2013

Literary and Visual Representations of Traumatic Memory of the Pinochet Dictatorship in Chile

Alison Tange
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the Latin American Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
Tange, Alison, "Literary and Visual Representations of Traumatic Memory of the Pinochet Dictatorship in Chile" (2013). Master's Theses. 1826.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1826

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 2013 Alison Tange
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

LITERARY AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS
OF TRAUMATIC MEMORY OF
THE PINOCHET DICTATORSHIP IN CHILE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN SPANISH

BY
ALISON TANGE
CHICAGO, IL
AUGUST 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, this thesis would not have been possible without the
tremendous amount of expertise, unwavering support, and guidance of my thesis director,
Dr. Bernardita Llanos. Tu influencia ha dejado una gran huella, comandante.

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Olympia González and Dr.
Héctor García, for their help and support throughout this process. I would also like to
thank my colleagues in the Spanish M.A. program at Loyola University Chicago for their
constant support and encouragement: Catie Callahan, Marie Bold, Adriana Díaz-
Sinanagic, Arelis Rivero, and Melissa Boroughs. I extend my sincerest gratitude to
Maureen Tobin Stanley, for her never-ending support, guidance, encouragement, and
friendship that has changed how I view the world and helped me get to where I am today.
Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Tom and Sally Tange, for everything.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...........................................................................................................iii

INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................................1

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ..............................................................................6

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ..........................................................................18

CHAPTER THREE: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMATIC MEMORY BY CULTURAL CARRIERS ........................................................................................................33

CHAPTER FOUR: VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMATIC MEMORY BY CULTURAL CARRIERS ........................................................................................................57

CONCLUSION ...............................................................................................................................70

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................75

VITA ..............................................................................................................................................78
INTRODUCTION

I first became interested in Chile and the Pinochet dictatorship as an undergraduate student. I initially encountered the topic while watching Patricio Guzmán’s documentary, *La batalla de Chile* (released in three parts between 1972-1979) for a course on Latin American film. I was intrigued by Salvador Allende and his intent to empower the Chilean people, and shocked by the violent imagery of the coup d’état led by General Augusto Pinochet. I became interested primarily because I had heard never heard anything about the Pinochet dictatorship before, and after talking with several other people, I realized that they hadn’t either. Why didn’t anyone know about this? The fact that nobody I talked to, aside from my professors, was aware of what happened in Chile made me even more interested. I was horrified to learn about the role the United States played in the installation of the military dictatorship in Chile.

Throughout my education, I always heard my history teachers paraphrase the famous quote by George Santayana, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” I agreed with this statement, but quickly learned that often times, the history I was learning was only one version of a vast, complicated, and heterogenous history. I was learning the “official history” of not only my own country, but the history of the world as my own country, the United States, wanted me to learn it. Throughout the course of researching for my thesis, I came across the work of many historians and sociologists, such as Steve J. Stern and Tomás Moulian, who both wrote
about the concept of Chilean Exceptionalism, the notion that Chile, a country that had
one of the most enduring democracies in Latin America prior to the 1973 coup d’état,
could never have imagined that something like Pinochet’s military coup could happen in
their seemingly stable nation (Stern 19). This struck a cord with me as an American. In
this country, our children are raised believing that we are exceptional, that horrible things
such as state violence do not exist here. We reassure our children that nothing like that
could ever happen here. When our children ask why, our response is usually something
along the lines of “because things like that don’t happen in America.” So why is it
important to study memory of the dictatorial past in Chile? How is this meaningful to
anyone? I believe that regardless of national origin, memory of the Pinochet years in
Chile is important because it serves as a reminder that no one, no matter where they are
born, can afford to have the blind faith that their country or their government is
“exceptional.” Even more important is the presence of many different types of memory
about this past—not just an “official”, or state-approved memory. The memories
analyzed and discussed in this study represent a type of memory that is not always
included in the “official” history. It is precisely for that reason why these memories are
important—to give many different people from different walks of life the opportunity to
share their experiences.

In Chapter One, I provide a brief historical background on Chile, beginning with
the military coup on September 11th, 1973 and ending with a brief outline of the
transition from the dictatorship to the return of democracy. This brief summary provides
historical context that is helpful in understanding and interpreting the literary and visual works discussed in this thesis.

In Chapter Two, I give an overview of several theories on collective memory that can be applied to the literary and visual works I later discuss in chapters three and four. The theories outlined in this chapter provide a theoretical framework on collective memory—both in regards to how a collective memory is created in a culture as well as the contested and conflicting nature of the memories that comprise the collective memory of a traumatic event in a society, such as what occurred in Chile’s dictatorial past.

This thesis presents an analysis of six narratives that contribute to the collective memory of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. In this study, I attempt to pinpoint the commonalities, motivations, and differences in three literary texts and three documentaries that focus on survivor memory. In Chapter Three, I analyze and discuss three literary representations of memory. *Un día de octubre en Santiago* (Carmen Castillo, 1982) is an example of survivor memory, recounting her traumatic experience during the dictatorship and her forced exile. *Mi verdad* (Marcia Alejandra Merino, 1992) offers another perspective on survivor memory because her memory story not only recounts the trauma she endured, but also her collaboration with Pinochet’s secret police. The third literary narrative discussed, *La vida doble* (Arturo Fontaine, 2010), is a work of fiction that is based on real-life testimonies of survivors that experienced exile, torture, and collaboration with their captors. These texts are examples of how memory of the dictatorial past has been shaped by these authors, as well as how the process of this shaping unfolds and transcends into the shaping of their own identities.
Chapter Four of this study focuses on three documentary films. The visual narratives analyzed also deal with survivor memory, while also focusing on how to remember the past in the present and how to shape the memory of this traumatic past for future generations. *La Flaca Alejandra* (Carmen Castillo, 1993) is a visual representation of Marcia Alejandra Merino’s written testimony, *Mi verdad*. Castillo gives Merino the opportunity to share her “truth” and sheds a humanizing light on the figure of La Flaca Alejandra (Merino), who is viewed as a traitor for her betrayal of the revolucionary group the MIR and her decision to collaborate with the DINA and CNI (Pinochet’s secret police). Patricio Guzmán’s *Chile, la memoria obstinada* (1997) deals with survivor memory as well, but with a focus on how to break the silence that has permeated this topic in Chile and how both survivors and the younger generations should remember this past in the present. In his documentary, *Mi vida con Carlos* (2008) Germán Berger gives the viewer the opportunity to witness the shaping of his own memory of his father, Carlos Berger, who was disappeared during the Pinochet regime. Berger shows how memory can be transmitted to future generations and emphasizes the importance of memory in the familial context. These documentaries, like the literature discussed, also reveal how identity is shaped parallel to the shaping of these remembrances.

All of these narratives, while unique, have many common themes and characteristics. As will be discussed within chapters three and four of this thesis, both the literary and visual narratives are deliberate efforts to shape memories of the dictatorial past in order to contribute to the collective memory of this past. These works are
analyzed using a variety of ideas and theories on memory and postmemory which help to reveal the motivations, commonalities, and differences among these narratives.

In this thesis, I argue that Carmen Castillo, Marcia Alejandra Merino, Arturo Fontaine, Patricio Guzmán, and Germán Berger are all “cultural carriers”—people who deliberately shape the memory stemming from cultural trauma, which in the case of Chile is based on the overthrow of president Salvador Allende and the installation of a repressive military regime led by General Augusto Pinochet.
CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On September 11, 1973, a military coup d’état occurred that would shape governance and societal norms in Chile for nearly two decades after its occurrence. The military coup, led by General Augusto Pinochet, forcibly removed Salvador Allende, the democratically elected President of Chile from 1970-1973 (Stern xxxiv). Due to economic and political turmoil during his presidency, Allende lost much of his popularity among his people in the months before the military ousted him. The military coup was sold to the Chilean people as an alternative to the “Marxist regime” of President Allende, and promised to rebuild Chile (Stern xxxv). In the name of reform and rebuilding, the military occupancy turned into its own regime led by Pinochet, which included the dismantling of all democratic institutions and drastically changing the lives of the Chilean people (Stern 42). Pinochet instituted what many would call a “new world order” that included several nationalistic tactics that led to military control of most facets of daily life in Chile. After the coup, street names were changed¹ to reflect the “glory” of the military in its efforts to rebuild Chile, and a strict curfew was enforced until the late eighties (Ensalaco 30). There was a strong military presence in the streets for the first two months

¹ According to personal correspondence with Dr. Bernardita Llanos—a Chilean citizen who lived in Santiago during the military coup—street names were changed after the military coup to reflect the “glory” of the military. For example, renaming a well-known street in Santiago 11 de septiembre in homage to the coup that “saved” Chile.
after the coup and it was not uncommon to see tanks and military personnel armed with automatic weapons. Political parties were abolished, newspapers were allowed to publish but only under strict censorship, and the detention, torture, and disappearance of thousands of Chilean citizens began.

The military coup resulted from a serious of economic and political differences among politicians in Chile during the Allende presidency. Allende was a socialist who admired the success of the Cuban Revolution, but aimed to create a people’s revolution that could be executed in a peaceful, nonviolent manner. Allende was an advocate for Chile’s left-wing lower and middle classes, with his efforts centered on benefits for all people, regardless of social standing. He wanted to create a democratic socialist government that gave the people more of a say in how their country was governed as Patricio Guzmán shows in his documentary, *Salvador Allende* (2004). Allende believed that Chile could become a socialist society without violent revolution. He believed in legal property transfers (such as agrarian reform and nationalization of industries), social welfare that supported workers and people of low socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as unions to protect the workers (Stern 8-9).

On September 11, 1973, the military forcibly removed Allende from power and instituted a military government that promised to rebuild Chile and celebrated the removal of the “Marxist cancer” that was the Allende government in order to make Chile “healthy” again (Stern 28). The military presence immediately changed the daily life of the average Chilean citizen. All television and radio programs were out of order or controlled by the military state, and information about the coup and the state of the
government on the day of the coup and for days after was heavily controlled (“La TV Chilena el día 11 de septiembre 1973”). This was just the first step in creating a new reality of repression and censorship in Chilean society. In order to implement the neoliberal economic model desired by the upper class and those in Washington, Pinochet adapted Milton Friedman’s economic model, the market-centered matrix. Friedman and his “Chicago Boys” advocated for a free-market model of capitalism to be instituted in Chile during the Pinochet regime. When Friedman gave a lecture in Chile in 1975, he spoke on the free market model as the solution to all of Chile’s economic problems, stating:

I do not want to leave you with any false impressions or ambiguities: there is no way to end inflation without some cost, but continuing with inflation also will have high costs. The fact is, Chile is a sick country, and the sick cannot expect to recover without cost (cited in Cárcamo-Huechante 428).

In this quote, Milton Friedman uses the metaphor of Chile as a “sick” country and is essentially inferring that the way to “heal” Chile is through the institution of the free market model of capitalism in the Chilean economy. This metaphor was also used by the dictatorship when discussing Communism as an “illness” that inflicted the Chilean population during the Allende administration (Stern 28). When Friedman visited Chile, the Pinochet regime was reviewing plans for the country’s economy, and chose to follow the free market model supported by Milton Friedman and the “Chicago Boys”—a group of Chilean economists who studied at the University of Chicago, stemming from an agreement between Chile’s Universidad Católica and the University of Chicago (Cárcamo-Huechante 416). Ultimately, Pinochet decided to adopt the free market model
and do away with the Welfare State adopted by Salvador Allende (Cárcamo-Huechante 419). Once Pinochet came to power, a neoliberal economic system was viewed as a way to modernize Chile economically. According to sociologist Tomás Moulian, this was the goal of the Pinochet regime—to have a capitalist revolution (18). Moulian argues that today’s Chile is not much different from what it was during the Pinochet regime in terms of the economy. He states that Chilean society today, marked by materialism, is a result of a “tríada” comprised of the military, neoliberal economists, and a combination of national and international corporations (Moulian 18). This “tríada” is what led to what he calls “la revolución capitalista” which created a system characterized by “mercados desregulados, de indiferencia política, de individuos competitivos realizados o bien compensados a través del placer de consumiendo” (Moulian 18). According to Moulian, it is the neoliberal economic model imposed by the dictatorship that helped to disable democracy in Chile because the populism under Allende did not fit with the neoliberal model of economic development (Moulian 29).

After the military coup, the military junta began what they called “Plan Z”, which consisted of propaganda in news publications and on television (Stern 29). Two prominent Chilean newspapers, El Mercurio and La Tercera, were allowed to start publishing again on September 13, but under censorship. The dictatorship used these publications to tarnish the image of Salvador Allende, painting him as violent, with stores of guns and money in his private residence as well as in La Moneda (the presidential palace) and his vacation home outside Santiago. Newspaper and magazine articles painted him as hypocritical by saying that he did in fact agree with the more leftist
militant factions, such as the MIR, attacking Allende’s credibility when he stated that he wanted to achieve socialism through nonviolent means (Stern 29). The military held press conference type meetings where they would show several guns, assassination lists, political documents, rifles and machine guns, radio transmitters, explosives like Molotov cocktails, and attribute these items to leftist groups that they had exposed. The military junta convinced the public that finding these individuals who planned to have another coup and take over again was the responsibility of average citizens, who should be on the lookout for anything suspicious and report suspicious people to the military (Stern 44).

Education was also a target of censorship during the Pinochet era. Chile’s State Technical University went from being an important part of the Allende government, educating those in the lower classes, to being used by the Pinochet dictatorship against its original intention. As Cárcamo-Huechante points out, the State Technical University was taken over by the military during the coup in 1973. When the dictatorship chose to have the State Technical University as a sponsor for Milton Friedman’s lecture, it served as “an act of symbolic appropriation that staged the powerlessness of the defeated” (Cárcamo-Huechante 424). This is another example of how the military dictatorship took over symbolic Unidad Popular-backed institutions and turned them into symbols of military rule in Chile (Cárcamo-Huechante 424).

Cárcamo-Huechante also points out what he calls the “cultural asymmetry between the North and South,” with Chicago being the North and Chile the South. Cárcamo-Huechante states that “the North (Chicago) was invested with the authority of professor, while the South (Santiago and Chile) was implicitly associated with the
position of student” (428). This observation demonstrates the influence the United States had on the institution of neoliberalism in Chile and its support for the military junta.

The installation of the military government also spurred an “Apagón cultural” (cultural blackout). The Pinochet regime, as part of its efforts to create a new order and “heal” Chile, restructured society in a way that greatly affected culture. The cultural shifts that occurred beginning after the coup were influenced by the adaptation of neoliberalism (Jofré 72). Beginning after the military coup, all channels of communication (radio, press, and television) were subject to censorship and only permitted transmission of official messages deemed acceptable by the Pinochet regime. Prior to the coup, people were allowed to express different beliefs and opinions through communication channels and had access to the public arena (Jofré 73). After the coup, those who were left wing were banned from using all public communication channels. Censorship of all printed forms of media, including books, occurred between 1977 and 1983 (Jofré 74). The censorship imposed on society by the military dictatorship also created a self-censorship among artists, musicians, and writers in Chile (Jofré 74). Part of the new world order imposed by Pinochet was introduced by dismantling and restructuring fine arts and humanities departments in universities and turned these types of artistic expression into merely a product of the new neoliberal free market economic model (Jofré 74). In the early years of the dictatorship, there were book burnings and certain books were banned by the regime. There was heavy censorship of books from other countries, bookstores went out of business, and books were taxed at 20 percent (Jofré 80). Literature could not have a
focus on the social situation in Chile or it would be banned, and books merely became merchandise in the free market (Jofré 81).

In the several weeks following the coup, the Chilean military, led by General Pinochet, dedicated itself to the systematic rounding up of civilians and political activists that were believed to be Communists or against the military takeover. The United States CIA estimates that between 2,000 and 10,000 people were killed during the coup, and roughly 1,500 civilians were killed by the military in the six-week period after the coup (Kornbluh 153). Approximately 13,500 citizens were arrested in these raids and most were former Unidad Popular members, political activists on the left, labor union members, factory workers, and other Allende supporters (Kornbluh 153).

A notable event in the aftermath of the coup is what is known as “The Caravan of Death” which took place between October 16th and 19th in 1973. During this four-day period, the military, acting as a “death squad,” began to round up political prisoners in several provinces in Chile. At each stop, people were arrested, beaten, and killed. In the span of four days, sixty-eight people were killed and their bodies were either thrown into mass graves or thrown into the Mapocho River. Out of the sixty-eight bodies, fourteen of them were never recovered (Kornbluh 155-156). Germán Berger in his documentary Mi vida con Carlos (2009) discusses his father, Carlos Berger, who was detained during the military coup and killed in the Caravan of Death. He discusses the effect that his father’s death had on his own life as well as his family members, specifically the pain caused to everyone in the family. This documentary demonstrates the psychological effect that disappearances have on a family, which was used as a technique to oppress the public by
creating an atmosphere of fear. The Pinochet regime achieved control not only by the detention, torture, and subsequent murder of political dissenters considered enemies of the State, rather its most powerful tool was the psychology of terror and fear it spread throughout society. The disappearance of individuals was one way that the regime could not only hurt one person, but also hurt and instilled fear in all of the detainee’s family members and friends. As noted by Tomás Moulian in his book, *Chile Actual: Anatomía de un Mito*, the uncertainty that surrounded an individual’s disappearance “se prolonga en el suplicio de sus familiares” (Moulian 187). Considering that estimates of those killed during the military coup and those detained after the installation of the military dictatorship amount to several thousands of people, the psychological effect on the Chilean people was significant and served as a method for controlling the civilian population.

Shortly after coming into power, Pinochet started the DINA (Directorate of National Intelligence, Dirección de Inteligencia National), which served as an intelligence agency that also specialized in political repression and torture. Out of the many other agencies that participated in the detention, torture, and murder of thousands of people, the DINA was by far the worst (Kornbluh 159). The DINA created 20 detention centers throughout Chile where presumed communists and leftists were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Each detention center had a specific torture style, which included various forms of physical, emotional, and sexual torture. Unthinkable and incomprehensible acts were performed on prisoners. For example, one detention center called “The Discoteque” or La Venda Sexy was a house that functioned as a clandestine
detention center. It was referred to as La Venda Sexy because prisoners were blindfolded the majority of the time and subjected to torture that was almost exclusively sexual in nature. It was also referred to as “The Discoteque” because, according to survivor accounts, music would be playing constantly. In another torture center, Villa Grimaldi, prisoners were kept in wooden rooms the size of closets. It had what is known as “the tower” which was a small space where prisoners would be kept and most did not survive because there was not enough room to move around (La venda). Overall, the most common forms of torture were beatings, sexual torture and rape, application of electric shock, suffocation, and “The Submarine” which consisted of “forced immersion in a vat of urine and excrement, or frigid water” (Kornbluh 163). In recent years, some of the few survivors of these torture techniques have come forward about what happened to them while they were detained in these clandestine detention centers. One notable account is given by Gladys Díaz, who was a MIR militant that survived being locked in “the tower” for almost three months (La venda).

Human rights activists around the world were aware of what was going on in Chile and there was growing concern about the human rights abuses that were being committed by the DINA. In 1977, General Pinochet abolished the DINA in an effort to improve the Chilean Army’s image and claimed that the creation of the new intelligence agency, CNI (Centro Nacional de Información) would not be authorized to arrest and detain people as the DINA was able to do, and would not be as brutal. This only reflected a name change and the new CNI continued to detain, torture, and disappear citizens as the DINA had done before (Kornbluh 172).
The Pinochet regime institutionalized torture. It was viewed as a means to achieving national “security”—specially trained torture specialists, physicians, equipment, and methods were used for the systematic torture of thousands (Bunster 298). According to Bunster, “militaristic states rely more than civilian states on the use of coercion to strengthen and perpetuate their public authority,” and this was especially true in the case of torture in Chile, as well as other countries in the Southern Cone (Bunster 300). In Chile, the clandestine detention centers throughout the country were run not only by Pinochet’s intelligence agency, the DINA (and later the CNI), but also by the air force, the navy, and the army (Bunster 300). Women specifically were subjected to especially heinous torture methods by the military. Bunster identifies two categories of women who were subjected to torture—women who were involved in leftist political activism, as well as women who worked in public service roles, such as union leaders, lawyers, doctors, and professors (302). The second category consists of “women who do not have a publicly recognized identity of their own, but, from the perspective of the state, derive their identity from their relationship to a male” (303). Women in the latter category were targeted, detained, and tortured because of a male family member or friend who was involved in leftist political activism, and by detaining and torturing these women, it was a way for the military to “get even with their men” (Bunster 303).

The Pinochet regime created a society that was marked by fear through the oppressive environment it created and through the disappearances and killings of thousands of Chilean citizens. This sense of constant fear completely changed the lives of many, and significantly changed the behavior of many. In Jofré’s article, published in
1989, shortly before the transitional democracy, he states that the behavior of Chileans in
public is different from the behavior exhibited before the military coup:

Today in the streets, few groups can be seen; there is almost no loud conversation
on buses…body language has become more restricted. What really has been
reduced is everybody’s social aura…Chileans project themselves different now.
Everything is kept inside…Appearance becomes more important than reality. The
only truth is defined by the one-way vertical and official monologue of coercive
power (Jofré 73).

Jofré’s observation shows the effect of the rhetoric of fear that characterized the Pinochet
Regime. This observation also relates to what Moulian has argued in regards to the
neoliberal economy in Chile—in a society marked by consumerism, appearance does
often become more important than reality.

Beginning in 1988, fourteen political parties in Chile united to create a coalition
called the *Concertación de Partidos para el NO* to defeat Pinochet in the plebiscite to
decide if Pinochet should continue to be in power (Kornbluh 422). The No campaign
won, and in 1989 the *Concertación para la Democracia*, made up of several centrist and
leftist parties, nominated Patricio Aylwin to run for the presidency. Aylwin won the
presidential election on December 14, 1989 with 55.2 percent of the vote. Aylwin was
later inaugurated in 1990 (Kornbluh 427).

Michelle Bachelet was president of Chile from 2005 to 2010. Bachelet is a
survivor of torture under the Pinochet regime and was the first female Socialist president
in Chile. In 1975, she exiled to Australia and later Germany, returning to Chile in 1979.
After returning to Chile, she worked as a doctor in a clinic for torture victims (“Michelle
Bachelet”). As president, Bachelet had strong economic policies that created more
funding for social programs, pension funds, and job creation. She was also recognized for reducing poverty in Chile ("Michelle Bachelet"). The Concertación, comprised of three political parties—the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, and the Party for Democracy—governed for nearly three decades until Sebastián Piñera took office in 2010 ("Sebastián Piñera").

This brief historical overview provides an important context for the literature and documentary films analyzed in this study. Allende’s presidency, the military coup, the environment of fear and violence during Pinochet, as well as the transitional period after the dictatorship are all important components in understanding the narratives of Carmen Castillo, Marcia Alejandra Merino, Arturo Fontaine, Patricio Guzmán, and Germán Berger.
CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The works discussed in this thesis are shaped by several theories on collective memory and memory studies. The theories and ideas outlined in this chapter assist in the interpretation of the literature and documentary films analyzed in chapter three. This chapter summarizes these thoughts on memory by Maurice Halbwachs, Elizabeth Jelin, Steve J. Stern, Michael J. Lazzara, and Pierre Nora. I also include definitions and explanations of cultural trauma as discussed by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Neal J. Smelser, and Ximena Bunster-Burrotto, all of which contribute to the relationship between memory and cultural trauma in Chile today.

Maurice Halbwachs’ theory on collective memory is a reference point for all of the theories and ideas on memory discussed in this chapter. Halbwachs offers useful explanations of individual memory and how it is related to the memory of the collective. In the beginning of his work, *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs notes that even those who suffer from aphasia (loss of ability to express oneself through speech) rarely forget that they are members of a society (43). Those with aphasia typically remember important events in their lives and the people that have been a part of their lives, and this memory, according to Halbwachs, “keeps contact with the collective memory and is under its control” (43). In other words, the collective memory of a society is essentially composed of individual memories from the members of the given society. Halbwachs’
theory also touches on the reconstruction of past memories in a way that is particularly useful in relation to the works discussed. When reconstructing memories of the past, Halbwachs notes, “If certain memories are inconvenient or burden us, we can always oppose to them the sense of reality inseparable from our present life” (50). This is the case for some Chileans in regards to remembering the dictatorial past. For many, these painful and traumatic memories may be inconvenient and burdensome, thus causing them to sort of reject these memories in an effort to move forward in their lives. The problem is that this is not possible because memory, as Patricio Guzmán argues, because it is obstinate and stubborn and it persists, never truly going away. Another important aspect of Halbwachs is his assertion on how the mind rebuilds memory since it “reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society” (51). The circulation and availability of the works discussed demonstrate that there is indeed a will to remember the dictatorial past in Chile. The documentaries and literature I study show that Chilean society wishes to reconstruct the memories of the past, and as Maurice Halbwachs’ claims, collective memory is built by a social pressure in which a plurality and heterogeneity of voices and stories come together.

The following ideas proposed by Elizabeth Jelin build off the theory of collective memory proposed by Halbwachs. In her article, “De que hablamos cuando hablamos de memorias?” Elizabeth Jelin discusses both individual and collective memory as it specifically relates to memory in the Southern Cone. She notes some of the shortcomings with the idea of collective memory and how it may seem almost impossible to accomplish in a society, due to the fact that it can be interpreted in very different ways,
either as something that is separate from the individual or as shared memories (Jelin 4). Jelin also notes that Halbwachs does not touch on memory and its relationship with trauma and only considers memory of a society to be something that belongs to the society as a whole and that this collective memory is made up of many individual memories that are all different but related (4-5). Jelin, for this reason, uses Ricouer against Halbwachs, highlighting that Ricouer’s interpretation of collective memory allows for discussion about the processes of memory and how collective memory is built, as well as acknowledging a possible hierarchical nature of the memories within the collective, privileging one or more types of memory over others (5). Jelin also discusses memory in relation to identity, citing Gillis’ idea that identity and memory shape how we think about the world, in terms of society, politics, and history and that there are certain social elements that allow for the organization of memory (Jelin 7). There are three social elements that organize memory delineated by Pollak that Jelin incorporates. Memory can only be constructed when there is a relationship between the events being remembered, the people who experienced it, and the places the experience or experiences occurred (Jelin 7). This construction of memory can become vulnerable if there is “crisis” in a group or outside questioning that calls for a reconstruction of memory and the identity with which it is associated (Jelin 7). Memory also evokes emotional responses that can motivate the person remembering to find explanation or meaning in the memories they are remembering (Jelin 8). This is important especially when looking at the documentaries by Carmen Castillo, Germán Berger, and Patricio Guzmán because all three demonstrate the effect of affect on those who are remembering past experiences
about the Pinochet regime that are traumatic in nature. Remembering also allows for the recall of certain details that do not seem to deal directly with the event itself, but aid in the remembrance of the event (Jelin 8). Memory is selective according to Jelin—echoing Lazzara and Stern and forgetting is a survival technique for individuals as well as groups (10). Jelin also discusses the types of forgetting or “la borradura de hechos y procesos del pasado,” the erasure of memory via suppression. This relates to the concept of “auto censura” that Guzmán represents in *Chile, la memoria obstinada* and how self-censorship is a by-product of the dictatorial censorship. Jelin reiterates the role of memory in symbolic production and asserts that:

> La memoria, entonces, se produce en tanto hay sujetos que comparten una cultura, en tanto hay agentes sociales que intentan ‘materializar’ estos sentidos del pasado en diversos productos culturales que son concebidos como, o que se convierten en, *vehículos de la memoria*, tales como libros, museos, monumentos, películas o libros de historia (17).

Jelin’s assertion demonstrates the importance of sharing memory in order to foster a collective memory on this past. This, however, can only happen if there are people who are willing to create “vehículos de la memoria.” The works by Carmen Castillo, Marcia Alejandra Merino, Arturo Fontaine, Patricio Guzmán, and Germán Berger can all be considered “vehículos de la memoria.”

How can a society organize the flood of memories from a past cultural trauma? Steve J. Stern in his book, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile* argues that Chilean memory of the dictatorial past is analogous to a “giant, collectively built memory box” (Stern xxiix). Stern views this memory box where “competing selective remembrances” that attempt to “give meaning to, and find legitimacy within, a devastating community experience”
Stern also discusses the importance of remembering this traumatic past rather than forgetting it, noting that there is “amnesia” among upper class Chileans that fared well economically during the Pinochet regime (xxvii). The memory box theory basically attempts to define what happened during the Pinochet regime and to process what it all meant as well as acknowledging that there is a “great collective trauma” that must be recognized (Stern xxviii). Stern talks about what he calls the “memory impasse” in Chile when the majority of the public was aware of the torture, disappearances, and oppression by the dictatorship while some people still supporting Pinochet and sympathizing with the military regime (Stern xxix). A key aspect in Stern’s memory box is how the dictatorship tried to destroy all memory of its atrocities through its construction of “memory as salvation” trope (Remembering 238). “Memory as salvation” was created by the dictatorship through its promotion of the idea of Pinochet as savior to Chile together with the military junta, he lead coup in 1973 and adverted a civil war in Chile (Remembering 126). The military junta achieved this so-called victory and salvation of the Chilean people by violently attacking all who did not share its ideology through its secret police force (DINA and CNI) and taking control of the media and other institutions such as schools and universities, in addition to government institutions in order to exercise complete control over the information provided to the public (Remembering 239). He rightfully notes that this was

The potent mix of repression, self-censorship, and propaganda in the public domain [that] launched memory as salvation—among a national population, moreover, in which a majority of the people were at first willing to give the new government the benefit of the doubt (Remembering 239).
The dictatorship sought to disable any counter-official discourse on what was occurring in Chile during that time. Stern asserts that this other clandestine narration also contributes to the cultural memory of the dictatorial past and asserts that here memory is “rupture, persecution, and awakening” (*Remembering* 238). In the 1970’s advocates of human rights went against the official discourse of the dictatorship to expose the abuses and murders that were occurring. The dictatorship insisted on the false idea that Chile had been cured of its illness and that it was no longer divided socially and politically, when the sociopolitical context in Chile was more aligned with “the metaphor of the open wound” (*Remembering* 239). Those who went against the dictatorship’s approved version of memory formed what Stern calls “dissident memory knots” that highlighted the importance of coming to terms with the truth about the past instead of subscribing to the official belief that it was no longer necessary to remember anything after the 1973 coup (*Remembering* 240).

By the late 1970’s, the dictatorship decided to regard the memory of the past as a “mindful closure of the box on the ugly past” (*Remembering* 240). This promoted the notion that it was not beneficial to look back on Chile’s violent past because the violence against those who fought against the dictatorship resulted in unfortunate “excesses” Chile could now move forward because it had won its fight against the ones considered to be subversive (*Remembering* 240).

An important part of Stern’s memory box of the traumatic dictatorial past in Chile are the “memory knots” or groups of people who brought attention to this traumatic past and the importance of remembrance. The authors and directors of literature and
documentary films I have selected are part of these “memory knots” because they offer views and insight into the lives of those affected (albeit in different ways) by the Pinochet dictatorship.

The idea of having a memory box of the dictatorial past in Chile is important because it provides a structure in which to organize these memories. However, within each memory, there are several nuances that take place in memory narratives, particularly so in the literature and documentary films that will be discussed in depth in chapter three.

In this book, Prisms de la memoria: narración y trauma en la transición chilena, Michael Lazzara focuses on narratives of collaboration, exile, torture, and disappearance. He argues that the conflict of memory in Chile cannot be addressed simply by categorizing the Chilean people as either pro-Pinochet or anti-Pinochet because there are several layers and points of view in both opposing political ideations (19). In this work, Lazzara calls Chilean memory of the trauma and fear of the Pinochet dictatorship as “prismas de la memoria” or prisms of memory, that is different voices of artists, survivors of torture, activists, and writers contributing in an effort to “dar voz a la memoria traumática de una nación” (33). Lazzara also points out that it is easier for nations to “forget” the traumatic events of the past in order to move on and focus only on the idea/desire to have a better future for the country and its people. However, as Lazzara points out, it is not possible to forget because if a nation does not confront painful and violent memories of a past like that of Chile’s military dictatorship, these memories will not be properly dealt with and will continue to hinder societal efforts to move forward and actually build a better future (Lazzara 34). Lazzara incorporates Primo Levi’s
perspective that “olvidar significa permitir que las voces de los ‘hundidos’ se pierdan para siempre; significa rendirse a la historia de los vencedores” (34). This statement falls in line with Allende’s last words to the Chilean people on September 11, 1973 while La Moneda presidential palace was being bombed: “La historia es nuestra y la hacen los pueblos para construir una sociedad mejor” (La batalla de Chile).

Lazzara proposes that experiences narrated and expressed as memory of the past (such as the testimonial and literary works discussed in this thesis) are created with a particular reader or audience in mind as well as a particular reason as to why these memories are being shared with the public (Lazzara 60). These memories, while individual, are intercalated with memories that are collective in nature—these individual memories could not be transmitted without a connection to the collective memory (Lazzara 60). Lazzara’s idea of memory as prisms, “prismas de la memoria,” shows that these memories convey a viewpoint coming from the victim of torture, and if the author chooses to shape that memory in a certain way, they have the subjective power to do so (Lazzara 62).

How can we define cultural trauma? The categorization of memories of the dictatorial past is important, but it is equally important to understand how these memories can be related to the cultural trauma that occurred during the Pinochet era. Jeffrey C. Alexander has developed a theory of cultural trauma that can be applied to post dictatorial Chile. Alexander notes that some people deny the suffering of others and deny the existence of their trauma. He argues that when people deny the existence of trauma in a social context, it alienates those who suffered the trauma by casting them apart from the
rest of society (Alexander 1). Alexander states, “For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crisis” (10). In the case of post-Pinochet Chile, the trauma of the dictatorial past has made it to the collective level because these traumatic events are not entirely acknowledged as a cultural crisis. These traumatic events and the culture of fear during the Pinochet regime has created cultural issues that are present today even after the transition to democracy. Some people still deny that any state repression ever occurred; some say that they don’t remember, while others do not think it is important to remember and feel the need to just move on and start over. Some Chileans even say that the human rights abuses during the dictatorship were justified. It could be argued that all those who lived in Chile during the dictatorship, even if they were Pinochet sympathizers, were all victims of trauma to some degree. A dictatorship uses fear as a means to promote its political agenda.

In his work “Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma,” Neal J. Smelser proposes definitions of trauma in a sociocultural context and gives criteria for determining whether a society has experienced a cultural trauma by using a psychological theory. Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile fits Smelser’s criteria for cultural trauma because of the economic and political issues that, according to Smelser, tend to make a society more vulnerable to trauma. Smelser states that historical events can be considered as culturally traumatic when certain conditions are present. In order to be considered a cultural trauma, the sociocultural context of the society must be carefully considered. According to Smelser,
A society emerging from a major war, suffering from diminished economic resources, experiencing rampant internal conflict, or having shaky social solidarity is more trauma prone than others that are more solid in these respects. Historical events that may not be traumatic for other societies are more likely to be traumas in afflicted societies (36).

A historical event may be viewed as a cultural trauma when there is remembrance:

The memory must be culturally relevant, that is, represented as obliterating, damaging, or rendering problematic something sacred—usually a value or outlook felt to be essential for the integrity of the affected society…associated with a strong negative affect, usually disgust, shame, or guilt (Smelser 36).

These traits outlined by Smelser can be applied to Chile and its dictatorial past, and how this past has left a cultural trauma because it is grounded in historical events and circumstances that make a society more vulnerable. As has been explained, the coup d’etat occurred in part because of the economic difficulties during Allende’s presidency, which also cut across the economic and political divide of Chileans. The economic problems and political differences reached a critical turning point during Allende’s government which ended with a violent coup led by the Armed Forces and backed by the United States and the Chilean elite. In this sense, Chile can be considered an “afflicted society,” due to the systematic violence of the Pinochet regime. Chile’s dictatorial past may be described as a cultural trauma because there is a body of works such as these that will be discussed in this thesis that show the remembrance of this conflicting past, which has a wide range of stories. Smelser also states that there is typically a lack of consensus in societies where cultural traumas have occurred, and that is precisely the case in Chile because its society is still working on coming to terms on what took place (38).

According to Smelser,
…a claim of traumatic cultural damage (i.e., destruction of or threat to cultural values, outlooks, norms, or, for that matter, the culture as a whole), must be established by deliberate efforts on the part of cultural carriers—cultural specialists such as priests, politicians, intellectuals, journalists, moral entrepreneurs, and leaders of social movements. In most cases the process of establishing is a contested process, with different political groups divided with respect to whether a trauma occurred (historical contestation), how its meaning should be regarded (contestation over interpretation), and what kinds of feelings—pride, neutrality, rage, guilt—it should arouse (affective contestation). Furthermore, once a historical memory is established as a national trauma for which the society has to be held in some way responsible, its status as trauma has to be continuously and actively sustained and reproduced in order to continue in that status (38, my emphasis).

Carmen Castillo, Arturo Fontaine, Marcia Alejandra Merino, Patricio Guzman, and German Berger can all be considered cultural carriers because their works contribute to the contested memory of the dictatorial past in Chile. These individual memories of their experiences either during the dictatorship or the experiences after that resulted from the dictatorial past and are all efforts to show the various meanings derived from this past, contributing to the plurality and heterogeneity of voices that shape the remembrance of these traumatic events.

The plurality and heterogeneity of voices present in the works discussed are organized in different sites of memory because they are different. Pierre Nora in his notion of lieux de memoire or sites of memory argues that these places of memory exist because “real” environments of memory no longer exist (7). Nora draws a line between real memory and history and says that history and memory are in “fundamental opposition” and claims that history is how our “hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past” (8). An important aspect of Nora’s argument is that memory can be manipulated, appropriated, but it can be dormant and also be revived
(8). In the case of memory of the dictatorial past in post-Pinochet Chile, the documentaries I analyze show us that memory of this past is in the process of revival in Chile. The repression and fear disseminated by the Pinochet regime caused memory to be remembered as well as dormant, which is shown in the people who have “forgotten” about the dictatorial past.

This dialogue initiated in Guzmán’s documentary relates to Nora’s notion of how these sites of memory are created. Lieux de mémoire are, according to Nora, created because there is a deep-rooted belief in societies that memory is no longer spontaneous, so it needs to create archives and hold commemorative events because of the widespread belief that if we do not do these things, there will be no memory and we will forget our own history (12). Nora argues that society is almost obsessed with the notion of creating archives as a means to remember our history: “The imperative of our epoch is not only to keep everything, to preserve every indicator of memory—even when we are not sure which memory is being indicated—but also to produce archives” (14). Thus, the principal reason for the creation of sites of memory is to prevent or stop the act of forgetting (19).

In the literature and documentaries discussed, the authors and directors create alternative archives, alternative sites of memory. These alternative archives are not necessarily created just to prevent or stop the act of forgetting, but rather to stop the “auto censura” (auto-censorship, Guzmán’s term) of the Chilean people. At the end of La batalla de Chile, Guzmán quotes part of Salvador Allende’s final radio address to the public on September 11th, 1973: “La historia es nuestra y la hacen los pueblos” (La batalla de Chile). It remains clear that Guzmán took these words very seriously, and recuperated the
film reels in exile after the coup. The psychological effects of dictatorial rule have a significant effect on a society. The censorship of the Pinochet dictatorship created the auto-censorship Guzmán cites in his film because the people lived in a state of constant fear for seventeen years. This auto-censorship led to a lack of information and dialogue about Chile’s past by those who lived it, and as shown in *Chile, la memoria obstinada*, the younger generations are effected by their parents’ silence and views on what took place.

Women play a central role in the literature analyzed in this thesis, as well as in the documentary *La Flaca Alejandra* directed by Carmen Castillo. Castillo’s narrative, *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, Marcia Alejandra Merino’s *Mi verdad*, and Arturo Fontaine’s *La vida doble* all discuss the fear and torture experienced by women during the dictatorship. Ximena Bunster-Burotto’s work “Surviving beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America” discusses the structure and patterns of state torture and delineates two categories of women who are victims of institutionalized torture, such as the torture conducted by Pinochet’s secret police force (the DINA/CNI) in collaboration with the air force, the navy, and the army in Chile (Bunster 300). The first is comprised of women who were involved in leftist political activism, as well as women who held professions such as lawyers, union leaders, doctors, and professors (Bunster 302). The second category is comprised of women who “derive their identity from their relationship to a male” (Bunster 302). In these cases, women were detained and tortured because of a husband, son, or other male family member who was involved in political activism (Bunster 302). The military tortured these women to “get even with their men” and
“intimidate, emasculate, bring forth confessions from, and, in many cases, destroy the men to whom they [the women] are legally or emotionally attached” (Bunster 303).

Torture during the Pinochet dictatorship was both psychological and physical in nature, and the torture endured by women was, according to Bunster,

Consciously designed to violate her sense of herself, her female human dignity. The combination of culturally defined moral debasement and physical battering is the demented scenario whereby the prisoner is to undergo a rapid metamorphosis from madonna—‘respectable woman and/or mother’—to whore (Bunster 298).

The torture of women prisoners consisted of massive rape, where the prisoner is raped by a series of men, with some women enduring the continuous rape perpetrated by three to twenty-seven men (Bunster 310). This and other types of sexual torture serve as methods of destroying female identity, her anatomy, and also contribute to her dehumanization. It also served as a form of punishment to women who had ventured into politics. Another example of female sexual torture is the rape of the woman by trained dogs, which is also a form of psychological torture because of the shame and sexual debasement (Bunster 310).

The lines between physical torture and mental torture are blurry—physical torture, such as rape and insertion of mice and other objects into the vagina, are clearly also forms of mental torture because of the shame and debasement that results from it (Bunster 312). The threats that are made against the prisoner’s family members, such as spouses and children, are a form of psychological torture. Also, listening to other prisoners being tortured augments the fear and psychological trauma that is experienced, and the physical and psychological torture would alternate (Bunster 306). The most
extreme forms of psychological torture were used on female political activists who fought against the military regime (Bunster 313). The children of women who had been detained were sometimes brought to the detention center and made to witness the torture of their children, or the torture of their children is threatened as a form of psychological torture to the mother (Bunster 315). Bunster’s chapter outlines the ways that the military performed physical and psychological torture on women specifically. This is important in relation to the female narratives of torture I analyze in the next chapters.

In sum, we can say that no memory is flawless and complete. The various theories on collective memory in this chapter provide a theoretical lens from which to analyze the works by Carmen Castillo, Marcia Alejandra Merino, Arturo Fontaine, as well as the documentaries by Carmen Castillo, Patricio Guzmán, and Germán Berger. All of these unique narrations on memory portray individual experiences during the Pinochet dictatorship offer stories that are an integral part of the formation of a collective memory of the past thirty years in Chilean history.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMATIC MEMORY

BY CULTURAL CARRIERS

The literature presented in this thesis represents different types of narratives that are part of the collective memory of the dictatorial past. Though they differ in some ways, all of the narratives analyzed are alike in that they are stories of survival—what the survivors did in order to live, both physically and psychically. The narratives also have in common the intent to contribute different perspectives to the collective memory of the Pinochet dictatorship, demonstrating how the development of this collective memory has progressed over the years. Through the development of collective memory, these narratives, both testimonial and fiction based on testimony, create a dialogue on the dictatorial past in Chile that aims to acknowledge this traumatic past and talk about it, rather than remaining silent.

Carmen Castillo’s, Un día de octubre en Santiago (1982), Marcia Alejandra Merino’s Mi verdad (1993), and Arturo Fontaine’s La vida doble (2010) are all memory stories that deal with survival of a traumatic past associated with the Pinochet dictatorship. All of these narratives focus on educated militant women from the 1970’s who experienced trauma as a result of their participation in leftist politics. The trauma experienced by the protagonists of each narrative leads a broken identity or complete lack of identity and sense of self, to varying degrees. In Un día de octubre en Santiago, we see
the struggle Carmen Castillo had to confront her traumatic past and rebuild her identity in exile, learning to find meaning in her life and getting acquainted with herself again in a new environment after being forced to leave Chile. In *Mi verdad*, Marcia Alejandra Merino discusses how her identity was broken due to the trauma she endured while under the control of the secret police, as well as her profound realization that she lacked an identity after reflecting on the past in her testimony and her effort to rebuild her identity by telling her “truth.” The main character in *La vida doble*, Irene/Lorena also experiences the destruction of her identity by trauma, drawing parallels to both Castillo and Merino’s memory stories, particularly regarding trauma and identity struggles.

Castillo’s *Un día de octubre en Santiago* can be considered a hybrid work of memory, testimony, and autobiography that, at times, resembles a journal entry. The majority of the text is told in the third person when making reference to Castillo herself from the point of view of an outside narrator. Other parts are narrated in the first person, and include the testimonies of other people that were involved in the MIR.¹ Her narrative also includes her exile, first to England and then later in France where she lives today. In addition, *Un día de octubre en Santiago* includes Castillo’s testimonial accounts from 1974 when she was living a clandestine life with Miguel Enríquez—subsecretary of the MIR—and their two daughters. She also recounts the ambush and attack that the DINA

¹ The MIR (*Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario*) began in the late 1960’s as a revolutionary organization that followed the political and social views of Lenin, Trotsky, and Che Guevara. Though it was not officially part of the *Unidad Popular* party during Allende’s presidency, the MIR took up the role of pressuring the *UP* to make social reforms (“Militancy”1-3).
orchestrated, led by Coronel Miguel Krasnoff Marchenko. The killing of Enríquez and her own near-death experience while being pregnant are a central event in her memories of the first few years of the Pinochet dictatorship.

Marcia Alejandra Merino’s testimony, *Mi verdad*, is also a story of survival of a former MIR leader who recounts her imprisonment in various clandestine detention camps, as well as the torture sessions she underwent, which were ordered and led by Colonel Krasnoff Marchencko in Santiago, and the ways she broke down and denounced other MIR members during these torture sessions. Her dehumanization and identity crisis cause her to collaborate with the DINA/CNI as a means of survival, becoming one of their agents for a number of years until her final public recant for the Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación in 1990. Her story tells us not only how she survived, but how she collaborated with the military as well as her relationship to power and desire to advance in different male dominated organizations. The choices she made have shaped her life and her individual experience contributes the collective memory of the dictatorial past with the point of view of a collaborator-survivor. Merino’s memory *Mi verdad* and the documentary, *La Flaca Alejandra* (1994) by Carmen Castillo (referenced in Castillo’s, *Un día de octubre en Santiago* and Fontaine’s, *La vida doble*) adds the dimension of collaboration and what that meant for la Flaca Alejandra (Merino), who held a high ranking position in the MIR and has now become a symbol of female treachery and betrayal of the left.

---

2 Colonel Michael Krasnoff Marchenko is a former member of the DINA who was in charge of the detention center Villa Grimaldi and also in charge of the effort to dissolve the MIR. He is referenced several times in *Mi verdad*. 
The novel, *La vida doble*, written by Arturo Fontaine uses the testimonies of several people who experienced detention and torture during the Pinochet years. Fontaine incorporated details from Marcia Alejandra Merino’s, *Mi verdad* as well as Carmen Castillo’s, *Un día de octubre en Santiago* (Fontaine 301). Fontaine’s work not only relates to the memory-stories told by Castillo and Merino—the novel is also a form of postmemory, which is discussed further in analysis of the documentaries by Guzmán and Berger in chapter four. The protagonist, known as Irene (her *chapa*) and also by her real name, Lorena, is a member of the fictional leftist revolutionery group Hacha Roja. There are two specific parts of the novel that correspond to both Carmen Castillo and Marcia Alejandra Merino respectively. Irene/Lorena is a hybrid of Castillo and Merino because she is a victim of torture and detention who decides to collaborate with the military and her own torturers like Merino. It also has characteristics of Castillo’s story because she goes into exile and expresses similar sentiments about rebuilding her life in a country that is not her own.

*La vida doble* is a work of fiction, but is derived from interviews and individual accounts of militants and collaborators, as mentioned earlier. The main character, Irene/Lorena, is molded by a variety of memory stories and historical accounts researched by Fontaine as he states at the end of the novel (Fontaine 301-302). He creates a fictional character that displays many different facets of individual memories, experiences, presenting a new identity that offers a new take on the collective memory of the traumatic dictatorial past.
One of the most interesting aspects of Irene/Lorena is her fragility and lack of self-esteem and identity, provoked by the torture she experiences at the hands of the DINA. Throughout the novel, her relationships with people in her personal life as well as the military men she encounters show the reader that her sense of identity is almost completely linked to others. She is an incomplete and broken female, much like Merino. In the beginning of her testimony, Merino says that as a child, she was very sick and that she kept to herself, noting “Siempre predominó en mí la inseguridad y la timidez (5). She goes on to say that her insecurity and shyness began to dissipate once she entered the MIR as a college student (6). Her belief that she entered the MIR and became a whole new person can be related to Diamela Eltit’s identification of the dilemma cuerpo e identidad, que aparecen como instancias móviles, readecuables, vulnerables cuando el sujeto—en este caso el sujeto mujer—se ve envuelto en las redes de los poderes dominantes, especialmente en esa parte del poder que requiere de la violencia—ya paródica, ya explícita—para mantener su hegemonía (104).

According to Eltit, Merino had a complicated relationship with power, which was traditionally masculine in both her militancy and her time spent collaborating with the DINA/CNI. Eltit refers to this as the “teatralización del yo” found in Merino’s testimony. Merino agreed to collaborate not long after her torture began, which suggests that she perhaps was not as “rígida y dura” (6) as she had thought she was as a leader in the MIR. When she began to talk and give names of MIR members to her torturers, it revealed to her that she was fragile, much like Irene/Lorena in La vida doble. Irene/Lorena, like Marcia Alejandra Merino, states on the first page of the novel: “Disolvió mi ánimo el ácido del miedo. Quise sobrevivir. Quise una prórroga. Me dio pánico vivir la duración
Because of her fragility and lack of self-esteem, it seems to be easier to “break” her and convince her to collaborate and become a traitor to Hacha Roja. Throughout the narrative, she allows the men around her to control her life and her self worth is directly connected to her “man of the moment” as she feeds off of the attention she gets from males. Irene/Lorena’s relationship with one of the members of Hacha Roja, Canelo, is just one example of many in the novel of how her identity seems to be directly tied to a man. In describing her relationship with him, she says that she was not in love with him and that they were just “compañeros de lucha,” but right after says “Pero algo en mí repicaba y me iba diciendo que si no fuera por él no lo haría, que me había adherido a él y a su lucha como la hiedra al muro…al no estar él, lo que yo era se desvanecía” (Fontaine 122). It is also noteworthy that she even has a dialogue with the writer of the novel because it is another example of the fragmentation of her identity and how she relates to men whom she perceives to have control over a given situation. The novel is set up to have her as the narrator of her own story, but as if it was being told to someone who is interviewing her about her experiences. There are several times throughout the novel that she tries to control what is being written about her by the author, but at the same time she wants him, whom we can assume is male, to have the control:

Ya ves, he llorado. No quiero banalizar lo que me pasó. Pero tú me has convencido de que hable. ¿Para qué? Ahora pienso que se te escapa lo sádico que hay en tí. Yo no quería. Eres un morboso. Eso es lo que te gusta de mí. ¡Confiesalo! Me fuiste convenciendo de a poquitito. Y tenía razón yo: me hundo solo yo misma en el mismo pozo de nuevo (Fontaine 191).
She agrees to tell the writer her remembrances, but then when she senses that she does not have control over what she is saying, she blames it on him, insulting him and lashing out, and then regaining control. Irene/Lorena believes that she can achieve power if she acts like the men in her life, specifically those in the military, which is very similar to Eltit’s view on Merino (discussed further on in this chapter). In one part of the novel, where she has already been “broken” by the DINA and is actively participating in the “breaking” of other prisoners, she tries to seduce one of the prisoners but is unsuccessful. After this failed attempt, she says “Quería ver la cara de alguno al momento de rendirse” (Fontaine 167) because she wanted to see what it felt like to have power and control over somebody—something she lacks in her own life by allowing others to control her.

There is only one occasion in which Irene/Lorena lives vicariously through a feminine role in relation to her daughter, Anita. She begins to give names and contact info to the DINA because she wants to save Anita. Later, when she escapes from the CNI and is living in exile in Sweden, Anita chooses to return to Chile to live with her father, and Irene/Lorena is devastated: “Hay que aprender a vivir de nuevo” (Fontaine 250). She is constantly re-learning how to live because she does not have an identity of her own that defines and grounds her. Her lack of a fixed and stable identity is parallel to what Merino writes about in her testimony. For example, her identity was hidden by the many names she used after she had been released and was working for the CNI analyzing intelligence information. These examples make it clear that these facets of Irene/Lorena’s character
are most likely an elaborated version of Marcia Alejandra Merino’s and Luz Arce’s experiences in Pinochet’s Chile.

**Written and Visual Stories**

In both of Carmen Castillo’s works, (*Un día de octubre en Santiago* and the documentary *La Flaca Alejandra*) Castillo shows the importance of memory for Chile and her works are deliberate efforts to contribute to the collective memory in order to break the prevalent silence and amnesia. As noted in Chapter Two, Stern asserts that the “memory box” of Pinochet’s Chile has many opposing political and social memory camps that make it difficult to approach a discourse on memory, but he notes that “from time to time, one can also incorporate such differences and problems into the cultural conversation and build a larger memory camp…but finding a common ground for conversation between these memory camps is much more elusive” (*Remembering* 103).

Carmen Castillo’s, *Un día de octubre en Santiago* is part of that memory camp on survivors of torture, the exiles, and the militancy against the dictatorship, driven by a revolutionary cause.

Carmen Castillo was a militant in the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) during the late 1960’s and through the 1970’s. As mentioned earlier, her book begins when the couple (Castillo and Enríquez) was fighting underground against the military dictatorship after the 1973 coup. On October 5th, 1974, the DINA attacked the house they lived in, referred to as the house on Santa Fe street, killing Enríquez and

---

3 Luz Arce is another female collaborator and her testimony, in addition to that of Merino, is discussed in Eltit’s “Cuerpos nómadas.”
wounding Castillo, who was pregnant at the time. The title of her book, *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, refers to that day, which changed her life considerably, forcing her to exile from Chile to Europe.

Throughout the book, Castillo makes many references to memory while telling her story. She includes her own story about when the DINA attacked her home and talks about her experience in exile, particularly in Paris, as a survivor of that traumatic event that marked her life forever. Castillo recounts this past in relation to the physical spaces she inhabited at the time, making memory that is embodied in three houses. The book is divided into three chapters, which are all named after the houses she lived in as well as one that became a secret detention camp all named after the streets the houses are located on—“La casa azul celeste de Santa Fe,” “la casa José Domingo Cañas” (Santiago), and “la calle Claude-Bernard” in Paris. In her article “La espacialización de la memoria en Nona Fernández y Carmen Castillo,” Bernardita Llanos discusses the relation between memory and space:

El dilema que presentan estos textos culturales tanto en la literatura como en el cine, no resuelve el problema de la memoria sino que abre otro discurso sobre ésta, donde la subjetividad y la identidad se entrecruzan otorgando un nuevo sentido a la experiencia del pasado mediante la modificación de los lugares de memoria y los géneros en los que esta se transmite. La espacialización de la memoria está vinculada a la identidad que es aquí vinculada por los sitios de la memoria (132).

The first space discussed in the first section of the text is “la casa verde olivo” which is an oasis where La Abuela lives and takes care of the children of the miristas who have to fight underground and leave their children in a safer environment. The second space is “la casa azul celeste de Santa Fe” where Castillo and Enríquez lived
clandestinely until his death. The third space is “la casa José Domingo Cañas,” which is a detention center run by the DINA. The second part of the book deals with the illegal detention of some of the leaders of the MIR and also discusses the torture endured by them. The fourth and final space discussed in the book is “la calle Claude-Bernard” where Castillo lived in Paris as an exile. In this section, she describes the loss of identity and general crisis produced by her forced exile and the pain of losing her partner, Enríquez and their baby, Miguel Angel. It is in this part of her story where Castillo expresses the desire to shape the memory of what occurred on the 5th of October in 1975 at the house on Santa Fe street. Here she recounts her fearful, painful, and uncanny experience of living in a country that was not her own anymore, right after her baby dies, with her as the only survivor from the traumatic and violent event on October 5th. She begins to try to rebuild the memory of the trauma and loss of Enríquez by gathering information from others on what they were doing on that exact day. Not only does she feel the need to deliberately shape these memories, but she is also suffering the loss of her identity as a militant in the MIR. Now that she is no longer actively working with the MIR, she makes the shaping of memory her new “campo de batalla…una lucha politico-estética contra ‘el olvido’ pregonado por Pinochet y la dictadura” (Llanos 139). In the end, after incorporating the memories of others into her own account addition to her own, confronting the trauma she and others endured, she goes back to Santiago for the first time since her exile in 1975. Upon her first visit, she finds everything different and unfamiliar from what it was when she lived there. Chile feels like a foreign country to her. Upon her return to Paris she states:
…Santiago y París, encogimiento del espacio y del tiempo. Soy parte del allá, aun estando aquí. Pero no puedo hablar de Chile, porque estoy aquí y no sé cómo andan las cosas allá. Ya no estoy al tanto. Está tan lejos. Entre nosotros se extiende el Océano…Una carta antier: cierta mujer, de nombre Elvira, con el marido en la cárcel, desempleada, echada a la calle con diez hijos. Y describe también las boutiques de moda Christian Dior, los aparatos Sony, los Citroën y Peugeot que circulan por calles amuralladas. Detrás de las murallas se pueden ver, si se quiere, niños mendigos…casuchas de madera desvencijada…los rostros agobiados de los desempleados, la fosa secreta donde sacan los cadáveres de los torturados. Ya ignore el precio del pan en Santiago…Me dicen que todo se transforma y que no podría reconocer mi ciudad, su gente, sus barrios, su habla, su comida. La vida, allá, sigue sin mí (Castillo 156).

This quotation shows the difficulty Castillo has coming to terms with the new Santiago, where capitalism has been deeply imbedded in society. In the social context of the Unidad Popular, Castillo feel that this would not be the reality in Santiago and acknowledges that she no longer knows her own city and no longer can recognize it and the people who live there, in large part to the neoliberalism propelled by the Pinochet dictatorship. As Castillo states in an interview with Michael Lazzara in 2010, Chilean society is victim to the defeat of the Pinochet dictatorship, and the realization of a socially just country that Allende was creating is gone. Castillo notes, “We were victims, yes, the whole country, the whole of society was, and the results are clear in today’s neoliberal system” (“Militancy Then and Now” 7). Urban space is also represented in both of Castillo’s works. When she returns to Chile after the end of the dictatorship, she doesn’t know Santiago as she used to, and sees it as almost foreign (Llanos 137). Santiago proves to have become more modern and “developed” since Pinochet’s neoliberal project. As Chile’s transition to democracy illustrates upon Castillo’s return to Santiago, everything people like Carmen Castillo and the MIR fought for—a society built
for the people, socially governed for the common revolutionary ideals—is gone in many respects from public discourse.

Castillo’s narrative also provides space for the stories and voices of other survivors. Amelia’s letter plays an important role in the transmission and preservation of memory in Castillo’s book. Amelia’s letter is a story within a story and representative of the many accounts that comprise the collective memory of the dictatorial past highlighting the plurality and heterogeneity shown among the memories of torture, fear, and oppression. Before the letter is shared with the reader, Castillo places an important disclaimer on memory:

Aquí se trata solamente de las cenizas de una memoria: la memoria de Amelia. En otros sitios hay otras memorias, las de todos los que no han sido consultados, a quienes no se les ha pedido su opinión. Hay que tener cuidado cuando se habla del pasado. Con mayor razón si se va a escribir. Las palabras fijarán imágenes difusas y movedizas. Hay que manejarlas con mucha precaución. Amelia quiere estar segura del futuro de ese pasado (Castillo 61).

This quotation serves as a preface to the story that is Amelia’s individual experience in which she undergoes detention and torture. While Amelia mentions other people in her memory story, she deliberately wants to make it clear that this story is her own, even though her memory story may overlap or parallel others. Castillo’s writing of the past is very pertinent to the discussion of memory as she notes the unfixed, unstable, and shifting qualities of memories recounted. By carefully writing her story in the form of a letter, Amelia exercises caution and is deliberate about how she recounts the past and what she communicates about the past.
In her letter, Amelia begins by talking about some of her compañeros who disappeared: “No murieron. Carolina, Octavio, Celia, el Chico. Son ‘desaparecidos’. No se sabe dónde están, pero están en algún lado, en algún campo” (Castillo 63). Amelia is with Castillo, reading the letter out loud. Castillo’s response to her assertion that their compañeros are not dead, but have just disappeared provokes despondency in Carmen: “Vergüenza de mi desaliento. La certidumbre de Amelia revela la frialdad resignada de mi escepticismo. Me equivoco. La muerte sólo existe para quienes creen en ella” (Castillo 63). This exchange between Castillo (the narrator) and Amelia is noteworthy because we can see that Amelia’s outlook on the death of her fellow militants is influential. There is no proof of their death, even though Amelia knows that they are really dead. However, Amelia attributes death to forgetting, and because she does not want to forget she says her fellow militants have not died because they exist in her memory. This leads Carmen to agree with Amelia and adapt her view on death and memory: “Ni siquiera hay tumba. Carolina, Luisa y el Chico viven con nosotros, entre Amelia y yo…sólo están ausentes. Evitaremos matarlos, Sólo queda vivir así, con su ausencia” (Castillo 63). This exchange plays an integral part in Castillo’s mission to construct memory of those who disappeared and she holds on to the idea that remembering them keeps them alive in a sense. This exchange between Amelia and Carmen can be related to the collective memory of the dictatorial past because this notion of keeping them alive via memory makes them impossible to forget. Castillo’s works, as well as the works of the other writers and documentarians discussed, use their voices and
those they represent to build the collective memory of the dictatorial past and thus showing the contested nature of collective memory.

Within the memory camp of survivor memory, *La Flaca Alejandra* (Castillo) and Merino’s own testimonial, *Mi verdad* offer yet another perspective, that of the militant who survives and becomes a collaborator. Marcia Alejandra Merino, known as La Flaca Alejandra, published her testimony in an effort to explain her experience in what she calls her “truth.” Merino discusses how she began working for the DINA after being detained and tortured in 1974 as a high-ranking member of the MIR. In *Mi verdad*, Merino begins by giving some biographical information; her date of birth, a brief description of her childhood, and how she became involved in the MIR in college (5). The next chapter begins by recounting her whereabouts on September 11, 1973 (the day of the military coup). Not long after the coup, Merino was detained for the first time. She was not tortured physically, but was interrogated and released after four or five days (12-14). In May of 1974, she was detained for the second time while meeting a fellow member of the MIR at a contact point (Merino 20). At this point in her testimony is when she begins to the names of military personnel as well as members of the DINA, including their real names as well as their aliases. During her second detention at the Cárcel de Curicó was when Merino began to answer questions asked of her by the DINA agents while being tortured (25). She goes on to say, “la cárcel no era tan mala, en comparación con lo que me tocó vivir después como prisionera de la DINA” (Merino 26). She notes that at Curicó the prisoners were allowed contact with other prisoners and it was run in a less organized manner than the detention centers she was transferred to afterwards (Merino 26). While at
Curicó, Merino begins to feel less confident. She attempted to get in contact with the MIR but was unable to do so, and notes that the lack of communication made her begin to question herself:

Siempre esperé una respuesta del MIR a mis informes. Tal vez el hecho de no haberla recibido, unido a mi sentimiento de culpa por no haber sido leal (aun cuando la información que me sacaron bajo tortura no era importante y no significó la caída de nadie), me hizo entrar en un proceso de duda y autocuestionamiento progresivo (Merino 26).

Her lack of confidence in the above quotation illustrates the beginnings of being “broken” in the sense that she is beginning to show her vulnerability. In August of 1974 she was blindfolded, handcuffed, and transferred to Londres 38, one of the torture centers run by the DINA. She describes Londres 38 as “el infierno” because of the screaming of people being tortured (Merino 31). Upon arrival, she was brought to the office of Osvaldo Romo Mena, a DINA agent, where she was told she would be undergoing a “psychological interrogation” and another member of the MIR was brought into the office who had clearly been brutally tortured named Alfonso Chanfreau Oyarce, with whom Merino had been romantically involved previously. Looking back on this, she interprets the presence of Alfonso as a tactic of the DINA to help “break” her (Merino 26). Merino goes on to describe the torture she endured, which took the form of insults, humiliation, as well as physical and sexual abuse. After describing her second brutal torture session, which was the second time she was tortured, she recalls that she believes that it was that particular session when she began to talk, saying whatever was necessary to stop them from torturing her again (Merino 32). At this point, the DINA begins to bring Merino with them in a car as they go to detain other people, and at this point is also
taken to another torture center, known as Villa Grimaldi, for her torture sessions and then sent back to be interrogated at Londres 38 (Merino 36-39). She goes on to describe the disorientation of time and space that she felt because of the frequency of the torture sessions and the disorientation that resulted from being blindfolded (Merino 43). The prisoners were all assigned numbers, presumably so they did not know who else was detained with them as well as a technique to further dehumanize them (Merino 43). She also describes the lack of food and not being permitted to wash themselves at all. Once she began to collaborate with the DINA, the agents announced her collaboration to the other detainees, telling them she had turned in people that she really hadn’t. Merino recalls that this made her feel even guiltier than before and also isolated her from the other detainees. Looking back on this, she thinks that they also told the other prisoners about her collaboration in an effort to instill more fear and helplessness in them because Merino was a high-ranking member of the MIR (Merino 43).

Shortly after her decision to collaborate, Merino was transferred to yet another torture center, José Domingo Cañas. Merino describes several conversations she had with Colonel Miguel Krassnoff Martchenko, who was in charge of Villa Grimaldi and with the effort to dissolve the MIR. She recalls the psychological techniques used to further break her. On several occasions she describes being talked to about the goals of the Armed Forces and given justifications for its participation in detaining, torturing, and killing people affiliated with the MIR (Merino 45). During this time she was also forced to write about herself, her childhood, and why she chose to enter the MIR. Shortly after her arrival at José Domingo Cañas, the DINA began to interrogate Merino and she starts to
give names of other MIR members, both in conversation and through *poroteo*[^4], the identification of MIR members on the streets of Santiago by Merino while with the military driving around (Merino 46).

Part of Merino’s testimony discusses the DINA operation that resulted in the death of Miguel Enríquez and the near-death of Carmen Castillo on the 5th of October, 1974. She recalls that Krassnoff returned to José Domingo Cañas with Enríquez’s gun and the money they found in the house on Santa Fe street. She describes how the agents celebrated by splitting up the money amongst themselves, and how they told the detainees about the death of Enríquez to further discourage them (Merino 52-53). It is interesting to note that at this point, the reader is aware that Merino’s identity is completely broken when she talks about her relief that Krassnoff was not hurt during the standoff with Miguel Enríquez:

…una mitad de mí misma estaba desgarrada y llorando, y la otra como tranquila porque Krassnoff no hubiera muerto. Su presencia al menos me daba cierta seguridad de que no me hicieran presenciar torturas. Mediante sus maniobras, él había logrado que yo lo sintiera como una ‘garantía’ para mi integridad (52).

She describes her relief that she would not have to witness torture sessions and began to feel that Krassnoff was her protector, demonstrating that the psychological games used by the DINA had begun to brainwash her. The result of these psychological techniques used by the DINA is described in the following passage where Merino looks back on herself during that time:

[^4]: *Poroteo* refers to the act of identifying members of the MIR on the streets of Santiago from a car, where those identified would be detained, tortured, and many later disappeared. This term was used by the DINA agents (Merino 46).
Pienso que cuando ‘me quiebran’, me convierto en algo que sólo puede sentir: miedo, dolor, asco. No quedaba ningún resquicio de racionalidad que me permitiera manejar situaciones o plantearme manejarlas. Ni siquiera tenía capacidad crítica para analizar la manipulación que la DINA estaba haciendo conmigo (Merino 53).

Not long after the killing of Enríquez, Merino attempted suicide for the first time by overdosing on sleeping pills. She shared a room with fellow collaborator, Luz Arce, who told the agents that she had tried to commit suicide. Shortly after the first attempt, she tried to kill herself again with a razor blade. Merino states that from then on, she felt that her ability to react emotionally was gone, and that she was unable to care about anything that was going on around her (Merino 54-55).

In late 1974, Merino was transferred to Villa Grimaldi, which she describes as the main detention center (65). She was detained there until May 17th, 1975 when she was “freed” from detention and taken to a meeting with the head of the DINA, Manuel Contreras. At this meeting, Merino was informed that the MIR was looking for her and that they wanted to kill her because of her collaboration with the DINA. He also informed her that he would free her from detention if she agreed to continue to help the DINA, and Merino agreed, stating that she felt like she had to comply (89). After her release, she worked at the Escuela Nacional de Inteligencia (ENI) where she studied to be a DINA agent and the DINA gave her an apartment to live in (Merino 94). Between 1975 and 1977, She analyzed MIR documents and explained them to DINA officials, and she also taught classes on how to interpret information pertaining to the MIR, as well as courses on Marxism and Leninism (Merino 95-99). Towards the end of her testimony, Merino
provides details on how the DINA was run, names officials and their positions within the organization, and talks about the structure of the agency and its operations.

Merino’s testimony opens up several questions that cannot be answered in a definitive manner because she does not explore these topics in her testimony. What made her choose to tell her story in 1993, and what did she hope to gain from it are important questions to address. In the introduction to Mi verdad, Merino writes that the source of her decision to come forward and tell her “truth” is to recuperate her life and contribute to the call for justice for what happened during the dictatorship. Merino explicitly states her objective:

Esto sólo es un testimonio. No puedo expresar ahora todas las emociones y sentimientos que me han acompañado durante todo este tiempo. No es mi objetivo en este momento. Sólo quiero dar a conocer, una vez más, los nombres de los responsables y entregar antecedentes sobre ellos que ayuden a desenmascarar su omnipotencia y engaños que los hacen permanecer en la impunidad. Me anima la convicción que sólo la Verdad hará posible la Justicia y la Reconciliación en Chile (7-8).

The goal of Merino’s testimony is to provide information recognizing what she witnessed as a victim as well as what she did as an assailant. She gives the names of torturers and other DINA officials to create the possibility of justice being served for the victims so that the torturers do not go unpunished, or are at least known to be former DINA members publicly, unable to hide from their past. As the quotation above illustrates, in reflecting on her experiences, Merino’s desire to desenmascarar (her second objective in her account of the “truth”) the power and brutality of the DINA agents, some of whom have gone unpunished shows, how she viewed her captors and power.
The reception of *Mi verdad* in Chile was not as notable as one would expect a testimonial on collaboration would be upon its release. Merino’s testimony was barely acknowledged at all, according to Chilean writer Diamela Eltit, who lived in Chile during the dictatorship as well as after. Eltit attributes this lack of reaction to the neoliberalist culture that pervades Chile and the “autocensura” and “propaganda del individualismo” that results from it (Eltit 101). Merino has been villainized for her participation in the effort to dismantle the MIR by the DINA and the CNI as well as criticized for showcasing her collaboration and presence during torture sessions. Merino’s testimony is her way of recounting her traumatic experience, while also purposefully narrating in an effort to propel discussion of this past in Chile.

In “Cuerpos nómadas” Eltit explains that autobiographical works based on memory, such as *Mi verdad*, can never be considered infallible, but rather the memories recounted in Merino’s testimony are a “teatralización del yo” (103). According to Eltit, this “yo” created in autobiographical and testimonial literature is fictional and not representative of reality but rather a construction of past experiences (103). This view on constructivist and fictional qualities of narration relates to Jelin’s theory on memory stories in that memory is selective and forgetting is a means to survival for individuals as well as groups (10). Merino conveys her viewpoint in regards to her past, and she has the power as the author to do so (Lazzara 62). These notions of fictionality and authorship advanced by Eltit, Jelin, and Lazzara are especially useful when analyzing Merino’s text. It must be kept in mind that while memory is fallible and subjective, this does not invalidate Merino’s testimony, but rather serves as a reminder that memories recounted
are subjective, but contribute to a corpus of stories about a traumatic and violent historical past. It is an individual “truth” rather than a universal truth.

An important aspect of Merino’s testimony is how she related to the power exhibited over her and the other prisoners by the DINA agents, which led to her collaboration and loss of her previous militant identity. During the Allende government, the militancy of groups such as the MIR led to the rejection of the more traditional role women played in society, personified in the women who chose to participate as militants and propelled the creation of a new identity, based on the masculine repertoires available for presence in the public arena (Eltit 106). Eltit states that militant women like Merino were already in uncharted territory when they began their militancy because it was not the norm for women to be politically active in that way at that time (106). Eltit cites the transition from one male space such as a political party that forced females to adapt to become more like a man is recurrent in Merino’s story. She goes from militant, who follows the political ideology of the revolutionary male and is propelled into a male militant environment, to the clandestine environment, which is also traditionally male in its recourse to fire arms and militarized structures. Eltit suggests that Merino transcends several spaces dominated by males, and that this contributed at least in part to her willingness to comply with the DINA. The psychological tactics used to “break” Marcia Alejandra Merino left her completely devoid of her identity and previous existence. Eltit observes that prisoners who were left in seclusion in these torture centers were unknown to most people (108). This contributes to the loss of identity experienced by Merino because it’s as if she didn’t exist (Eltit 108). The physical torture and pain, in the case of
Merino, reached a breaking point where she divulged specific and detailed information about the MIR and its members, some of her own friends, who were then later detained and disappeared. The act of collaborating with the DINA is, according to Eltit, a symptom of the fragmentation of her identity, resulting in psychological disequilibrium, as a form of psychological torture (108). The dismantling of the political prisoner’s identity is precisely one of the goals of torture in order to give the torturer an absolute power over the prisoner: “El torturador se adjudica la decisión sobre la vida y la muerte, se vuelve a una especie de dios que profana el cuerpo del prisionero, anulándolo. Vaciado de sí, el sujeto que habla, paradojalmente pierde su identidad: ‘se quiebra’” (Eltit 108). In an effort to regain a sense of control, Merino adapts to the military in order to regain her sense of identity and the power over her own life (Eltit 108).

The last chapter of Mi verdad is titled “Entre la muerte y la muerte.” Here Merino talks about her life after she is “liberated” from the detention center, free to live independently but always under the supervision and vigilance of the CNI. As we read we find out that the CNI still controlled nearly all aspects of her life—she received economic support and an apartment in exchange for information about the MIR, which in turn meant keeping relationships with militant friends and contacts. After trying to cut ties with the CNI in 1984, she began to receive threatening phone calls and was attacked more than once by unknown assailants (presumably the CNI) at her place of work and her home (Merino 131-132). Efforts to rebuild a life and identity after her collaboration proved very difficult. The constant threat from the CNI as well as members of the MIR who knew she was collaborating and helping to destroy the party marked her life. During
this time she was also contacted by the Vicaría de la Solidaridad⁵, who told her that she was a victim and they would help her if she would help them to identify torturers and help bring them to justice (Merino 126). The process to get to understand what exactly had happened to her and that she in fact had lost her sense of self (both physically and psychically) to the torture and coercion on the military secret police was long and extremely painful. She finally claims that she converted to Catholicism in 1990, and was only then able to come to terms with her traumatic experience. In the final chapter of her book, Merino talks about testifying before a judge in the Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación, divulging all of her knowledge on the death of Lumi Videla, a fellow leader in the MIR whom Merino had turned in her whereabouts to the secret police.

Merino states that after admitting that she had turned in Lumi, accepting responsibility for her actions was “natural” (138). Merino goes on to recall that after her testimony on Lumi Videla, she was helped by ex-members of the MIR to finally leave the apartment that the CNI provided for her, stating that it was the first time in eighteen years she had been treated with “love and care” (138). She attributes all of the help from others and her ability to confront her actions against Lumi to her finding Christianity (Merino 137). Merino ends her testimony by noting that in May of 1975, she was taken out of an environment of death and torture, but was not truly free until November 1992 when she decided to be honest about her role in assisting the DINA/CNI (Merino 138).

---

⁵ The Vicaría de la Solidaridad, founded by Raúl Silva Henríquez, was a partnership between Catholic churches during the dictatorship to assist those who had been victimized by the Pinochet regime, providing both social and legal resources to those who contacted them. More information can be found at www.memoriaviva.cl.
In sum, the memory stories presented in *La vida doble*, *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, and *Mi verdad* are all examples of written memory on survival of trauma during the Pinochet dictatorship. The memories discussed in this chapter are a contribution to the collective memory of this past. Arturo Fontaine, Carmen Castillo, and Marcia Alejandra Merino all tell unique but similar memory stories of survival under unimaginable conditions. The shaping of these memories have not only occurred in an attempt to find personal closure, but to also help in the recognition of this difficult past by Chileans today.
CHAPTER FOUR

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAUMATIC MEMORY

BY CULTURAL CARRIERS

The documentary films discussed in this chapter, like the literary memory narratives in the previous chapter, have individual elements that are a part of the collective memory of the past during the dictatorship. These films demonstrate the shaping of individual memories pertaining to this past while showcasing the importance of the process of memory shaping in the creation of the collective memory of the traumatic past in Chilean society today.

Memory has also been visually represented by one of Latin America’s most important documentarians, Chilean exile Patricio Guzmán. His first documentary, La batalla de Chile filmed in 1973, is a five-hour long documentary about the end of Salvador Allende’s government. Guzmán was detained in the National Stadium after the military coup and from there fled the country (“La Web De Patricio Guzmán”). Focusing on the creation of documentaries, his body of work deals with memory of the dictatorship in Chile as a means to understanding history and challenging the official history, which is one-sided, and incomplete. Guzmán has made several documentaries that relate to the dictatorial past, focusing on different aspects of this past while still following a clearly defined path that can be traced in his filmography—the intent to give voice to the people, empowering them to know their history and to have an active role in its creation.
Patricio Guzmán’s documentary, *Chile, la memoria obstinada* (1997) also deals with the stories of survivors, while discussing the past from the perspective of the present of those same survivors who view photographs and watch film footage of themselves as well as hearing others remembering the *Unidad Popular’s* triumph, defeat, and dismantling by the military coup and the subsequent dictatorship. The survivors’ stories show how remembering and forgetting is played out and the plurality and heterogeneity that defines these remembrances in present-day Chile, especially in contrast to the younger generation who did not live the same historical events and experience.

Carmen Castillo’s documentary, *La Flaca Alejandra* gives voice to Marcia Alejandra Merino, “La Flaca Alejandra,” allowing her to share her “truth” through film, extending the reach of her testimony, *Mi verdad*. This documentary shows a more human side to Merino, allowing the viewer to identify with her and attempt to understand that which is nearly incomprehensible to anyone who has not been in the same situation of torture. Castillo’s objective in this film is to rebuild the memory of the dictatorial past, while focusing on the value of having many different voices and points of view on this past.

The last documentary discussed in this thesis is directed by Germán Berger and is titled *Mi vida con Carlos* (2010). Berger’s work deals with the memory of his father, Carlos Berger, a Communist journalist and lawyer who died in the Caravan of Death.¹

---

¹ The “Caravan of Death” occurred between October 16 and October 19th in 1973, shortly after the military coup. Former *Unidad Popular* members and other political prisoners (including Carlos Berger) were detained in northern Chile. The prisoners were then transported to several locations (La Serena, Copiapo, Antofogasta, and Calama) in a helicopter, where at each location were killed and either thrown into mass graves and fourteen of the sixty-eight people murdered were never found (Kornbluh 155-156).
the day of the military coup, Carlos Berger was working at Radio El Loa when he was detained by the Carabineros.\textsuperscript{2} Berger reflects on his father’s absence and how it has affected his life as well as the impact of a political death among his family. Carlos Berger is another desaparecido in Chile due to the dictatorship and the film shows the impact this has on the next generation as well as all of the relatives. Berger also explores transmission of postmemory among others who left Chile and others who stayed during the dictatorship, providing insight to the development of the collective memory of this traumatic past in Chile (and outside of Chile) through his extended family.

Carmen Castillo’s documentary \textit{La Flaca Alejandra}, on the other hand, is an effort to provide public space for Merino to share her memory of torture and subsequent collaboration. The documentary veers off from focusing on the traditional heroes of the MIR (such as Miguel Enríquez, Bauchi, Edgardo Enríquez, and Gladys Díaz, among others) and projects Merino’s individual experience and her characterization as a villainess and female traitoress par excellence. \textit{La Flaca Alejandra} opens this dichotomy up to discussion by filming scenes with her reactions while visiting José Domingo Cañas where she was captured and tortured as well as others, and scenes in which people argue against Marcia Alejandra Merino’s actions. Castillo gives her a chance to explain and contest the accusations in front of the camera. There are two scenes in the documentary that are of particular interest in this respect, the first being the encounter between Marcia Alejandra and Alicia Barrios, a former militant whose husband is a desaparecido from

\textsuperscript{2} The Carabineros, Chile’s police force, participated in the military coup against President Allende on September 11, 1973 (\textit{La batalla de Chile}).
the MIR. From Alicia’s perspective, talking about what happened in the past is useless, a “huevada” since she is not particularly interested in Merino’s explanations. This provokes the following response from Merino:

No es una huevada. ¿Sabes por qué? Porque no tuve la opción que tu tuviste de reinsertarte en un mundo, tal vez duro y amargo como sea, tu tuviste esa opción, a lo mejor, cuántos años atrás—¿unos dieciocho? Yo salí libre recién en noviembre del 92. Y todos esos años para mi fueron olvido, fue pérdida de la identidad, fue destruirme a mí misma, ¿me entiendes? Yo ahora me estoy rehaciendo, la única forma de reconstruirme en lo personal es viviendo esto que tú llamas huevada, y para mí es mi vida, porque MIR fue mi vida (La Flaca Alejandra).

This scene gives the viewer insight on Merino’s perspective in relation to her past and how she is dealing with it in the present—her attempt to reconcile with her past and rebuild her life and identity through the telling of her story. When asked later by Alicia why she let herself be manipulated by the DINA and chose to collaborate, Merino’s response is to ask if Alicia had ever been tortured, and when she said no, Merino responds, “No podrías comprenderlo porque tu no lo viviste” (La Flaca Alejandra). As the conversation continues, Merino, after being questioned by Alicia repeatedly as to why she collaborated with the DINA, responds saying that she was weak and could not handle the torture she was subjected to. Merino then explains why memory of this traumatic past is important, stating

…es fundamental reconstruir, no solo mi memoria sino la memoria de un país, porque son muchos que, miles, los que murieron y son muchos los dañados, los que sobrevivimos con daño, con un daño terrible, es una sociedad entera que está enferma de miedo (La Flaca Alejandra).

This quotation demonstrates her desire to contribute to the collective memory shows that she is attempting to recuperate from trauma by confronting it head on after
many years of repression. It is as if Merino is giving her testimony and information in an effort to repair the traumatic and violent past she became a part of, moving from the role of victim to also being the assailant. It is important to note that, while Merino may have good intentions with coming forward and acknowledging her involvement with the dictatorship, it may also be evidence of her lack of identity once again. Merino published her testimony shortly after Luz Arce, fellow survivor and collaborator, published hers. Merino states in *Mi verdad* that she had some doubts as to the accuracy of some of the details in Arce’s testimony, and that it helped her write her own: “En abril de 1991, apareció el testimonio de Luz Arce. Me produjo sentimientos encontrados por algunas inexactitudes en sus recuerdos y por el hecho mismo de la publicación” (Merino 132).

This leads to a question that cannot be answered—does Marcia Alejandra Merino make the decision to come forward out of a genuine dedication to confront Chile’s traumatic past or is this just another example of her willingness to be a follower in a difficult situation? In her article “Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America” Ximena Bunster-Burotto says:

> Just as we should look twice, as feminists, at the shaven heads of so-called collaborators, we should strongly object to the common male stereotype of the Teutonic fascist woman guard in a concentration camp. She is most probably a figment of the patriarchal imagination as she certainly by no means devises and runs the state’s torture machine (321).

Bunster’s observation is useful when discussing Marcia Alejandra Merino because it shows that, while Merino is responsible for the detention and torture of many of her own compañeros, she cannot be completely viewed as a collaborator because she is also a victim of the male-dominated dictatorship. Regardless of her possible motivations for
sharing her testimony, Merino can be considered a cultural carrier because she takes the initiative to publicly share her experiences and the information about people that were held prisoner and were tortured physically, psychologically, and sexually, as well as the military personnel she worked with.

Later in the film, Miriam Ortega, a former member of the MIR, is introduced as another counterpoint to Marcia Alejandra. Ortega is a representation of people in Chile who prefer not to talk about the memory of people who collaborated like Marcia Alejandra. Merino is not present during the exchange between Castillo and Ortega where they discuss the physical and psychological torture she was subjected to while detained by the DINA. When asked by Castillo her opinion on collaboration with the DINA/CNI, Ortega states “la colaboración es la muerte” (La Flaca Alejandra). In Mi verdad, Merino reflects on her past saying “En toda esa época, mi dilemma fue elegir entre la muerte y la muerte…” (7). However, the biggest difference between the realization of Merino and Ortega is that in the moment of being tortured, Ortega was able to make a conscious effort to not agree to collaborate with the DINA, whereas Merino comes to this realization after the fact. Merino’s testimony explains why there was the “dilemma” between death and death, but only realizing this after her collaboration and participation in the DINA.

A few years after the publication of Mi verdad and the release of La Flaca Alejandra, documentarian Patricio Guzmán released his film Chile, la memoria obstinada which focuses on the importance of remembering the past from 1970 to the present in
Chile. This documentary is also part of the survivors’ memory camp, while also being part of the shaping of memory, especially among young people, of the dictatorial past.

Guzmán gathers a group of survivors who were filmed in his first documentary, *La batalla de Chile* (released in three parts between 1972-1979), which consists of footage of what was happening in Chile in the months leading up to the military coup during the Allende presidency as well as footage from the military coup itself. In these scenes, Guzmán asks them what they remember. There are scenes in which some of the survivors are animated, happily remembering the people they worked with in Allende’s government and seemingly enjoying these remembrances. For some of the survivors, this is not the case. For example, there is a scene featuring a woman named Carmen Vivanco, who watches footage of herself in *La batalla de Chile* but when asked if she is in the footage, she cannot say for sure that it was her. She says that it is possible, that it could be her, but she can’t say for certain. However, to the viewer, she is clearly the person depicted in the footage. How can someone not know what they looked like when they were younger? How does she not recognize herself? Vivanco’s reaction can be attributed to what Jelin has discussed regarding the erasure of memory caused by suppression, noting that forgetting can be used as a survival technique (Jelin 10). In *Chile, la memoria obstinada*, Guzmán attempts to combat this suppression of memories. By doing this, he is deliberately creating a site of memory to promote a dialogue on the dictatorial past.

In this documentary, there are several scenes in which *La batalla de Chile*. Guzmán shows the film to three different groups of high school and college students in Chile. The film evokes a variety of reactions from the students, ranging from support of
the military coup, to sadness, anger, and guilt about it. These reactions can be viewed as a microcosm of Chilean memory of the dictatorial past in the present youth because they show the viewer that memory of this past is still wrought with conflicts and contradictions, as well as a lack of historical understanding by the younger generation.

Guzmán’s film is an attempt to revive memory of the dictatorial past, creating what Pierre Nora has referred to as lieux de memoire (sites of memory)—in this case an alternative archive found in old and new images of Chileans. Guzmán, like the other cultural carriers analyzed here, has identified the need to deliberately and consciously construct these archives, celebrate anniversaries, and monumentalize or commemorate the past in an effort to preserve it (Nora 13-14). Guzmán’s film is an alternative archive of memory because he believes it must be created due to the censorship and societal repression during the dictatorship that has resulted in what Guzmán calls the autocensura (self-censorship) that is seen across generations and experiences. Guzmán’s film addresses self-censorship at the individual level as well as the social level. At the individual level, the film depicts people who either do not want to talk about the dictatorial past or completely deny it, whereas on the social level we see the effects of auto-censorship in the three groups of young people. None of the young people in the three groups had seen La batalla de Chile before, nor were any of them aware of their country’s history in terms of the dictatorial past previous to watching the film. For Guzmán, knowing the history of one’s country is extremely important to open up a dialogue and bring awareness of the past and what happened, especially for the younger generations. In creating this documentary using old and new images of Chileans and
historical events, Guzmán shows the memories of the past from the perspective of the present cutting across generations, social classes, and political ideologies. Maurice Halbwachs claims collective memory is built by a social pressure in which a plurality and heterogeneity of voices and stories come together. This documentary reveals precisely that the shaping of memory of Chile’s recent past is occurring today.

In his documentary, *Mi vida con Carlos*, Germán Berger also contributes to the collective memory of the dictatorial past by sharing his individual process of remembering this past and how the trauma of the dictatorship and the murder of his father by the Pinochet regime has affected his life, as well as the lives of his family members. Berger, much like Castillo in *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, uses his personal journey as a means of confronting and understanding this past. Berger does so by working through his own memories. Remembering in the film is done through the viewing of photographs, videos, and memories of his family members’ stories who knew his father, Carlos Berger.

Berger focuses on not only the development of his own memory about his father, who was detained and disappeared when he was one year old, but also on the process of shaping and reshaping memory in the familial memory. Berger’s objective in this documentary is crucial in reviving the memory of his father within his family, while in turn sharing this process with the public in the form of a documentary. This shows that there is a will, especially in recent years, to contribute to the “memory box” of Chile’s recent traumatic past. Berger narrates the entire documentary and even talks directly to his father through a letter he addresses to him, which allows the audience to be part of the process of shaping the memory of his father on an individual level. This process takes
place using home videos and family photo albums to reconcile the past with the present by “filling in the blanks” of the past. In the beginning of the film, Berger states “Me habló poco de tu vida, nada de tu muerte” (*Mi vida con Carlos*). Here speaks to Carlos, referring to the lack of information he was given as a child about his father from his mother, Carmen. Berger’s two uncles, Eduardo and Ricardo (brothers of Carlos) are interviewed in the film as well. After the death of Carlos, Eduardo left Chile to live in Canada, while Ricardo stayed in Chile but did not participate in any political activism. In one scene where Eduardo is interviewed by Berger, he states he left Chile to avoid the pain caused by Carlos’ death. In another scene, Eduardo, his wife, and his daughters sit down to talk about the documentary. Eduardo states Berger’s intent for creating this film: “…tratar de Ricardo, Carmen y yo conversemos todo lo que debimos haber conversado hace treinta años” (*Mi vida con Carlos*). The family goes on to say that the fact that they never recovered Carlos’ body has made it very difficult to overcome his loss.

Berger’s documentary is an example of the concept of postmemory coined by Marianne Hirsch in her article “The Generation of Postmemory.” According to Hirsch, postmemory is “a structure of inter and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience” (106). Hirsch also notes that “postmemory’s connection to the past is…not actually mediated by recall, but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (107). *Mi vida con Carlos* demonstrates these qualities discussed by Hirsch in its imaginative use of images to create a postmemory that transcends three generations of family members. The three generations are comprised of the following family members: Carmen, Eduardo, and Ricardo (first generation), Berger himself, as well Eduardo’s two
adult daughters who appear in the film, who prior to filming knew nothing about their father’s past. Berger’s young daughter is from the third generation, which can also be viewed as the future generation of postmemory of this traumatic past. The use of sound and natural imagery plays an important role in communicating memory throughout the film (Class presentation, Marie Bold, 4/2/13). In the beginning of the film, a home video is featured depicting Carlos running into the ocean as a teenager. The film has no sound but the voice of Berger tells the viewer that this video was the first image he remembers seeing of his father. The film clip is silent, as well as the scenes where pictures are shown, connecting all the memories of his father through the lack of sound.

Once memories of Carlos begin to take shape through Berger’s conversations with his mother, Carmen Berger and his father’s brothers, Eduardo and Ricardo, and Eduardo’s adult children, the imagery begins to change—it is more nature-based, representing the memory of Carlos as being “alive” in a sense because his son, the documentarian, has begun an interfamilial dialogue about Carlos’ life and the trauma and fear experienced by so many Chileans during the dictatorship (Class Presentation, Marie Bold, 4/2/13). At this point, the silence is broken and Berger states: “El silencio era una frágil capa de hielo que podía quebrarse en cualquier momento” (Mi vida con Carlos). Berger uses photographs as a method to open up this dialogue with his family members, as he does when he speaks with his mother, asking her questions about his father while they both look at a photo album together. At one point, the scene changes and photos of Carlos are shown, submerged in water and the viewer hears voices that sound distant and echo, which is another representation of memory, specifically how memory can be
difficult to pinpoint because it can be blurry, just like the photo when submerged in water (Class Presentation, Marie Bold, 4/2/13). As Lazzara has noted in his idea of memory as “prisms,” memories are not always accurate because they convey a certain viewpoint rather than the “truth” of what really happened (62). The use of images in the film is also to deliberately create a space in which to remember his father, who died in the Caravan of Death and his body was never recovered. In the article “Mneumonic Hauntings: Photography as Art of the Missing” Silvia R. Tandeciarz argues that

By attaching a face and a name to the disappeared, these photos imbue them with a corporeality they have been denied; opposing their categorical erasure by the authorities, they reinsert the missing in the spaces from which they have been torn, serving as placeholders until their hoped-for return, or alternatively, as concrete sites where loved ones focus their grief (138).

This is exactly what Berger does in his effort to shape the memory of his father. Because there is no physical space to remember him, other than in the desert where he is thought to have been taken and killed. Berger actively creates the memory of Carlos using images to reconstruct his life as a father, husband, brother, son, and militant defying the military state erasure of his body, despite the human rights advocacy work of Carmen Berger. In sum, Berger successfully shapes a memory of Carlos Berger and also successfully initiates the transmission of this memory, which can now go one to be reshaped by each individual from the three generations effected by the death of Carlos. The film ends with the shaping of memory for Berger’s generation, Carlos’ generation (Carmen, Eduardo

---

3 Carmen Hertz (Berger) is an attorney and human rights activist. She worked with the Vicaría de la Solidaridad and worked as Chile’s primary human rights defender from 1977-1992. A brief description of her work can be found on Chile’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website: http://www.minrel.gob.cl/.
and Ricardo), and the third generation being Berger’s young daughter, who now knows who Carlos is and why he is important to her own father.

In conclusion, the documentary films, *La Flaca Alejandra, Chile, memoria obstinada*, and *Mi vida con Carlos* are all examples of memory of the dictatorial past in Chile that have many similarities, but are unique and individual in many ways. The creators of these works all contribute to the collective memory of this past, showing the plurality and heterogeneity of voices that shape the remembrance of these traumatic events, and also propel the importance of having these memories and how they are being shaped and reshaped by the younger generations today.
CONCLUSION

In this study, I have attempted to identify the motivations, commonalities, and differences in the literary and visual representations of memory discussed. In conclusion, *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, *La Flaca Alejandra*, *Mi verdad*, *Chile, la memoria obstinada*, *Mi vida con Carlos*, and *La vida doble* are all important contributions to the collective memory of Chile’s recent dictatorial past. These memories, though different, have a common thread in that they all provide different perspectives and articulations of what this traumatic past has meant for individuals, families, as well as society at large, while also showing the progression of the formation of collective memory of this past. Both the literary and visual narratives discussed in this thesis have been shown to be representations of the collective memory of the traumatic dictatorial past in Chile’s recent history. The intricacies of these narratives reveal unique and individual aspects, while also being connected by many common themes and characteristics. Through the course of this study, all of the works discussed are deliberate efforts to contribute to the collective memory of the dictatorial past, which in turn shows that there has been progress in regards to breaking the silence about the dictatorial past and creating literature and documentary films that create a dialogue on this past. The creation of this dialogue has aided in the construction of the collective memory of the Pinochet years in Chile.

In the works by Carmen Castillo, she communicates clearly to her audience her intention to confront the trauma of the past, and in both her literary and visual works she
incorporates a technique that proves to be integral in the process of remembering—
returning to spaces of the past. Castillo also clearly demonstrates her objective to open a
dialogue about the past in both of her works, specifically in regards to the MIR and the
profound loss of the social ideals they worked hard to create in Chile.

In his documentary, Mi vida con Carlos, Germán Berger gives the viewer the
opportunity to witness the shaping and transmission of memory of his father in the family
context. Berger deliberately sets out with the objective to shape this memory, and by
creating the documentary he shares this experience with those who watch the film and his
effort to shape this memory and share it shows that the construction of the collective
memory is making progress, which is also seen in Chile, la memoria obstinada by
Patricio Guzmán. This documentary is also a present-day representation of the collective
memory that opens a dialogue between the survivor generation and the younger
generation, who knows little to nothing about the dictatorial past. In making this film,
Guzmán creates an alternative archive to combat the autocensura among the survivor
generation and promotes awareness among the younger generation.

All of the memories discussed in this thesis show a process of shaping what is
remembered of the dictatorial past. Not only do the protagonists of these memory stories
shape their own individual pasts but they make the effort to share their individual
memory experiences with others, which has undoubtedly contributed to the creation of
the collective memory in Chile.

These works also find common ground in their relationship to personal identity.
In Castillo, Merino, and Fontaine, female identity plays a significant role in the
representation of memory. In all of these narratives, identity, at one point or another, is compromised for these women. In Castillo’s *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, her identity is in question when she almost dies from an attack from the secret police and then has to leave her militant life in Chile for life as a political exile in Europe. The trauma of losing her partner to a violent attack, later losing the child they were expecting and becoming an exile dramatically changed her identity. Marcia Alejandra Merino, both in *La Flaca Alejandra* and *Mi verdad* describes a profound fragmentation and loss of identity due to physical and psychological torture she experienced as a political prisoner, and the subsequent control and vigilance over Merino in her life as a “free” civilian, who was still not truly free and continued to work for Pinochet’s secret police until the transition to democracy and her subsequent testimony in 1992. Like Merino, Fontaine’s protagonist in *La vida doble* shows a loss of personal identity that has many similarities with the identity issues exposed by all of the female protagonists in these different works.

Berger’s film also highlights the importance of identity in his search to rebuild and reclaim the memory of his father with the rest of his family members. Both are efforts that propel the search for identity, or the search to complete one’s past.

The shaping of memory takes place in all of the narratives presented. However, as shown in Guzmán’s, *Chile, la memoria obstinada* and Berger’s, *Mi vida con Carlos* they create a dialogue between the survivor generation and the younger generation who did not live under the dictatorship. Guzmán’s film explores the memories of those who lived during the that time and were either detained by the secret police, exiled, or had family members and friends who were disappeared. Because of the climate of fear and
repression under Pinochet, many of these voices had been silenced, and even years after the dictatorship was over, the scars remained evident in some of the survivors. Guzmán’s documentary provides the viewer with remembrances from these survivors and also exposes the younger generation to Allende’s presidency and the military coup that violently ended it through the viewing of his documentary, *La batalla de Chile*. Years later, Berger does something similar in his documentary, but narrows his focus to the memory of his father among his family members, thus individualizing the importance of memory, while still contributing to the collective.

In conclusion, *Un día de octubre en Santiago*, *La Flaca Alejandra*, *Mi verdad*, *Chile, memoria obstinada*, *Mi vida con Carlos*, and *La vida doble* can all be considered alternative archives that combat the offshoots of censorship and self-censorship created by the Pinochet regime. As Neal J. Smelser has noted, the cultural damage resulting from a traumatic event or series of events, such as a society affected by dictatorial repression like Chile, must first have people who are “cultural carriers” who typically have public roles such as intellectuals and activists, that claim that the traumatic cultural damage did in fact occur (38). Carmen Castillo, Marcia Alejandra Merino, Arturo Fontaine, Patricio Guzmán, and Germán Berger are all cultural carriers because of their deliberate, unabashing and creative contributions to the collective memory of Chile’s recent traumatic past.

These cultural carriers have assisted in establishing a dialogue about the past, with the belief that confronting the traumatic past will lead to an eventual “healing” of its wounds. In the future, it will be interesting to see the contributions of other writers,
documentarians and artists to the collective memory of this past and how these new undertakings will shape, and possibly reshape the collective memory. It will be particularly interesting to see how the intergenerational dialogue on the collective memory of this past continues to take shape as well. We may be seeing a resurgence of the ideals that marked the youth of the 1960’s and 1970’s in new figure of the militant in Chile, such as Camila Vallejo, former college student leader from the left who continues to fight for many of the social reforms the Unidad Popular briefly achieved under Salvador Allende’s presidency.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Chile, la memoria obstinada. Dir. Patricio Guzmán. First Run/Icarus Films, 1997. DVD.

Class Presentation. Marie Bold. 2 April 2013.


*La batalla de Chile: la lucha de un pueblo sin armas.* Dir. Patricio Guzmán. n.p., 1978. DVD.


*Mi vida con Carlos.* Dir. Germán Berger. Cine Directo. Chile. 2010. DVD.


Smelser, Neal J. “Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma.” *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California, 2004. 31-59. Print


VITA

Alison Tange was born and raised in Saint Paul, Minnesota. As a child, Alison attended a Spanish Immersion elementary school, which influenced her decision to continue her studies of both the Spanish language and literature at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, Alison attended University of Minnesota Duluth, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish in 2010. While at Loyola, Alison taught Spanish 101 courses as an Adjunct Instructor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.