—make this space an open market in the middle of the city. Its effervescence contrasts with the neoclassical formality of its interior and the dusty silence of the Andrés Bello archive next door.

In this effervescent space, all of the pedestrians interviewed knew and understood its history and the successive occupations and student demonstrations that have occurred there:

> I know about the history of this building. . . . This place is also known as the "palace of the university," and it is also a part of the traditional zone of Santiago. (a man who works in the vicinity)

> Andrés Bello played a role in the creation of this university and for this reason they have his statue outside. (a student)

> The university is important for the education it offers and for its central place beside La Moneda, on the Alameda; it is practically in the center of Chile. (a woman sitting in the shade of a tree)

There were also those who, without knowing the details of its history, daily contemplated the façade and the students standing in front of it. Their knowledge of the students' demands was expressed in the attentive stares that they directed toward the canvases and graffiti of this institution of higher learning:

> The muddy wall here was a while back filled with posters and things. (a man who walks by daily on his way to work)

> I don't know its history, but I saw in photos that previously it was full of posters and murals. (a young woman hurrying to her job)

> I agree with that sign that said "No to Profit," It's true, here we are all in debt. (a mother observing the graffiti at the base of a wall)

Still others made of the institution of higher learning a strategic space for their daily subsistence—used booksellers and sellers of various objects on the sidewalk. For some the place is the epicenter of the social effervescence of the capital. A used-book dealer on San Diego Street explained:

> I have had my bookstall for 35 years now. Why would I lie to you? Being here is a privilege. The students come here, worried, to ask me for a book that they cannot find in the library, the mothers search for a book for their children, inveterate readers. It is very difficult to leave here with your hands empty—the best prices with the most variety in Santiago. Being close to the university not only benefits us but also benefits the kids because they can hide here when the repression becomes harsh, when the water cannons assault them; they know that our doors are always open to help them.

For the informal merchants, the relationship is more symbiotic. Their products are more to the students' taste—music, pirated movies, food and pastries, bread and whole-grain products, and low-cost clothing for young people. A young informal vendor of organic products explained:

> When there is an occupation, it becomes very good for my business; everything I sell I can sell that day; the kids know that my bread is good, I bring it fresh. Clearly, when things become bad and the "pigs" [police] arrive one has to escape, but I have never lost anything. We have an agreement. If it becomes bad, I escape by running and they [the students] take the bread and my other merchandise inside the university until the repression is over. I have never lost anything here.

Although the occupation, with its various uses and signs on the walls, interrupted the historical and monolithic meaning of the monument, weekly cleaning of its walls and its sidewalks signified that the struggle continued.

HISTORY, ARCHIVES, AND PERFORMANCE

In 1841 Minister of Public Education Manuel Montt conceived the idea of founding a national university with the goal of promoting education and cultivating the humanities and the sciences. The project was developed by Andrés Bello, and in 1843, under the government of Manuel Bulnes and the rectorship of Bello himself, the Universidad de Chile was inaugurated. From 1844 on, the university functioned in a temporary location next to the Instituto Nacional until the construction of the present building began in 1863. The Frenchman Lucien Ambroise Hénault and the Chilean Fermín Vivaceta were the architects. The construction of the Casa Central was concluded nine years later.

Andrés Bello's university project contemplated "general education, the education of the nation, as one of the most important and privileged goals that a government can concentrate on; it is a primary and urgent necessity; it is the foundation of any solid progress; as the indispensable cement of republican institutions" (*Discurso*, September 17, 1843). For the same reason, Bello believed

that it was necessary and urgent to promote literary and scientific education.[2] The task, as he saw it, was to "adapt and restore" the sciences to Chile's environment, its customs, its industry, its soil, and its people. So, the university was born of the young republic.

NEOCLASSICAL FORMS AND SETTING IN PUBLIC SPACE

The architect Hénault stamped on the main building of the university a French neoclassical style that produced the impression of austerity. Its façade, always ochre and white, was informative about its central location in the city and in the ideology of the nation. Fronting the Alameda, the university overlooks the civic center and is observed by the rushing multitudes that occupy its wide sidewalks. Since its founding, its placement in the public space of the city has been an object of concern. Only two blocks from La Moneda, the mint that Manuel Bulnes made into a presidential palace in 1845, the Casa Central can be considered an explosive component of an incipient civic axis stretching the length of the Alameda.

UNIVERSITY REFORM

The current student demonstrations and occupations of the Casa Central are not the only ones known to history. Demonstrations in favor of a more democratic and modern education have been a part of this institution of higher learning for decades. The beginning of the twentieth century[3] saw the development of a movement for university reform that would reach its peak between 1967 and 1973. Propelled by the student movement, with the support of the faculty and administrators, the idea of a need for more university autonomy was introduced. This reform achieved profound changes in academic culture, including cogovernance (after 1967) and the participation of representatives of the university community in decision making and the election of authorities—all ideas that continued to be called for by subsequent student generations. The principle involved was a commitment between the university and society, a principle that was present at the founding of the university, although then in terms of reaffirming the role of the literate elites in training and educating the illiterate society (Rama, 2004). On May 24, 1968, the students of the Federación Estudiantil de Chile (Chilean Student Federation—FECh) occupied the Casa Central for three weeks to press for the ideals that mobilized them.[4] The struggle for university reform did not, however, remain on the margin of national upheavals; its resolution and end took place on September 11, 1973, with the military coup and overthrow of President Salvador Allende's government (Garretón and Martinez, 1985) and the subsequent purge of the Universidad de Chile.

RUPTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL CLEANSING

The coup impacted the university by aborting the reformist process. The policies against it involved not only the dismissal of academics and students but also the closing of provincial centers and the end to the institution's status of state university (Subercaseaux, 2014: 167). The military government

designated rectors who, until 1987, were air force officers and other military (Huneeus, 1988). These were years in which, along with the dismantling, there were denunciations from inside the university, with academics, administrators, and students suffering dismissal and detention. These were years of cleansing—cleansing of walls, of students, of professors, of classrooms, and university centers—in order to "disinfect" the image of a university in revolt based on the ideology of the overthrown regime (Errázuriz, 2009).

In the same year, the university experienced intervention by the military junta, and in the 1980s it suffered a great purge at the hands of the same military regime. As Darío Oses (1998) reminds us, it was "sold in parcels so that not even its shadow remains." The neoliberal program of the dictatorship achieved the dismembering of its regional centers and some of its departments, leaving only its centers in Santiago.[5] The law decreed, furthermore, the end of the differential school fees that had allowed the majority of the students to obtain a public higher education free of charge.

The military intervention in the universities was understood by the regime as a first step toward the complete restructuring of the higher education system in the opposite direction from that undertaken by the reform.[6] Between 1978 and 1990, the most radical measures of the counterreform were implemented in the universities. The institutional redesign, which had as its basis a presidential directive signed by Pinochet in 1979, proposed that "secondary education and, especially, higher education constitutes an exceptional situation for youth, and those who enjoy it should earn it by their effort . . . and, furthermore, it should be paid for or returned to the national community so that those that can do it now or in the future can benefit" (Pinochet, 1979). The founding principle of the university of access to higher education for all was abolished. In 1981 the military regime advocated the development of new private universities at the expense of public ones.[7]

PURGING THE HERITAGE

Paradoxically, a year after the military coup, the Casa Central was declared a national historical monument (Ministry of Education Decree 11, 1974-07-01). Years later, in the midst of the dictatorship in 1989, the university and its vicinity, bounded by New York Street, the stock market, and the Union Club, were declared a historical district (Expedientes, Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales [hereafter CMN] File 13.1, 1989). This interest in recovering the national heritage was equivalent to the rescue of Chilean identity and the patriotic spirit. Between 1974 and 1989, the largest number of declarations as heritage in the twentieth century was issued in the historical foundational district of Santiago. The military junta's crusade to "reestablish the national soul" threatened by politicians and international Marxism symbolized the reconstruction of a nation that had been degraded (Errázuriz, 2009: 147).[8]

During the 1970s and the 1980s, after its declaration as heritage in 1976, the university undertook the renovation of its southern façade and the surrounding environment (CMN File 13.1, 1976–2003). The armed forces' intervention was framed by the context of "operations of expurgation and cleansing," whose central aim was dismantling the Unidad Popular project (Errázuriz, 2009: 138).

In the case of the Casa Central, protective grids were installed on the eastern end of the building to avoid problems of "hygiene, misuse, difficulty monitoring, the housing of delinquents and homeless, . . . bombings," and social mobilizations (CMN File 13.1, 1977). With the earthquake of March 1985 and the civic demonstrations against the dictatorship, the issue of the grids and security gave way to projects for restoring the original façade and the interior and concern about the public space in the vicinity (CMN File 13.1, 1985). These were years of antidictatorship mobilizations and protests as the university returned to occupy its symbolic place on the Alameda. It was then that the necessity of conserving and restoring the "originality of the building" was raised, its materiality divorced from history, just as had been done with La Moneda (Bianchini, 2012). In this "campaign for restoration," the recovery of heritage was the rehabilitation of an "original essence" for nationalist purposes (Errázuriz, 2009). The university was thus purged and emptied of its history and its democratizing achievements to be presented and celebrated as the leading university of the nation, an "icon-fetish" of national origins. The Casa Central was molded according to the ideology of a nation that believed itself loyal to its founding principles. A return to the "original" in this case meant the "reestablishment' of the institution of higher learning as a neoclassical symbol of the young independent nation, distant from the political dimension that it had acquired during Allende's Unidad Popular period. The military dictatorship intervened in the university in two ways: first it destroyed it by hybridizing the institution and the centers of the Universidad de Chile, and later it declared it a national monument, "restoring" the building and the institution by relocating it in a distant past, far from the government of the working class.

REESTABLISHMENT BY THE HORSES OF THE APOCALYPSE

In 1988, a white horse and two naked jockeys, Pedro Lemebel and Francisco Casa, entered one of the campuses of the university to "reestablish" it. The poet Carmen Berenguer held the reins of the horse, and Nadia Prado played the flute. They were the Horses of the Apocalypse. "It occurred to us to go by horse, like Pedro de Valdivia [Santiago's Spanish founding father], and nude, like Lady Godiva," one of the jockeys said. "We acquired a mare in Peñalolén and took it to Macul con las Encinas. There we took off our clothes and mounted the animal. It was very beautiful, like a sculpture in motion. It was a tremendously erotic image, with a large measure of homosexuality."[9] With this performance, symbolically, the university, which had been mistreated and stripped by the dictatorship, was refounded not on the basis of its masculine and misogynist tradition but on that of the transgressive body of homosexuality that had been largely silenced and hidden in Chilean society.

RECOVERY AND RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL

With the return of democracy to the nation in 1990, the discussions about saving, recovering, and restoring the original characteristics of the building and its façade continued. The evidence of the deterioration of the public higher

education system and the ravages to the faculty, students, and curriculum created a sense of urgency about the return to its founding principles. The nation was confronted with evidence of the dismantling of public education;[10] enrollment in higher education had decreased by a sixth during the years of the dictatorship (Riesco, 2007). The rescue of the essence and primary vocation of the building as a guardian of public education was part of the concern for remodeling but this time in a manner opposed to the one realized during the years of the dictatorship. In the 1990s, the university solicited authorization from the Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales to undertake a study of the architectural style and the original color of the façade. In that context, in 1992 it was proposed to paint the façade blue to preserve the building's "essential" characteristics (CMN File 13.1, 1992). This proposal represented the efforts of the architects and the authorities to harmonize the historical and founding principles of the institution with its architectural principles.

If the problem of the safeguarding of its "originality" followed the principles dictated by the law for monuments (Ley de Monumentos, DME no. 11, 07/01/1974), it was also done in pursuit of the restitution of the founding principles of the university. "The restoration work on the Casa Central" was to be done "with absolute conformity to the original material." The material was history, and to the degree that the material was preserved in its essence, history remained. In their proposal the architects said, "We plan to restore to the building its right to remain in time without distortion or erasure of the imprint of history, avoiding falsifications that lead to misunderstandings (what is authentic and what isn't)." What this means is not conserving the original condition of the monument but, following the "principle of differentiation," preserving "a record of the period in which the intervention takes place. . . . As a way of emphasizing this effect, the new elements are detached from the older ones" (CMN File 13.1, 1992: 3). The tension imposed by this concern for the coherence of historical value and "authentic" architectural form is expressed in the warnings about the invisibility and abandonment of the eastern façade of the building—a hermetically sealed warehouse, according to the archives of the Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales, that stood in contrast to the wealth of historical archives that it safeguarded.

In the never-ending conversation between material and memory, not only are the speakers' voices different but also there is a risk of history's being lost in the possibilities of the material and the material's being lost in the labyrinth of history. In the exercise of coupling history with the material, part of each vanishes and is transformed. What remains will depend on the conversation of differentiated voices and interests. It may well be that ending this conversation and linking the material to "historical truth" is the ultimate goal of the declaration of buildings as heritage.

THE SALÓN DE HONOR MURAL

In 1996, in the context of the restoration of democracy, the Chilean artist Mario Toral joined a mural project for Casa Central's Salón de Honor (CMN File 13.2, 2000). Until it was destroyed in the student revolts of 1927–1930, the hall had possessed a huge painting decorating the back of the main façade. This painting, by

the French artist Ernest Courtois, represented the allegory of the sciences, arts, and letters. A half-century later, the artist Toral expounded on the symbolic and figurative elements of the new painting that would replace the original, emphasizing the value of the university's Masonic roots: the "flowery man," symbol of knowledge and culture, the "all-seeing eye" or "cosmic eye," symbol of the Supreme Being, the Mapuche *rehue* (indigenous sacred altar), Greek columns, and the university's coat of arms. Contextualized in terms of universal values and the national culture, the mural would be designed to appear "as if it had always been there." On March 27, 2001, Rector Luis Riveros inaugurated the mural, reinforcing the importance of "finally," after years of dictatorship and alienation, restoring the influence of this institution of higher learning over the nation and its citizens: "The essential concepts of love, progress, and harmony that the artist has embodied in it should emanate from these solemn columns and spill over our streets and plazas, penetrating, finally, into the daily lives of Chileans." [11]

RENOVATING, RESTORING: MATERIALITY AND SYMBOL

At the end of the 1990s, there was a public competition for the restoration of the Casa Central. The winning project, which was never implemented, proposed reestablishing a correspondence between the material proposal and the republican values embodied in the university project: "The Casa Central represents the intellectual, scientific, and artistic ideals that have forged Chile's republican life" (CMN File 13.3, 1998: 1). Continuing with the metaphor and the transposition of materiality and symbol, the proposal invoked the values of "transparency and dynamism, symbols of a University of Chile that is open to the twenty-first century, qualities that are determined by its exterior materiality and its internal structure." The transposition of the university's values and architectural acts such as the painting of the building are in evidence when it is indicated that that they should be realized "in the exterior as well as the interior of the blank building, symbolizing in this manner the essential and exacting character of the University of Chile" (CMN File 13.3, 1998: 3, 4). The renovating exercise is also to be restorative of its primary vocation, combining the strengths and spatiality of buildings of the same discipline, the Universidad de Chile and the Instituto Nacional. Restoring its public vocation would also require ripping open its enclosure by opening the university through the Plaza de los Presidentes, a "new" solution to the problems of physical enclosure and institutional hermeticism that had been imposed on it over the years. Its location was also to be given attention, always keeping in mind the perspective of the public vocation of the building: "creating a major public space that unifies the sidewalks of the university facing the Alameda Bernardo O'Higgins, giving form to the new urban atrium, the ceremonial space that the Casa Central deserves" (CMN File 13.7, 2009: 3).

PATRIMONIALIZING MEMORY

In April 2003, the Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales registered its first visit to the Casa Central in the context of the celebrations of the national Heritage Day (CMN File 13.2, 2003). Pressured by its public vocation, in the year of the bicentenary the institution opened the doors of its academic

Figure 3. Archivo Andrés Bello, Heritage Day. (Photo Cristián Ureta, 2013)

departments, museums, and archives in order to offer a look at the history centered in "its most precious heritage" (CMN, 2013). In the words of its rector, the idea was that "all of Chilean society can know and enjoy the heritage that, belonging to the University of Chile, belongs to all of Chile. . . . Every treasure . . . has a very clear echo in the development of our republic and in its political and social life" (Pérez, 2011: 4, 6):

> The patrimonial treasures demonstrate that the university has been the support of different knowledge disciplines, from the humanities to the sciences, that step by step forged its foundations in the public interest. That is why it is not possible to disassociate the life of our institution of higher learning from that of the nation. Its buildings, starting with the Casa Central, are unequivocal monuments of the sentiments of the republic as its principal educator; solid and filled with the past, it confronts the present by manifesting its unforgettable tradition.

Nevertheless, on Heritage Day it was not the space occupied that was shown to the visitors but the silent and neglected offices of the Andrés Bello Archive and their historical treasures (Araya and Montesinos, 2011) (Figure 3). The stacked cardboard boxes of historical materials and Pablo Neruda's conch shell collection jealously guarded in its damp basement were evidence of the patrimonial pride of the oldest institution of higher learning in Chile, which persists (and resists) in its past. The commemorative exercise of Heritage Day dramatizes its historical meaning but at the same time turns it into a fetish that is alien to the incessant hustle and bustle of the actors in its surroundings. It may be that a building is made heritage and conserved from the moment it achieves the status of "testimony"—in a sense, because it is evidence of a period that is over (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2007: 27).

MONUMENTS, MEMORIES, AND PALIMPSESTS

If the university continues to be the icon of the republican dream of "public education for everyone," it certainly is not because of its long history, its damp

Figure 4. Statue of Andrés Bello with hood like those of the mobilized students. (Photo Gonzalo Peña, 2013)

archives, and the daily activities in its classrooms. The strength of the monument and its "naked truth" also lie in its occupations, its graffiti, its banners, and the hustle and bustle of the urban life that, attentive and active, historically observes it in order to remember and modernize its foundational mission. In these terms, the Casa Central becomes a palimpsest—a term that Huyssen (2003) uses to describe the way buildings and cities register time and memory. Not every building can be a palimpsest, since the juxtaposition of different meanings in the same container comes from the urban worldview of its inhabitants. In this case, the palimpsest is made up of the Casa Central's past and its present role as the chalkboard of the student movement. For Huyssen, an urban palimpsest is a city that is constantly writing and rewriting itself. The value of the writing of the palimpsest is in the imperfection of each of its layers, the unfinished and fragile nature of its veneer. Each period of the university has left its mark without erasing the past completely or fully controlling its meaning or materiality. As a palimpsest, the Casa Central realizes patrimonial vistas in its interior, celebrating the neoclassical architecture of the building and its antique hallways, while on the twenty-first-century façade, covered with banners, graffiti, and a statue of Andrés Bello hooded like one of the student demonstrators, it speaks to us of the unfinished republican construction (Figure 4). If the celebration of this historical monument continues, it is because the textual corpus of republican feeling is embodied in it. It is this corpus that facilitates the consensus that eventually makes possible dissent, disputes, and the presentation of demands.

The creation of the Universidad de Chile in 1843 was a fundamental milestone for the city of Santiago. It was not only one of its principal republican symbols but also the place for the training of elites, literate individuals who were distinguished, through their practices and rituals of exclusion and inclusion, from the rest of the population (Rama, 2004). The Casa Central was permeated with practices that reaffirmed the power of the literate class. The university today, however, represents not only the literate city but also the tumultuous city

of the student movement. During the 172 years of its existence it has remained an institution of literate power, with the difference that nowadays the limits and barriers of inclusion by the literate city are in conflict with the bodies, marches, and banners that are ensconced in the very center of its power.

The university is an example of the fact that history can be transmitted in various ways and that multiple forms of history can give monuments new meanings . All foundational and historical programs construct and benefit from cultural artifacts, but at the same time these cultural artifacts produce social practices that give history new meaning (Sahlins, 1988). As a literate building of postcolonial Santiago, the Casa Central has numerous public roles: university and pre-university studies, museum, archive, heritage building, meeting hall, political headquarters, administrative seat, backdrop for banners and graffiti, shelter, and dormitory. Its history is also the history of literate Santiago and the dispute between the elites, the middle classes, and the workers for the control of (for the former) and access to (for the latter) education.

Nevertheless, in every program of restoration, Heritage Day, dance, and graffiti, the history contained in that monument becomes manifest. It is then that a double movement is triggered and culture is reproduced historically in action and commemoration. An analysis of the archives of heritage declarations warns us that the meanings bestowed on those monuments do not necessarily coincide, since the conventions can always be creatively reexamined. This is a never-ending debate between the historical narrative embodied in the monument and the practices that give meaning to, mold, reaffirm, or transform those forms. This is a complex interaction between the instituted cultural order and the embodied meanings and ideas of individuals. In each act of occupation and use of the historical monument individuals submit these cultural and historical categories to "empirical risks" (Sahlins, 1988).

The monument as the materialization of memory is one of the battlegrounds on which subjects compete for the construction of a meaning in function of their particular memories. In this sense, it operates in the same way as a nation does—as a space where distinct national, community, or regional projects struggle for hegemony (Achugar, 2003: 214). In this disagreement between persons and monuments, however, the symbols can be reclaimed and contested by the powers that created them. The weekly cleaning of the walls and the whitewashing of the graffiti on the walls of the monument required by the Consejo Nacional de Monumentos makes this apparent. Certainly, the institutional forms of a monument and their different expressions "format" the practices associated with them and create the opportunity for particular arrangements and languages. But, whereas heritage produces a cultural audience, that audience and its practices also produce heritage. The performance—dance, protest, visit, writing—also creates a symbolic relationship and an "other." Thus, what is important is not only the declaration of the university as a national historical monument but also the form and contingent circumstances that make the organization of performances possible—reminding us that the role of a national historical monument is not always the projection of the existing order.

The Universidad de Chile, as a national historical monument, not only contains in itself various temporalities and historicities but is capable of being interpreted and appropriated. The monument, as a sign, always attempts to link the

past with the future, to defeat time and forgetting, in order to reaffirm its origin (Achugar, 2003: 192–193). This is the source of its particular historical and symbolic efficacy. Nevertheless, interpretative realization is always situational, circumstantial, in accordance with the intention of the historical agent. The façade of the Universidad de Chile, covered with graffiti and banners, speaks to the transformation of that interpretative realization. While the postcards distributed on Heritage Day celebrate the building's nineteenth-century architecture and its "stylistic unity," the press photo that publicizes the student protest displays the façade covered with a huge banner demanding a "free education."

The idea of praxis as a situational sociology of the signifier allows us to understand how the commemorative exercise permits a kind of dematerialization of the monument. As a performance discourse, product and producer of identities, it breaks through the empirical rigidity of the archive's historical and patrimonial narrative. Thus, as in myth, empirical fidelity is not as important as the shouting and singing (Barthes, 2009).

SEDUCTION AND THE TRUTH OF THE MONUMENT

Finally, a historical national monument, in its function as a reminder, always instructs. It illustrates through its magnificence, permanence, and glory because it transfigures us through the materiality of the metaphor of an imagined past, which is always glorious and deserving of celebration and commemoration. Enriched by the identifying mimesis with the form, the monument becomes an opportunity and an instrument of identification with the nation's historical epic.

Certainly, the subject of heritage and historical centers has always been closely connected with the processes of construction of the nation, since they indicate the necessary invention of a common absolute and homogeneous past. The nation, through the state, authorizes and legitimates a common past whose historical reconstruction is always problematic and incompletely realized (Lacarrieu, 2000), with the possibility of its subversion always present (Ranciére, 2010: 59). In a way, even when the monument might wish to respond to a political program or satisfy a social need, it never achieves this because on the other side are the "masses" and it is always redirected and reinterpreted (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2007).

Is there truth in a monument? Is it not in fact more than its historical references, its goal of instructing in the "civil religion," its heritage commemorations? Does not fulfilling its goals, its truth, really require going beyond its historical references to lead those who contemplate it to the practice of the "civil religion"? In its formative will, history needs to be seen, to be felt, to be constituted as a metaphorical object charged with revitalizing a privileged past in its possibility of being the "chosen" historical artifact but also its capacity—always uncertain—for submerging those who visit it in the ideology that the state wants to protect. Therefore, all monuments have to operate in two registers: confirming a history and remembering its truth. In this sense, it is not the meaning of the monumental, the formal, and the architectural that cultivates the citizenry but the world that they express and translate. The artistry of the monument and of the architect lies in their capacity to seduce, although in that seduction differentiated perceptions and worldviews are born as in all palimpsests.

The monument always contains a secret and therefore the possibility of being an illusion (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2007: 30). Since monuments are not always easily legible, that is where their capacity for seduction resides. The Universidad de Chile, like all monuments, possesses filters, layers of history that are superimposed as a patina of memory that bestows on it a depth of field. The material and the immaterial speak to each other. It is then that the historical truth of the monument is transformed into what the citizen believes, perceives, knows, and imagines, and the thing that is perceived also radiates to those parts of the monument. Or perhaps it acquires all of its power over the imagination from its capacity to create public spaces (Choay, 2007: 56). Nevertheless, despite potential chaos, monuments exist to obstruct our distracted daily walks. They remind us that there are nodes, aesthetic landmarks, and foundational ideals in the history of the nation—a civilizing exercise that structures space, organizes walks and ideas, and keeps us from walking without purpose (Gorelik, 1998).

What, then, is the power of resistance and transformation of the performances displayed in front of the institution of higher learning? What remains of the gestures and the ephemeral corporal practices if, in the end, order and disorder are two sides of the same coin? The reversal of order is not its collapse, since it may reinforce or become a component of order under a new configuration. As sacrifice creates life from death, order is created from disorder. Furthermore, all cultures have a place for disorder, which is feared because it is unyielding but can also be transformed into a component of order (Balandier, 2003).

Doesn't the ritual, the march, the demonstration, the performance as repeated action also create order? To what extent do demonstrations by citizens demanding their rights shake up the elite power structure? Also, in those acts is there not a recognition and invocation of the historical memory embodied in that state or ecclesiastical monumentality? Diana Taylor (2015) points out that in performance order and disorder converse as does the archive with the catalog, the word with speech. The catalog benefits from the archive because history and memory are not polar opposites; they speak to and feed each other. In the words of the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1988), mythopraxis exists exactly because history requires it. Corporal performance, Taylor says, usually contributes to maintaining the repressive social order. Nothing is guaranteed, but more than order or disorder every performance is, by definition, a political act.

In the ephemera of the performance, of dance, of the nude bodies riding a white horse, of the bodies banging on drums in the Alameda, of the young hooded faces that present a threatening and violent unity, there must surely be a political act or gesture that comes to rip apart the previous fatal design so that order finally comes to reign. The performances of these students are acts of possession and, as such, contribute to their legality and visibility. If performance practices transmit vital knowledge it is because they contain memories, traditions, and demands for their proper place in history. As Taylor states, culture is not something petrified in writing but an arena of social discourse in which social actors struggle for survival and the right to be there. In each dance and body movement, demands for cultural agency are established. The dramaturgical model illuminates not only the playful and the aesthetic but also the liminal and the symbolic reversal. We are all on stage, all actors participating simultaneously and intertwined in this drama even though we have lost the

ability to speak. Here cultural agency is not individual but collective, and it is this that bestows a political imprint on the performance. And if, with the literate city and its institutions of higher learning, writing has displaced and delegitimized other epistemic and mnemonic systems, with performance corporal practices are recovered as a form of knowledge and claims. Corporal practices exist as long as there are ephemeral and unreproducible acts, and this makes them very difficult to repress. Like the Horses of the Apocalypse, the Universidad de Chile, historically masculine, could not be but reinvented, since the subversion implied by homosexuality emerges in a house that by definition is misogynistic. With this action not only the university but heterosexuals and homosexuals are saved and reestablished. The action becomes collective because it is public, open.

Unfolding in the public and central spaces of the historical city, each of these actions permits agency and leads to meanings that, to be deciphered, require our presence. Movements that are not easily translatable may remain enigmatic and indecipherable to the culture of the written word of the archive and the literate elite. Corporalization permits us to trace resistances and subalternities. If political desire and the "active life" continue in these young people, it will probably because they are corporalized knowledge, living, always elusive, and heterotopic. The political implications of performance speak of "other" knowledge, since corporal practices disturb categories and order and subvert them, at least disrupting the "social framework of memory."

Why, then, the insistence on monuments as a symbolic record of history? It appears that the narrative that instructs us about this official history is not sufficient. In the imprint of the monument, image and form combine and open to the sphere of the fantastic to make of this object a distinct reality, sometimes free of any attachment to the conventions of the historical object. Public space, Rousseau pointed out, is a place for the "education of souls" or the establishment of a "pedagogy of statues." The city, with its avenues and plazas, functions as a history book to inculcate the values of a national culture in the masses, to find a path to a cultural integration that complements schooling (Gorelik, 1998). However, as in the case of the Universidad de Chile, a monument frequently becomes the foundation for subaltern narratives.

Marking, using, occupying, and violating monuments are small heroic acts that not only involve a form of shared construction but also are a form of mockery of the order synthesized in the monument.[12] The colored origami birds that were hung on the university's façade during the occupation of 2011 and the banners and graffiti plastered on it remind us of both the centrality of the institutionalization of the memory of the nation and the importance of stripping and updating it in order to imagine a possible future.

NOTES

1. The student movement, led by the Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile (Confederation of Chilean Students—CONFECh), does not limit itself to any particular reform but seeks to reform the whole Chilean educational model. The demands are the state's assuming its role as educator, restraining the influence of market forces over education, and maintaining a high-quality educational system and one that does not segregate.

2. "Nowhere has the elementary education that the working classes demand been able to spread . . . except where, previously, the sciences and letters have flourished" (Bello, 1843: 2).

3. The university's student federation, the first such organization of a national character in the Spanish-speaking world, was founded in 1906. In the 1920s its goals were student representation on the governing bodies of education, economic autonomy for the university, the state's assuming its role as educator, and a free and secular national education. The student demonstrations at the end of the 1960s were heavily influenced by the movement for university reform that occurred in Cordoba, Argentina.

4. The reforms can be summarized as the application of democracy to education, access to culture for the masses, and changes in the functioning of the university institution itself. In 1967, coinciding with the spirit of May 1968 in France, the demonstrations extended to the other principal universities of the nation and called for "university for all," cogovernance, 25 percent student participation in the election of authorities, and the modernization of the university's functioning and administration. Between 1968 and 1972, eight universities elected their highest authorities with cogovernance.

5. The military junta promulgated a policy for the dismantling in the General Law of Universities, published in the summer of 1981. This law decreed the fragmentation of the two great public universities (which had branches in various provinces) with the twin objectives of fragmenting any student movement and decentralizing its leadership. In this way, the schools were segmented into smaller regional and specialized universities. The Universidad de Chile and the Universidad Técnico del Estado ended up being subdivided into 16 universities. In Santiago it did away with the Instituto Pedagógico and the regional branches of the Quinta Normal.

6. This meant that the "delegate rectors" would unilaterally designate the student representatives, student participation would be limited in internal matters, and any other form of organization would be prohibited. The Rettig Report points out that among the principal victims of the forced massive disappearances were the student leaders, "those of higher education as well as high school" (Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación, 1991). The Valech Commission established that more than 15 percent of the individuals who suffered "rigorous political prison" in Chile between 1973 and 1990 were students (4,114 cases) and these progressively increased through the life of the regime (Comisión Asesora para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, 2011).

7. Some of these initiatives remain in the presidential directives of 1979, the constitution of 1980, the higher education law of 1981, and the Organic Constitutional Law on Education, promulgated by Pinochet on March 10, 1990, a day before he abandoned power.

8. The first paragraph of the Constitutional Act of the Board of Governors established the "patriotic commitment to restore Chilean identity" (Constitutional Act of the Board of Governors, Decree Law 1, September 11, 1973).

9. http://www.yeguasdelaapocalipsis.cl/.

10. At the time of the military coup, 30 percent of Chileans were enrolled in the educational system, almost all in the public system. By the end of the dictatorship, the proportion had been reduced to 25 percent, and at present it is only 27 percent. Public expenditure on education is half of what it was before the dictatorship, and the fees for higher education, which was almost completely free, reach many millions of pesos per student during their careers, indebting them and their families. Expenditure per student has exceeded previous levels only in elementary education, while in secondary school it barely reached previous levels and in the universities it is half (Riesco, 2007: 247–253).

11. http://www.uchile.cl/portal/presentación/historia/patrimonio-histórico-y-cultural/5032/casa-central.

12. We agree with Jelin and Langland (2003) that the aesthetic question is resolved by the incorporation into the design of the territorial framework of the same possibility of reinvention of meaning and ambiguity that invites one to engage in the active work of memory and meaning.

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