

## Economic Forces

The 14th of July, 1789—what is commemorated as Bastille Day—marked a revolution that began and ended in the course of a single day. Word of the event spread quickly as “the Bastille was known and detested around the whole world. Bastille and tyranny were in every language, synonymous terms” (Michelet, [1847]2008: 11; Tilley, 1970: v). Of course, political imprisonment has always driven the dominant narrative of the Bastille; still, another force was at play, namely economics. Popular depictions of the revolt often highlight the seemingly festive mood of the crowd; Schama, however, reminds readers of the degree of desperation in France: “bread prices were reaching levels that were symptomatic not just of dearth but of famine. Conditions throughout urban France were rapidly approaching the level of a food war” (1990: 371). Compounding matters, it was suspected that the famine was not a product of climate but rather the instrument of an aristocratic cabal conspiring to eradicate the people. Among Parisians, those fears were fueled by the growing presence of German and Swiss military. Another contributor to the economic crisis was defections among French troops, who were sharing the same fate as the locals. At least one observer noted at the time: “French soldiers will never fire on the people . . . but if they should, it is better to be shot than to starve” (Schama, 1990: 376).

Economic forces not only provoke revolutions, revolts, and rebellions but also help give rise to the Bastille Effect, in that former prisons and detention centers become part of the collective memory of economic struggles. Precisely how a given site is culturally transformed depends greatly on the circumstances in which a particular conflict occurred. In this chapter we first explore La-Prison-des-Patriotes, in Montreal, where the rebellions of 1837 and 1838 have not been forgotten. On that very site, more than 1,000 Patriotes were imprisoned. Deepening the injustice, a dozen of them were executed by the British. Those momentous events parallel the 1916 Rising in Dublin, which resulted in 14 Irish rebels facing the firing squad at the Kilmainham Gaol. In each case, a failed rebellion tilted history, over the course

of which a former prison was resurrected as a hallowed place for storytelling. Accordingly, La-Prison-des-Patriotes—like the “Bastille of Ireland”—has emerged as a dynamic metaphor for political struggle.

From there, we return to the southern cone of Latin America, where an extreme version of neoliberalism was instituted by the dictatorships as a “sacred” form of economic policy. In that context, the influence of the Chicago School of Economics is discussed alongside the reliance on mass detention and torture. That diagram of control aligned “economic freedom” with “political terror” in ways that ensured they would not interfere with each other (Letelier, 1976). Furthering a collective memory, several sites incorporate critiques of human rights atrocities brought about by economic upheaval. In Santiago, for example, La Casa de José Domingo Cañas has been uniquely transformed, shedding its past as a torture center so as to unleash its significance as a memorial space. Similar diagrams of control are deciphered in post-apartheid South Africa, where Robben Island, a celebrated heritage site, retains remnants of its profane political and economic history. With the benefit of a new place identity, those memorials serve as cultural vehicles in which themes of descent are rivaled by themes of ascent, thus promoting human rights.

#### LA-PRISON-DES-PATRIOTES

With a critical eye on the Atlantic world, prominent historians contend that the American Revolution (1776), the Dutch uprisings (of the 1780s), unrest in the Austrian Low Countries (after 1787), the French Revolution (1789), and all of the European revolutions of the 1790s constituted a single phenomenon (Godechot, 1986). Conspicuously absent from that lineage of political upheaval are Canada’s rebellions of 1837 and 1838. The significance of those events has prompted another round of scholarly inquiry (Ducharme, 2007; Greer, 1995). The Atlantic Revolution is now being revisited so as to expose not only the political motives of the insurgents but also the economic forces at play. According to Donald Creighton, the rebellions in Canada were the climactic episode in a chronic struggle between “commerce and agriculture” (1956: 255). Deeply embedded in Canadian heritage, those two pillars of radical social change are contoured along competing lines of ethnicity, language, and religion, forging complex identities that persist to this day.

As discussed in previous chapters, that contested heritage has been channeled through former prisons to express particular interpretations of the conflict. In Montreal, the city’s oldest prison, Pied-du-Courant, has been transformed into an elaborate exhibition space named La-Prison-des-Patriotes (see figure 11). From the standpoint of building a narrative, it is a curious place. On the one hand, it casts the British as the central authority with all their political and economic clout, thus marginalizing the non-British people in Lower Canada who fought the establishment. On the other hand, the museum places itself at the center of authority as it narrates those conflicts, and in doing so delivers messages that could be interpreted from a divergent point of view.

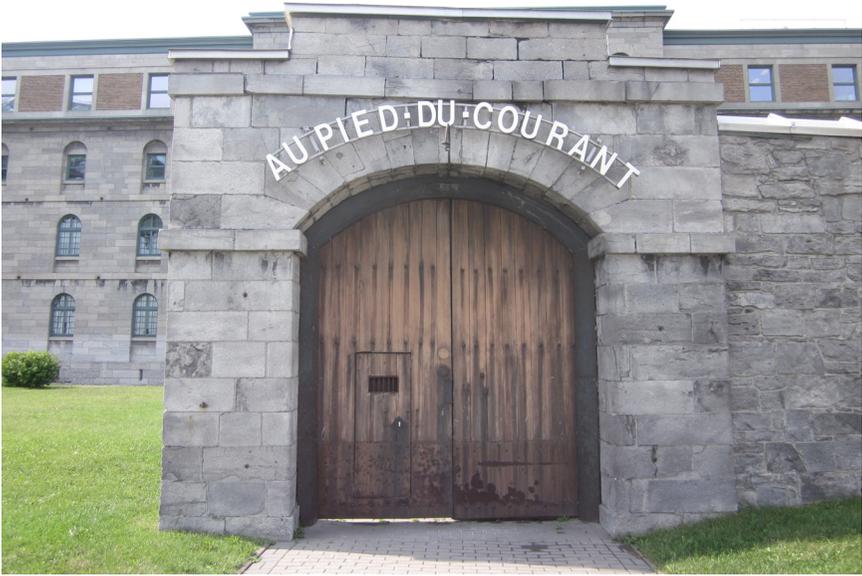


FIGURE 11. “Pied-du-Courant.” In Montreal, the former prison, Pied-du-Courant, has been transformed into an exhibition space named La Prison-des-Patriotes. © retrowelch 2022.

La-Prison-des-Patriotes carefully dissects the rebellions of 1837 and 1838, drawing close attention to the very site where more than 1,300 Patriotes were imprisoned. To emphasize its profane history, the curators remind us that 12 of those Patriotes were hanged by the British military. La-Prison-des-Patriotes—the “lieu de memoire des rebellions”—echoes Nora’s (1989) idea that memory is attached to places. The brochure invites visitors to “discover” and “relive” a moment in history that is “indelibly stamped on Quebec’s collective memory, and let yourself be transported by the Patriotes’ spirit of freedom and democracy.” The site strives to connect with those who were executed, quoting the eloquence of Chevalier de Lorimier: “I die without regret. In insurrection and independence I desired nothing but the good of my country. My views and actions were sincere and were not stained with any of the crimes that dishonor humanity and are only too common in the tumult of unleashed passions” (La-Prison-des-Patriotes, n.d.). Those personal testimonies serve to “person” the place with the ghosts of Patriotes: the site has undergone a cultural transformation as a memorial while also issuing an allegory about the ascent of democratic values.

Reflecting on the rebellions, La-Prison-des-Patriotes establishes itself as a unique voice for Canadian history, in large part because the displays are written almost entirely in French. Thus, visitors who are not equipped to interpret lengthy passages of text are likely to find themselves outside the conversation on the meaning of the rebellions. Lacking as it does any bilingual crossover, the message is clear: the exhibition solely represents the perspectives and heritage of the French

Canadians, or Québécois. For visitors possessing some basic familiarity with the French language, however, the tour is worthwhile and informative as it attempts to set the record straight—whatever that might be.

As a storytelling institution, the museum assumes the position of authority, relying on a series of lengthy posters to establish its narrative. Arranged in chronological order, the exhibition navigates visitors down a *walk through time* (see Bennett, 1995; Williams, 2007). The curatorial narrative at La-Prison-des-Patriotes is quite didactic, especially with respect to the underlying economic threads of the rebellions. For example, one such lesson is titled “Colonial Economy of Lower Canada” (now known as Quebec):

Local economy depends on the size of the metropolis and imperial policies. The [British] Empire encouraged the importation of products of its colonies—in the case of Lower Canada there are endless wood products and grains—which benefits its markets because of preferential customs rates. But, membership of the Empire has to affect a specialization of economic development of the colony and a closing of other possible markets. In the 1830s, the economic link of the Empire gave rise to important debates.

To heighten their scholarly tone, the curators—as local experts—rely on other experts to authenticate the narrative. Among the key sources is renowned author Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited Lower Canada in 1831. “The wealthy classes for the most part belong to the English race. Although French was almost the universally spoken language, most of the newspapers, posters, and up to the signboards of French merchants are in English. The commercial enterprises are almost all in their hands. It is truly the ruling class in Canada.”

The passage includes this key statement: “This finding, the newspaper *The Irish Vindicator* of Montreal has already done before in 1830.” That final sentence acknowledges a presence of the Irish in Lower Canada without any further explanation; yet the direction of the narrative remains almost exclusively on the experience of the French Canadians. Hence, messages are likely to undergo some tension, as other non-British ethnic groups in Lower Canada are reading the narrative differently. For instance, historical scholarship is steeped in Irish contributions to Lower Canada, including its politics, economics, and heritage. As Maureen Slattery points out, Irish Catholics in Lower Canada were a “double-minority in a majority French Catholic Church and a dominant English Protestant society” (1997: 33). Despite being pushed to the margins on both sides of the power play between the French Catholic Church and English Protestant society, Irish Catholic leaders in Lower Canada remained very much part of the French Canadian resistance to British hegemony—economic and otherwise (Bowen, 1988; O’Gallagher, 1988; Wilson, 1989).

Allen Greer weighs into the discussion, suggesting that a comparative approach to the rebellions (of 1837 and 1838) benefits from lessons in Ireland, for it

demonstrates how the Irish had been marginalized by the British state elsewhere. He writes: “Ireland provides a particularly striking parallel in many respects, and the Patriotes were well aware of this connection; Papineau was proud to be known as the ‘O’Connell of Canada’” (Greer, 1995: 6, 10). Here curators embrace themes of ascent as the narrative introduces Louis-Joseph Papineau as a central leader in the Patriote movement. Papineau had taken inspiration from Daniel O’Connell, known as The Liberator (or The Emancipator) for his success in securing the rights of Irish Catholics in Great Britain in the first half of the 19th century. In the years leading up to the rebellions, the print media circulated written messages to readers on the margins of a British-controlled state. Among those sources was *The Irish Vindicator*, later known simply as *The Vindicator*. The influential newspaper was edited by Dr. Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan, a bilingual Irishman, member of the Patriot party, and “Papineau’s right-hand man in the Lower Canadian Legislative Assembly” (Slattery, 1997: 29; Verney, 1994). Papineau recruited O’Callaghan in part because of his personal—and political—contacts with O’Connell. Papineau courted Irish Catholics since they provided the swing vote in Lower Canada. As a regular feature of *The Irish Vindicator* (in 1833), O’Callaghan reprinted O’Connell’s “Letters to the Irish People,” thus underscoring the Patriotes’ affinity with the Irish cause. In the wake of the 1837 rebellion, Papineau and O’Callaghan escaped together across the American border (Slattery, 1997; 1980).

Returning to the theme of economics, La-Prison-des-Patriotes celebrates the rise of the People’s Bank as a counterweight to the Bank of Montreal, which engaged in discriminatory lending practices against French Canadians and supporters of the Patriote party. Tensions between the French (alongside the Irish) members of the Assembly and the British business elite spilled over into parliamentary maneuvers to exert pressure on the government. “The Assembly makes use of its ultimate weapon by refusing to vote on the subsidies under the principle no taxation without representation. The government can then allow no public expenditure, and the management of the State is paralyzed.” Along the way a set of grievances, in the form of the 92 Resolutions, reached London as a petition to the King, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. That petition opposed the policy of surrendering territory to speculators in Crown land; the Assembly also “denounced the discrimination” in the granting of public posts to officials of British origin, who outnumbered those of French origin 157 to 45. The Assembly reminded the British Parliament that the majority of the people of Lower Canada were of French origin and that their use of the “French Language, has become for the colonial authorities a pretext of insult, of exclusion, of inferiority policy and separation of rights and interests.”

Those linguistic tensions compounded a contested heritage, and La-Prison-des-Patriotes is quick to point out that those at margins of society were being kept there through the degrading social practices of the British elite. The exhibit goes further, pointing to the ironies of British control that failed to establish order and

indeed incited rebellion. From the standpoint of cultural sociology, punishments are intended to symbolize a sense of legitimate authority that strives to promote civilization. On the flip side, injustice looms as its shadow (Smith 2008). By 1837, economic, political, and ethnic strife had reached critical mass as British administrators imposed martial law, initiating a “process of repression of a magnitude previously unknown. . . . The guarantee of individual freedoms and the protection against arbitrary arrests are immediately suspended.” By the end of the year, the Patriotes’ armed defense had been repressed by British forces and more than 500 people had been arrested and taken to prison, where most of them would remain until June 1838. Soon after that, administrators of the colony proclaimed a new martial law and the suspension of *habeas corpus*.

The number of arrests reached 800, and a military tribunal was established to judge the prisoners. Fourteen trials were held in 1838 and 1839. Louis T. Drummond, an attorney of Irish descent, and Aaron Philip Hart, a Jewish lawyer, served as defense council. Their legal intervention proved insufficient. Of the 108 defendants, nine were acquitted and 99 were condemned to death; 12 were hanged, 58 were deported to Australia, and two were banished. The remaining 27 defendants were released on bail (see Dunning, 2009). La-Prison-des-Patriotes provides a sacred space for memorialization and reflection by reminding us of these personal tragedies. “Among the twelve hanged in Bas-Canada, seven are married. They leave behind 26 children, a large number of infants. Three other children were born in the weeks following the hanging of their father.” *The Irish Vindicator* reported that in solidarity, young people of Montreal formed a permanent political association whose name, the Sons of Freedom, was borrowed from the American revolutionaries. Embracing themes of ascent in the face of adversity, the fraternal organization adopted a strident republican orientation in its manifesto.

Michel Ducharme digests the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838 as the “last chapter of the Atlantic Revolution, a chapter that did not end happily for Canadian republicans” (2007: 420). In that vein, La-Prison-des-Patriotes concludes its *walk through time* by pondering the failed Patriote rebellion, which has resonated “through generations of Quebecers who are seeking to understand what really happened . . . [as well as current] debates on the balance of power in the political institutions, on the sharing of wealth in society and on the assertion of identities in the common State of citizens.” Along those lines, the curators concede that the performance of heritage is indeed contested since a reconstruction of history does not always benefit from all possible angles. Thus, many questions remain unanswered. In telling its story, the museum ends with a note of noticeable ambiguity. “In this case, we would like to remind you of two things: that the views of the witnesses of the time vary, and that among the current historians, the divergence of points of view persist.” That lack of closure seems to leave visitors with a sense of unresolved differences, which undermine an otherwise virtuous defense of the eternal good. In this way, La-Prison-des-Patriotes, unlike the Kilmainham Gaol, seems to stop short of entrenching a full-fledged Bastille Effect (see Flander et al., 2016).

## LOS CHICAGO BOYS

A revolution of a different kind began in the 1950s at the University of Chicago's Economics Department, whose tightly knit faction of conservative professors would shape a new cross-national identity known as the Chicago School of Economics. They aspired to establish a school of thought so recognizable that their prized students would proudly declare themselves "the Chicago Boys." Together, they "represented a revolutionary bulwark against the dominant 'statist' thinking of the day" (Klein, 2007: 57). Leading this academic mission aimed at revolutionizing economics was the charismatic Milton Friedman (1962), whose catchphrase was simple: unbridled laissez-faire. The Chicago Boys were taught the tenets of neoliberalism and the power of the market; indeed, they were inculcated to accept its theory as "a sacred feature of the system" rather than just a scholarly hypothesis (Knight, 1932: 455). "The core of such sacred Chicago teachings was that the economic forces of supply, demand, inflation and unemployment were like the forces of nature, fixed and unchanging. In the truly free market imagined in Chicago classes and texts, these forces existed in perfect equilibrium, supply communicating with demand the way the moon pulls the tides . . . an Eden of plentiful employment, boundless creativity and zero inflation" (Klein, 2007: 61). Or at least, so the story goes.

Initially confined to basement workshops in the social science building, the Chicago Boys seized upon a rare opportunity to experiment on an entire nation, whose economy would serve as their laboratory. On September 11, 1973, General Augusto Pinochet launched a devastating coup d'état that altered the history of Chile, with spillover effects on the entire region. Inducing "states of shock . . . the bloody birth of the counterrevolution" dismantled the progressive policies of President Salvador Allende (Klein, 2007: 92). Before proceeding with greater details about the Pinochet dictatorship and its alliance with the Chicago Boys, some theoretical consideration is in order to help us sift through the political—and human rights—casualties of the Chilean economy. As a guidepost, we turn to Foucault, whose interest in notions of power pivots on how it is exercised, especially since it involves distinct domains of knowledge (or *savoirs*). That "know-how" (technique, or *techne*) becomes the underlying rationale for government practices. Moreover, those constructs also prepare the ground for what Foucault calls the spaces of security (2007: 11; see also Dilts and Harcourt, 2008; Harcourt, 2011).

Indeed, space and security are tightly coupled, while allowing pathways through which various forms (*multiplicities*) of power flow. Somewhat schematically, Foucault explains: "Sovereignty is exercised within the borders of a territory, discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population" (2007: 11). Sovereignty, security, and discipline figured prominently in the Chilean coup: the military dictatorship quickly restructured economics through brazen campaigns of state-sponsored terror that were not limited to detention, torture, and murder. To refine our understanding of this, let us establish a few more distinctions between discipline and security: "Discipline is

essentially centripetal. . . . It isolates a space. Discipline concentrates, focuses, and encloses. . . . Discipline regulates everything. Discipline allows nothing to escape. The apparatuses of security . . . are centrifugal. Security involves organizing . . . allowing the development of ever-wider circuits” (Foucault, 2007: 44–45). With those notions in mind, one can associate discipline with detention and torture while security segues into matters of the economy and the financial performance of the state (see Welch, 2008, 2010a).

Those conceptual distinctions improve our understanding of diagrams of control and sharpen our capacity to recognize momentous shifts in history. It is believed that in Santiago on the day of the coup, while fighter jets bombed the La Moneda, the presidential palace, Allende took his own life rather than surrender to Pinochet. State terror swiftly ensued: more than 13,000 civilians were rounded up and taken to detention centers set up at the National Stadium and other sites scattered throughout the country. At Pinochet’s direction, brutal conditions of confinement were exacerbated by the routine abuse and torture of carefully targeted victims. Among them was Orlando Letelier, an economist who had just returned to Chile from his ambassadorship in Washington, D.C. On the day of the coup, Letelier was ambushed by soldiers toting submachine guns. After being detained in Santiago, he was banished to Dawson Island in the Strait of Magellan, in the far south of the country—Pinochet’s version of a Siberian labor camp (Dinges and Landau, 1980; Guzmán, 1993).

The coup cleared the slate for a total overhaul of political institutions and the economy. This paved the way for Los Chicago Boys, who had completed their studies with Friedman and Harberger. Pinochet assigned these newly minted economists to senior advisory slots within the military junta, authorizing them to institute the *laissez-faire* principles contained in their 189-page report referred to as “*el ladrillo*” (the brick; see Valdes, 1995). As the official economic document, *el ladrillo* would defy other logics. Critiques of it, or even any sensible alternatives to it, would be regarded as dangerous—vaguely subversive or Marxist—and contained by military force. As a result, those diagrams of control would make room for massive economic re-engineering alongside repression and crimes against humanity.

Meanwhile, dissenters pressed their plans to revive democratic platforms. After a year of confinement—and torture—Letelier was released on the condition that he leave Chile. In 1975, Letelier joined the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., where his resistance to the Chilean junta gained international support. His scathing rebuke of the new economic order was starkly titled “The ‘Chicago Boys’ in Chile: Economic Freedom’s Awful Toll” (Letelier, 1976). From the outset, Letelier singled out US financial officials (i.e., William Simon, Secretary of the Treasury; Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank) for providing economic aid to Pinochet. He criticized them for condoning a diagram of control in which “economic freedom” and “political terror” seemed to reside in the same

social system without touching each other. Letelier also pointed out that the CIA had funneled funds to the Chicago Boys, who in turn administered Friedman's "shock treatment" of the Chilean economy (e.g., a drastic reduction in government spending on social programs). Their pure free market policy would bring about extreme inequality and indeed exacerbate it.

With the keen eye of an economist, Letelier (1976) posted economic indicators demonstrating the collateral damage inflicted by Los Chicago Boys and *el ladrillo*. "The inhuman conditions under which a high percentage of the Chilean population lives is reflected most dramatically by substantial increases in malnutrition, infant mortality and the appearance of thousands of beggars on the streets of Chilean cities." Letelier stressed that the concentration of wealth was not the marginal outcome of a difficult situation; rather, it was the very basis of Pinochet's social project. And to complete that project, the economic plan had to be enforced "by the killing of thousands, the establishment of concentration camps all over the country, the jailing of more than 100,000 persons in three years, the closing of trade unions and neighborhood organizations, and the prohibition of all political activities and all forms of free expression" (Letelier, 1976). Los Chicago Boys' strategy entailed repression of the masses and "economic freedom" for a small, privileged group. Those two imperatives operated with an "inner harmony"—two sides of the same coin. Andre Gunder Funk (1976), a dissident Chicago Boy, contributed to the wider critique by issuing his own commentary, titled *Economic Genocide in Chile* (see also Friedman, 1982).

Letelier would pay dearly for his sustained condemnation of Pinochet and Los Chicago Boys. Less than two weeks after his essay was published, on September 10, 1976, Chilean authorities revoked his nationality. Eleven days later, on September 21, 1976, agents for Operation Condor assassinated Letelier (and his US colleague Ronni Moffitt) with a car bomb on Embassy Row in Washington, D.C. For those murders, the Chilean courts, in 1993, convicted Manuel Contreras, former chief of Chilean intelligence, along with Brigadier Pedro Espinoza and Michael Townley, a US expatriate (Branch and Propper, 1982; Dinges and Landau, 1980).

Pinochet was now a global pariah, the embodiment of a truly profane regime. Over time, the human rights movement would mount a formidable attack that would shift history away from the disorder of injustice and toward upright accountability. Facing intense international—and even US—pressure, Pinochet grudgingly stepped aside, allowing Chile to transition back to democracy in the late 1980s. But his problems were just beginning. In 1998, he was placed under house arrest in London for crimes against humanity committed in Chile; he was eventually released (on medical grounds) and returned to Santiago in 2000. Later that year, he was indicted on kidnapping charges related to state violence in the course of the coup (e.g., the Caravan of Death). Once again, on medical grounds, the Chilean Supreme Court dismissed those indictments. Another round of charges for human rights atrocities, in 2004 and 2005, kept Pinochet in the frame

for prosecutors, and in 2006 he was sentenced to house arrest for the kidnapping and murder of two of Allende's bodyguards. Days later, on December 10, 2006, Pinochet died. Although he avoided convictions on an array of criminal charges, his legacy continues to be stained not only by state terror but also by evidence of an elaborate money-laundering scheme involving US banks that defrauded the Chilean financial system of millions of dollars (Kornbluh, 2013; Roht-Arriaza, 2005).

In Santiago, at the Museo de la Memoria y Los Derechos Humanos, a special exhibit in 2017 curated by the investigative journalist Peter Kornbluh examined Pinochet's "Secretos de Estad" (State Secrets). The archives were brought to light following a sweeping declassification order by President Clinton. The exhibit contains multiple examples of how the coup was aided by US elites. To reenact a conversation that then President Nixon had with Henry Kissinger (then National Security Advisor) in 1970, a telephone placed on a pedestal is accompanied by a transcript. Verbatim, it informs visitors that Nixon and Kissinger opposed President Allende's progressive policies. The White House was prepared to sabotage Chilean labor, production, and the distribution of goods—as Nixon put it, to "make the economy scream" (Kornbluh, 2013: 17, 83).

In *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein takes aim at Pinochet, Los Chicago Boys, and the use of political force to dismantle an economy that had been regulated by Allende. As inflation, unemployment, and the cost of basics such as bread spun wildly out of control, Los Chicago Boys refused to reconsider their laissez-faire assumptions; rather, they insisted that the problems were caused by insufficient strictness. "The economy had failed to correct itself and return to harmonious balance because there were still 'distortions' left over from nearly a half-century of government interference. For the experiment to work, Pinochet had to strip these distortions away—more cuts, more privatization, more speed." Or in the words of Friedman (1982), the Chilean economy must undergo "shock treatment" (Klein, 2007: 97, 98).

La Casa de José Domingo Cañas, in a residential neighborhood in Santiago, is another reminder of the interplay between figurative and literal shock treatment. The former detention/torture center has been repurposed as a memorial space. Much as happened with Villa Grimaldi, the property was demolished, leaving exposed foundations that curators have since marked so as to transpose visitors onto a different place and time. "Sala de Tortura" (torture room) is now an empty plot on which a metal bed frame rests: a cue to its previous life. Known as "the hole," that room was used for a sadistic electrocution technique called "la parrilla" (cooking grill) (see Feitlowitz, 1998). The site is enclosed by walls covered with murals, most notably a painting of a vulture with wings colored with the US flag, an obvious reference to Operation Condor (McSherry, 2005; see figure 12).

Violence, repression, and economic chaos were not confined to Chile. Los Chicago Boys had a comparable impact on neighboring Argentina, where similar diagrams of control emboldened strict disciplinary and security measures. In Parque de la Memoria Monumento a Las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Stado in Buenos



FIGURE 12. “La Casa Cañas.” At Casa de José Domingo Cañas (Santiago, Chile), a mural featuring a vulture with a US flag is captioned: “La paz era una Paloma y alrededor los buitres oveja negra” (Peace was a dove and around the black sheep vultures). © retowelch 2022.

Aires, human rights activists pay their respects to the victims of state terrorism but also condemn economic injustice. In doing so, they throw critical light on the reckless financial policies imposed by the military junta following the 1976 coup d'état. Along the promenade, a group of artists (Grupo de Arte Callejero) have installed *Carteles de la Memoria* (Memory Signs) that inject the visual language of traffic signs with the synthetic power of images. A sign featuring a tank with a peso/dollar symbol signifies the relationship between the last dictatorship and the concentration of capital in the oligarchy. A similar posting shows a graph illustrating the booming foreign debt incurred during the junta; names of US financial institutions are encrypted into the art (e.g., Boston Bank). Another sign targets the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which syphoned Argentine capital across borders according to the principles of neoliberalism. The words “se vende” (for sale) are superimposed on emblems of public utilities (e.g., transport, telecommunications, postal services) to convey the cynical logic of privatization, which creates greater profits for corporate entities at the expense of Argentine consumers.

At the time, investigative writers sought to amplify the resistance to the Argentine dictatorship and its economic platform, among them Rodolfo Walsh—a literary dynamo born to third-generation Irish immigrants. On the one-year

anniversary of the military Junta, Walsh issued his “Open Letter from a Writer to the Military Junta” (1977). The lengthy essay is regarded as a passionate strike at the brutality of the repressors. Much like Letelier, Walsh recognized that human rights atrocities run parallel to economic exploitation. In tandem, these “introduce[ed] Argentine society to the most profound terror it has ever known”:

Fifteen thousand missing, ten thousand prisoners, four thousand dead, tens of thousands in exile: these are the raw numbers of this terror.

Since the ordinary jails were filled to the brim, you created virtual concentration camps in the main garrisons of the country which judges, lawyers, journalists, and international observers, are all forbidden to enter. The military secrecy of what goes on inside, which you cite as a requirement for the purposes of investigation, means that the majority of the arrests turn into kidnappings that in turn allow for torture without limits and execution without trial

Walsh, skilled at cracking espionage codes, is best-known for intercepting a CIA telex that blew the cover off the US invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba (Klein, 2007: 115). His letter to the junta was signed on March 24, 1977, then delivered through a system of clandestine channels, eventually reaching foreign press offices. Walsh told his wife (Lilia): “I want to let those fuckers know that I’m still alive and still writing.” The following day, Walsh was attacked by a team of soldiers with orders from Admiral Massera to “bring the fucking bastard back alive, he’s mine.” As the story goes, Walsh, who embraced the motto “It isn’t a crime to talk; getting arrested is the crime,” produced a weapon and began shooting. The military returned fire and threw his wounded body in a car bound for ESMA, where he was pronounced dead on arrival. It is believed that Walsh’s body was burned and dumped in a river (McCaughan, 2002: 284–90; Klein, 2007: 117–19).

Walsh accurately predicted that “the Argentine people’s resistance for more than twenty years will not disappear but will instead be aggravated by the memory of the havoc that has been wreaked and by the revelation of the atrocities that have been committed.” At a memorial space at ESMA, his letter is displayed in front of the Casino (the former detention, torture, and extermination center), where his words enter the collective consciousness of human rights activism and economic justice. Walsh’s criticism of brutal labor practices still resonates. In 1977, Walsh railed: “By freezing salaries with the butts of your rifles while prices rise at bayonet point, abolishing every form of collective protest. . . . And when the workers have wanted to protest, you have called them subversives and kidnapped entire delegations of union representatives who sometimes turned up dead, and other times did not turn up at all.”

Human rights atrocities as they intersect with economic crimes continue to be investigated in Argentina. In 2018, two ex-Ford Motor executives were convicted on charges of kidnapping and torturing workers employed in an auto plant located just outside Buenos Aires. Pedro Muller and Hector Sibila were sentenced to 10

and 12 years respectively. Their trial marks the first time officials from a foreign company have been held criminally liable for state violence. The company acted in a coordinated manner with the military, and testimony demonstrated that “executives provided the military with lists, addresses and photo IDs of workers they wanted arrested and even provided space for an illegal detention centre at the plant where the abductees could be interrogated” (Goñi, 2018). Supporters of the plaintiffs declared that Ford was an example of civilian-military state terrorism operations. “The majority were kidnapped right off the assembly line. . . . They were taken by rifle-toting military officers and paraded before the other workers so they could see what happened to their union representatives. This created an atmosphere of terror in the workplace that prevented any wage or working condition complaints” (Goñi, 2018). A lawyer for the plaintiffs said that the victims were considering suing Ford Motor Company in the US since it “is clear that Ford Motor Company had control of the Argentinian subsidiary during the 70s” (Goñi, 2018).

#### POST-APARTHEID PARADOX

Similar diagrams of control are critiqued elsewhere, including in Cape Town, where key sites memorialize political prisoners. Above all, the maximum security prison at Robben Island has a reputation as a Bastille of sorts. There, a steady flow of international tourists board crowded ferries to journey across the harbor to see where anti-apartheid activists were confined. Of course, the real draw is the prison cell that held Nelson Mandela. The pilgrimage reaches its climax as visitors stare through the iron bars into an empty cell furnished only with a sleeping mat, a night stand, and a rubbish bin (Welch, 2015: 226; 2012). The cell has undergone a cultural transformation, having abandoned its use-value as a profane place of confinement. In its current incarnation, the prison cell—with all its signifying-value—speaks to the power of the anti-apartheid movement that prevailed over injustice. Imagining Mandela sleeping on his mat serves to “person” the space, allowing visitors to sympathize with his pains of imprisonment. Still, with its themes of ascent, the tour is uplifting: Robben Island projects an impressive Bastille Effect, emerging as a metaphor for a democratic nation. Lending the experience added authenticity, former political prisoners serve as tour guides to narrate a collective story about the struggle for freedom.

Beyond Mandela’s prison cell, Robben Island offers more lessons on political imprisonment during the apartheid era. Minivans transport tourists around the island so that they can examine other aspects of the prison regime, including remnants of manual labor. The lime quarry, for instance, retains special meaning: that former worksite is where Mandela and other political prisoners toiled in the African heat. As a form of resistance, the prisoners, emboldened by their solidarity, looked toward the future. The tour guide points to an enclosure at the quarry where political prisoners huddled during their breaks. That otherwise cramped

space became known as “the university,” for that is where Mandela and his comrades shared their visions of a new South Africa, portending the demise of its racist regime (Mandela, 1994). Yet visitors are not told about the complexities of social change, particularly with respect to macroeconomics (see Ramsamy, 2016).

In 1990, after 27 years as a political prisoner, Mandela was released. After a rapid succession of events, he emerged as the President of South Africa in 1994. History, especially economic history, was just beginning. Although Mandela and his political party, the African National Congress (ANC), held high hopes for progressive economic transformation, other factors and forces would change the course of the country’s financial affairs. Drawing on harsh lessons from the southern cone of Latin America, Klein (2007) recognizes a similar pattern of economic shock. While the ANC kept its eye on the prize—electoral politics—the old apartheid bosses within the de Klerk government watched for economic spoils. During negotiations, those financial rewards would be secured in the fine print of the deal. In line with the Washington Consensus model, supposedly impartial experts would dictate central bank policy and trade policy, besides making arcane inroads into the IMF and the World Bank.

Vishnu Padayachee, one of the few classically trained economists in the ANC, conceded: “By the time the draft was complete . . . it was a new ball game. . . . We were caught completely off guard” (Klein, 2007: 253–54). From his studies in the US, Padayachee was well aware of the Chicago Boys and their strategies for central banks, which were to be run as “sovereign republics within states out of reach of the meddling hands of elected lawmakers” (254). That version of power was being embedded in the new South African economy and administered by the same men who had run it under apartheid (i.e., Chris Stals, Derek Keyes). Such a deceitful maneuver is identical to the way Argentine finance ministers for the military junta managed to get their jobs back when the country transitioned to democracy (McSherry, 2005).

Despite all the enthusiasm and fanfare of a post-apartheid society, it turns out that the original economic operations remained at the core of the state. The national budget was consumed by debt passed on by the apartheid government. Human rights activist Rassool Snyman realized sadly that “they never freed us. They only took the chain from around our neck and put it on our ankles” (Klein, 2007: 257; see also Gumede, 2005). Under the weight of debt, the government was pressured to privatize services and to comply with the demands of foreign investors. Mounting inflation and unemployment were met with cuts to basic housing and food allowances, further shocking the economy and its citizens. Meanwhile South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission grappled with such horrors as torture and disappearances. One of the commission’s jurors, Yasmin Sooka, regrets that more attention wasn’t paid to the economic crimes of the apartheid system. Echoing Rodolfo Walsh as well as Orlando Letelier’s critique of the “inner harmony”

between torture and free market economics, Sooka said she would have done it differently. “I would devote only *one* hearing to torture because I think when you focus on torture and you don’t look at what it was serving, that’s when you start to do a revision of the real history” (Klein, 2007: 267; see also Marais, 2001).

## CONCLUSION

Viewed from abroad, the Bastille had a long-standing reputation as a place of arbitrary confinement. In Paris, however, that fortress prison was just part of a larger network of institutions designed to hold political prisoners, including the Conciergerie, the Grand Chatelet, and the Petite Chatelet (BnF, 2010: 29–31). The Chateau de Vincennes is associated with the Bastille in more ways than one. It was rumored that the Bastille and the chateau—on the edge of the city—were connected by an underground passage (Schama, 1990: 411). Today, visitors to “the keep”—the former prison—at the Chateau de Vincennes are informed by a sign that tells them: “In the second half of the 18th century, Vincennes became a symbol of royal despotism. Some prisoners here were victims of royal *lettre de cachet* (ordering imprisonment without trial). They were imprisoned, like Diderot in 1749, for writings deemed subversive.” On display is an original printing of the book *La Theorie de l’Impot* (The Theory of Taxation). Its author, Mirabeau ([1760] 2010), caused such a stir that the king ordered that he be detained in Vincennes for eight days before being exiled. According to a storyboard posted at Vincennes, Mirabeau, an economist, launched a “new economic thought, speaking with frankness that attracted numerous votes to him. . . . In particular, he took a stand against the *fermiers generaux* [who farmed out the right to collect taxes], severely criticized the fiscal regime of the day and set out the conditions necessary for fair taxation.” Mirabeau’s writings are admired for their understanding of the importance of *economic justice*, which earned him the nickname “the friend of man.”

The Bastille Effect incorporates critiques of economic forces within a wider apparatus of control. At La-Prison-des-Patriotes, curators narrate the contested heritage of Quebec as contoured by commerce and agriculture, culminating in violent rebellions. In the collective memory, that profane past is subject to virtuous transformation in that it recasts the Patriotes as heroic martyrs. The actual site of their execution has been converted into a memorial space, thereby expunging its malevolence. In the southern cone of Latin America, disciplinary power—with all of its centripetal forces—was imposed on the victims of the dictatorships through detention and torture. Similar forms of disciplinary power were unleashed on the economy in ways that delivered dividends to the financial elites while subjecting the people to unforgivable misery. Even in its demolished ruins, La Casa de José Domingo Cañas continues to project scathing condemnation of military repression, which relied on foreign investment. As with other memorials studied here,

curators rely on the power of place to convey the significance of sited-ness as a metaphor for transcendent justice. Indeed, Robben Island has been designated a world heritage site due in large part to its capacity to inspire support for human rights. In the following chapters, relevant cultural developments are examined within other diagrams of control, namely religion and architecture.