

**Eden Medina**, *Indiana University Bloomington*

For "Forensic Identification in the Aftermath of Human Rights Crimes in Chile: A Decentered Computer History," *Technology and Culture* 59:4 Supplement (2018), S100-S133

The Abbot Payson Usher Prize committee congratulates Eden Medina as the winner of the 2019 competition, with the essay "Forensic Identification in the Aftermath of Human Rights Crimes in Chile: A Decentered Computer History." The essay connects computing to the broader narrative of human rights in a country with a troubling history of dictatorship and secret killings. The essay is only partly about computing per se, but instead reveals how forensic techniques were used to identify human remains of political victims of the Pinochet dictatorship. As Medina puts it, by decentering computing we can more clearly see how the range of forensic identification techniques shaped processes of truth, justice, and reconciliation. With this broader cultural understanding we can evaluate the continued reliance of craniofacial superimposition in Chile even after the widespread use of DNA testing. Medina's is not a celebratory story of decisive use of innovative technology, but shows instead how nascent efforts at computer-based superimposition techniques influenced judges, family members, and the general public, becoming integral parts of truth claims in the new era. The essay makes a fascinating case for the role of technology in facilitating emotional closure for the families of victims of state-mandated killings, and makes provocative claims about the role of computing technology in the country's transition to democracy.