

# UC Santa Cruz

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Amnesia & Memory: JEP and Allende

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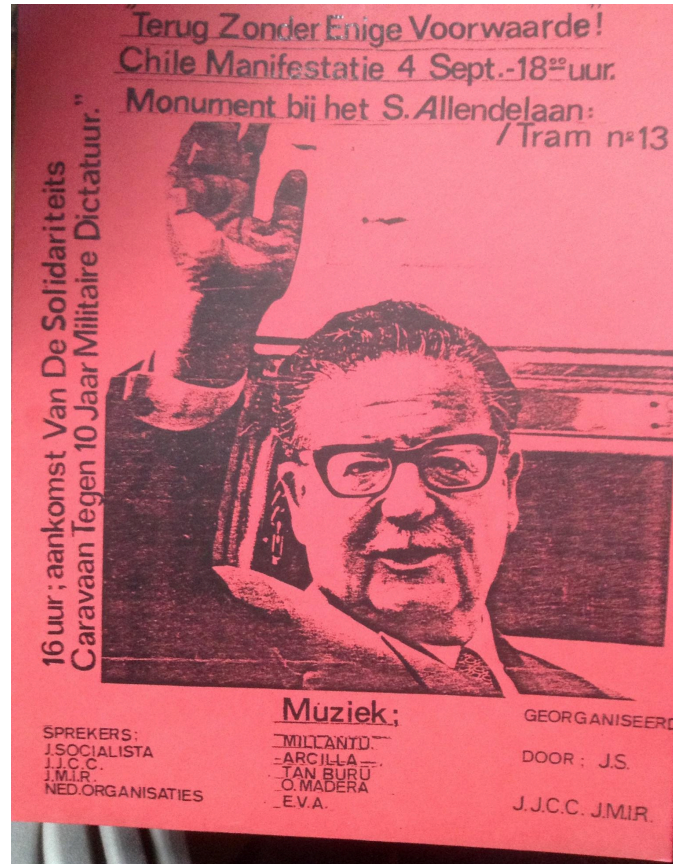
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### *JEP and Allende: Of Amnesias and Memories*

Guillermo Delgado-P.<sup>1</sup>

September calls me to revisit a historic watershed. Of all those Septembers one will always come back, again and again. My joy was greater, some years ago, when I opened the first volume of three, truly encyclopedic, volumes of an anthology simply titled “*Inventario*.” It began to circulate in 2017, the date of its publication, covering ten years of production, 1973-1983. They are chronicles and essays written by the renowned Mexican bard José Emilio Pacheco. The texts of *Inventario* had the purpose of recording everyday events in a critical way. And in doing so, the writer, precise chronicler that he was, documented world events. In several ways José Emilio was a complement to the ubiquitous chronicler Carlos Monsiváis who did the same with the Mexican megalopolis. This creative talent signed his essays simply as JEP, initials with which this intellectual delivered his weekly contributions to *Revista Proceso*, and *La Jornada*, of Mexico City. The three volumes I refer to are available and delicately cataloged in the prestigious libraries of humanity. However, *Inventario* constitutes a separate work, not the poetic one that is

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<sup>1</sup> I appreciate Prof. Harry Cleaver’s (Emeritus) encouragement and suggestion to post this brief memoir.

monumental in itself. Learned men and women have explored, studied, and analyzed the poet's work and, being unavoidable, they continue to quote and review him.

But, what is this recalling all about? Several days after the coup d'état that overthrew the coalition of Popular Unity parties of Chile, on September 11, 1973, an unforgettable text titled simply: "From Lautaro to Salvador Allende: A Minimum Review" was circulating among courageous militants. I read it hastily during the frightening darkness of those fragile days while events transformed a precarious democracy into a sinister dictatorship. That moment of hurried reading became tarnished over time, leaving only vestiges of memorable references of that text, single words floating in images. I vaguely remembered the author. It was something ineffable, fleeting, and circumstantial. But let us pause here, briefly, to return to this moment at the end of these pages.

Time passed by. I left Santiago then, never to return except as a disoriented tourist, around 1995. At the airport, a grumpy agent, upon checking my passport, turned to look at me and, very reluctantly, issued a visa for no more than five days.

But, those distant upsetting moments of nameless uncertainty return from hiding and spring up, almost involuntarily, from some corner of my brain. That September the mission of active resistance demanded of us university students a simple task: covertly distribute a poem without title or author. Mimeographed copies of the poem were cleverly left about on the seats of the "liebres," trolley-buses, and taxi cubs. Those of us who distributed it pretending to be distracted passengers, after doing so, got off the crowded public transportation that crisscrossed the city, urgent and nervous. The bus drivers wanted to return to their homes and, almost desperate, they were beating the curfew. We, after stepping out, got lost in the twilight, avoiding the state of siege and evading the soldiers' checkpoints stationed at the street corners.

With my nerves frayed that time, I confess, I did not detect the authorship when reading the poem. I assumed that its creator, whoever it was, had captured in tangible and undeniable poetic images what was brutally happening before our very eyes: "And one morning everything was burning/ and one morning the fires/ were shooting out of the earth/ devouring beings, / and ever since then fire,/ gunpowder ever since,/ and ever since then blood." But, I wondered—who would it be? Who could have sat down and written the poem while bombs were raining down on *La Moneda*? One of its *stanzas* that was imprinted in my memory simply said:

"Come see the blood in the streets,  
                  come see  
                  the blood in the streets,  
                  come and see the blood,  
                  in the streets!"

That's an excerpt of a famous poem. And, in Chile, a nation of poets, that very day *everyone* suspected the name of its author. And so, I learned about it that same night. Years later, in Austin, taking advantage of the quiet of a library that holds ALL the volumes written in many languages on the Chilean experience of 1970-1973, I rediscovered that anonymous poem we circulated that fateful September in a volume by Pablo Neruda himself.<sup>2</sup> Don Pablo could read his poems in *La Vega* de Santiago, when the roar of human voices subsided slowly so that only the bard's voice could be heard. For those who don't know what *La Vega* is, that is the name of the Santiago market.

A little more than half a century has passed since those moments. What happened on September 11, is a historical event that belongs to the twentieth century. Neruda himself died that same month and his library lost volumes stacked on public bonfires lit by the hands of cruel soldiers in a looting. JEP captured this act of barbarism: — “Neruda's immense legacy is his work: his books that burn, although in a very different sense than that intended by those who order their incineration.” That's how it was, that's how it is.

Now I come back to what is pending. Sheltered in a safe place, I read in awe “Lautaro, Allende...” at that time (it was the house of a solidary acquaintance who, due to his official FAO status, drove a vehicle with a diplomatic license plate and, at that moment, that meant that his residence was inviolable because it was governed by the Geneva Convention), and it was now returning from some groove in my cerebellum. Yes, I remembered that that text compressed the history of Chile into fifteen paragraphs, sections that, at that young age, also came to my eyes in understandable novelty, which is why I wanted to save it among my papers.

I said that my joy was greater when, upon opening that first volume of *Inventario*, in 2018, at the beginning, the lost text that vaguely remained hidden in my memory jumped out. When I reread it I knew that it was the same one I wanted to keep. Urged by the circumstances, I abandoned it next to my small library when, sullen and unsure, we left Chile. With the volume in my hand, I noticed that the chronicle was signed by JEP, on September 15, 1973. I remember reading it after Neruda's death, that is, around the 25th, or so. What amazes me is that on that destabilized occasion, things moved as a vortex because by the 15th, JEP's “Minimal Review” of the history of Chile was already circulating in Mexico in precise detail. A few weeks after the coup, we could also read it in the anonymous secrecy of the streets of Santiago. In many ways, this text signed by JEP provided a perspective that we, then, feeling disoriented, perceived it to be guiding an intuition disjointed by the unpunished and hasty treachery of the moment. What happened? Let JEP register a *requiem* of that shattered dream transformed into a nightmare:

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<sup>2</sup> See: “I Explain Some Things”, *Third Residence* (1947), translated by Mark Eisner, ed. The Essential Neruda (2004).

“In 1970 Salvador Allende triumphed in the elections and wanted to free Chile from its dependence on imperialism and its socioeconomic backwardness through the construction of a socialist society, gradually implemented through constitutional legality and without bloodshed. Surrounded and boycotted, it had the support of the working and peasant masses and large sectors of the middle classes. He did not arm his supporters into defensive militias to avoid clashes that could spark civil war, and because he relied on the army's incessantly proclaimed loyalty. Inside and outside Chile, its destruction was relentlessly plotted. All the problems caused by his predecessors and his enemies were imposed on him: maddening inflation, unrest, declining industrial production. The ITT and the CIA, like the English investors in Balmaceda's time, joined their natural Chilean allies and finally achieved that — in an act of ignominy that surpasses the Huertista betrayal [in Mexico] of 1913— a majority fraction of the armed forces overthrew and assassinated Allende on that tragic Tuesday, September 11. By sending these lines to the printer, everything indicates that the only thing achieved by the vile murderer Pinocchio Pinochet was to unleash the civil war that Allende gave his life to prevent. The Chilean people take up arms against the traitors. The Washington-Brasilia-Santiago axis will not be established. The fascists will not pass.” September 15, 1973<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, every September 11, the *obstinate memory* calls on militancy to occupy the streets and avenues. We know why. There is no shortage of those who want to erase or ignore that memory. That is an impossible act, a useless desire, stubbornness prevails.

Santa Cruz, CA. September, 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> José Emilio Pacheco. *Inventario. Antología. 1973-1983*. volumen I. México: Ediciones Era, UNAM, El Colegio Nacional, UAS. 2017. Pp. 19-20.