

THE ENLIGHTENED DICTATORSHIP
Genealogy of an audiovisual propaganda culture in Chile [73/78]

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Summary

This work explores a feature of cultural power developed during the Chilean dictatorship (1973-90), particularly the ways by which audiovisual mass media helped in the rise and stability of that government, and articulated its foundational discourses.

The study contemplates the building of hegemony in Chile; in other words, the creation of politico-social consent by cultural forms of power. The thesis investigates the manifestation of popular support to the Chilean dictatorship and its dominance using non-repressive means, at a singular moment (1973-78), universally associated with violent coercion. The thesis proposes that in order to observe and understand that power equation —the will to govern by force without completely discarding consent— one of its cultural forms must be exposed. An audiovisual culture illustrates and assists that equation in the most evocative manner during the most repressive stage of the dictatorship.

The tension between coercion and consent in Chile, a crossroad of fields of action and discourses, demands more than one discipline of study. This research does not prioritise academic disciplines because of their scientific or methodological features, but opts for one juncture of knowledge: a cultural history. This approach privileges *form over content*, and culture above political-economic determinations. The study, a particular cultural history, focuses on a case study also with its own tension: a communication medium that has the exceptional capacity of both reproducing and building events.

The thesis identifies a historical phase when the method of coercion was primarily supplemented by propaganda practices. Specifically, the study concludes that the dictatorship from its inaugural night favoured one cultural modality to communicate and create consent: television. Secondly, the propaganda practice that hid or distorted the use of violence as political control was more effective when it coincided with an audiovisual culture. Thirdly, during this stage the dictatorship encountered the most evocative expression for a systemic re-foundation in the audiovisual medium: it personalised political power in the figure of Augusto

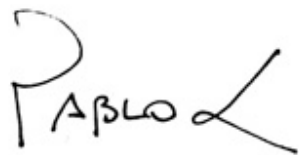
Pinochet; legitimised the violent takeover through a visual historiography of the prior government; and supported through televised events a constitutional re-foundation and a neoliberal revolution. Finally, the thesis argues that the preference for television allowed its industrial and discursive growth and relative autonomy. The use of audiovisual culture in the period covered by the thesis marked the path towards a fully cultural phase of the medium in Chile and of the dictatorship in the future, when the image of despotism gradually disappeared to consummate a hegemony.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “The enlightened dictatorship: genealogy of an audiovisual culture of propaganda in Chile [73/78]” has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University and Universidad de Santiago (cotutelle).

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis did not need approval by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink. The first part of the signature is a large, stylized 'P' that loops around. Below it, the word 'PABLO' is written in a simple, slightly slanted font. To the right of 'PABLO' is a long, horizontal stroke that ends in a small hook.

Pablo Leighton

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