

“THE ART OF STORYTELLING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY”

Children and young people in exile

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Children and young people in exile

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Marianela Jarroud Z. Journalist. She was born in exile in Venezuela in 1977. After a one-year return, she left again to Venezuela in 1986, to return definitively to Chile in 1988 at the age of 12.

Antonio García Q. Anthropologist. He went into exile at the age of 7 months to Argentina and later to Mozambique. He returned to Chile at the age of 11 in 1983.

Natalia Cuellar D. Actress and Choreographer. She went into exile at the age of 8 months in 1974. After being in El Salvador and Costa Rica, they go to Mexico. She returned in 1986 at the age of 14.

Florencia García O. Bachelor of Arts. At the age of 9 months, she went into exile in Algeria, country from where she returned at the age of 13 in 1986.

Valeria Sanhueza R. Graphic Designer. She leaves for exile at the age of 2 and a half to Sweden. She returned in 1986 at the age of 12.

Francisco Rojas C. Audiovisual Communicator. At the age of 6 he went into exile in Costa Rica, country from where he returned in 1985 at the age of 15.

Wladimir Morales C. Graduate in Foreign Trade. He left for exile at the age of 6 to Bulgaria, country from where he returned at the age of 21 in 1989.

Camilo Martínez V. Sociologist. He went into exile in Mexico in 1973 at the age of 7. He returned at the age of 19 in 1986.

León Pascal C. Journalist and Writer. He went into exile when he was 9 years old in Ecuador, after being granted asylum in the embassy of that country. He spent most of his exile in Mexico. Returned to Chile in 1984.

Vilma Oyarce R. Czech-Spanish Translator and Accountant. She went into exile at the age of 15 in 1973 to Czechoslovakia, country from where she returned in 1983.

Marlene Soto G. Social Worker. At the age of 18 she went into exile in Finland, country from where she returned in 1991 at the age of 28.

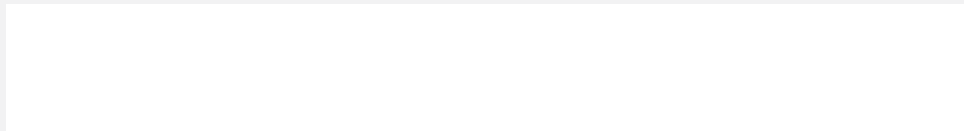
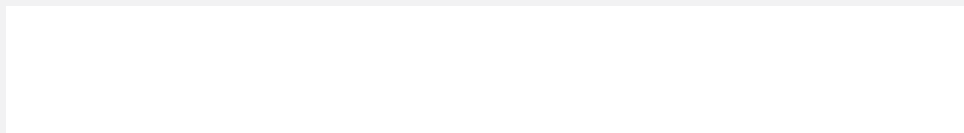


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PRESENTATION

Since its beginning, the PIDEE Foundation has conducted studies on the “exile” of Chilean men and women since the coup d'état of September 11, 1973. However, until now there had not been a testimonial record through which it was possible to know and analyze the process of the re-signification of the diverse experiences lived by those who were children and young people, who experienced “the exile”, as historical subjects.

It is interesting to analyze the reasons why in traditional history, first women and then children and young people -even though they are historical subjects like men- have been made invisible in the investigation, collection of information, analysis and interpretation of historical events and/or processes, not considering all the protagonists as active subjects in the construction of this historical fabric in all its complexity.

The authors' aim is to make an invitation to think about the reconstruction of historical processes, especially contemporary ones, considering all the protagonists of complex phenomena such as exile in the Chile of the Civil-Military Dictatorship, and in particular to highlight childhood memories. Thus, knowing the perceptions, feelings and evocations of children and young people who had to leave the country abruptly due to the political convictions of their father, mother or both, allowed us to approach in a sensitive way the elaboration and interpretation of this subjective and relational reality. Since many of its main actors are still alive, with life and society projects related in some way to the events experienced.

We hope that this study will contribute to the understanding of this social, cultural and historical fabric. With the purpose of making it available not only to historians, but to all those professionals and people who are interested and motivated to learn about this historical process known as “the exile”, delving into the intrahistory of everyday life, of anonymous actors who we believe have a word to say, incorporating more than one thread to the understanding of the complex process that meant and still means the exile lived in their lives in the present.

The chosen methodology, consistent with the purpose of this study, is qualitative in nature, based on the collection and recording of information through the instrument of a semi-structured interview, which was organized in two methodological instances called conversational audiences.

In the first conversational-audience or pre-interview, general background information was recorded, and a free story of the exile experience was created, and at the end of the interview, the participants were invited to participate in a second audience, a semi-structured interview recorded in audiovisual format and where they were asked to have photographs and objects that were representative of their experiences in exile.

Twelve people participated in this Oral Archive, who were selected under two fundamental criteria: the first was to have exile experiences in different countries, betting on the cultural diversity of the exile and identity process, and the second, no less important, was that some of them had been part of the children and adolescents fostered by the PIDEE Foundation. This selection guideline led us to form a group of young adults that we ended up separating into two subgroups because the experience of exile and identity construction is directly related to the age at which they left the country. Thus, the first group is made up of children who were born in exile, left at a very young age, or were in their first years of schooling (0-9 years). The other group was between 10 and 16 years old at the time of crossing the border.

It is worth mentioning that most of the interviewees, left Chile with their mother to be reunited with their father in the host country. Some of them, starting a real pilgrimage with the family. From this new space they were building a history where they discovered new learning, losses that in some cases were irreparable, built life projects and learned about the ambivalence in the construction of personal identity and different conceptions of life, both in the present and in a vision of a life project in the future.

In this testimonial corpus, we approach an oral record of an experiential character at three moments in the history of the exile experience of our interviewees:

- a) The “Before” or pre-exile moment;
- b) The moment of the experience “during” the exile; and
- c) The moment of return to Chile.

In this movement of personal and family times we placed the personal imaginary and childhood memories through objects, photographs, writings, which contributed to rescue anecdotes, to be touched through identification in the past and to recover by omission the memory of the three stages described above. The use of photography, objects, letters, or writings as sources of tools for the recording of oral history had the implicit meaning of “a picture is worth a thousand words”. The technique used is based on the fact that an appropriate question guided by a photographic document, a piece of writing or an object, makes it possible for pertinent and valuable answers to emerge about the situation to be studied and learned about. Likewise, they constitute a means of communication through which the interviewed subject offers us an interpretation of reality without forgetting that this interpretation is a reading based on the semiotic realistic code of the image. Objects and writings as well as photographs constitute informative sources to rescue the memory of the family, social, economic, and emotional situation of the interviewee.¹

At a conceptual level, we have considered the concept of “double exile”, as the process of return to the country of origin is commonly known, which each child, young and his or her real family had to face from: the period or previous moment, or “before” the beginning of the exile, the experience lived “during” the exile outside our country and the return or the period “after” the return to their country of origin. That moment of return from exile once again put our “historical subjects” (children and young people) in the new challenge of what it meant for them to reinsert themselves in a Chile they did not recognize in their personal imaginary through the story of their significant adults.

Finally, we have been able to recognize in them, after the initial shock, their vision of a personal future committed to our country, after the exile in which they were involved as children or young people from one moment to the next, without any possibility of choice.

In some way they were -also- a support to enhance and enable a look from us, as participating researchers, in the attempt of real understanding of this experiential experience, to other places, other cultures with other meanings, with other body codes, different smells and flavors, in short, in other waters and in other unknown skies.

1. Xavier Aguirre Palacios. *Fotografía e Historia Oral. Una apuesta metodológica. Fotohistoria, blogstop, 2011*.

This study, which we are currently presenting, is part of the second Oral Archive conducted by the PIDEF Foundation, which aims to address and bring to the present the anonymous history of a group of children and young people who were part of that large number of exiles and political returnees. We are certain that the problem of childhood in exile has not yet been made sufficiently visible because there have been no formal, host communities and citizen dialogue spaces to tell their stories, or what would be more serious, that these have not been considered -as happened with the history of women in the past- or considered as they were and are testimonies of children and young people and, therefore, implicitly do not have the same relevance as the study and collection of information on adults. Therefore, remaining as experiences that are outside the category of validly accepted discourses, as were and will be the violations of the Human Rights of Children in specific and with the ethical burden that this entails in the society of the late XX century and now in the XXI century, remain invisible. The experience of exile was not a joint decision between fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons, but a sentence of external agents, representatives of the state, which changed their lives completely, without the right to any other option.

In these pages we will find experiences that were forged by the implementation of the National Security Doctrine, originated in the School of the Americas, with the direct support of the U.S., installed in Panama. The best officers of the Latin American Armed Forces were trained there to defend against the “internal enemy”. The National Security Doctrine, promoted by the U.S., provided a theoretical and ethical basis for the so-called anti-subversive war, which justified the fight against those groups within a country that threatened the existence of democracy, understood as western multi-party and representative democracy. However, in the historical reality of Latin America, it was used as a basis to support the coups d'état and right-wing military governments that, in the seventies and eighties, made themselves felt throughout Latin America, particularly in the Southern Cone, developing politically dictatorial and economically neoliberal systems. These regimes, implemented by the Armed Forces and the most powerful economic groups in the region, deployed a set of strategies that -among other things- justified the so-called “Dirty War”, using torture as a mechanism to obtain information on individuals and/or insurgent groups. The forced

migration of a collective subject considered dangerous was also used, who looked outside their countries of origin for an escape route to avoid the machinery of terror and the protection of their families.

In summary, our purpose as authors is to share the experiences felt, the development of a sense of belonging and identity, the possible changes in the political and cultural ties of those who, as children or adolescents, went into exile with their fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, for a period of time, a time that was not linear, but in which milestones or moments in the personal history of the interviewees can be distinguished. These milestones are "before", "during" and "after" the exile. For this reason, the book is organized in three chapters that explore each of these stages in particular. Interpreting them and looking for which elements can be discovered as common to them and which are of the singular experience of each child and young people as an unrepeatable and, therefore, singular historical subject.

All these voices collected from the experience in each selected temporality, become audible and are personally recreated by the interviewees themselves, showing the variables of the singular and group process of development, at a distance with respect to their sense of belonging to Chile and, therefore, sometimes appear so alien to the children and young people who lived in exile, especially upon their return, as are the longings and nostalgia of their progenitors of an imaginary of Chile that their daughters and sons could not live in that period. Neither the "before", "during" and "after" the exile as they, the exiled adults, experienced it, and therefore must be studied as an essential part of a complex and multidimensional process.

The Authors



IMAGES AND...





MEMORY FRAGMENTS



IMAGES AND MEMORY FRAGMENTS

María Rosa Verdejo R.

*“We are our memory,
we are that chimerical museum of shifting shapes,
that pile of broken mirrors”²*

Jorge Luis Borges

A camera, an interview guideline plus some photographs, objects and writings selected by the interviewee were the fundamental supports to encounter the personal memory of this group of children and young people who went into exile in the 70's. A personal memory that despite being contextualized in the political, social and cultural events of the country, is unique, individual and unrepeatable, because every human being since birth and development, builds representations about his/her environment, about him/herself and according to the stage of socio-cognitive development in which he/she finds him/herself.

On this occasion we find different factors that make it possible to re-signify the experience. Age, family context, socioeconomic status, educational level of the family with which the experience begins -most of the times traumatic-, are part of the different areas of memory in which each one of them has built a personal and familiar identity that has flats, questions, frustrations, anger and gratitude.

2. Poema Cambridge del libro *Elogio de la sombra*. (1969) Emecé. Buenos Aires.

From the history of the country of origin, in the country of their parents, together with the different moments of the past lived inside and outside Chile, a process of de-construction and re-construction of personal memory is generated in these stories, which seeks to show, find meaning and express how aspects such as: the awareness of political persecution, fear, loss of psychosocial environment and economic instability are intertwined, generating as a result a pilgrimage around the world that has left learning and heartaches. It is in these spaces of memory where we find something apparently subtle, but which in reality is as solid as a piece of the lives of the protagonists, in which affection and family are part of the fundamental pillar to face the changes and adapt to the host country.

In the re-construction of each one of the memory registers, the photographs selected by the interviewee, the own and family objects, the moments are looked at again and, in this way, the family and collective memory is revived. In the same way, the environment where the objects were used, where the photographs were exhibited, as well as the circumstances in which a life diary was written to record what was lived, are also retained. And, with it, the reasons that led to their conservation over time. Each and every element shapes this oral record where the past becomes present.

Through these oral records we visualize the helplessness of children and young people, as well as that of their parents and relatives, as a result of the horror experienced in Chile at the beginning of the Civil-Military Dictatorship. The direct exposure to situations so inappropriate and dissociated from the experiences of the first years of childhood is materialized with the forced search for a land that would provide security and protection to each of them. Despite the young age

-for the vast majority of the interviewees-, there are reminders that persist in their memories and are those that marked the days or months before leaving for exile.

Asylum or exile: a survival and protection decision for children

The twelve stories that shape this work are interwoven with stories marked by the fact that they belong to a politically committed family during the Popular Unity era. The parents, generally the father, were

active political leaders and/or held positions in the government of President Salvador Allende and, therefore, at the time of the coup d'état on September 11, 1973, they were among the “enemies of the homeland” or the so-called “terrorists”. The asylum or exile arose as a way to protect the family and to protect oneself from a repression where the violation of the rights of both adults and children prevailed.



Wladimir's family. Father Communist Party official Control and Cadres

“...I chose the photo basically because it represents the four of us together...we left and came back the four of us. My childhood in Chile, in reality I remember very little, except for the raid on the house (...) Everything else is hidden in the nebula of my childhood memories, I remember my grandparents with great nostalgia because in reality it is the only memory I have of them, and when I returned they were no longer there. (...) My childhood in Chile, I started it when my house was raided when I was 5 years old, on September 13, 1973. (...) They burned all the books we had in the house, pictures, they took everything out, they turned almost everything upside down. That is the strongest memory I have, I think, before I went into exile.” (...) “My mother had an evangelical family, so they had nothing to do with the Popular Unity, nor with any political issue... My grandparents' house was where we could stay quietly. After the raid we never went back to the house, the next day we went to my grandfather's house and there my father would go to see us from time to time, sometimes he would arrive at night, stay there and the next day in the morning he would leave again.”

(Wladimir, at 6 years old exiled - Bulgaria)

Camilo was 7 years old on the day of the coup d'état. His father was an active militant of the Socialist Party and an official of CORVI (Housing Corporation). He was detained the same day, September 11, 1973, and the family took refuge in his paternal grandfather's house in the Ñuñoa district, where other family members arrived who were also wanted for their political commitment to the ousted government.

Camilo tells:

"Later, my father was released but they were still looking for him and as a form of pressure they detained my mother and an aunt for hours. There my father decided to seek asylum and jumped over the fence of the Mexican Embassy. Talking to my father, as an adult because I don't remember many things, he told me that he did it for two reasons. One, it was because my sister and I were very young and he was very afraid of what could happen to us, more than for him or my mother, because we were very young, and he took asylum in the Mexican Embassy as if it were automatic, but he also thought about the cultural proximity, the language, to make it easier for all of us to get there."

(Camilo, at 7 years old exiled - Mexico)

Looking at the prevailing social political context in Chile during the first six months of the Civil-Military Dictatorship, it seems that children were not part of the repressive events. Nevertheless, they were there and were part of an environment full of violence, of half-silences and a vacuum of explanations that surely would have had no basis if they had been told by their parents. The perplexity in the face of political violence only gave rise to action, crossing or jumping over the fence of an embassy, as a way of salvation for the political militant, and a sudden or programmed departure for the family. It was a choice and a concrete solution to the imminent danger to the physical and psychological integrity of the family as a whole.

Asylum or exile is a decision that was taken because the siege of repression was getting smaller. The steps of repression were reaching the heels of the father and, in some cases, also those of the mother. On other occasions, asylum and exile emerge as "the" alternative to the closing of borders and the suspension of international transportation, and this occurs within hours of the coup d'état.

In addition, the family is beginning to experience economic instability as a

result of job layoffs and the lack of a job that would allow the family group to survive. Social stigma and exclusion of groups adhering to the Popular Unity government was the “modus operandi” of the new authorities, directly affecting the functioning and basic survival of the family. Then, fear, uncertainty and family disintegration were juxtaposed with economic instability.

A deep and foreign decision

The moments prior to the decision to leave the country are perceived by adults as a journey of early return. In the meantime, the children got the idea of an almost adventurous trip, where the imaginary was counterbalanced with the difficult and hard experiences before leaving. The family system undergoes a radically different modification of its security, as well as of the equilibrium destroyed by political and social events. Once settled in the host country, one becomes aware of this; however, on this path there is also insecurity due to the inaccuracy of not knowing when one will return.

Francisco's father is an actor and worked in 1973 at the Theater of the University of Chile. His mother is a student of Philology at the U. of Chile. He and his brother Cristián attended kindergarten at the same university. The four of them, fathers and sons, were expelled from the university on

the day of the coup d'état. Both parents were communists. To the political persecution of his father, raids and denunciations, a long unemployment is added where he recalls that:

“My parents invented jobs for themselves, sold gloves, set up a greengrocery store in the garage of the house that helped them survive for a while, until they made the decision to leave Chile.”

He notes that the main reason was economic.



He recalls that they went to Viña del Mar where his grandmother had a house. They stayed there for the weekend and were given passports. A fact that he relates as a great event because:

"We had our hair gelled, wore a tie and signed our name. Then we went to Valparaíso."

From then on, everything was an adventure for Francisco, because of the novelty of traveling by boat, seeing the little people from far away. Currently he resignifies the moment and says:

"My parents were very brave because they were very fearful, with one hand in front and one hand behind, uncertain of what might happen, but also confident in their artistic abilities."

He remembers that some relatives, grandmother, aunts, went to leave them. Paradoxically - he says:

"To this adventure of the boat trip was the sorrow of saying goodbye and the uncertainty of not knowing when we would see my aunts and grandmothers again. We were joined by two other Chilean families. All in the direction to Costa Rica."

(Francisco, at 6 years old exiled - Costa Rica)

In general, the children who were between five and eight years old at the time of leaving for exile have a fragile memory; however, their memories remain clear about events that are related to affections, emotions and sensory memory. The first dimension (that of affections) is framed in the story with the abrupt absence of the father, or both of them. A loss that had no time or space, because the parent moved away from the family, moving house or hiding in places where it was better not to know for everyone's safety. A cloak of darkness covers these family groups where the children were not in tune with the facts but were able to wonder about what was happening:

"When I heard the helicopters, the first thing I did was ask for my father... he had gone to hide. I knew something terrible was happening because there were raids in the settlement where we lived in Puerto Montt and four raids in my house. They were looking for my father who had been president of the CUT (Workers' United Center of Chile) in Puerto Montt and coordinator of the Communist Youth. (...) before my father was detained, he came to see us clandestinely, I did not recognize him because he came dressed as a peasant, without a beard and with a moustache. That's how it was until he was detained."

(Marlene, at 18 years old exiled - Finland)

Meanwhile, sensory memory³, understood as the capacity to register information through the senses, especially vision and hearing, seems to be at its peak in children's evocation, because just as they spontaneously remember the raids on their homes and the violation of their own private space, they retain information related to the original stimulus, despite the fact that forty years have passed. They refer to the noise of the "hawker hunter" planes because they heard them; to the tense atmosphere felt within the family immersed in the midst of the events; to the speed with which the family networks were activated because it was their uncles, grandparents or friends who protected them while they found a way to leave the country. In the memory related to emotions, fear is the emotion that crosses all the stories. The fear of losing one's life at such a young age and by the precise decision of a third. Francisco, a six-year-old son of actors, relives in his story the fear he felt during the raid on his home, where his father was pointed at with a machine gun. He relates what happened, evoking physical and emotional sensations he had never experienced before.

In another passage of the stories, we find the fear of losing his life felt by a 9-year-old boy. It's León, son of Pedro Gastón Pascal Allende and grandson of Laura Allende, says that while he was in asylum in the Embassy of Ecuador with his three brothers:

"I felt, very, very afraid that they would break off relations between Chile and Ecuador and the milicos (Chilean slang for "military") would come in and kill all of us who were there."

(León, at 9 years of age exiled - Mexico)

The emotions and experiences associated with the moment prior to the asylum or exile of the parent or family group are clearly related to the fear of a probable family breakdown. Fear and uneasiness lead the list of effects generated by the repressive situation and are reiterative in each of the stories and are related to the sensation and concrete reality of the threat. The repressive impact received by the family groups was so intense that they were unable to overcome the unveiled emotion that invades children and

3. Ulric Neisser : *Iconic and Echoic*. The term echoic memory was coined in 1967 by Ulric Neisser to describe this brief representation of acoustic information. It was initially studied using similar partial report paradigms to those utilized by Sperling; however, modern neuropsychological techniques have enabled the development of estimations of the capacity, duration, and location of the echoic memory store. In the 90's, the role of visual persistence in memory gained considerable importance, although in 1960, George Sperling began his classic partial-report experiments to confirm the existence of visual sensory memory and to determine some of its characteristics, such as its capacity for duration.

young people. That state particularly affected those who were fully imbued with the repressive actions of the state, those who at the time were young adolescents who were part of the social political process of the time and had a greater knowledge of what an institutional breakdown in Chile meant.

Many sensed from the outset the magnitude of the events in their own lives. In re-signifying her history, Vilma reviews the moments prior to her exile, stating that:

“I felt that something was missing, my adolescence was interrupted, years of my life and experiences to live were being taken away from me.”

Reminiscences of Childhood

One of the interviewees was born during her parents' exile, others left when they were months old. Although they do not have a complete memory of the period prior to the exile, they do maintain a narrative that relates to what was transmitted by their parents. For example, Valeria's family went into exile after her father's detention in 1975. His father, like so many others, was expelled from the University of Chile in the midst of a totally deteriorated academic context. The atmosphere of insecurity that the family is beginning to experience leads the head of household to accept a job offer at an Academic Study Center in Sweden.

Valeria recalls her parents telling her that:

“(...) my father was taken prisoner in 1975, which was exactly what triggered us to go to Sweden (...) what I know are anecdotes of how he moved around a lot in clandestinely, of the meetings with his comrades and that he took my sister to these things, which were meetings to pass on information. My father was imprisoned in Tres Alamos⁴ and his experience there, he has always told me, was not so terrible, they had indeed interrogated him, but he had not been tortured.”

(Valeria, at 2 years of age exiled - Sweden)

4 . Detention facility. It operated between 1974 and 1976. It was the last camp for political prisoners. Its main importance lay in the fact that prisoners were identified, unlike other detention centers, and could even receive visitors. From this place many detainees were expelled from the country. According to testimonies given to the Valech Commission in this facility: “they were humiliated and insulted and lived in overcrowded conditions. Some political prisoners indicated that they were taken out of the compound to be interrogated elsewhere. They frequently punished them by arbitrarily suspending their visits and their food and clothing.”

There also remain in memory those stories passed on by relatives and friends of the parents, people who were hosted in those homes, those people who after prison and torture went into exile and who made -many times- a first stop in the homes of friends.

"We grew up hearing about the horrors of the dictatorship, detentions, tortures, because of the large number of people who passed through our house. But there was also a burden of fear and pain in the children because we listened, we always listened to what was happening in Chile but there was no explanation from the adults. A silence in front of the children," says Florencia.

(Florencia, at 6 months of age exiled - Algeria)

In this group of children, we also observe the sensation of fear when recalling and describing the moments prior to the exile experienced by their families, transmitted by their fathers and mothers in a verbal and analogical way. It is in this sense that the sensory memory becomes powerful by connecting with the selected photographs and the preserved objects, allowing to know that area of childhood memory not visualized, and little understood by today's societies. In this scenario, the children internalized Chile's political and social events and installed in their imaginary the sensation of fear, they made visible the moments of tension and pain experienced in the country where they were not born, or from which they had left before their first birthday, but to which they felt they belonged in one way or another.



- Inés! If you had to name this photo, what would you call it?

"It's like a Matryoshka, like these Russian dolls. I feel like a matryoshka, it's one of those dolls that has like these ornaments, it has the scarf, it's like a Russian doll. They didn't know that there was a Chilean woman inside."

“My childhood in Moscow, well, I don't know if one can say that one tends to idealize some memories, but I remember years as very pleased, very happy, very quiet, with no notion of dangers or anything. Obviously, my parents always lived according to Chile. So, I had that quality of being half Russian, of feeling very much a part of it, I went to a normal Russian school, with Russian children, I was practically the only foreigner (...) at the same time I felt very Chilean, my parents lived according to Chile. My father worked at Radio Moscú, director of the program “Escucha Chile”, so everything was very permanent according to Chile. (...) in reality, as always what was talked about and what was known was about the dictatorship and terrible things and everything, I imagined. I was kind of afraid, I said: we are going to come to a place that is like a total war.... because what I saw were also the protests, the demonstrations, what do I know, the pacos (Chilean slang for “policeman”), the guanaco (Chilean slang for “water cannon truck”). I imagined that this situation was something permanent and that there was a permanent fear”.

(Inés was born in Moscow and returned to Chile at the age of 13).



The first time Inés traveled to Chile she was 11 years old, and she tells:

“I imagined this war, this terrible situation, so I was scared. I asked my mother, I don't know, if I could speak Russian, I didn't dare in fact; or if I could walk around with red things because they could associate it with something communist, maybe absurd things but they were out of fear.”

We can see, then, that the oral transmissions of experiences associated with the post-coup period and prior to exile were in one way or another internalized. They clearly point out that they imagined a Chile in constant war, that there were good guys and bad guys, that nobody talked to anybody. They also describe feeling nostalgia for the unknown. Others made these oral transmissions so much their own that they voluntarily joined the political activities carried out by the Chilean community where they lived and thus began to weave a story that, with the passage of time, became part of their own history.

Counting the imaginary.... carving reality

“Things have a life of their own.
It's simply a matter of waking up their souls.”⁵

“It seems that my older brother was very lively, very alert and he was fascinated to go to Africa, and he imagined himself as a country with lions, with giraffes, elephants and everything. I see, now, that he had a look full of illusions, so when he stepped on African soil for the first time, he was very disappointed because there were no jungle animals.”



5. Gabriel García Márquez. *Cien Años de Soledad*, (1967). Editorial Sudamericana. Buenos Aires.

"I don't have any pre-exile memories. My first memories are in exile. I was born on April 2, 1973, and we left in exile on August 3, 1974. My father was a communist and my mother was a member of the Christian Left and we lived in Viña del Mar. Both were university professors. My father was not detained but he was persecuted, and it was a story of hiding for four months; he managed to get asylum in the French Embassy and from there he went to Algeria where the whole family got together, (...) the oldest was five years old, the other one was three and I was one. (...) The memories I have of Chile are kind of terrible, for example, the family (they were right-wing families) kind of omitted a lot, they distanced themselves a little for the coup and could have been more welcoming, more supportive, knowing that my father and my mother were politically committed (...) they kind of didn't understand the dimension of what was happening (...). The thing is that my father had to leave the V Region, the Valparaíso area, because they were looking for him and an uncle who belonged to the Navy told my mother not to worry because he was going to get Pepe out and he left him locked up in a room for two days and never came to look for him. These things are talked about openly in the family, without taboos. Also when my mom was scared to death, then when my dad was gone she slept with all of us with shoes, with parkas, all tucked inside the bed, everyday things... it was scary. (...) If I now think of my parents in their seventies and sixties, fear is still a ghost in their lives. What must it have been like at that time?"

-she wonders.

(Florencia, at 9 months in exile - Algeria)



Departure is usually associated with climbing the airplane stairs and one suitcase per person. Some of this luggage carried the favorite toys of the little ones. Others, the clothes knitted by the grandmother; but also, in its interior traveled a handful of objects that in one way or another were inherited from the past and carried in memory as part of the identity and memories.



"I have since that time, since I was a child, I always put them together, and looking at it, without thinking about it, I have military dolls, I also have Indians and I also have football, something happy; this is the 74 World Cup, the mascot of 74 in Germany that I keep with much love because I used to play with them. The little car I had from that time I also keep it with a lot of love that I have not wanted to give to anyone because it is something that only I can understand the affection that these toys have, and the curious thing that I played with little soldiers, so much so that even though maybe they caused me some damage, maybe psychological, I still played with them. They were part of my childhood"

(Wladimir, at 6 years of age exiled - Bulgaria)



Natalia goes into exile with her mother and two older sisters, 7 and 6 years old respectively. They arrive in Costa Rica, move to El Salvador and the United States because his father goes into exile on a scholarship to the United States. When he was six years old, they arrived in Mexico City where he lived until he was 14 years old. Both professional parents and communist militants.

"Of Chile in the past I do not have very clear records because it is a period I did not live through, and my parents did not share many details. I think that silence was a way to protect us from so much brutality. Despite the fact that torture, detentions and aid to those in need was part of the daily routine, especially in the first years of exile. But I was very young and didn't understand it. As the years went by, the transit from place to place and the emptiness of a development space saddened my mother. That's how I remember her, but she was also the strong woman who carried boxes, ornaments and belongings in a suitcase that made it home and family. Through these objects she gave us the message that home is inside you and they are the fragments of your memory."

(Natalia, at 8 months of age exiled in Costa Rica, Salvador, United States and Mexico)

About those memory fragments, Natalia tells:

"This is one of the objects, it is an inkwell, it is very simple, but it is one of the objects that always accompanied us. And when my mother died, we shared the objects that gave us permanence, stability in our home."



Remembering in the Present

"It is the right of children and their parents to leave any country and enter their own, with a view to family reunification or the maintenance of the relationship between one another."

U.N. Art. 10 Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

There is something disturbing and unthinkable about these stories at the present time. The prevailing uncertainty in the face of exile carries with it an implicit condemnation that transgresses all universal law. Two of our interviewees were teenagers, 15 and 18 years old. They, like their parents, had a passport marked with a letter "L", which literally means "limited entry". This mark was intended to monitor transit abroad as well as unauthorized entry into Chile, which was stamped on passports by the Ministry of the Interior. The "L" signified not only the prohibition of entry to Chile, but also to those nations that supported the civil-military dictatorship.

Vilma was 15 years old when she left Chile with her father -former Minister of Labor in the Salvador Allende government-, her two brothers and stepmother. The father moves to asylum, and they travel to East Germany, from there to Italy, finally disembarking in the former Czechoslovakia. In recalling the memory of that time, she says that they lived through very tense moments before the exile and that she found out -once in exile- that there were threats to the family, in addition to the father's clandestinity. *"He was protecting us and that's why he was hiding the information,"* she says. However, when she was able to process what had happened, *"I also understood that tension or fear that I felt all the time."* Over time, she says she understood what the limitation on entry to the country meant.



"Something like no freedom to move from one place to another, a decision taken by others on the steps to follow, a violation of her fundamental rights where the expulsion was a frontal attack on the nationality of a girl."

“Before I left, before I left it was exactly leaving everything behind, it was difficult because I felt that my life was falling apart, it was difficult, my friends, I had to leave my mother here, I don't know, it was my life. I didn't know what was going to happen to me, what was going to happen to me, where I was going to end up living, how I was going to get back to Chile. That was my biggest concern, I wanted to return, I always wanted to return and I think I would have returned to Chile much sooner if it had not been because when I went to renew my passport I was banned from entering Chile. I was given the “L”. That was the end of the world for me because I had made my plans, I knew I was going to return, I was going to study and that I was going to dedicate my life to Chile. (...) My plans changed (...) I finished my studies there, high school and started to think about what I wanted to do, because if they didn't let me in I had to think about how to get ahead and I decided to study languages, which is something I always liked. I also decided to get married. I married a Slav I met in Bulgaria, and there I felt that everything was difficult and that I had to assume that I was making my life in Czechoslovakia.”

(Vilma, at 15 years old exiled in former Czechoslovakia)





Marlene: "...this photo is very meaningful to me."

"The memories that I have of leaving Chile were super painful because I was 18 years old and I wanted to stay in Chile of course, since I was not a child which is easier to carry. But it was also important to be with the family, to be with your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters, and in view of all that my family had gone through with all the suffering, I didn't want to give my parents any more pain, so we all left on August 23, 1982, for Finland to join my father with refugee status."



Marlene was 10 years old at the time of the coup d'état. She was fully aware of the effect of the Unity government because she lived it with his father in the community centers, rallies, so she was a participant in his father's political activities. He was a member of the Communist Youth, where he held a coordinating position as a neighborhood leader. Actor and protagonist of the Occupation of Pampa Irigoin in 1969. He was a candidate for alderman and also held

the position of Intendant (S) in the city of Puerto Montt. He defines his family as a nucleus “absolutely politicized by family history.”

He witnessed raids carried out by the military at his home and in the settlement where he lived with his parents in the days following the coup. From there, different repressive situations were unleashed, of which she was a direct witness. Clandestine father. Later, he was detained and transferred to Chin Chin Prison (1975) where she saw him again at Christmas because they were given a visitation permit. She remembers that moment with great emotion:

“I saw my mother broken when we all got together after so long.”

“We used to go with my brother, I have those memories, we used to go with my older brother, he was 11 and I was 10 years old, to see him at Chin Chin prison, to leave him the food lunch of those years, that huge enameled lunch and then we stayed and climb up a little hill in front and we would stay there playing, talking, doing anything, we were kids. We stayed there watching until my dad was taken out for a walk in the yard. And there we were shouting at them because they told us that we could not go near the fences. There was a whole issue that we were told that they were electrified, I don't know if it was a myth or not, but it scared us, so we would shout from the hill and my dad would make signs and then we would go home happy and run to tell my mom that we had seen my dad and that he was fine.”

(Marlene, at 18 years of age exiled - Finland)

After a year of imprisonment, the father was sent to the Codpa Valley, in the interior of Arica. The family travels there to be near him. During the seven years that her father was sentenced to sign daily, the family remained by his side. In 1981, he served his sentence. However, he was detained again in the context of a visit by Pinochet to the city to inaugurate a school in Arica. He is accused of being part of a plan to assassinate Augusto Pinochet. Her father had been detained two days before the news broke.

Marlene was 16 years old at the time, so she remembers the violence and repression in greater detail and recalls the nine days the family spent searching for him because his detention was not recognized by any police institution. Finally, he is seen at the Military Prosecutor's Office; from there he is transferred to the Arica Prison. She went to visit him twice a

week. These contacts are lost when the father is transferred from prison to prison, until he arrives in Santiago where his sentence is commuted to deportation, and he is expelled from the country by Decree 504⁶ and his passport is marked with a prohibition to enter the country.

"When he was expelled, several countries offered him asylum, including France and Canada. But we had a cousin of my mom's who had been living in Finland since 1973 and my dad asked him -that relative- if we could move to that country. Finland welcomed us. We left in August 1982 after I finished my accounting studies at the commercial institute. All travel arrangements were made through the International Red Cross. Here we had to sell everything and start from scratch in another country where we didn't even know the language."

The father's commutation of his sentence and the family's refugee status reunites them as a family group after long years of political repression. Controversially, Marlene recalls that she had to leave a sentimental story unfinished; that the family had to start with nothing and with no possibility of being able to communicate in the host country. Also, with the weight of the "L" in her passport. Marlene, like her father, was banned from entering Chile. The violation of human rights perpetrated against Marlene's family becomes permanent, as she had to live according to the dictates of the prevailing civil-military regime, which translates into the impossibility of getting rid of a past that remains anchored to memory.

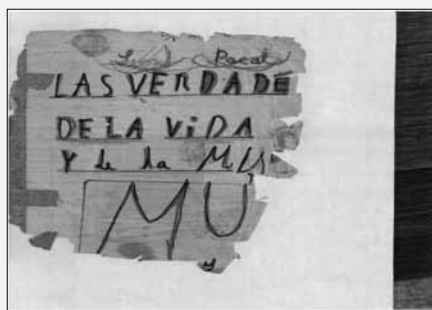
In other children, the mark is transferred by their affiliation, that is, having a name and surname that in the ears of the repressors was associated with the so-called "terrorists". The fact that their parents had a political identity, were nationally known, or had held political or public positions

6. Sáez Salazar, Ignacio. *Extrañamiento en Chile: El Decreto Supremo 504 y la situación de los presos políticos de Dictadura*. Within the framework of these repressive and dismantling policies of the popular and workers' movement, there were different practices, ranging from detention, through torture, exile and even death. In the case of exile, it was three laws that made it legal. These imply the abandonment of the country and the impediment to re-enter the country: Decree Law 81 of 1973, Decree Law 604 of 1974 and Superior Decree 504 of 1975. The S.D 504 was the result of a negotiation between the government and organizations and institutions related to human rights, such as ICEM (Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), which were the organizations that signed a four-party agreement, including the government, in order to promote S.D. 504. Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, 2013.

during the Popular Unity, implicitly marked their daughters and sons. In these cases, the political identity of the father or mother had a direct impact on the children, as they symbolically represented the path to follow in order to unite the repressive apparatus with the clandestine militant, as can be seen in the case of León and his siblings.

From all of the above, it can be inferred that it is impossible to get rid of a past that remains anchored to memory. Thus, the relevance of a photograph, an object, or a text, even if it can be considered part of the representations of a moment for a child, turns out to be binding between the facts of the past and the memory brought to the present. In their various forms, these appear as traces, vestiges and footprints of the irrecoverable; of that which “has been and/or has been lost”, of the destruction of the family, the absence of parents during a critical moment for society as a whole and where they were no strangers.

“The testimony, the intimate diary, the letter, are genres that fulfill the objective of attesting, testifying, confirming what happened, sometimes narrating a story that, from other discourses, is stripped or denied its status as truth.”⁷



Life diary:

Written by Leon Pascal during his time at the Embassy of Ecuador, 9 years old.

León was 9 years old on the day of the coup d'état. His father, Pedro Gastón Pascal Allende, architect and socialist activist and his mother Rosemond Cheetham Price, sociologist and MAPU (Popular Unitary Action Movement) activist. The origin of his family is dissimilar.

7. Alicia Genovese. *Entre la ira y el arte del olvido: testimonio e imagen poética*. Kennedy University, Buenos Aires, Argentina. 2010.

"My father is the son of Laura Allende, a consistent woman who was detained in Tres Alamos, tortured and died of cancer, and in a political gesture she committed suicide in Cuba. My maternal grandfather, a recalcitrant Pinochetista, who went out to toast with champagne when the coup took place, stopped talking to my mother for 23 years because she was a leftist. (...) My two parents were together because they had the same project for the country." (...) "On the day of the coup we were going to school, we were studying at Saint George, and on the radio, they said that there was a tank movement, so they hid my brothers and sisters, there were four of us, three men and a woman. And we were separated into two groups. Me with my older brother, Pedro, and my younger brother, Cristóbal, with Noelia in another house."

He says that they were first taken out of the house by the lady who took care of them, and then by two married couples who were friends of his parents and hid them for six months.



"Twenty days after the coup, the neighbors came in and ransacked the house and burned everything they found. So, the only photo I have is this one because they burned all the photo albums, stole the carpets, everything. I have no photos or things that remind me of childhood. The looting was seen by an aunt who went to the house to get clothes for us."

Probably, the act of robbing the house of a neighbor linked to the Popular Unity is irrelevant when the Presidential Palace is being bombed. It's just that, anything can be expected when the boundaries have been broken. However, simple and silent facts often contain the symbols that lie in the midst of horror and violence.

The robbing on León's house by his neighbors shows the symbols of barbarism of neighbors belonging to sectors with greater access to culture and material goods. None of those neighbors needed the goods from that raided house; none could gain anything from trashing the family photos.

Transformed into a herd -violent, unthinking and without capacity for analysis- they acted like automatons, however, they did it with viciousness. Their actions are mere traces of insignificant characters, anonymous in their mediocrity and resentful of those who could -from welfare- propose a change in favor of the most dispossessed.

The context of violence provoked in León's family environment shows us a rupture of the relational context that gave meaning to the individual and group experience of each family member. Father, mother and four children live a real catastrophe and in the face of the crisis they have to adopt different ways to protect the life of each one of them. Family and friendship networks come into play to take care of the four siblings. They are separated into two groups, totally unaware of the fate of their parents, but very aware of what they were going through because their parents left them a cassette tape telling them why they had to hide. The political risks were discussed, and they were fully aware of what was happening to them. Daily life was lived with great fear and with the feeling of being faced with death at any moment, despite being inside a foreign territory, such as the Embassy of Ecuador.

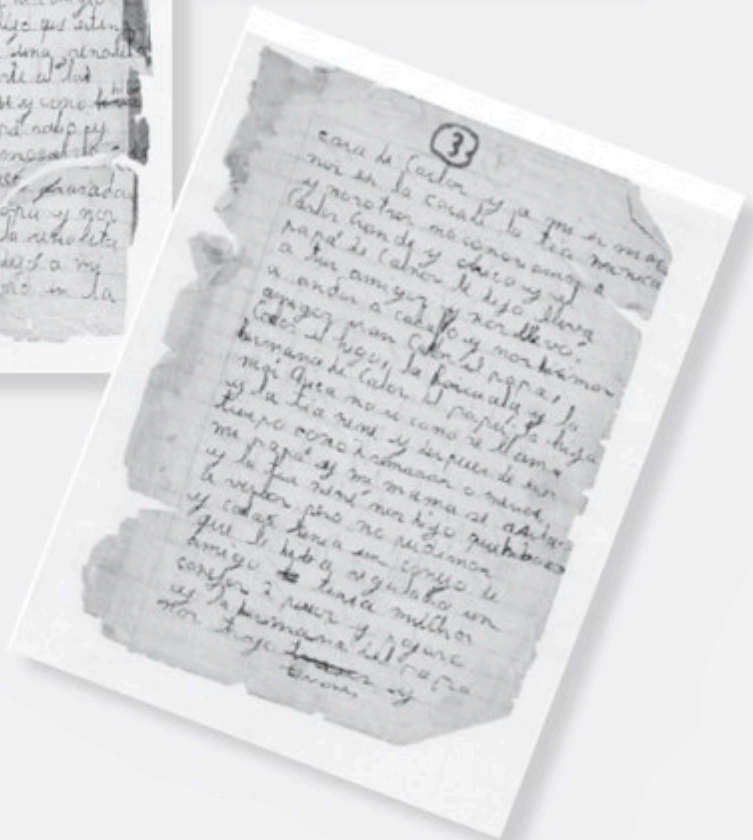
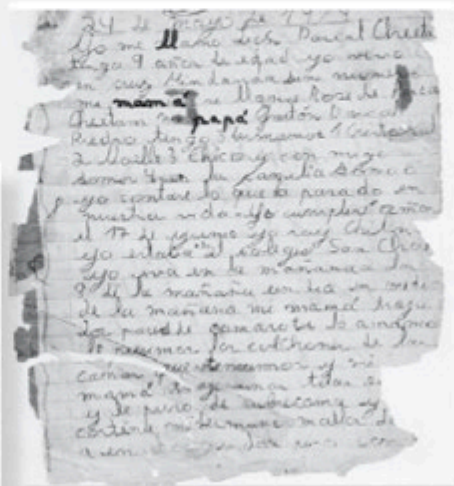
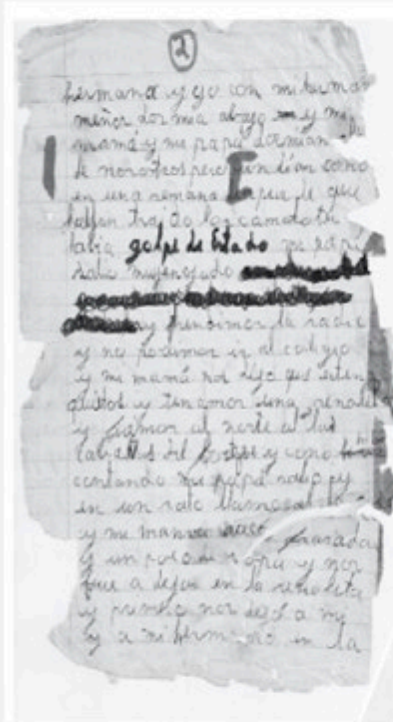
"One day, they gathered us in a square and there the Ecuadorian ambassador with his driver arrived at the place and they put us in the trunk of the car and there we entered the embassy without my parents. We were the first to seek refuge, the children, the kids. My older brother was 15 years old; Noelia was 10 years old, I was 9 years old and my younger brother was 8 years old. We spent six months at the embassy with six hundred other people, a lot of young people. One night my parents arrived, shots were heard, and my parents had jumped the embassy, my parents armed, with wigs. There I was greeted by a lady who said "hello Leoncito" I said, "who are you?" She took off her wig and it was my mother. They were looking for them because obviously they wanted to kill them and all because of their participation in the Popular Unity, but mainly because of their surnames, my father is the brother of Andrés Pascal Allende, one of the founders of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). The path of exile is a pilgrimage: Ecuador, Mexico, Cuba, Spain, Chile, Spain, Spain and Chile finally."

(León, at 9 years old, exiled - Mexico)

Life diary: “The truths of life and death”

"...writing was an element of catharsis to face the moment I was going through"

León Pascal Cheetham



IN SUMMARY:

“No cause can justify the abuse of human rights”⁸

The previous stories tell of children and young people who have experienced different situations of violence. All of them organized because the repressors of their parents, and sometimes of themselves, were agents of the State who, having the responsibility, the social and legal power to be guarantors of the rights of children and young people, transgressed it. In this way, they transformed the protective function of the State into a source of terror, losing all normative and ethical content, which made it impossible to recognize the opponent as a human being, as a neighbor, but rather as an object to be destroyed.

From the other side, the victims who were children and young people violated for the political ideas of their parents, for their social commitment to their country and for their political, social and cultural performance during the Popular Unity government, were left without essential and legal guarantees. There was a contempt for the values and principles contained in fundamental documents approved and ratified by the Chilean State, such as: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man approved by the United Nations in 1948 and which are implemented with the Pact of San José de Costa Rica and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959); and in Chile's post-dictatorship period the approval of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989. All these treaties were approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and ratified by Chile.

Indeed, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the cornerstone in the history of human rights, because it is a basic international document of the inalienable and inviolable rights of all members of the human family. However, this international rights instrument lost all validity after September 11, 1973. Meanwhile, Article VIII (rights of residence and transit)

8. Khan, Irene. (2008). Text compiled by Carmen Corredor for the Commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

of the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, lost the rights to leave freely any country, including his own; not to be expelled from the territory of the State to which he belongs, nor deprived of the right to enter it; to choose residence in the country of which he is a national; and to move freely within it⁹.

To the above, we must add the transgression of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, an international treaty unanimously approved on November 20, 1959 unanimously by the 78 member states of the United Nations Organization at the time.

This Declaration, in turn, is based on the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child and contains 10 principles. The Geneva Declaration was adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations (SDN), a document that became historic, as for the first time it recognized and affirmed the existence of specific rights of children, as well as the responsibility of adults towards them.

As we move into the present, we can point out that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed in 1989, with 54 articles. Apart from the extension, the main differences between the two conventions are that compliance with one convention is mandatory and, on the other hand, the approach changes, considering children as subjects of protection and not only as objects of protection.

Both the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) highlight among their respective principles or articles the protection and special care of children and young people. From today's perspective -and considering the postulates of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and/or the Convention on the Rights of the Child-, these principles were breached, violated by the State, leaving its responsibility as guarantor of rights in the hands of family and friends as the only ones capable of providing protection because in the face of the objectives of the coup d'état, children and young people were made invisible and their rights were violated without contemplation.

9. *Violations of the right to live in Chile. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Organization of American States. Country Report, September 1985. Chapter VI*

These stories of memories show us that the historical repercussions of the violation of rights exercised by the State after the coup were individual, collective and social. Likewise, the consequences of applying these criteria of violence and violation of the rights of children and adolescents were not considered. To such an extent that they were deprived of the right to be citizens, as we have recorded in these memory traces, both because of the impossibility of living or moving freely in their country, which is linked to “the right to live in the homeland”, an absolute right that was denied, because their parents -the only guarantors of rights at that time- were banned from entering the country, or because they had been expelled from Chile through *administrative* means.

This Oral Archive confirms, once again, the violation and recognition of human rights. Just as, it confirms the existence of a reflexive memory that by having the possibility of bringing it to the present after decades “assumes the vital condition of the subject who understands himself as a task for himself and from himself.”¹⁰ The past is never finished, and remembering it opens up possibilities of meaning for the present and the expression of desires for the future.

10. Gelhen, A. *Man His Nature and Place in the World* quoted in Lelich, Joan Carles, *Memoria y Esperanza*. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona 2003. The veritative function of re-memorization, which Ricoeur assigns not only to the proof of the source, but to the act of self-recognition of the remembering subject, is not under discussion here, but its capacity to generate a reflection and its multiple interpretations that are generated in the subjective act of narrating.

A black and white photograph showing a person's legs and feet walking on a railway track. The track recedes into the distance, flanked by a flat, open landscape with sparse vegetation. In the far distance, a few small figures can be seen on the horizon. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds. A semi-transparent white horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the title text.

MEMORIES OF EXILE



CHILDHOOD: FROM ADVENTURE TO AWARENESS



MEMORIES OF EXILE CHILDHOOD: FROM ADVENTURE TO AWARENESS

María Teresa Dalla Porta F.

MY HOME IS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

*My home is anywhere in the world
Wait for my visit among the cacti of Maputo
Every day I kiss my nephews and nieces in Biava
My home is anywhere in the world...
My home is now anywhere in the world
It is wherever a poem is written or the mountain range is remembered
Where under the Seine a Mapuche longs for the Ñachi and the Muday
Or in Gothenburg dreams of the blond sands of the Pacific¹¹.
Jorge Teillier*

Every experience of exile constitutes a forced displacement from a “familiar” place to an alien, profoundly unknown territory. Spatial movement that is not desired, that happens quickly and provokes feelings of insecurity, fear of what has been experienced and of what is to come, uncertainty and uprooting, among other sensations and emotions. Exile is lived in association with the loss of the constructed history and the public rejection of the official society that makes up the country of exile. This is demonstrated by the antiquity of this punishment, linked to the maximum penalty that a citizen could receive. Already in Athens the “ostracism” or public exile was seen by the condemned as a kind of death in life, since they became “nobody”, losing their quality of citizens with civil rights, having therefore serious consequences for the family of the exiled, which became merchandise to be sold as slaves as one more of the belongings that were confiscated from the exiled.

11. “El mudo corazón del bosque.” Tajamar editores Ltda. Chile.2014.

Currently, or in the recent past, those forced into exile experience social exile and territorial displacement, forcing them to reconfigure their being and their way of inhabiting the world. They are compelled to try to continue being themselves elsewhere. That new geographical and societal space, which perhaps with the passage of time and through the deployment of the active adaptation and identity reconstruction capacities of the exile and his family, could become a second home. A new home that at the beginning is lived with strangeness, full of questions, contradictions and also rejection by some of the members of that family that experiences exile.

Childhood, and consequently, the studies of personal and collective memory of these groups, are not alien to the experience of the diaspora¹². In the following chapter, the relationship between exile and childhood memory will be approached from two perspectives: first, from the visualization of the experiences of children and young people who were forced to leave Chile for political reasons. We sought to build a concert of voices with experiences of enormous relevance and thus be able to record while preserving the information, knowledge and emotions that emerge from these testimonies, in order to finally integrate these stories into a broader context about the complex relationship between childhood and exile.

Thus, we were interested in approaching this reality by deploying a wide range of probing questions about the experience of exile: what were the children who lived that particular experience like?; What did they remember about the experience of exile and according to the age at which they lived it; with what and with whom did they associate it; what did they learn so far away from their family, social and cultural roots of their country of origin?; were they actively inserted into the diverse societies and cultures in which they came to live unexpectedly and without any preparation?; was exile an experience of psychosocial trauma for them; did they like going to school and in these new environments, did they make friends; their lives, their dreams and games, their fears?

12. In general, the definitions of diaspora used conceptually encompass four major aspects: 1.- the forced displacement of a group away from its place of origin; 2.- the maintenance of a connection (real or imaginary) with the place of origin, which is often idealized; 3.- the establishment of relations with the host society; and 4.- the generation of a strong identity consciousness of the exiles.

In summary, the aim here was to investigate, record and interpret the oral memory stories of a sample of twelve children, experiences collected according to a selection of categories and criteria already explained in the presentation. How did each of them live and experience exile; can we find certain common experiences in spite of personal and family differences?

In the testimonies collected for our research, we were able to identify a memory of exile and its protagonists as a great time in which daily life was lived for them, between Chile and the country of arrival. A time in suspense, since the thought and fantasy of return was systematically present in the memory of the interviewees. The possible return was always present.

The Civil-Military Dictatorship in Chile was frequently present in these memories, so emphatically present that Chile is an ambivalent country in these remembrances.

On the one hand, these protagonists felt like going back to their origins to meet their extended families; grandmothers, grandfathers, cousins, homes; stories of families and political commitment. Meanwhile, on the other hand, they listened to verbalizations of political violence, humiliation and crimes perpetrated in Pinochet's dictatorial Chile.

Francisco, relates us his memories of that period:

“like the experience one has of uncles that I had, I mean uncles, putative uncles that in the Chilean colony in Costa Rica of course, I had an uncle who was half deaf, we would go to his house and we had to talk to him loudly and at some point I remember that he told me why he was deaf and he told me that he was deaf because he had been tortured and they had done something to his ear and he finally lost one ear. So finally, when you are a child, you did not have the experience and you live in exile, you build your world, we built our world of what Chile was based on the references we had, based on the music we took with us, the music we listened to, the food we ate, the food my mother prepared and the stories told by our uncles and aunts and the Chilean colony that accompanied us and lived under the same conditions”

The exodus, the new geographical and cultural spaces

"The place of belonging is the place of childhood."

Antonio. Testimonial Memory

The spaces that evidence otherness, from the children's memory, we could say that they are the language and the place they inhabit on a daily basis: the house and its physical and human landscapes.

Some exiled children sought to insert themselves through language into the intimate and profound world of the host countries: Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Mozambique, Algeria, Finland, Italy, former Czechoslovakia and Russia. They knew that the accent was the first thing that made them different, and they made an effort to avoid it, to learn words and speak, as Francisco says, -one of the interviewees- as "Tics", or as Inés says:

"I learned more, of course to speak more Russian, but there was a moment in my... when I was learning to speak, that I spoke Russian/Spanish like mixed, because surely I had a mess in my head, like I was going to a Russian garden, then I arrived home it was all in Spanish, in my house they always spoke only in Spanish, so I spoke as if it was only one language. Uh... then at some point I said ah, like, unconsciously I decided not to speak in Spanish anymore and I spoke to everyone in Russian, so my mom would speak to me in Spanish, I would answer her in Russian. And then I kind of started, I started to assume the difference between the two things (smiles) and uh... and speaking in Spanish and Russian when it was appropriate (smiles)."



The group interviewed also recalled that many of them took classes to learn the language of the country they came to live in and were translators for their parents.

It was not only the verbal language that allowed them to incorporate themselves into the new social and cultural life. Also, knowing and inhabiting the places and their landscapes enabled and endowed them with a sensory memory that allowed them to share and hold conversations with other children they observed on a daily basis; they also felt they belonged to a place with names, colors and shapes:

Antonio relates:

“I remember a very pleasant life, in the city let's say, of walking everywhere, of a lot of relationship with friends and a lot of freedom as a child let's say too. It was a city at that time very quiet, very calm, very pleasant. So, I was thinking of Mozambique because of the landscape and also because I brought this photo in the savannah, there is a Mozambican, which also connects a little with this landscape, with this green landscape of the Santiago foothills and I integrate it with that of the savannah, like that transit. And that is like the, the daring that my parents had to go into the savannah, which was a totally unknown landscape and that all playing a little with the... with the imaginations that one has of Africa, no, of the savannah, dangerous, full of unknown animals (smiles), I think that my parents somehow took that risk... And that I am permanently grateful to them, let's say, because it was a great opportunity to live there (smiles). And the savannah was also the... the possibility we had to... from time to time to leave... Maputo, the city, the capital and get to know this, new landscapes, full, always full of strange beings.”

The first images that children in the host countries remember are related to the landscape.

Valeria recalls:

“when we arrived in Sweden, it was all white and full of snow (she laughs), it also has spring and summer ...because for me I think of Sweden and for me Sweden is, it's... it's winter, it's the snow that I love, I love... like that nice memory and... no, here we look like happy and I loved those afternoons with, I mean with snow and that there is sun and that you can go out and play, it was fun, super fun, because there were lots of activities in the snow.”

And with the presence of their parents waiting for them, with the government delegates who received them as political refugees, the Red Cross with campaign posts, relatives and/or friends of their parents who welcomed them by opening the doors of their homes, groups of solidarity and resistance to the dictatorship and people from the host towns. Marlene, continues:

"I wanted to show you that this is the photo that describes us as when we arrived there. This photo appeared in the main uh... newspaper of Finland appeared there as, the last family that arrived with refugee status and they took this photo of us for the newspaper and they made an article about us here, from this comes a super, super nice story too, because... a very nice anecdote that I wanted to tell you, that as a result of this a, a grandmother who lived in another city, about two hours from Helsinki, which is the capital city, she... she came to visit us a few months later, because she had read the article and she had also been a political prisoner, the time of the civil war where the reds and whites were confronted, she of course was red (laughs) she was a prisoner and became so sensitive to the issue and came to visit us and brought us gifts, she had knitted wool socks for, for us and went to give us all her support"

The trauma of repression

"My cousin would listen to anything and say something like What is that daddy, a clown daddy, a bomb daddy, Allende daddy?, as if he mixed everything up."

Florencia Testimonial Memory



The experiences of repression were lived directly by the exiled children, and if they were born in the host and containment countries, they felt the transference from their parents of those experiences of direct violence that have been called transgenerational traumas, which are transmitted orally and/or implicitly or silently. Where the recounted memory is very significant for the affective world of childhood, so is “the unsaid.” That complicit and delicate silence that many families in problematic situations have built, childhood inevitably captures them and interprets them with all the senses that inhabit their sensory world.

At the psychosocial level, when children are confronted with the experience of exile, there are different feelings associated with this experience of loss. A series of emotional indicators are observed here, which may be general or specific in nature: anxiety, sadness, fear, irritability, desire not to speak, insecurity and uncertainty about the present and the future:

In this regard Marianela says:

“I had a very hard time in exile, it was very hard, linked to poverty and lack of opportunities, it was in Upala that I got a super hard parasitic disease, we lived in the savannah... we rented a room from a friend of my mother's and there was no drinking water. Then I would come home from school, and I had to walk about 1.2 miles from the road to the house and I would get home so thirsty and drink water.”

Camilo relates us in his interview:

“...I get anxious very easily and when I get anxious I somatize it in my stomach, (in) my first years at school, I remember that it happened to me 2 or 3 times that I peed myself in class..., Why?, but I peed myself, I was suddenly distressed, I remember that (laughs) there was a classmate, another classmate who was Chilean, Lavín, Boris, once made a teacher angry, and the teacher threw the eraser over his head, as was education in olden times, the eraser flew from one side of the class to the other and reached Boris' head, because Boris was, Lavín was misbehaving, and I peed myself, he didn't pee himself, from the anguish of seeing that he was beaten”

In addition, there is a deep affective perception that life is “painfully fragmented and disorganized, as if it were dissociated or in pieces.¹³”

In this regard, León recounts:

“...The most painful was first this feeling that we were not going to be able to return anymore, because we were on the blacklist...with a lot of pain from everything that had happened, with a lot of trauma”

These children felt that their personal and family history was “on hold”, and they need to reconstruct their identity processes as survivors of the loss that exile meant for them in their childhood, in negotiation with others. In order to resignify this feeling of internal pain, the children desired and expected affective support from adults, which was expressed in the elaboration of fear on their part, as expressed by Florencia:

“Those twelve years in Algeria liberated that idea of fear, which I felt was permanently in my family, those were years without fear, they were very, very important.”

It also happened that most of the children were inserted into the social life of the new countries, as their parents looked for schools for them, facilitating peer games and linking them to solidarity groups with Chile. Psychosocial resignification and reparation are linked to being part of cultural life and art becomes one of the most important therapeutic means used to manifest and express the contained emotions of children during exile:

León points out:

“Culture, art, music, painting, literature, everything is useful because you have to keep on living.”

13. Neimeyer y Stewart, “la reconstrucción dialógica de un caso de duelo” 1996.

The School

Vilma...

"The letter L changed my destiny and well... I had to stay and decided to study there, I still studied English, I studied language... and my suitcases were only partially unpacked, because my heart was always in Chile, always, always."

Vilma Testimonial Memory

Schools in exile became spaces of socialization, of deconfiguration and reconfiguration of identity(ies) and socio-cultural integration. The exiled children learned not only not only to know the tongue, language and metalanguage of the host countries, but also the ways of interacting among peers and relating to the adult world. In addition, they were appropriating the cities where they lived by walking the daily journey from home to school. Francisco, alludes to it:

"When we arrived in Costa Rica, they put us in an artistic school, where we had to travel an hour... it was very far from downtown and in the mornings they had a programmed school thing and in the afternoon, you had to dedicate yourself to an artistic discipline and when we were kids we got involved with that, my brother Cristobal is a drummer until today..."

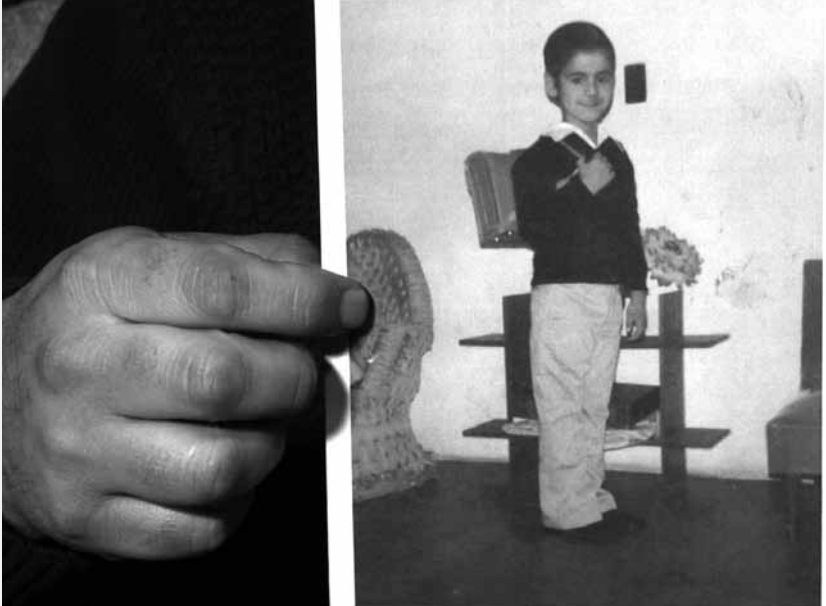
The recreational and outreach activities associated with the school world are remembered with joy and vitality associated with that world of sharing and enjoying with the "other children, of the new place", a world so desired by childhood, playing with the "others, different". Inés, expresses:

"Nice memories, I remember rather positive things, like... having a good time, enjoying a lot of this... this nature, the forests, the lakes that were there too; the birch trees... and always being like, surrounded by many other children. Uh... in those camps that we went to in the summers uh... of course there were, there were a lot of children, I don't know, sometimes there were also children from other countries, I had to share with children from, from Africa, from India, from Arab countries as well, so that was an experience I think it was different"

Some families looked for schools that shared their ways of thinking about life and society, assuming the possibilities offered by the host policies built by the countries for political refugees, so some schools became spaces of

containment and host for Latin American exiles, providing facilities for parents to enroll their children.

Camilo's testimony is expressed with his words.



“One of my first memories that I have when I arrived in Mexico was the first day of classes, which I remember was very impressive, uh... because of the backpack, because of the bag, because we, all the boys and girls who were in exile at my age, there were several of us, we all arrived at the same school, which was the Colegio Madrid. Because the Colegio Madrid in Mexico is a school founded by exiles, by republicans, the Spanish exile to Mexico, when they arrived there, they founded this school, the Colegio Madrid, then for formation, for values, when the exiles in Latin America began to take place, they received all the children.... and they gave them scholarships, they gave them scholarships for the first two years, and in the first year scholarship they gave you the backpack and the school supplies and that is why I was telling you that one of the memories I have is the backpack, because it was a bag (shows a photo), look here in this photo, great, you can see it, it was a hard leather bag”

Other families enrolled their children in educational establishments that were intended for foreigners in general:

This is evidenced in Florencia's story:

"We studied in a school, in a French school... it was like the French Alliance where all foreigners went, not because it was a private school, but because we did not speak Arabic, Algeria is a bilingual country, every foreigner is linked to the Arab world through bilingualism, therefore every foreigner speaks French and not Arabic, all foreigners studied in the French school, and we studied there"

It also happened that some children changed schools for different reasons due to the particular situation of the places of exile, and/or by decision of the adults as well as the children themselves. Others resisted the changes with tears and tantrums, thus sensitively incorporating themselves into the new cultural world.

Antonio relates:

"I remember that I studied in an international school, a school where all the diplomats went and I didn't like it, I felt strange. Then I was transferred to a Mozambican school, a Mozambican public school let's say, full of children from there. So, I had a very different story than my sister, for example, who, who went on to diplomatic school in English and, and... living, let's say, with students from different parts of the world; I, I kind of lived in the Mozambique more, more deeply in that sense (smiles)"

Marlene, expresses in her story:

"It was a very hard adaptation period for my little brothers, my youngest brother who was four or five years old went to a kindergarten, without understanding anything, it was terrible to see him cry every morning that he didn't want to go...he would throw tantrums"

School insertion was a different experience for the young women who had left with their families for exile. They were confronted, for example, with the experience that secondary education was not mandatory in the host countries, thus presenting an external difficulty associated with the



educative system. In this way, the desire to continue the studies that had been suspended in Chile had to be redefined by actively participating in resistance and solidarity work with Chile.

In this regard Vilma relates:

"Italy is a beautiful country, and I have nice memories from there, although I could not study, I could not finish my secondary education, because as I was the Chilean who had arrived, I wanted to study, I wanted to be a teacher, so my idea was to study in a school uh... for teacher, and we visited several schools, but none received me because I was the Chilean... we worked rather in the Democratic Chile, as we could not study, so we were in the Democratic Chile preparing pamphlets and things like that, everything for the... so that we could organize our rallies in Italy"

The Family

"...my parents were very much of the idea of: 'hey look we are in another country, we are getting to know another culture, we are learning new things...' they were very intelligent in that sense and without being irresponsible obviously... they made us feel the notion of travel, of exploration, life was a small adventure... I learned to do the same by watching them..."

Francisco. Testimonial Memory.



The memories of the children and young people interviewed also speak of families who, in exile, had the ability to actively integrate into other territories and cultures, regardless of longing, built-in fear and the sorrows ingrained in their skin. The experience of exile of the adults reveals experiences and a dissociated contextual situation, since on the one hand, there were the immediate and urgent requirements of active adaptation imposed by the conditions of the society and the host country and, on the other hand, the ever-present longing to return to the homeland.

These feelings and thoughts marked by the ideo/affective dissociation of adults were perceived by children in general. This is because the experience of exile was not only for adults. These experiences also became part of the inner world of childhood, inviting them to discover, understand and empathize with the reasons and ideas that led their fathers and mothers to be exiled from a dictatorial regime:

Antonio:

"...my feeling is that we were always on the verge of returning"...

Inés relates:

"...my parents always lived according to Chile, so I had this duality of being half Russian, of feeling very much a part of it... and at the same

time I knew I was Chilean, because my parents lived in Chile, but my main childhood feeling is one of great joy, of having a good time, of being very calm, but with something of nostalgia transmitted by my parents, a nostalgia for a country that I did not know, but that was supposed to be my homeland”...

We also observed families carrying a “leftist culture”, such as clay pitchers that were taken to any place in the world and filled with water.

Daily family life was linked to diverse political, social and community ties. To a feeling of being part of a political-collective, which was expressed in the various cultural activities that were reproduced as a sort of repertoire in one place and in another. In these places certain music, literature, also the program “This is Radio Moscow... Escucha Chile”, together with the creation of pamphlets and posters; the pocket reading of the Quimantú collection for all, the books of Marta Harnecker, the Mapuche and Altiplano handicrafts, the party hymns, the colors and flags, represented the culture inherited and not taken away by violence and exile. Such a device, in turn, was generating feelings of being alive and actively collaborating in the resistance to the dictatorship in Chile. Thus, childhood and youth, among others, remember themselves as protagonists of the political and historical exodus of their fathers and mothers:

Antonio in his testimony tells:

“Because the Chilean community was very strong, very cohesive... we lived in cultural, political-cultural events, for the different important dates; uh... movies, slideshows with Neruda, with Allende, Allende's speeches permanently. Uh... all the constantly told and retold history of the Chilean left, the social movement, and as a child I felt like a super protagonist of all that, I mean, I did not feel that this was a matter for adults and that I was watching from afar, I felt like a central part and super protagonist.”

The exiled families also transmitted the importance of organizing and resisting the Civil-Military Dictatorship in Chile, from their condition of exiles, valuing the realization of different actions of solidarity with the Latin American peoples. This worldview becomes relevant in the story of Marlene, who shows the ability of these young people to emotionally tune in with others, questioning the conservative idea that youth is exclusively

ego/centered and individualistic, as the myth of origin of this vital cycle:

She says:

...“We channeled it by organizing ourselves too, as we Chileans know how to do it, uh... we formed a group of young Latin Americans, for saying, and we did things, we did activities, we danced in the street, we did a lot of things and we collected money, we sent some of it to Chile for the children's dining rooms, the common pots, part of it. *Another part we sent to El Salvador for the Salvadoran guerrillas. Besides, there was a whole Latin American effervescence with what had happened in Nicaragua, with what was happening in Salvador, several things that also began to awaken and excite us... now there is also the idea that we supported my father and accompanied him in everything.*”

The children and young people visualized their mothers and fathers in exile from different perspectives, recalling various introjected images. However, it is relevant to mention that maternal and paternal attitudes and skills to cope with times of exile, influenced in a fundamental way the styles of being of the interviewees, in the way of visualizing the world and solving difficulties of everyday life:

“...my parents were very much of the idea of: ‘hey look, we are in another country, we are getting to know another culture, we are learning new things’... they were very intelligent in that sense and without being irresponsible obviously... they made us feel the notion of travel, of exploration, life was a little adventure. I learned to do the same by watching them. I also remember that my dad was very good at doing things... I remember he made the table in the dining room, for example, he built it himself, he got the wood, he made the table, a nice table with good wood.”

“...The bunk beds where we slept were also made by father, and the lamps were invented by my mother with him... and of course, now I become aware and I say, they did everything because maybe they were so short of money, that they were getting content at time where everything we had was the result of their work. I also value very much the fact that in the end, one also achieves a certain degree of self-sufficiency in life, of... of doing things, this same table was made by me, for example, (points to the

table) of pallets that are in fashion uhm... but looking for, to get ahead by oneself uhm... of course I remember all that process, all that first process..."

Francisco. Testimonial Memory

Parents' working hours were perceived by the children as long duration. In these times of absence, they report feelings of loneliness, anxiety and anguish. Other children recall that at an early age they took on the care and protection of their younger siblings. They also say that when they were alone, they went out to play, to enjoy the landscape, nature and animals.

They also remember how difficult it was for their mothers to find employment, attributing it to dominant and exclusive systems, where patriarchy marked the future of exiled women, where they were denied their own identities and were subjugated to the male world. Natalia:

"So, the woman was not the exile, she was the exile's wife, a very male chauvinist category too, and that determined several things and, and built stories from that, because many didn't have a work permit, my mother among them..."



The notion of "family" in the children who lived in exile is broad and diverse. They consider "family" to be an emotional unit that is supportive, cohesive and united in the face of difficulty(s):

"The 4 of us that made up this family, uh... as we left, we left and as we left then we came back, uh... we never had a... that is to say, although there were many family problems. There were a lot of issues, especially that I was the oldest with my father. I had some differences, maybe political with him, or different points of views. However, what always united us was the family issue, that there were the 4 of us, and the 4 of us had to go back, and leave in the same way... and I really owe that to them, to my parents... to my sister too, a great partner in life..."

Wladimir. Testimonial Memory

The children and young people incorporate in their stories some conceptions of family where they include friends of their parents, the Chilean Community that existed in the different countries they lived in, relatives who were in Chile, and those who raised them as relational mothers:

"... She was like a mother to my siblings and to me, the person who raised me, who educated me, she was Algerian, from a tribe that was not Arab, she was Kabyle, she was from this ethnic group before the Arabs arrived in North Africa. They were different ethnicities living in the mountains... she was also the widow of a mujahidin, of a man who had fought for Algeria's independence. So, she had the status of widow of a hero for independence, so she was respected by her people, by her tribe..."

Florencia. Testimonial Memory

Communications with family members living in Chile were permanent and the children did not feel a sense of family loss. The means used for communications were letters, telephone calls, as well as the sending of "cassettes":

Camilo relates...

"My dad, I don't know if any other family would have done it, (laughs) but my dad and my mother used to make us record a cassette that to this day I still regret, because they are still going around, and I don't know. The other day my sister played them at a family event and was the object of ridicule, because obviously one's voice changes, one expresses oneself in a different way, they made cassettes where they made us talk to my cousins, talk to my grandfather, talking to a cassette is as difficult as talking to a camera, uhm... and they sent them. And the letters, the letters that are still kept to this day, that my father always kept with his father, but the cassettes, I remember the cassettes a lot, because I didn't want to record them. My sister would sit and talk for hours and hours, but I didn't, I didn't like it, I just said 'hi cousin, ok, bye'".

Those who could travel in both directions, to the host country and to Chile, were able to maintain family ties, political communications and the circulation of personal, family and social affections. The exiled children when they traveled to Chile met relatives, houses, and places of memories, they also learned the codes of protection of recent family history: ...

"And every two years as my mom could return to Chile, every two years we could come to Chile with my mom, and then it was like something kind of bipolar. Because of course we came to... to see the family... the family who, uhm... was right-wing, who, uhm... found that Chile was doing very well and that... and that everything was perfect and, and that my mom was kind of out like on... like on vacation, kind of a thing like... like no, we didn't talk about politics anymore, it was something very, very strange... my mom tell us, we told her 'no, no, don't worry mom, if we're going to talk about the good guys now when we go (she laughs), we're going to talk about the good ones...' we knew that the good guys were the bad guys and the bad guys were the good guys"...

Florencia. Testimonial Memory.

Games and friends

“... We reinvented the world, we played at being revolutionaries”...

Camilo. Testimonial Memory

The particular importance of symbols associated with familiar and/or personal objects is well known, especially when they refer to the world of affection and playful fantasy. Even more so when it comes to objects that become children's toys. When leaving Chile, the children had little opportunity to choose which toys to take on the trip. Some lived the experience that these toys allowed the repression to argue the raids they were living with their mothers, fathers and siblings. Leaving behind their play objects or witnessing firsthand how the military destroyed their toys, for the children, were experiences of separation, associated with losses with high levels of anxiety, which they would relive in the first moments of exile:

León states:

“My father was not allowed to leave the embassy because he was Pascal Allende, we went with my mother, I had some tin soldiers, I have never forgotten, and... I have not forgotten, what I have forgotten, and then there was a... milico, because they checked us at customs before we left, then a milico said “ah, you are taking the... the brave Chilean army out”; and I told him “milico huevón”.



Francisco remembers:

“Arriving in this condition we arrived at the house of a, of a friend of my father who had children the same age as us and that suddenly (gesture with the hand) we liked each other, but he did not lend me his toys (laughs), at that time a kind of big doll was in fashion, the nuclear man, you name it, who had here in his head (he shows behind his head) the vision of the nuclear man and of course I remember that he, the son of my friend's father never lend us the toy (laughs)...”

Games become a key element of rootedness, bonding and sense of identity with the host countries. Playing with the children of the new neighborhoods, going out to walk through their streets and different landscapes, full of anthills, snakes, lizards and monkeys, or skateboarding and participating in music-loving streets, where they listened to shared music without discrimination, where they listened to Victor Jara and Pink Floyd at the same time.

They also learned to be together with other exiled children, mostly Chilean, who participated in groups that rescued Andean music, such as the group “Aconcagua” in Finland, or soccer groups, such as the “Lautaritos” in Costa Rica, who congregated in “Los Pioneros” in Mexico and Costa Rica. A group of politically committed children, grouped in cultural centers, where they carried out diverse activities: from studying Chilean history to solidarity actions with the Nicaraguan revolution.

Francisco expresses in his testimony:

“I remember we used to spend whole weekends shelling peanuts, just to send to the guerrilla fighters. That part is very powerful, that also made us recognize our condition as Chilean communists, as pioneer children committed to the ideals of our parents and also to become aware of why we didn't live in Chile and why we were here... and not to act crazy, no, no, not to belittle that condition, on the contrary... rather to feel proud of that.”

Transgenerational pain and resignification of exile

Many children returned to Chile after years of family exile. Others stayed in the host countries. Returnees report different experiences and meanings associated with these childhood memories. The personal imaginaries are obviously multiple and varied, however there are themes and affective emergencies that stand out in common: school as a space for social and cultural learning; a profound learning experience of “otherness” between children that generate identity belongings of cultural exchange, and linkage with the country that received them.

Another shared element that appears frequently in the interviews of the selected group are games that are full of interactions that were building friendships, shared childhood experiences, remembered and longed for. Also, transgenerational pain and its forms of elaboration, language and nature are perhaps the cultural elements that are most strongly fixed in the childhood memory of our sample. These appear as a kind of living witness of having lived in exile, expressing the effort of belonging in the face of the different and also as an indicator of the foreign.

The role of children is to be builders and transmitters of personal, family, social and political memory. Bearers of codes, customs and traditions within exiled Chilean families. They generated shared affective bonds about the need to build profoundly egalitarian and just societies. That is why, even as children, they were politically committed to the ideas of their parents and participated in humanitarian and partisan organizations.

Likewise, we find several memories full of “collective memory”. Where there is talk of revolution, Latin America, Africa, blackness, political violence, art and culture. The adventure of leaving for a different country is transformed day by day into the historical consciousness of being part of the childhood and youth that inhabited the exile.

Trying to define the experience in a glance, they tell us about exile:

Florencia:

"Exile is that I left a very happy little girl in Algeria, and I would like to go and look for her"

Vilma:

"I connect exile with Illapu's song "Vuelvo", it is the most beautiful song I have ever heard"

Antonio:

"For me exile is return, and return is exile"

Marlene:

"I want to thank the Finnish society for hosted us, it is very important"

Inés:

"I have felt very Russian and very Chilean, and my mom and dad I see them working at Radio Moscow"

Francisco:

"I want to remain the same gunfighter, the one I was as a kid, the one who shoots music"

León:

"I feel exile as a kind of scab on my heart"

Camilo:

"Exile is not conscious for one as a child, nor something you have decided"

Natalia:

"In exile there is no permanence and that's why you don't take roots"

Valeria:

"Exile is like the image of a pacifier...of a child's pacifier"

Marianela:

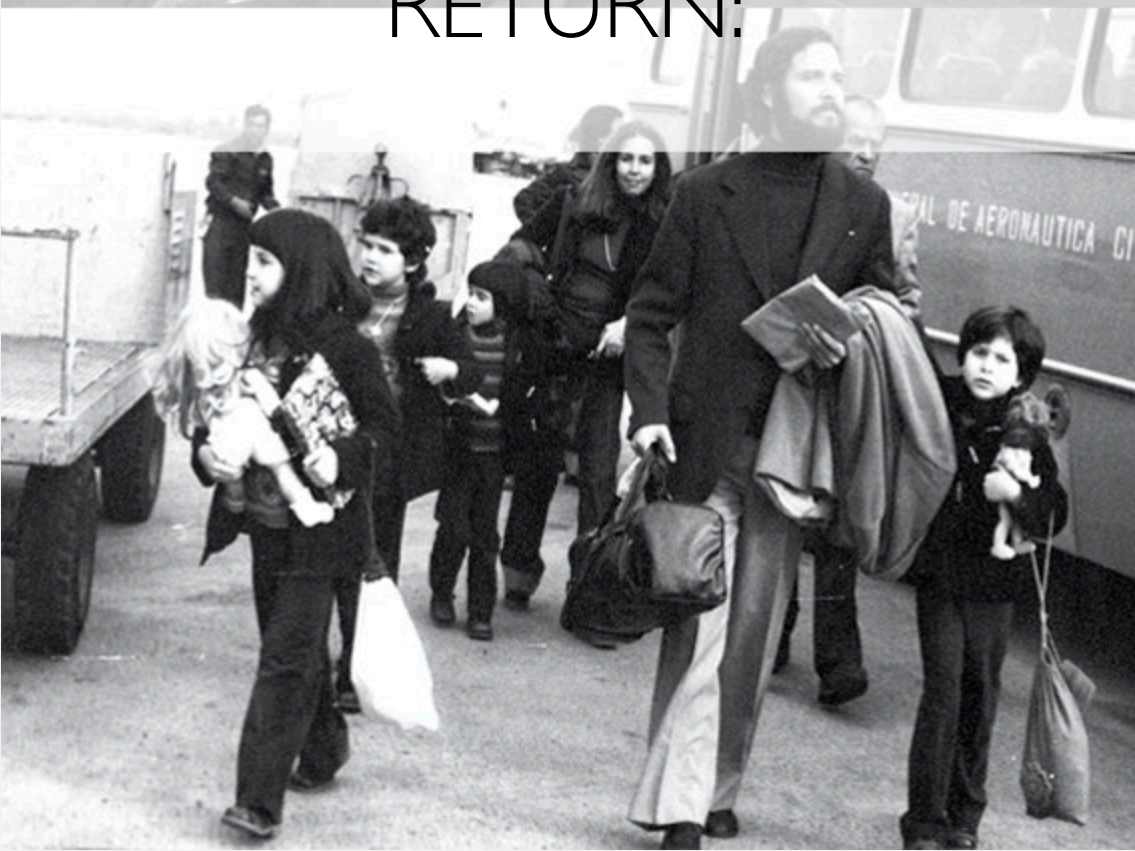
"Exile is torture, and it is psychological torture for everyone. But I do feel that there are different types of exile"

Wladimir:

"Exile is the best time of my life."



RETURN:





THE MEMORY IN THE SKIN



RETURN: THE MEMORY IN THE SKIN

Gloria Maureira L.

*"Perhaps my only notion of
homeland is this urge to say We,
perhaps my only notion of homeland
is this return to my bewilderment"*¹⁴

Mario Benedetti.

In this chapter we will talk about "return", because we will narrate the personal stories of young exiles returning to Chile. However, for most of them, it would be more appropriate to talk about how, upon returning to Chile, they became exiles in their own country.

When a child is born and lives in a country from an early age, the construction of bonds, whether through school, high school, city life or the small community, the language of the street, makes the child - badly or well - integrate into that society and feel part of it. Regardless of the type of integration of their parents, the exiled children have made the host country their own homeland. From those new cultural spaces, they have their first friends, first loves, school life, among others. There they learned the keys and group experiences that allow social insertion, it will be in this new society where their identity was gestated and developed.

If we think of identity as the process of developing as a unique individual and at the same time as part of a collective, this is developed from birth with the experience of attachment and is constructed in the relationship with others throughout life. We must assume that these young returnees, who were nurtured by a culture foreign to that of their parents during the entire period of their childhood, have a different identity from the one

14. Poem "Noción de Patria". (1998) VISOR LIBROS.

generated in other circumstances. The complexity of identity construction is greater if we consider, in addition, the degree of influence of family identity –in this case– Chileans persecuted for their political convictions, exiled, rootless.

It is this type of experience that many of the stories of our interviewees speak of. In these stories, there is a mixture of emotions and judgments about how they perceive Chile when they return.

For most of the children and young people interviewed, the adaptive processes required a good number of years. Some pointed out that it took five long years... curiously enough, this time coincides with the time it often takes to work through a major loss. The interviewees showed different stages in this adaptation process, which went from absolute rejection –the first months– to integration and reconstruction of an identity in which the Chilean was mixed with the traditions of the country where they grew up and developed as human beings.

The return becomes massive from 1983 onwards and corresponds to the increase in the struggles to overthrow the dictatorship. And it coincides with a period of identity construction for some of our interviewees, this time linked to their ability to become autonomous from the family and build their own path.

Indeed, most of them returned as teenagers and young adults. During this period, when the return of most of the population took place, citizen protests increased in our country and various groups of organizations and collectives emerged in different sectors and regions of the country. While it is true that those years are full of growing struggle in the streets, it is also true that the dictatorship remains with an enormous hardness to repress.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the assassination of three communist leaders, José Manuel Parada, Manuel Guerrero and Santiago Nattino in March 1985, two of them kidnapped in broad daylight, and which took place precisely in this scenario of great struggles for the recovery of democracy. This kidnapping occurred at the gates of a school, with children in class, in broad daylight, shocks Chilean society and its young people. Our young returnees participate in these struggles, which are increasing day by day, and in them builds its return of truth, the return

Nowhere
in site
on earth
can I
settle
In every
new
climate
I find,
I find myself
languishing
although
before
I was
used to
and from there,
I always detach myself
foreigner
being born
returning from
times too lived

Enjoying a single
minute of life
initial
I am looking for a
country
innocent

Poem "Vagabundo"
Giuseppe
Ungaretti

to the Chile of truth.

The road of return has been so long and contradictory that for many it has become a way of being and not being. Chilean identity seems to be a lineage that is neither distinguished nor recognized. Which seems very strong when you are far away and very rough and distant when you are living in the country.

This period of a poorly defined identity generates fatigue and discomfort, probably because the affective construction -and its deconstruction¹⁵- is defined within the framework of a conscious act. Some of our interviewees point this out, saying that the return is a conscious, decided, planned act (referring to young returnees, born in Chile). That is to say, since there are no emotions linked to belonging to a specific place, any bonding or integration process is carried out primarily in the cognitive sphere, leaving a feeling of lack of depth in the affective bonds or simply feeling that they are merely transitory or disposable.

For others, exile and return are part of a baggage of knowledge of experiences that are generally valued, and that leave stuck to the skin -as a subtle and definitive trace- that one is from this world and also from other distant ones.

For others, their "itinerant permanence" has them among us with their critical views on our culture -such as the unacceptable social exclusion observed

in Chilean society- precisely, to change some of these reprehensible practices and thus contribute to a more respectful coexistence among us.

¹⁵in the sense of analyzing its components, with the previous knowledge and mental representations previously possessed in order to integrate and make a new original synthesis of the new elements that appear in the personal and collective reality. Taken from Jacques Derridá. M. Ferraris, *Introducción a Derrida, Amorrortu, 2006*.

Delicacy that does not impose identity

Our interviewee's story allows us to visualize the mixture of painful and difficult events, such as the departure for exile, mixed with the parents' attitude of delicacy and respect for the emotional integrity of their children. Their parents were able to creatively transform the violence of the persecution into a space of games and adventures for their children. Thus, for these children, the departure for exile begins –in their childhood construction– as a great adventure of boarding a plane that took them to Mexico.

The newly exiled adults and their families experience all kinds of instability, poverty and lack of work, sometimes lack of knowledge of the language and the lack of understanding of the cultural cues of the country of exile. In spite of the parental emotional protection, the children perceive the problems and reflect it in diverse symptoms such as behavioral changes, irritability, nocturnal enuresis, which confirms that these moments were hard and that the adaptation cost time and effort for all of them..., Camilo recalls:

“I somatized it in my stomach, the first years I went to school I remember that it happened to me two or three times, that I urinated...”

When we speak of a parental education based on respect, we are referring to values and interaction strategies that allow it. without a doubt, the experience of respect is put at risk when the adults involved are in crisis, in this case as a result of forced exile. It is not easy to respect the drift of a child when everything becomes unstable and difficult. It seems that these parents were determined that their children would grow up healthy and be able to integrate into the society in which they lived, without traumas or fears. For this reason, in many cases parents avoid contaminating them with their problems of uprooting and are rather open to the particular experiences that the children are building in the new countries and cultures where they arrive.

From the whole of his story, our interviewee conveys the feeling that his parents achieved their purpose and that he and his sister were integrated into Mexican society, without ceasing to feel that they were Chileans. This dual identity –contemplated with affection and freedom– is an achievement of parents who do not yield to the temptation to demand unique personal identities, and this gives a hallmark to their return.

The father's inability to return to Chile -has an "L" in his passport- somehow postpones any plans for the whole family to return. Until he has a serious car accident that puts his life at risk, Camilo remembers:

... "I was in Mexico, just out of high school, I wanted to study at UNAM, I was looking at the possibility of studying engineering... and that's when I had an accident... () my head turned around... (and I thought): I'm going back to Chile."

Accidents, like many other life-threatening events, produce drastic changes in behavior. And those changes often unveil what is essential in people's lives. In his case, he tells -between magical and funny- that he thought that if death was looking for him, he would rather choose to challenge it in Chile.

*So that death may never find me,
here I'm hidden from it.
If it's asked about me,
say you don't know me.*

Jaime Jaramillo Escobar, Poem Coplas de la muerte,

So, Camilo -quickly- decides to return to Chile.

... "I'm going to fight against the dictatorship, to see what I can do so my parents have the possibility at some point to return... 'they were never one of those, Chile, Chile, we have to return'..., rather their attitude was: integrate, make a life for yourself."

The decision to return will trigger some perceptions that he didn't have until then.

Behind this speech of giving freedom to his children, so that they could define their own path, his father keeps a deep pride of being Chilean and the longing to return to his homeland. This would explain why it has not been nationalized, despite the good integration with Mexico and the benefits that this could bring. On the other hand, he understands that his father didn't want to make his wishes explicit, just so as not to put pressure on them, within the framework of protection and respect.

This act of parental respect and libertarian affection, commits him deeply and seems to influence our interviewee's decision to return to Chile. It would seem that after the accident, it is precisely this act of respect that is in evidence. It is this unforeseen breakdown in his life that allows our interviewee to reflect on the actions of his parents and to value their attitude of respect towards them as children. It is from this awareness and this freedom that he returns to Chile.

Camilo returns to Chile having lived as a Mexican for more than half of his life. In his free decision and in conscience, the reparation of the act of injustice with the father is built: It's he who -symbolically- returns the country to his father. And two years before his father is -effectively- allowed to return.

... “and at some point, my dad said thank you, and he said: when you decided to return, a window opened for me, a small space that said that maybe I will be able to return...”

Cloistered identity

Marlene is the daughter of communist militants. Her parents are of proletarian origin and have held various positions of political responsibility throughout his partisan life.

She grew up in the midst of the activities that took place during the Popular Unity period. The coup d'état meant for her father and all of them, the beginning of multiple events that put her family in situations of high risk, economic precariousness and living many injustices and human rights violations every day and for many years.

Marlene says that her “being Chilean” was never even questioned. Her identity was not touched by the exile because –her and her family– always lived as a function of Chile. It seems that the exile was lived as a mere moment in a long process of punishment, starting with the coup d'état suffered by his father and his family as a whole.

The exile in Finland is irrelevant to her psychological scenario and that of the family: it could have been any other country; it was simply the step

before the return. The sense of transience is defined and is not even visualized as a conflict.

Marlene says:

“Looking back, I think my life was very unhealthy because my only goal was going back to Chile.”

Inevitably, this identity, lived in a cloistered way, limits integration and prevents him from knowing in depth the society in which he lives. For her, Finland is merely a functional place to live, while she defines her return to Chile.

This syndrome of “living between suitcases” has been described as a difficulty to take charge of the present when it is an expression of deep violence to the ego structures. It is as if one doesn't accept the present with all its contradictions but lives in function of a future that is perceived -artificially and rigidly- identical to the past... like a picture of what has been lost.

What is striking about this situation, which is frequent in very ideologized environments, is that it is lived without the perception of problems - there is no awareness of illness - but rather, it is seen as part of a courageous and committed attitude towards the lost country. In these situations, there is a fragmentation of the affective world that makes it difficult to relate to others and to integrate into the real world in which one lives. The only acceptable interactions are those that link it to activities against the Chilean dictatorship.

In this highly ideologized context, return is visualized as a reward and an end to suffering and marginalization. That's what Marlene believes and hopes until she does indeed return... *“I gave myself a tremendous bump”*... says

The enormous idealization that she has built in this life as a function of Chile and, at the same time, the lack of support for returnees and that our country has been deeply transformed from the societal model in which she left to the present in which she returns, makes her life upon her return, difficult and painful. It seems to be made more difficult by the frustration of discovering the real Chile.

In spite of how painful it is for her, she becomes aware of the emotional state in which she has lived the exile and soon after, she resumes her studies and with it, the construction of support and affection networks.

Says:

“I think that when I arrived in Chile and entered the university at the age of 26, I began to discover things that I had no experienced before...”

The return progressively allows the construction of a more personal identity. Says:

“When I returned to Chile, I think it was a rebirth (...) I was turned off, and I was born again in Chile..., I was able to make my dreams come true...”

The process of idealization with which Chile lives when he is in exile is secondary to a narrow militancy focused only on political activity, which leaves him no space to look at or develop other spaces of his being. The breakdown that occurs between the idealized and the real of the country, produces deep and painful breakdowns in her. But from those breakdowns, she generated the energy and strength to produce the changes she needed to live more fully and re-adapt her emotions and her interaction with the outside world.

After a while, a kind of rebirth takes place in her and then she puts all her personal resources and experience at the service of a more integral and personal project. Hence, she feels that the return has been a very good thing for her life.

This interviewee makes us reflect on the resilience of children who, for various reasons, have been framed in a space that hinders the fluid development of their own identity. And, how at the same time and in spite of this, after a breakdown -in this case generated by the confrontation with the real Chile- his personal identity emerges with strength and determination. So much so that she experiences this as a rebirth.

Our interviewee allows us to observe her resilient strength that broke down her limitations and built for herself a harmonious identity valued by herself and her environment.



Personal variables on return

When the pains in life appear to be linked to political events, it seems to be superfluous or out of place to consider the personal elements involved. There is a tendency to blame exclusively on the destructive force of violence for the repressive act. And, therefore, the expected response is one of struggle. Even in politicized environments, it is considered a duty to behave in a manner that is compatible with the stated purpose of politics and ethics.

There seems to have been a gesture of censure for those whose pain was impossible to overcome; an implicit and sometimes explicit rejection, for not fulfilling the roles expected of a militant, as if life were decided only in the spaces of reason and political strategy.

History shows that this type of situation was also experienced by Chilean exiles.

In wars and violent conflicts, these type of people is usually the most common, have been rejected by all of their peers and even by society as a whole, for alleged cowardice and inconsistency with their convictions and from that point of view, their symptoms have been considered as part of an ethical lowliness or lack of patriotism and considered as mere lies. These are people who become ill when the level of sustained violence progressively deconstructs the self. The symptoms they presented are compatible with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder¹⁶.



There were mothers and fathers who could not withstand the onslaught of life, who lost their strength and were unable to rebuild a life project, who couldn't create a space for the healthy and balanced development of their children.

... "This photo speaks of (her) strength, passion, sensuality... and then that went away, it was lost ..." Says one of our interviewees talking about her mother.

16. "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Syndrome." American Psychiatric Association (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. (DSM-IV-TR)*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.

Little has been written about the relationship between the psychological damage produced by the emotional breakdown linked to divorce, when this coincides with a situation of uprooting from one's culture and one's own. We can assume that the condition is doubly critical.

Frequently, at the end of the marital cohabitation, the children are left in the care of the mother, without considering or evaluating whether this is indeed possible from an emotional point of view.

In exile and upon return, for those women who didn't have a profession or a well-defined work activity, it was very difficult the economic reconstruction and thus, to be able to autonomize her life and that of her offspring. The focus was on the subject, the direct object of the human rights violation (the husband) and little or nothing was said about his ex-spouse and family, if she was no longer with him.

This meant that many of these women began depressive processes of increasing chronicity. Probably in a chauvinistic society like the Latin American one, this was not taken into consideration, since the culture assumes the existence of superlative mothers. In this ideological context, not being able to protect one's offspring is effectively considered a crime rather than a problem.

In the Chilean exile/return, we observed this type of situation although they have not been frequent. Within these families, there was a deterioration in the quality of interactions, often associated with alcohol and drug abuse. There were losses of father/mother roles around the care of offspring; and as a result, children used to exhibit behaviors secondary to neglect and lack of boundaries, as well as emotions of insecurity and overcompensation.

Among the returnees are children who lived with these mothers. Those mothers who, neither in exile nor on their return, weren't able to develop adequate survival behaviors, that they were not able to become economically self-sufficient, and thus produced a process of impoverishment (eco



nomic and in self-esteem) and growing helplessness. Often this psychological disqualification went hand in hand with marital separation and that makes one wonder how much gender-related problems were involved in these conflicts...

... "fragments remain of what the person was and then if the person doesn't manage to gather those fragments again and self-constitute (join hands), it's disintegrating... that would be the name, because it is a fragment of what she was..." Natalia says.

One of these daughters, on the other hand, shows the trace of a forced adultization frequent in these situations when parents don't fulfill the protective roles expected of an adult,

"... I don't know, I don't know if the return was easy or difficult... I must do what I have to do, just adapt quickly, I just had to adapt..." says the same young woman interviewed"

These young women don't have or expect any protection and their rough relationship with others, as well as a somewhat haughty attitude, generates difficulties in inserting themselves in the environment and reveals a scarce capacity to generate bonds. This is the result of an early experience without emotionally responsible adults. All of this made it particularly difficult to adapt to the return. And for the children, there remains the eternal question of what happened to their mother. Says our interviewee:

"...she (the mother) would ask herself the same question I ask myself now: at what point did I lose that?"

Over time, however, this painful period has been worked on and elaborated by this young interviewee. His adulthood has derived towards a particular identity, marked by defiance and creativity. Currently, our interviewee is working on a project that -using death and pain- builds beauty and meaning.

"... with the theater and dance many things can be said that cannot be said with words..."

Imaginary identity

Some of our interviewees were born outside of Chile. We speak of "imaginary identity" to emphasize mechanisms of identity search, when there is an adult imposition to live far from where one was born.

Inés remembers:

"Well, they were always really like inculcating us with everything in terms of Chile... and I think they didn't really like that I was so Russian, I think..."

It's common for children born in distant lands and later transferred to their parents' place of nationality to have special difficulties in the construction of their identity. The entire early childhood attachment process takes place in the place where you were born and grew up. His affections are developed in that environment and his language arises from the relationship with the cultural world in which he lives...

"Beautiful memories, of having a good time, of enjoying nature, forests, lakes, etc."

So strong is this bond of attachment, that the native language is chosen

"Unconsciously I decided not to speak in Spanish anymore and I spoke to everyone in Russian and my mother answered me in Spanish..."

And his initial language was different, as well as the landscape and the relationship with others. Chile was a legacy from parents and a longing transmitted day by day. To return is an improper verb for those who begin an exile, since it symbolically represents a loss of everything that until now was theirs. Her friends, her school, her language... It gets to a place where codes aren't understood and even the affectionate manners with which our interviewee was received seemed false to her because they didn't derive from knowledge or real ties with her.

Inés says:

"... I was scared... I imagined a war, this terrible situation, so I was scared, I asked to my mother if I could speak in Russian... I didn't dare, in fact, if I could wear red thinks or something like that a bit

absurd... and I was surprised in spite of everything, we could walk down the street with a relatively normal life..."

In her childhood vision, she imagines the Civil-Military Dictatorship as a war movie. His return is disconcerting to her, and she is permanently in fear. At the same time, she is bewildered because the situation she finds upon her return doesn't correspond to his war imaginary.

For our interviewee, who was born in Moscow and arrived in Chile at the age of 12, her return was complex from the beginning. Says:

"... I wasn't allowed to enter (...) I had a very ugly passport, one as a stateless... because I didn't have a Chilean passport (I was born outside Chile and there was no Chilean embassy in Moscow), nor a Russian passport (I was not the daughter of Russians) ... they kept us in offices for many hours..."



Their refusal to return is based on judgments about Chile and Chileans. Says:

“... is something that impressed me... the individualism here... the lack of honesty is very notorious in Chile society... and everything gets by with their own things...”

Chileans seemed to her to be distrustful, disrespectful and deeply individualistic people. This way of seeing and feeling the country made her suffer for several years and probably caused her to remain trapped in rejection and with an affective repertoire linked to sadness and confusion. His story reveals how hard it was for her to adjust and she believes she had then, untreated depression.

Remembers:

“... i missed so much my friends from there, the Russians. I had a moment when I didn't want anything with anyone and I felt like I didn't like everyone, because it was difficult... not understanding anything, feeling that sometimes some classmates laughed at me or didn't understand me, and I didn't understand them either... it was a difficult, complicated period...”

She joined a school where there were others who had also lived outside the country and who, in some way, shared her rejection of the Chilean way of being. Sharing these visions about Chile and Chileans with her classmates allowed her to develop bonds and, little by little, a certain degree of belonging.

The adaptation process took about five long years... she says:

“It was a strong process (...) like felling part of the country and returning to that other country of which I am also part... from there I think the issue of identity comes... it has been complicated for me throughout my life, being Chilean, being Russian, I don't know...”

It is likely that the degree of difficulty in integration does indeed reveal the presence of a depressive condition as she points out. Let's remember that she was living again in Chile. It was to be expected that their adaptive mechanisms would have been inhibited given the gap with their parents' emotional state (Who were happy to return) and with the other

members from the family at that time. Her rejection and confusion increased her sense of loneliness and loss, even though her family -we have no doubt- was concerned about her...

“... little by little, one becomes reconciled with some things. With what I am getting to know...”

The space she builds for her adaptation to Chile is that of criticism that becomes constructive and, at the same time, is based on the struggle to maintain her principles of collaboration and solidarity with the weakest, which she associates with her family and the country she left behind. This is the space in which she currently develops her work, and which reveals the integration of her life experiences.

- And where are you from?

... when I read in Russian, when I watch Russian movies, I am a bit Russian and when I read Russian authors, I feel them as my own... and when I listen to Andean music, I also feel it as my own... now when I am asked where I am from, I say that I am from Quisco...”

PIDEE, a pivot in the reconstruction of Chilean cultural identity.

Most of the young people returned, came back -at least initially- to their extended family. Generally, the grandparents' house.

Each one was integrated into the standard of living they had and only after a few years, they were able to build a space for themselves, according to their possibilities and interests. PIDEE Foundation 17 was the space that articulated this transit and at the same time, it was the common place for returnees who lived different experiences, having the possibility of sharing them and being understood and hosted from their personal reality.

The children and young people returnees from the professional middle class entered schools where the children of parents who were opponents to the dictatorship were being educated. Schools where the concept of discipline was based on consensus and where trust and respect were the

17.- See Annex



PIDEE foundation units from 1979 - 2011

core values. Many of these students had also experienced human rights abuses in their own families or close relatives. These returnee children were included in a space of acceptance and affection. There, what was different could be valued and differences could be a source of jokes but not of mockery. Given this friendly and welcoming environment, those schools were an important contribution to the reintegration of the returnee children and the first foundations of their support network and contacts. But these were schools that were not affordable—for economic reasons—for all the returnee children.

The situation was different for those who enrolled in municipal educational establishments or subsidized in part by the State. There they lived that dichotomy, to which so many scholars of our reality have referred in the past, and which refers to the rejection by Chileans of the poor foreigner and the overvaluation of the Nordic foreigner, an attitude that was reinforced during the dictatorship. In this environment of suspicion of what is different, the returnees children experienced discrimination in public schools. Curiously, and in spite of their precarious economic condition, many of them were discriminated against as “bourgeoisie”, meaning that they had traveled, that they had more elaborate social behaviors, and that they had a certain level of expectations in life.



As in so many other situations where communities excluded by social prejudice are observed, children from public schools replicated with their returnees classmates the conditions of abuse and mistreatment suffered by them as children of poor families¹⁸.

Perhaps one would expect educators and other adults in charge to have encouraged integration and solidarity with the newcomers, but they were exceptions.

But during the dictatorship, models of exclusive and individualistic relationships were strongly imposed (because there was fear of the forces of change that could be generated in the collectives) and few Chileans were able to transcend these practices.

The return, for one of our interviewees, is built on a harsh story of the reintegration of children without economic resources who lived through the dictatorship experiences of marginalization and abuse by their peers, who discriminated against them for their accent when speaking Spanish, for their way of dressing, for their customs.

18.- Franz Fanon (1963) "Los condenados de la tierra" Fondo de Cultura Económica. Colección Tiempo Presente.

Natalia declares:

“... I was rejected because I was bourgeois because I had lived abroad...”

In this context, PIDEE foundation represented a space for children and young returnees of all social conditions, the place to share experiences, to think, imagine and generate future. It was the place where they were able to meet with other returnees who, like them, had direct experiences of violation of their rights, such as children of executed political prisoners or of political prisoners who had been detainee disappeared

Wladimir relates:

“... I had support from PIDEE to recover Spanish and in the pedagogical area I had support to define my academic future...”

PIDEE became the space par excellence, where many children were able to articulate elements to reconstruct their identity, the space to receive them and where programs were developed to support them in their academic reinsertion as well as to support their development as individuals. Also, in the group workshops that sought to generate bonds and affective and social networks that would make possible the insertion of the young returnees.

The long road that many of them travel to build or rebuild themselves as Chileans lies in large part in the support provided through the activities and links made possible by PIDEE.

Some interviewees recall their time at PIDEE with affection and gratitude. Indeed, PIDEE provided the tools for the reintegration into the country of these children and young people assaulted by repressive policies, at a time when the government of the Civil-Military Dictatorship embezzled the State of its role as protector of all its citizens.

PIDEE was the organization that generated care programs in both Mental Health and Educational aspects. Several workshops were organized to socialize about these difficult times and the construction projects for the present and the future. These children, adolescents, young people and adults shared their pain and frustrations in this space and in it, hope and strength emerged to build their identity as Chileans in a personal way and with freedom.

The disillusionment of return

“...I had the image of the mountain range, the blue sky, the copihue, the cueca (Chile’s National Dance). And I returned and the sky was leaden, the mountain range was not snowy, nobody was dancing cueca... the impact was strong, it was very hard for me to understand Chileans, it was very hard for me to feel part of Chile... my exile was here on my return... I didn’t feel like I was part of anything, I had no history (in common) ... everyone had seen an animated cartoon, but I didn’t know anything about the animated cartoon, I didn’t see that animated cartoon when I was a kid, I didn’t see that program, I didn’t see that movie... it was very painful for the soul... the soul was with wounds...” Wladimir narrates.

His story confirms that identity is built in a common drift with those with whom one lives, family, neighborhood, friends, school, day by day. The returnee children lived these experiences of belonging with those they left behind, not with Chileans of their own age.

It is clear that it is not enough to be born in a place to belong to it, and that is indeed what happened to many of these young returnees. It is their parents who return, but for many of them, their exile began.

The return to Chile under these frameworks of idealization so clearly described by Wladimir, increase the bewilderment and rejection in the young returnees. Soon after, our interviewee joined resistance groups against the dictatorship and here he had another disagreement with the country. He perceives his fellow members of the organization as lazy, with little cultural baggage of knowledge and deeply resentful. From his experience in Bulgaria, being a young communist, for him, was a hard-earned distinction of effort and courage. The shock of this realization is as great as his helplessness to feel that Chile was disorderly both in its values and in its structural development.

He is not the only one to experience disappointment and disillusionment upon his return. Also, his family. Countries like people change and these changes were enormous, almost so much so that some returnees felt that Chile was not Chile. The natural processes of idealization in people who are homesick and far away undoubtedly contributed to this.

On the other hand, during the dictatorship, as was to be expected, there

was no support for returnees. In addition, the aid implemented by NGOs linked to the defense of human rights proved to be few and insufficient. International entities that financed families returning to Chile also did not have specific support networks in Chile. In this context, since 1979, PIDEE has become the organization with the most experience in strategies and programs to aid and support children and young people who are direct or indirect victims of political repression, particularly returnees.

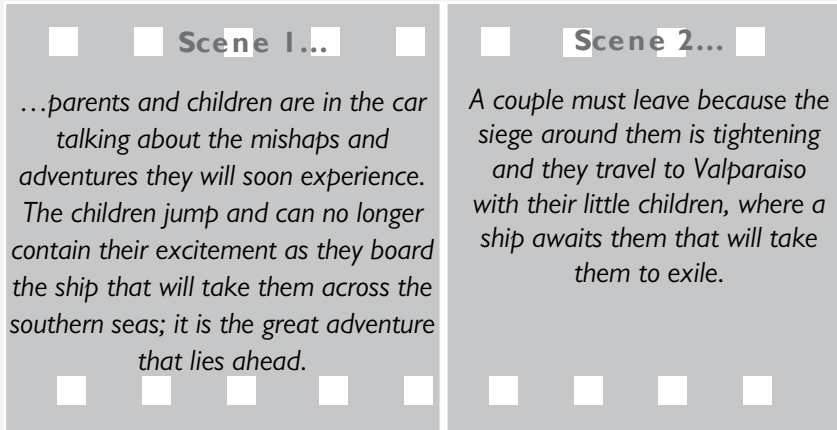
The focus of its actions on the children of returnees and the lessons learned over the years in the development of this role, reveals and evidence, also through the testimonies of those who were hosted and supported, the experience acquired up to the present.

Our interviewee Wladimir especially values the aid he received from the pedagogical area of PIDEE, which, in addition to emotional support, allowed him to regularize his studies and obtain orientation regarding his academic and professional future in the country.

He himself recalls that the return was a period of great loneliness and marginalization from public life, which he overcame progressively and over the years, and which left a trace of belonging to the foreign country that welcomed him during his exile, where he lived his childhood and adolescence.

When the Chilean identity is constructed through the experiences of parents, it is to be expected that young returnees feel confused and upset when they return to Chile. This is independent of the political variable. This return meant for them a change of a magnitude not always considered in its complexity and a new instability, which generated crises in all aspects of their personal lives and in their social ties with this new social, political and cultural environment, called Chile.

The playful construction of crisis: exile and return as an adventure



Scene 1: This is the story of Francisco at the age of 8 when he leaves for exile with his family.

Scene 2: This is the story of an adult who observes with concern.

Francis speaks of exile as well as return as a difficult but entirely manageable process. His parents had the ability to permanently transform adversities into challenges and in this way, they were able to overcome economic difficulties and labor problems and all the set of difficulties that occur when there are important changes. Their ability to re-signify reality in order to transform it seems to be the key for this family to remain united until now, developing projects and tackling diverse challenges.

Francisco's story is a tribute to the capacity of some parents to resignify destructive emotions and transform them into spaces of understanding, affection and support for their children. Probably, this parent's way of resolving conflicts allowed the children to learn from new experiences without fear and with trust in themselves and their family. Thus, the return is experienced as a change that demands new skills and challenges but does not generate emotions of fear that disorganize their lives.

“Being in your country... makes you feel good, makes you value what is your own, what is authentic... to be a little part of this, part of the musical and artistic continuity in the country...”

He and his brother studied at an art school and have been closely linked to music and art ever since. His parents had a good job placement in the country of exile, which is why the decision to return to Chile was not an easy one:

“...Because that is an issue. Because what my parents had achieved, when they returned, they lost it... and you return to Chile, and nobody knows you anymore...”

“... I am grateful to my parents, because at some point they asked us: do you want to stay in Costa Rica, what would you like... we looked at each other and said: let's go back!”

Then they (the parents) wiped the slate clean and forgot everything they had built, to arrive in a 1985 Chile that was not easy to enter.

“There was a lot of fear, so it was very complicated, but even so I don't regret anything, I think we have been adapting to the social and political conditions to the extent of the things we can give and deliver...”

In the course of these years, he has managed to build together with his brother, a line of work in music that has been expanding and enriching. In their interviews, it is clear that the process of identity construction has been developing progressively and that the difficulties have also been transformed into experiences.

“... we found out what we wanted to do...”

Theoretically, the ability to transcend is possible when the identity process is at its most elaborate and complex stage. When one is able to articulate the lived experiences –in this case exile and return– in a sense beyond one's own existence.

Francisco tells us about what he has been able to build on his return to Chile

“... it is like feeling that you didn’t spend your life in a band anymore, without shame or glory...”

This story of Francisco was chosen for its resilient character. It shows us in some way how parents' beliefs and behaviors can influence the emergence of values and behaviors in their children such as trust, effort, and transcendence. That is, in the construction of an identity that grows in the experience and evolution of life.

Identity in the skin

Leon relates:

“... I have Mexican friends, ah, they are my Mexican brothers, a very beautiful country, very supportive, a country with a lot of personality in music, in food (...) a strong, very violent country, a gigantic country that I traveled all over... from the Pacific to the Caribbean... but I have never considered myself Mexican... (although) I grew up in Mexico, I would not go back to live in Mexico, I can visit, I have great friendships, ex-girlfriends, loves in Mexico, but for me Chile is my country...”

One is from here and can spend many lands loved and discovered in the heat of the struggles, of the loves, of the geography but Chileanness for him is a matrix that is transformed and enriched but not changed.

The love with the countries of exile is from the primary love with Chile. This allows for other paths and other encounters but doesn't question the origin. Nor is it lived as a burden, it is simply a story of shared beginnings with the closest family and the primary experiences of affection.

“It’s not that Chile is loved more, it’s that it has been loved since before... forever.”

I imagine when it returns. He comes from Mexico, a democratic country with great spaces for culture and the development of people. He arrives in Chile in the mid 80's, where people lived with uncertainties and many restrictions; there was a curfew, prohibition of collective activities, among others.

Our interviewee tells us that he fell in love with the country's geography. It was probably the only space where it was possible to fall in love without fear or limitations. Like most of the other returnees, he developed activities to fight against the dictatorship and became more and more involved.

In him, exile has left traces of personal enrichment in his more inclusive, more tolerant and less ethnocentric outlook.

Not that the return has been easy for him. At the beginning of it, the restrictions imposed by the dictatorship, as well as the condition of Chile being a country so far away from everything, overwhelmed him. For a young person living in Mexico, traveling to European countries or to the USA is something relatively easy and accessible, and for a young person who is interested in culture and human development, this fact is valuable.

Our landscape, separated from the rest by the enormous and magnificent mountain range, at first overwhelms him and he says that at the beginning he even had physical sensations of oppression.

He says that his identity as a Chilean was never questioned. It is there with him since his birth, and this did not prevent him from loving different lands, exploring their geographies and traditions. He traveled a lot around the world and met many different people and places, worked in multiple activities, traveled through lands admiring them and had friends and affection in many places. He adapted to foods and colors, to fragrances and spoke in other languages.

When he returned, he wanted to leave. He stayed. He went out again, to always come back, because Chile is the point from where his life emanates.

Chilean identity: Earthquakes and grandmothers

It is said that we are a country full of tragic events derived from a young and unstable nature; that when we are rebuilding from an earthquake we are hit by mudslides that wipe out houses, plantations, services and all the stability that has been built over time, and what can we say about our volcanoes that seem always ready to remind us that they are alive and their activity, at any moment it can increase and its lava can devastate everything in its path.



If you look at it in perspective, the inhabitants of these areas of great instability -in this case us- have had to generate mechanisms

-unconsciously- to bring order and a certain degree of normality when everything has become chaotic.

On the other hand, we know that it is the duty of adults to provide their children with a space of calm and security, even if the latter is precarious and sustained more imagination and

creativity than by reality itself. From so much learning to put calm where fears grow and chaos reigns, it seems that our grandmothers were able to do some of that when the Civil-Military Dictatorship attacked our families, and the world became insecure and chaotic.

Florencia tells us.

“... and also that formal thing that my maternal grandmother had, who was right-wing (...) she had sent some little sweaters to La Ligua so that the children would go on their trip in a very tidy and beautiful way... as if there was something impeccable... as if that was very Chilean... as if in the midst of all the tragedy there was something impeccable... that the children had to leave, that they were going to travel by plane, so she had sent them some special suitcases so that they would travel beautifully...”

Her grandmother knitted her a beautiful and elegant coat to be - wherever she went- distinguished and her appearance would detonate her lineage as an educated and beloved girl. We would say that she knitted a protective vest for her granddaughter, full of beauty and affection to protect her from uprooting and sadness in distant lands.

This Chilean way of responding to adversity is associated with dignity and self-respect. This people so full of uncertainties, it seems that they tend to take actions where they try -almost artificially- to return to normality. It is the need to rebuild, because a Chilean would say, how else can you get out of the impasses?

Returnees observe more than other Chileans, these characteristics to which we allude, although they are not always well valued. Sometimes, they are interpreted as problem denial behaviors or of an unbearable careerism for hiding poverties instead of denouncing it.

What is clear with respect to children is that they need the world to be stable as soon as possible in their childhood and that any effort to achieve, it is worth. Apparently, many of our returnee children had parents and grandparents who took care to bring them the breeze when the storm was raging and the sun when the night was dark.



This is confirmed by the stories of our interviewees, since for large majority of them their grandparents' house was the house that awaited them upon their return. The house that awaited to comfort and keep them warm.

For most of them, the relationship with their grandparents is the most important immediate and permanent emotional bond. From them, the most primary and deepest networks are reconstructed. Safety and tenderness.

Antonio says:

"... A couple of times we came, my sister and I, we had a great time, super fond of each other, very connected with my grandparents..."

Valeria says:

"... The return is like, it is with open arms, it is to embrace and meet again, in my grandmother's house, with my family..."

To summarize

Our interviewees left for exile as a child and returned as adolescents or young adults. The reunion with Chile -the return- is hard and the adaptation takes years. Chile is a permanent reference in the lives of our interviewees while they were living in exile. Forms an idealized reference -like all longings- there is a desire to know it and appropriate it, but there is fear and dread of the violence they perceive on a daily basis: the curfew, the various restrictions on public life, the repression of protests.

It is an idealized reference that bears no relation to the reality they encounter upon their return.

Marlene says:

“(I realize) how discriminatory this country was, how classist, how racist... I thought I was going to find a country (...) that there was going to be political organization everywhere, (...) and I began to see a country that was super dull, super apathic, super consumerist... so, it wasn't what I thought Chile was going to change...”

Surely, the information handled by the Chilean exile didn't reflect the daily life, and the emphasis was only on what was important for the political struggle. Upon arriving in Chile, these visions aren't only perceived as false but also generate anger and bewilderment; naturally, great rejection of the country.

From all the stories we have had at hand, there is a common denominator: upon return, all of them join groups that develop activities against the Civil-Military Dictatorship. It could be said that this is the umbilical cord of the return to Chile, where the first bonds of affection and the networks in which these Chileans with hearts full of love and pain from other parts of the world are inserted are built.

In young people, their identity as Chileans is being built in the political activity of protest, in their inclusion in projects that arise for a new stage, leaving behind a suspended identity, linked to solidarity and distant support, imposed by exile.

The political struggle they are part of has been built collectively and has an identity force -the struggle against the dictatorship- that makes it recognizable and is capable of giving them space and at the same time, allows them to unite, nucleate, define and give body to a personal identity still in the making.

The process of returning is hard and requires diverse adaptive behaviors; among others, building a collective sense, a path that transcends and gives space to this suspended identity in order to become real. This is found and developed in the actions of protest and pressure for change.

When in exile, parents promote the integration of their children in protest activities against the dictatorial regime and their daily life is related to the life and activities of other Chileans who are still in exile.

However, this practice of political struggle generates great fear in parents who fear for the safety and physical integrity of their children. There are conversations between parents and children, in which the natural contradictions between the former -who know how hard the actions of the Civil-Military Dictatorship can be and do not want their children to suffer it- are confronted. On the other hand, the children feel that any such judgment is inconsistent with the family's political history and that, at the same time, they feel that the struggle for justice is well worth the risks.

The contradiction of assuming the risks of political action under dictatorship is not a new theme and has been in Latin American literature for some time. It is always complex to define the right limit of action and, at the same time, to reconcile political strategies with personal emotional commitments of love and protection, whether as a couple or as parents.

Several of our interviewees, that is to say, returnees, point out that they, like a large part of their generation, "went home" with the formal return to democracy." By this they mean that they left militancy and political action and resumed their work or academic bonds or began to work on the reconstruction of the State apparatus. In democracy, it seems that intimate life regained an important place, leaving aside other areas of development.

“I feel that it was a generation that was quite withdrawn to private and professional development... and the whole thing that happened in the 90’s in this country, is that it was depoliticized Antonio Says.

After a decade of great struggles, a change takes place. Antonio points out:

“What we didn’t want was to have a dictatorship, that the right wing would not govern... we left... That the more conservative tendencies did what they did, that is... we were not able to remain resistant to the more extreme capitalist tendencies, to consumerism and extreme liberalization...”

For other interviewees, the following period seems to be defined by the work in the construction of the incipient democracy... and when they analyze his work during those days, he does no longer as a returnee, but as someone who, from the voice of progressivism, analyzes the country's events. Identity conflicts and reinsertion as a destabilizing element in their lives are a thing of the past. Although they recognize the country as a conservative country, their attitude is not to remain in denunciation, but to develop or join processes of change that allow for more libertarian spaces.

... “I have always been linked to the subject of communications, I worked in the Lagos government (...) “and I decided, despite my love-hate I have for the state, to return to collaborate in the government of President Bachelet...” Leon says.

The return to the country of these universal Chileans has enriched our views and our coexistence with different models to solve the problems of everyone and have filled us with colors and fragrances that we didn't know. They have transformed the pain of uprooting into a conscious and industrious citizenship that enriches us all, women and men of our country.

For others, the exile/return experience makes them recognize that these processes are always present in life, even if they aren't generated by political violence. In other words, exile/return is conceptualized as a merely adaptive process that has similar characteristics to other events of profound changes such as those derived from serious accidents or emotional losses that break the course of life.

In these processes, the initial uprooting is suffered, followed by various periods marked by adjustments to the new reality and associated with emotions of anger and sadness, to finally be assumed as something valuable for the development prospects of the person. The positive traces would be the increase in adaptive capacity.

... “it gives you the possibility to feel good anywhere and you integrate very quickly. It could be here; it could be there, and it doesn’t make any difference...” Camilo says.

Negative traces are linked to a difficulty in building deep bonds. This difficulty arises from the experience that every relationship has an end, which leads to the generation of avoidant behaviors of affective expression, which is often very reduced. This perception of difficulty in maintaining and deepening bonds is, in these cases, a permanent trace.

Several of our interviewees who perceive this feeling of "belonging to the world" are critical of the situation in the country and point out that they need to go out from time to time.

Camilo says:

“... Chile is a suffocating country; it may not have a dictatorship, but it is a terribly repressive country... the only thing I wanted to do was to go out... what do Chileans do? They go to the mall! I don’t know, as a society we lost our way and we haven’t rebuilt ourselves yet, we haven’t found each other again”

For others, the return is a process of discovering their condition as Chileans, an identity that was suspended in exile but that they have always had.

“... It took me a long time, my friends taught me to understand the Chilean people, to know where they were going and to insert myself with them... Chile was my root and little by little I discovered my structure and now I can say that I fell Chilean, that I feel good among the Chileans...” Wladimir tells us.

For another group of returnees, what remains is the wound of the diaspora, with their brothers and sisters scattered around the world, with the dream of family unity broken forever.

Poem TWO HOMELANDS

Wladimir Morales.
Bulgaria, Sofia, 1982.

Two homelands I carry with
me Both in my heart
One speaks when I laugh
The other when I cry

Chile gave me the life Its
storms, the voice
The blue sky, the stars
The people the martyr, pain

Bulgaria gave me love of
homeland
A new and better world
What I didn't have
What even God denied me

What my mother in the crib
Promised me in song
It was given to me by this
great homeland
Where Botev was born

Divided in sadness and pain
From one I split in two
Half of them stayed in Santiago
The other half arrived in Sofia

Two Homelands I carry with
me Both in my heart
One speaks when I laugh
The other when I cry

ANNEX

PIDEE: FOR A CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In the early 1980s, the first returnees returned to Chile. Many of them with their children, usually teenagers. PIDEE Foundation, at that time, already had formally established host programs for children and young people whose parents had been victims of repression.

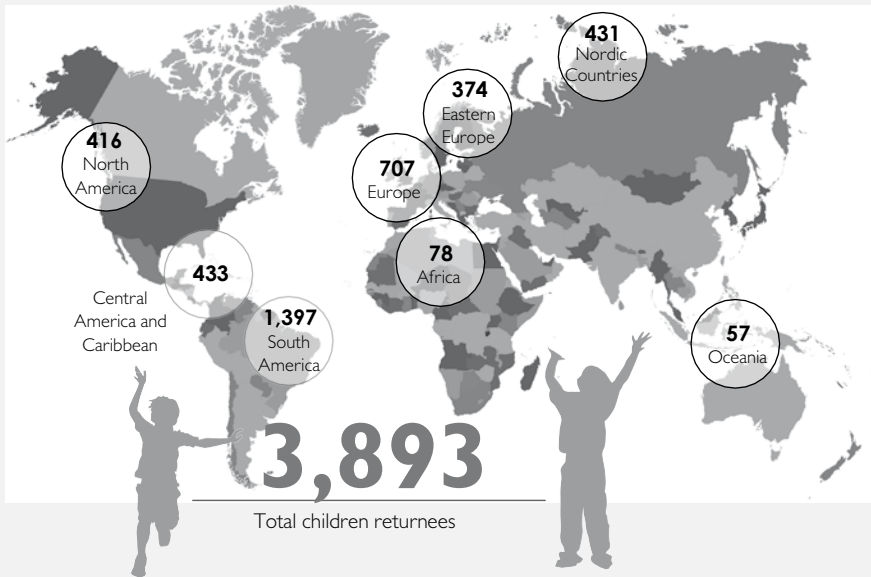
Faced with the arrival of hundreds of children and young people returnees, PIDEE Foundation develops biopsychosocial programs through its multidisciplinary team in order to support the reintegration of those who were just getting to know Chile at the time of their return, those who didn't speak fluent Spanish, those who didn't have social networks and friends to share their experiences. Nor did they have many possibilities of access to recreational spaces because outside of the family's reception everything was practically unknown and alien. This set of variables generated various programs such as psychological support groups for adolescents, educational programs aimed at helping them to catch up academically, as well as workshops. The Recreational Workshops for returnees children and young people were aimed at establishing a space with specific characteristics for those who were beginning their own exile.

The first host programs for returnees children began between 1983 and 1985 as a result of a massive return of Chilean women and men to the country. This period coincides with the lists containing the names of exiles who could return to the country and with it, the elimination of the letter "L" in passports which was an unmistakable mark that the Civil-Military Dictatorship stamped on those it considered the "enemies of the homeland."

The decision to return was generally made by the parents, who communicated it to their children.

Between 1983 and 1992, PIDEE Foundation received a total of 3,893¹ children and young people from different parts of the world, providing comprehensive care, both at the Santiago and the regional offices.

Graphic 1: Children and young people returnees hosted by PIDEE Foundation according to geographic region.



“They had talked so much about Chile. I automatically said yes...”
(17 years old, returnee from Sweden)

“I don’t remember if I was asked, seems that I wasn’t”
(10 years old, returnee from Mozambique)².

PIDEE Programs

Social Support Program³ PIDEE's work began with this activity and ended in the late 1990s. Among its objectives was the articulation of international resources through sponsorship and other systems, which sought to financially support families in need. It should be remembered that

1. PIDEE Foundation (2015) *Catastro de atención integral a niñas, niños y jóvenes retornados*. Santiago, Chile.

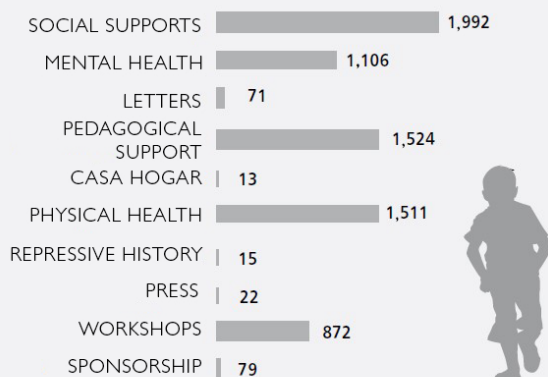
2. Baeza Noemí (s/f). “Resultados de la aplicación de la encuesta destinada al conocimiento elemental de la problemática retorno en niños.” PIDEE Foundation Santiago, Chile.

3. PIDEE Foundation Evaluación de Proyecto. “Apoyo en la reinserción psicosocial de menores retornados.” (1992-1993). PIDEE Foundation, Santiago Chile

a large majority of the institution's beneficiaries came from poor and/or impoverished sectors of society. Many of these families, in addition to having relatives who had disappeared, been executed or prisoners, experienced persecution and marginalization at work. Especially in the provinces, the economic situation was very difficult, and the support program meant, for many, survival. Many returnees families were also included in this program since there were no support programs from the State, international entities and others. This program is the concrete expression of International Solidarity with the Chilean victims of political repression.

Graphic 2:

Number of returnees children and young people hosted under PIDEE programs



Pedagogical Support Program⁴ Like the Mental Health program, this program develops a creative and innovative proposal to respond to the academic demands of very different formats of the children and young people hosted by PIDEE. Its implementation began with a pedagogical diagnosis and the work was developed in consultancies in different subjects and workshops for evaluation, orientation, and vocational accompaniment. Work was carried out in groups of 12 people and attendance exceeded 75 percent.

4. Morris, F. (s/f) "Retorno – Reinserción. El castellano, segundo idioma para los niños y jóvenes retornados." PIDEE Foundation Santiago, Chile

Graphic 3: Children and Young People returnees hosted under Pedagogical Support programs



This program included school leveling programs for young people and children coming from countries with different school curricula, as well as spaces for formal study of the Spanish language. Thus, the Bilingualism Workshop was created for young people who spoke Spanish insufficiently and didn't write or read it.

Knowledge assessment, on the other hand, became a fundamental task of the team to prepare young people to take national exams, through workshops and/or specific tutorials.

The complexity of the task addressed by this team includes its guiding role in the labor future, which inevitably tends to be related to the academic proposal for the future of young people returnees. In the interviews conducted for this book, we have noted the contribution of the pedagogical area in their work decisions and their gratitude for this significant fact.

The work methodology was also diverse and, in many cases, included an individual tutorial system. The working group was made up of teachers from different academic backgrounds and with a high professional commitment that explains the gratitude of hundreds of children served in PIDEE.

Mental Health Program⁵, arises early. In 1980, a very small team began caring for children who showed emotional and scholastic disturbances. Due to the demand, this team is growing and so is its coverage, including not only individual but also family type therapies. There are also experiences of group work with adolescents. The Mental Health team addresses the issue of grief and loss processes and presents its professional work at various psychology and psychiatry congresses in Chile and abroad⁶.

5. Maureira, G., Del Río, M. (1993). "Observation on the family dynamics of returnees to the country." PIDEE Foundation, Santiago Chile. Presented at the XXIV Iberoamerican Congress of Psychology.

6. Alamos, L., George, M. (1986) *Clinical Study - Descriptive data on returnees children and adolescents from exile and assisted at the PIDEE institution.* PIDEE Foundation Santiago, Chile.

We are interested in highlighting the contribution of this team to the development of Psychology in Chile. In the words of the prominent psychologist Domingo Azún, President of the Chilean College of Psychologists at the time, and referring to the work of the PIDEE Mental Health Team, he said:

“... the systematic practice of violence, sophisticated and brutal, had the ultimate goal of psychosocially destroying the individual and the human group identified as the internal enemy... In response to this, a group of mental health workers (PIDEE) became involved in assistance, research and prevention of the harm suffered by the children, their families and society in general... The PIDEE Foundation has a key role to play in this story.”

Psychologist Domingo Azún continues, regarding the book *Infancia y Represión* (Childhood and Repression) edited by the Mental Health Pidee team.

“...This is a synthetic and systematic exposition of a model of psychological intervention in this field, showing the challenges of the problem faced and the hopeful possibilities that its confrontation poses for Chilean Mental Health workers. Several of the articles in this book deal with the work done with returnee families and individual care for returnee children and adolescents.”

In recognition of this clinical work, the Mental Health team of PIDEE Foundation received the "Psychologist of the Year" award in November 1988 from the Chilean College of Psychologists

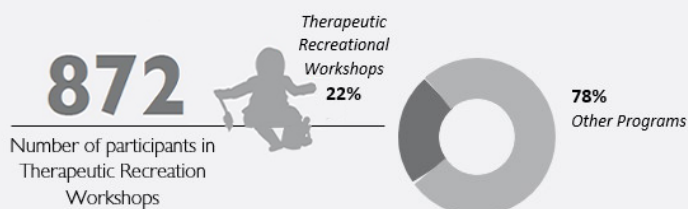
Physical Health Program. This program was born out of the brutal deterioration of health conditions in Chile during the dictatorship and, on the other hand, the very limited access that PIDEE beneficiaries had to the public health care network. Around 1984, this program was created by a pediatrician and a nurse. As can be seen in the graphs, it provided a great deal of coverage. In addition to the traditional functions of well-baby control and others, preventive care was added, and the work was linked to the mental health area of the institution.

Therapeutic Recreational Workshops Program. This program was very attractive due to its design and structure. The large number of young people attending the workshops

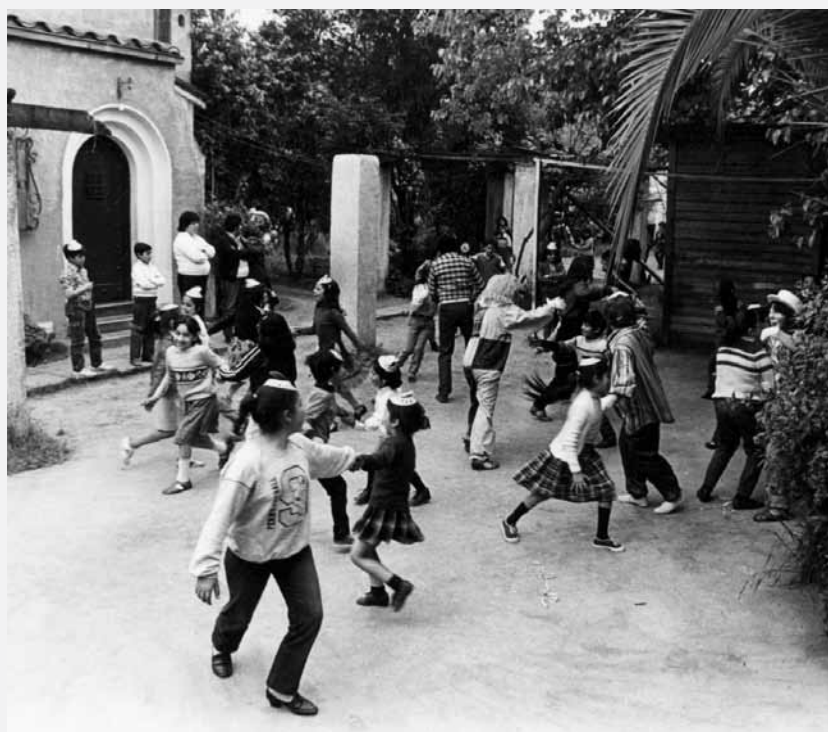
and coordination with the mental health and social assistance teams were essential to supervise the psychological support provided to the various young people returnees attending the workshops. A psychologist from the Mental Health team participated as an observer to enrich the vision and support of those children with greater reintegration problems. One of the team members recalls.

“...They were held every Saturday and were divided into nine artistic areas for children, young people and three other workshops for mothers, because they also need a hosted place.”

Graphic 3: Number of Children and Young people returnees according to participation in Therapeutic Recreational Workshops.



One way or another –adds the workshop participant– they had to learn to reintegrate in a country that was not the same as the one they had left ten or fifteen years earlier. At the same time, they faced the abandonment of a living space built with effort and difficulty in exile. Music, painting, writing, theater, weaving, and other crafts led by specialized monitors in each area played an important role. For many, Saturday was a time of coexistence among Chileans with a poorly defined identity and the possibility of sharing and trust in this stage of reintegration. In many cases, this experience was not easy, because the economic situation of the returnees families was not always the best; on many occasions the milk and food they received was a great contribution to the family's sustenance.



Emotional Crisis Prevention Workshops for returnees Children⁷.

In those same years, the Emotional Crisis Prevention Workshops for Returnee Children were implemented. This program privileged children between six and twelve years of age and its main objective was to help them reintegrate into school at the elementary school level; in addition to making the corresponding referrals according to the needs of each child. These workshops were held once a week with a duration of three chronological hours and a total of six sessions. Each workshop was attended by 12 children. One group is six to eight years old, and the other group is nine to twelve years old. In both groups, the first sessions were dedicated to recovering "life in exile", instance when the children shared photos of the country of exile, songs and wrote letters to friends they had left behind, depositing them personally at the Chilean Post Office. Of the countless activities that shaped these workshops, their coordinator mentions three: Flying to Santiago de Chile; The Carnival party, The PIDEE "tíos" and the imaginary little train.



7. Baeza, N; Tapia, A. "Análisis descriptivo de reinserción de 21 familias retornadas" (1985-1987). PIDEE Foundation Santiago, Chile



Flying to Santiago de Chile

This activity consisted of the children choosing a pilot and co-pilot, plus two flight attendants. The plane departed from one of the cities of origin of the participants and according to the geographical logic; then this "plane" made stops in all the "airports" of the cities from where the "passengers" participating in the Workshop came from. In this dramatization they listened to music and exchanged experiences of life in exile. The final destination: Santiago de Chile.

The Carnival

At the end of these three sessions, the group of participating children was invited to a carnival party; for this purpose, the parents or relatives involved prepared typical food from the "country they left" and the children dressed up in costumes from those places. International dishes were shared, listening to music from those countries and dancing.

The PIDEE "tíos" and the imaginary little train:

The carnival party concluded by inviting the participating children to form a long, little train that went around the PIDEE Foundation's premises. It should be noted that in advance, the officials were prepared to get involved in the activity, which consisted of welcoming them to Chile.

The remaining three sessions corresponded to his experiences in Chile: Talking about their feelings, their fears and what they didn't like about Chile. There were conversations related to the school, the neighborhood and there was always a lot of playful learning and games.

The problem of language, Spanish "grammar", was worked on by inviting them to write short reports on the activities they carried out in the workshops, or on free topics: cooking recipes from the country they left behind stories about their family environment, anecdotes related to their pets. They were also suggested to bring the texts they were using in their school and discuss their reading comprehension difficulties.



To conclude, we present short stories collected by the PIDEE Foundation in 1986 from children and young people between 10 and 17 years of age.⁸

"I remember when we were at the Italian Embassy, it was nice, but there were a lot of people, it wasn't a place to stay and live."

(17 years old young woman, returnee from Italy)

"I remember when the CNI (Central Nacional de Informaciones) arrived and when the plane took off, I remembered my grandmother and my aunts who were crying down there"

(17 years old young man, returnee from Sweden)

"I remember a "paco" with a machine gun at the airport and a passenger who gave me his watch as a gift"

(Young man, 17 years old, returnee from USSR (Russia))

"Returning to Chile was not my decision, I don't remember being asked. No, my mom decided, and I wanted to stay."

(10 years old boy, returnee from Mozambique)

"Chile is poor, has no money, people are begging for money in the streets. I thought the mountain range was bigger, it looks tiny."

(11 years old boy, returnee from Australia)

"My aunt and uncle took me to the airport, and I spend many hours on the plane. My mom cried and cried We arrived in Mexico and the sun was more... much more yellow than here."

(11 years old boy, returnee from Mexico)

"I remember that they showed movies at the Embassy and a lady took us from the Embassy to the airport, I don't remember anything about the airport, but the Panama hotel was like a Jungle."

(15 years old young men, returnee from Panama)

"It's very different to speak Spanish there with your family and other Chileans than here with people you don't know, it's like a different Spanish here, other words... I don't know, strange idioms. My accent is also strange because when you are not in the country you start to change the "music" to the phrases you say."

(17 years old young men, returnee from Colombia)

8. Morris, F., Baeza, N. (1986) "Resultados de la aplicación de la encuesta destinada al conocimiento elemental de la problemática retorno en niños y jóvenes que vivieron el exilio. PIDEE Foundation Santiago Chile.

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