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Review Article

Second Funerals": The Case of the Hero as an Element of Analysis

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Introduction

In a previous work, written for the course Dying in the West, I analyzed the formal and administrative processes involved in the exhumation, transfer, and burial of the Tucumán hero Bernardo de Monteagudo in the Western Cemetery of San Miguel de Tucumán. Returning to this topic, this essay seeks to address the issue of double funerals and their implications for both the deceased and their relatives. To this end, I draw on various concepts proposed by [1-6] among others. I offer a brief theoretical discussion of the implications of successive exhumations and burials in the context of this historical figure, as well as their consequences for the body itself. That is, I examine how these double funerals (in this case, multiple funerals) may imply several deaths before reaching a "definitive" one, and what this process may also entail with respect to mourning for the dead.

A Brief Introduction to the Life and Death of Monteagudo

Bernardo de Monteagudo was born in Tucumán on August 20, 1789. Throughout his life, he was a politician, journalist, soldier, and revolutionary patriot, playing a prominent role in the independence movements of Upper Peru (present-day Bolivia), Buenos Aires, Chile, and Peru. He was a close collaborator of the liberators José de San Martín, Bernardo O'Higgins, and Simón Bolívar. He accompanied José de San Martín as legal auditor of the Army of the Andes and drafted the Chilean Declaration of Independence, signed by Bernardo O'Higgins in 1818. In Peru, he served as Minister of Government and Foreign Affairs under San Martín during the country's first independent government. His principal governmental measures included the abolition of forced labor (the mita), the emancipation of children born to enslaved mothers, the expulsion of the Archbishop of Lima, the creation of a teacher training school, and the establishment of the National Library of Perú. Bernardo de Monteagudo was assassinated in Lima on January 28, 1825, at the age of 35. The crime took place in the Plazoleta de la Micheo, in Lima. He was found face down, his hands clutching a large dagger embedded in his chest. That same night, Bolívar personally went to the Convent of San Juan de Dios, where Monteagudo's body had been taken, and exclaimed: "Monteagudo! Monteagudo! You will be avenged!".

Monteagudo was aware of the risk to his life involved in returning to Peru with Bolívar: he was a man condemned to death, and he knew it. Nevertheless, he was determined to face his tragic fate without compromising his essential nature as a staunch revolutionary patriot. Following his assassination, Monteagudo was buried in the Convent of San Juan de Dios on Sunday, January 30, 1825. Between 1848 and 1851, the convent was demolished, and in its place the San Juan de Dios railway station—the first in Peru—was built. In 1878, his remains were exhumed and placed in a mausoleum. In 1917, Monteagudo's remains were transferred to Argentina and deposited in the mausoleum of General Pablo Richieri in the Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires. On the occasion of this repatriation, a monument in his honor was inaugurated. Sculpted by the German artist Gustavo Eberlein, it is located in Pringles Square, in Parque Patricios, at the intersection of Caseros Avenue and Monteagudo Street—the point at which the street bearing his name begins in the City of Buenos Aires (Bill, 2014). In 2012, the Professional Council of Engineering of Tucumán (COPIT) initiated a process for the transfer of Monteagudo's remains by submitting a proposed law to facilitate their repatriation. This law was approved by the Tucumán Legislature in 2014. After several administrative procedures carried out by the Municipality of San Miguel de Tucumán, it was decided that the exhumation, transfer, and burial would take place in 2016, coinciding with the celebrations of the Bicentennial of Argentina's Independence. On the morning of June 24, 2016, Monteagudo's remains were exhumed in a formal ceremony at La Recoleta Cemetery. The urn was draped with an Argentine flag. Representatives of the Ministry of Defense and the

Municipality of San Miguel de Tucumán participated, along with the director of La Recoleta Cemetery, a descendant of Bernardo de Monteagudo, and members of the "Founders of the Nation" group. Grenadiers formed an honor guard and accompanied the urn from the mausoleum to the vehicle that transported it to Tucumán (La Gaceta, 2016). On June 25, the remains arrived in Tucumán and were temporarily held at the funeral home responsible for the transfer, where they were displayed to receive public honors from the people of Tucumán. On June 29, a procession of gauchos escorted the funeral urn to the Western Cemetery, where the burial ceremony took place and the remains were placed in a marble vault prepared for the occasion. Provincial and national officials of the Argentine government participated in the ceremony, as well as representatives of various social organizations in Tucumán[1] [7].

The Hero as a Symbolic Figure

Before turning to the theoretical issues addressed in this paper, it is important to briefly consider the meaning and uses that society (or at least a segment of it) assigns to the figure of the hero, whether to reinforce or redefine certain policies at the state level or within specific social groups. In order to analyze the case of the Tucumán hero Bernardo de Monteagudo—particularly the exhumation and transfer of his remains from the city of Buenos Aires and his "definitive" burial in San Miguel de Tucumán—it is necessary to situate this case within a set of concepts that illuminate the social and political dimensions underlying this event. To this end, I draw on the idea that "every commemoration expresses and contributes to the elaboration of social or collective memory" [4] for a given segment of society. In the case of the Tucumán hero, and following Bertrand's argument "it is not the reconstruction of facts and their explanatory causes that constitutes the exclusive purpose of history, but also—and perhaps above all—the measurement and understanding of their effects. In this sense, knowledge of the actions that are remembered or even commemorated by a social group, regardless of its size, becomes secondary, while the traces of those actions, as well as the dynamics generated by their commemoration, become central". In other words, it is not the actions that characterized Monteagudo's life that are at stake here, but rather those inherent to the commemorative event of the Bicentennial of Argentine Independence. It is within this context that the recovery of the myth and the hero emerges, as an emblematic figure deemed necessary to frame and, to a certain extent, legitimize the commemoration itself. Consequently, the need for a dead man—a body constituted as a symbol of this historical feat—becomes essential to reaffirm the past and justify the present. As [4] argues, "commemoration establishes a link between the past one seeks to celebrate, the present one inhabits, and the future one envisions. For the group that organizes it, commemoration becomes a definition of collective identity". From this perspective, the figure of the national hero, whoever he may be, functions as a justification that allows both the organizers of the celebration and the political content of these ceremonies to shift according to the historical moment (Bertrand, 2011) [4]. Following this line of thought, it is important to note that the initiative to transfer Monteagudo's body originated in a non-profit civil institution. This is particularly significant, as it frames the commemoration not as a politically opportunistic act, but as one that held meaning for the social actors involved. Nevertheless, given that the Monteagudo case is embedded within the context of the Bicentennial celebrations, it is impossible to ignore the broader historical framework of such ceremonies—especially their precedents. As [8] notes, the political capacity and symbolic efficacy attributed to dead bodies have historically transformed state funerals into political events that tested governmental legitimacy, while simultaneously becoming spectacles of great emotional intensity. The use of significant—and often controversial—figures can thus serve as a means of mitigating deeper and more immediate social tensions at specific historical moments. In Argentina, the deployment of bodies or the dead as supposed symbols of national reconciliation has a long history [9].

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Figure of the Dead Hero

Having thus contextualized the meaning of the figure of the Tucumán hero Bernardo de Monteagudo, I now turn to the concept of "dying twice" or the "second death". This notion refers to processes involving the double or multiple burial of a deceased person—that is, situations in which a diachronic temporal dimension intervenes. Such cases include the body of a national hero; the exhumation of the dead from cemeteries who, for various reasons, are transferred to communal ossuaries; or the victims of state terrorism who were clandestinely buried and later reinterred following the recovery and identification of their remains by forensic experts. Although [2] carefully analyzes the question of the double as "the core of all archaic representations concerning the dead," this is not the perspective

1. Julio Cazas Cardozo asked permission to say a few words at the foot of the restored monument to Monteagudo in the West Cemetery. He introduced himself as a Bolivian from Potosí, an admirer of the hero's courage and dedication: "What a valiant act to have brought Monteagudo back from there (Lima, in 1917 to the Recoleta Cemetery), abandoned in lands that didn't want him. What a great man Monteagudo was!" he exclaimed, before singing the Argentine National Anthem, also in Quechua. With this impromptu act, the ceremony came to a close in an emotional and unexpected way.

from which I approach the deceased here. Rather, my interest lies in the idea of the dead person inhabiting their own death, and in understanding the processes or mechanisms through which that death is experienced and ultimately resolved. In this sense, questions of a good death or a bad death, of oblivion or memory, and of what was—or should have been—come into play. The deceased seeks to come to terms with their own death and to find a place within it. To do so, some individuals must first resolve, through a second death (including its associated funerary rites), the conditions under which they may remain in their final death. As a result, the deceased may acquire several doubles—contrary to what Morin suggests—corresponding to successive deaths, until reaching the double with which they recognize themselves and are recognized by the living. It is in this sense that I emphasize the notion of "dying twice" as a process through which the deceased seeks their final place and the manner in which they would have wished to be buried. Although I employ the terms "dying twice" or "second death," these may at times imply multiple deaths or repeated dying, as in the case of Bernardo de Monteagudo. Such repetition inherently signals the prolongation of an unsatisfactory death or an extended process of mourning, an issue that will be examined later. This notion of a "second death" implies that the deceased and their body—what remains of them—were initially buried (their first death) in a manner experienced as "uncomfortable." It is this discomfort that generates the demand for a good death, understood as burial in accordance with the wishes or expectations of the deceased. This process may be broadly situated within what [1] describes as second funerals. However, in the case examined here, Monteagudo's body was not originally deposited with the intention of later removal. Consequently, the idea that "the body of the deceased is deposited provisionally while awaiting the second funeral rites in a place other than the final burial site" [1] does not initially apply. Rather, as I will argue later, it was the deceased himself and the specific circumstances surrounding his death—indeed, his original wishes—that gave rise to a series of funerary rites.

It may also occur that the deceased—as is partly illustrated by the case of Monteagudo—is forgotten, ceases to be remembered, and comes to claim, through various means, another place and another mode of existence within death. In such cases, the forgotten dead—the deceased whose grave is no longer visited—may seek rest elsewhere, in places where they are accompanied by other equally forgotten dead. One example of this displacement is the transfer from an abandoned grave to a communal ossuary. This raises the question of how such a "second death" may be correlated with the wishes of the deceased and with a mortuary existence that demands to be remedied. [5] Argues that the dead never act directly; rather, they "have singular ways of being present that become particularly perceptible through the semantic and syntactic choices that allow us to describe the ways in which they act". Drawing on Latour, Despret further suggests that this presence is essentially "a matter of influencing, forcing, shaping, or, more precisely, making others act". She goes on to argue that "these syntactic forms qualify what the dead are capable of— that is, their ways of being, their ethology, their singular power". Despret concludes by proposing that such actions "inspire" actions that cannot be automatically explained by our empirical reality. I would add that the mechanisms through which the dead—in their first death—operate are highly diverse, and that the ways in which they convey the message through which they claim a "second death" can only be apprehended at particular moments. In other words, the temporalities of the living do not coincide with those of the dead. This is evident in the case of certain historical figures whose first death was ordinary, distant, barely remembered—a death perceived as inadequate. Such deaths, it is felt, should have been marked by pomp, ceremony, and collective, public, and transcendental rites. Faced with this discrepancy between the death that occurred and the death that "should have been", the deceased demands to be heard, to be differentiated, and to be recognized in their pomp and glory. As Morin (2021, p. 46) clearly states, "the search for glory is also the search for 'intensity' in the glorious instant." In the case of Monteagudo—who was aware that he would be betrayed and murdered—his actions can be understood through Morin's assertion that "it is preferable to risk one's life than to live a miserable existence. Hence, true life, the dangerous life, should be preferred to a mediocre one. Glory, then, is the exaltation of individual life. At the same time, the glorious instant is the gigantic wave that forever engulfs history, the privileged moment stronger than death, and which will subsist 'eternally' in the collective memory". Thus, the hero—Monteagudo, in this case—and others who die under similar circumstances seek a way for their death to be recognized and for their voice to be heard. We cannot, of course, determine whether it is the deceased who, through stratagems woven from the afterlife, orchestrates the network that allows this moment of recognition to occur. Yet once the conditions are in place, once the message has been conveyed, this "second death"—what Hertz would define as a "second funeral"—takes place, accompanied by the honors and ceremonies the deceased had anticipated. In this way, the deceased dies once more, now reconciled with their death. As Morin (2001, p. 46) observes, "the synthesis of the individual [in this case, the figure of the hero] culminates, on the plane of death, in a form of civic immortality, where the best of the individual is inscribed in the common phylum". However, dying twice is not the fate of all the dead. Most are satisfied with their first death. The "second death" is reserved for those unsatisfied dead—those who experience their death as a bad death, or whose communities seek to mourn them otherwise.

I now turn, in a concise manner, to this final theme: the mourning of the dead. We usually speak of mourning as experienced by the living—the bereaved, those who remain— but what of the mourning of the dead themselves? What of those who demand not to be forgotten, who retain a form of nostalgia for the life they lost, for the spaces they once inhabited, and for the beings they loved? Death may therefore also entail mourning on the part of the deceased. It is important to clarify that, in this work, the concept of mourning does not follow the framework proposed by [1], which focuses on the ritual universe associated with the period of bodily

decomposition. Rather, my interest lies in mourning— here, the mourning of the hero—as the symbolic universe through which the deceased, in another dimension of existence, seeks to make sense of their own death, a death that is singular and vital to them. Such mourning may be negotiated internally, according to the terms of that other plane of existence, or it may require mediation through the living—in our own plane—particularly through relatives or collective actors. Once this mourning has been resolved, the deceased may reach a definitive death, at least in relation to the world they longed for and desired. Continuing with the example of historical figures, the deceased completes this mourning through the recognition of their "noble" existence. In other words, mourning culminates in the "second death," in "dying twice," and ultimately in the "final" funerary rites that provide symbolic closure.

Thus, just as the mourning rituals of the living allow death to run its course, enabling those left behind to continue with their lives, the deceased may likewise require the fulfillment of their own rituals in order to continue within death. These rituals, which are difficult to identify, may operate through moments in which the deceased seeks to communicate [3]. Such communication can take different forms[2]: noises, knocks, dreams, premonitions, smells, and other phenomena in the realm of the living allow the deceased to express their need to grieve. This need, and the mechanisms through which it operates, may extend beyond the consciousness of the deceased, appearing as a persistent presence in this world that requires proper mourning rituals to transition fully to their rightful realm.

If mourning among the living is necessary to process death, understood as "a set of mental representations and linked behaviors that provide elements for the effective elaboration of the process" (Soto et al., 2009, p. 1) [10], it is reasonable to consider that the dead— or at least some of them—also require resources to process their own deaths. This includes mourning not only for themselves but also for the living they left behind. In this way, the grief of the living and the grief of the dead intersect in a shared, often unconscious, dimension, allowing the deceased to fulfill their mourning. Such fulfillment facilitates, for the deceased, the achievement of what I call the "second death", which is completed through final funeral rites. The grief of the dead may unfold over time, sometimes spanning generations, and—depending on the case—through multiple "deaths" or intermediary mourning processes. [6] Observes that "symbolic perception is constitutive of rituals" and that "the symbol serves to recognize oneself". Following this perspective, both the living and the dead rely on rituals to structure, enact, and ultimately conclude the mourning process, thereby closing the cycle of existence. For those who "die several times", these intermediary deaths constitute a trial-and-error process through which their needs and messages are gradually recognized. Only once the appropriate symbolic and ritual conditions are met can the deceased achieve the death they consider just and noble. Concluding with these conceptual considerations, and drawing on historical examples, the exhumation, transfer, and final burial of the hero's[3] body completes their cycle, for both the living and the dead, transforming the initial death into a "good death"—a death realized as it should have been.

Funeral Rites and Mourning: The Final Death

The historian Villareal [10] describes Bernardo de Monteagudo as "a transformer of realities in every endeavor and from every position; a weaver at all times of the relationships that shaped his destiny". Two hundred and twenty-seven years after his birth, Monteagudo's remains returned to Tucumán, coinciding with the bicentennial of the Independence he helped achieve, marking perhaps his final death. Throughout his successive deaths, Monteagudo continued to shape his destiny even from beyond the grave, seeking mechanisms to carry out his "second death". His first burial took place at the San Juan de Dios convent (Peru) on January 30, 1825; his second, in a mausoleum in Peru in 1878; his third, in La Recoleta Cemetery (Buenos Aires) in 1917; and his fourth, in the West Cemetery (Tucumán) on June 29, 2016. In these successive burials, Monteagudo's concern was not for a "good death" in the sense of dying for his cause—assassinated in pursuit of independence— but for being reconciled with his true homeland. Monteagudo's example illustrates the earlier point that the grief of the living and the grief of the dead converge, allowing the deceased to complete their mourning. His "second death" was thus realized fully and definitively. This mourning unfolded over time, involving several generations of the living who participated in ensuring that his death and its commemorations were carried out in the proper time and place. As Byung-Chul [6] observes, symbols serve for self-recognition. Monteagudo sought to recognize himself in the symbols that acknowledged him as a hero, choosing the date and location for these rites: Tucumán, his birthplace and the site of the Independence proclamation, and 2016, the bicentennial of that Independence. According to [5], language and signs allow the dead to communicate their wishes. In Monteagudo's case, his desires were made unmistakably clear. Finally, following [4] insight that ceremonial practices shift according to the moment, one may note the exclamation of a man from Potosí at the West Cemetery: "What a great man Monteagudo!" Whether by chance or as part of the hero's own agency from beyond the grave, this moment symbolically concluded his mourning, allowing Monteagudo to enter his second death definitively.

2. Let us also remember the different ways, according to Morin (2021), of the manifestations of the double.
3. According to Morin (2021, p. 47), the hero "tends to believe that he will 'live on' in future generations, and that whatever his battles may be, he will always be present."

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