

# CHILEAN WOMEN IN DOCUMENTARIES ABOUT THE PINOCHET DICTATORSHIP

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Recibido: 25 de julio de 2022

Aceptado: 25 de septiembre de 2022

## **Abstract**

This paper analyses the female representation in documentary films that chronicle the dictatorship of Pinochet. More than three hundred movies from 1973 since 2019 have been studied in order to configure a cinematic portrayal of Chilean women. We have considered their social, cultural and political roles during the military regime to evaluate how characters and testimonies have changed over the years, which means that historical representation in documentaries and the filmic memory are volatile according to the time of filming. As a powerful force for change, women have had an essential function in Contemporary History, therefore a cinematographic study of them during the dictatorship in Chile between 1973 and 1990 is crucial to understand their historical significance.

**Keywords:** Pinochet dictatorship, Chilean women, memory, cinematographic History, performative documentary, human rights.

## LAS MUJERES CHILENAS EN LOS DOCUMENTALES SOBRE LA DICTADURA DE PINOCHET

## **Resumen**

En este artículo se analiza la representación de las mujeres en películas documentales que relatan la dictadura de Pinochet. Se han analizado más de trescientas películas realizadas entre 1973 y 2019 para configurar un retrato fílmico de la mujer chilena. Para ello hemos considerado su papel social, cultural y político durante el régimen militar, para así evaluar cómo los personajes y testimonios han cambiado a lo largo de los años, lo que significa que la representación histórica en documentales y la memoria fílmica son volátiles, acorde al momento en que son rodadas las películas. Como una poderosa fuerza de cambio, las mujeres han tenido una función esencial en la Historia Contemporánea, por lo que un estudio cinematográfico de ellas durante la dictadura en Chile entre 1973 y 1990 es crucial para entender su trascendencia histórica.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1344/fh.2022.32.2.229-249>

**Palabras clave:** Dictadura de Pinochet, mujeres chilenas, memoria, Historia cinematográfica, documental performativo, Derechos Humanos.

## DONES XILENES EN DOCUMENTALS SOBRE LA DICTADURA DE PINOCHET

### Resum

En aquest article s'analitza la representació de les dones en pel·lícules documentals que relaten la dictadura de Pinochet. S'han analitzat més de tres-centes pel·lícules realitzades entre el 1973 i el 2019 per configurar un retrat fílmic de la dona xilena. Per a això hem considerat el seu paper social, cultural i polític durant el règim militar, per així avaluar com els personatges i testimonis han canviat al llarg dels anys, cosa que significa que la representació històrica en documentals i la memòria fílmica són volàtils, d'acord amb el moment en el qual són rodades les pel·lícules. Com una poderosa força de canvi, les dones han tingut una funció essencial en la Història Contemporània, per la qual cosa un estudi cinematogràfic durant la dictadura a Xile entre 1973 i 1990 és crucial per entendre la seva transcendència històrica.

**Paraules clau:** Dictadura de Pinochet, dones xilenes, memòria, Història cinematogràfica, documental performatiu, Drets Humans.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1973 almost four hundred documentaries about the Pinochet dictatorship have been filmed. The aim of this article is to assess how women are represented within this historical portrayal. In our purpose to achieve an extensive perspective of the female role in the fight against the military regime and their filmic performance, nearly 85% of the non-fiction movies have been included in this research, based on the book *La dictadura de Pinochet a través del cine documental. 1973-2014* (Barroso 2018), in which more than three hundred documentaries were analyzed regarding to their main topics, their narrative structures and their underlying ideology. Targeting the analysis towards the feminine question, it has been indispensable to configure this study into a more representative reference framework, which allows us therefore to value women's significance in the recent History of Chile as well as in documentary films.

The relation between History and Cinema is not only based on the contribution of historians as advisers or scriptwriters (Abrash and Sternberg 1983), what is more, movies should be an undoubtable source for researchers of the past. As we live in the audiovisual era, the fragility of memories can be preserved by films. Furthermore, cinema allows historians to approach to the past in a more immediate way than written documents (Rosenstone, 2006). Movies can also express all the human experience that words cannot (Deshpande, 2004). Having said that, documentaries have their own limits, determined by the image frame, the edition or the communicative function which condition the reality recorded to a message, to a

narration. So, the study of History through movies should be done as it is: a cinematographic History. In fact, non-fiction films can be used as framework of inherited memories. The Chilean case, as we will see, is not the only one. A recent article by Laia Quílez (2020) confirms the interest on these movies to preserve a fragile past in countries like Spain where a similar trauma was experienced.

As a diachronic study of non-fiction movies between 1973 and 2019, different stories can be contrasted between movies filmed during and after the dictatorship. In that sense, points of view change over the years as memories get lost or undergo significant transformations. Some tales, however, can be repeated but in different contexts, strengthening concepts and visions which became undoubted truths. On the one hand, it is crucial to analyse the narrative aspects of the movie, for instance, who gives the evidence for the story and what is his ideological position towards the dictatorship of Pinochet. On the other hand, a comparison between individuality and collectivity is essential to comprehend the narrative as a shared memory or as a singular one released from a hegemonic perspective within the political, social and cultural spheres.

In this research we have analyzed documentaries by Chilean filmmakers like Patricio Guzmán, Miguel Littín, Carlos Flores, Pedro Chaskel, Orlando Lübbert, Ignacio Agüero, Antonio Skármeta, Claudio Sapiaín, among others. At the same time, the study of movies filmed by foreign directors, such as Bruno Muel, Théo Robichet, Valérie Mayoux, José María Berzosa, Walter Heynowski, Gerhard Scheumann and David Bradbury has been required to reach a wider view of our purpose. Obviously, the female point of view has been crucial to highlight which roles were played by Chilean women during and after the dictatorship, and how they dealt with this traumatic period. Moreover, it is imposible to approach the study of the female representation in non-fiction films without considering the filmic work of Tatiana Gaviola, Gloria Camiruaga, Carmen Castillo, Carmen Luz Parot, Marcela Said, Lorena Manríquez, Alejandra Carmona, Lorena Gianchino, to name some examples.

As we have focused this essay on the cinematographic conception of women affected by the dictatorship of Pinochet, several fields have been taken into consideration, such as social, cultural and political ones. On the basis of such areas of study, we have followed a methodology which allows us to understand the historical roles of Chilean women through documentaries. In this analysis we have noted the relevance of women as memory defenders, courageous fighters for finding the truth and above all social activist for their rights. In consequence, our methodological approach refers to the filmic perception of Chilean women in these categories.

## 2. FEMALE PROTAGONISTS AS GUARDIANS OF MEMORIES

As well as the first documentaries that focused on collectives, it is important to recognise those which portrayed the regime of Pinochet through individuals. According to our research results, only 32% of the documentaries filmed between 1973 and 1989 are based on individuals as the main protagonists. Among these, people like Salvador Allende or the musician Víctor Jara were the most representative victims who captured the attention of filmmakers during the years of the dictatorship. It was in these stories that women made their first appearance on screen. They did this by sharing their memories. For instance, the socialist president is remembered in *Septiembre chileno* (Bruno Muel, Théo Robichet and Valérie Mayoux, 1973) by his daughter Isabel, who sought refuge in Paris after the coup. The film starts with her testimony about Salvador Allende's death, but her memories about him were not as important in the narrative as her own life in exile.

In a similar way, Joan Jara, the widow of Víctor Jara, took a leading role in a documentary film about her husband's death. *Compañero Víctor Jara* (Stanley Forman and Martin Smith, 1974) consists of a long in depth interview in which Joan describes the musician's life, his role during the Popular Unity government and the aspects of the coup which affected him. Her memories about the last phone call to Víctor Jara, the recovery of his body and the funeral are such emotional memories that they substitute the image of the musician, who becomes an abstract idea of repression, in other words, a symbol. His absence is substituted by an oral testimony, which not only gave more weight to Víctor Jara's story, but also configured a collective memory, beyond the single experience of Joan. So, as guardians of memories, women preserved victims stories, and as long as they told them publicly, they spread them in order to fight against the dictatorship and its mechanism of forgiveness, creating a shared imaginary construct about the repression.

One of the most representative films in which women are portrayed as defenders of memories is *Los muertos no callan* (Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann, 1978). In this documentary the stories of José Tohá and Orlando Letelier, ex-ministers of the government of Salvador Allende, are remembered by their widows: Victoria Eugenia Morales and Isabel Morel. Both men were arrested after the coup, jailed in Dawson Island and finally murdered. It is important to note that both women had a clear memory of the friendship between their deceased husbands and Pinochet before he became a dictator. This idea is highlighted during the film in order to portray Pinochet as a disloyal and treacherous man, who was not

only capable of refusing the release of his old friends after being tortured, but also of ordering their assassination, as the person responsible for the repression. In fact he broke the most essential military rule, to violate the oath of allegiance to his superiors and the constitutional legality he had vowed to uphold.

In some documentaries during the seventies and the eighties, women were represented as indirect victims who suffered the loss of a relative. However, they should be viewed as double victims. They appear preserving the memory of those who had disappeared, but for this reason their own stories are lost. Women's testimonies were transformed into a medium for memories which due to the absence of the protagonist take over the cinematic narration. They were also social, economic, political and cultural victims, but these aspects seem to be overlooked while the documentaries focus on the people who disappeared. Not only did they suffer the disappearance of a relative, but they were also condemned to look for them eternally, while marked by this social stigma.

As long as women survived the dictatorship, they became the main opponents to military repression. It seems as if they played another role as a force of resistance after these first images of women as the guardians of memories. The Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared,<sup>1</sup> consisting mostly of women, was crucial. The first time its activities were shown in a documentary film was in *Recado de Chile* (Carlos Flores and José Román, 1978), which recorded meetings of the association, hunger strikes carried out by relatives of people who had disappeared and therapeutic games to overcome the trauma and trials by the folk dance group. In fact, one of its performances was the most symbolic cultural expression during the dictatorship. Women danced alone the traditional dance of *cueca*, in which a courtship dance seemed to be performed. However, as they danced alone, they tried to denounce the disappearance of a male relative, their husbands. Without them, they expressed their loneliness, but also their strength. In that way, these women from the association used a patriotic symbol like the national dance with a twofold intention, both as an accusation of human rights violations and as an ode to the missing.

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<sup>1</sup> The original name of the association in Spanish is *Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos*.

### 3. WOMEN AGAINST THE DICTATORSHIP IN DOCUMENTARIES

During the seventies and the eighties, documentaries that portrayed the dictatorship of Pinochet used to put collectives at the centre of the narrative. In one hundred and twenty three movies analyzed from this period, 65% of them featured groups (Barroso 2018). Some of these collectives were members of *common pots*, the main character of films like *Olla común* (Ricardo Vicuña, 1989), but also featured in others documentaries such as *Rebelión ahora* (Rodrigo Gonçalves, 1983), *Dulce Patria* (Andrés Racz, 1984) or *Acta general de Chile* (Miguel Littín, 1986). In that sense, it is important to note that the *common pots*, groups dominated by women, were crucial for the lowest social class to solve the economic and social crisis caused in 1982 by the policies of the military regime.

These solidarity groups were not the only essential collectives in preserving human dignity, there were others such as the previously mentioned Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared, main protagonist of *Baile de esperanza* (Deborah Schaffer, 1989) and *Canciones de libertad* (Rodrigo Moreno, 1989); or the members of the Association of Victims from Lonquen Furnaces who featured in the movie *No olvidar* (Ignacio Agüero, 1982). These were the first cases of disappearances, and in consequence the most shocking examples of human rights violations, discovered and shown in Chile during the dictatorship. Furthermore, *No olvidar* was one of the first pieces of evidence of the silence and oblivion policy of the dictatorship because Lonquen furnaces were destroyed in 1979 in order to make people forget what had happened (Olea and Grau 2001). With a similar title, a documentary filmed by Tatiana Gaviola (*No me olvides*, 1988) focused on another group of women who fought against the dictatorship: The Association of Women for Life, which led a demonstration through the streets of Santiago de Chile carrying banners as human silhouettes with the names of the exiled, the missing and political prisoners with the question 'Have you forgotten about me?' and two answers: 'Yes or No'. The protest was repressed violently by policemen seeming to ignore the concept of human rights violations.

Despite the relevance of collectives in the narrations of the documentaries about the dictatorship, it is also important to consider those main female characters that appeared in movies as individuals: courageous wives and mothers, who faced the dictatorial authorities in order to find their relatives. This role was played by many women. One of the most impressive images that shows a single woman as the lead protagonist was filmed in *Operativo cívico-militar* (Leopoldo Correa, 1985), a short documentary record of a military intervention in La Legua community. In this

movie, an anonymous woman is featured facing the soldiers and asking for how long Pinochet was going to be in power, while she carries a copy of *Cauce* magazine with a question referring to Pinochet on the front page: 'When is he going to leave?' In a similar vein, another movie, *Así golpea la represión* (Rodrigo Gonçalves and Peter Nestler, 1982), is remarkable for the testimony of Rose Marie, Hugo Araya's widow, who remembers the assassination of her husband, the search for his body and the moment she told her children that their father had died.



On the left, María Estela Ortiz, José Manuel Parada's widow, claiming for justice in the film *Chile ¿hasta cuándo?* On the right, Ortiz at the demonstration under the slogan *Somos +*, filmed by Chaskel and Salas.

One of the most significant figures that represented a courageous wife was Estela Ortiz, José Manuel Parada's widow. Parada had been murdered in 1985 for being a worker in the Solidarity Vicarship, a section of the Chilean Church which fought to recover the bodies of the missing. His assassination was one of the most famous cases during the Pinochet regime: the Beheading Case. The constant search for truth by Ortiz was filmed in several movies. The first time she appeared on a film was the year of Parada's death. It was the documentary *Chile, ¿hasta cuándo?* (David Bradbury, 1985) which recorded in real time the beginning of the case. In fact, Bradbury even filmed the exact moment that Ortiz was informed of her husband's death.

The same year, Ortiz was one of the most recognisable faces in the non-fiction film *Somos +* (Pedro Chaskel and Pablo Salas, 1985), a typical example of direct cinema (Barnouw 1974). In this movie Pedro Chaskel and Pablo Salas captured a demonstration led by women who called peacefully for unity and solidarity. At the beginning of the documentary, Ortiz, like others, did not hesitate to confront a policeman in order to continue the march. These two films show a double version of women, embodied by Ortiz, during the dictatorship: victim and fighter. These documentaries were not the only ones that Ortiz took part in. She kept on appearing in films in order to show her pain and her battle for the truth. Her role was later

transferred to her daughter Javiera, who had already appeared in a documentary about an individual protest of her mother, filmed by Pablo Salas (*Estela bandejón*, 1986). The inherited memory of her dead father was transmitted in *Memorias de una guerra cotidiana* (Gastón Ancelovici, Jaime Barrios and René Dávila, 1986), in which Estela Ortiz remembered the day when she gave Javiera the news of José Manuel Parada's death. From that moment, from that film, Javiera Parada became her father's memory guardian. And this was evident in *Javiera de Chile* (Marcelo Ferrari and Cristián Galaz, 1989), a movie that illustrates clearly the process of mourning for Javiera.

However, female individuals could also represent groups like the Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared. This was the case of Ana González de Recabarren, the most recognisable face of those who had lost a relative. She featured as a truth teller in several movies, especially in the eighties. Apart from the abovementioned film *Memorias de una guerra cotidiana*, González de Recabarren appears in other films such as *Chile, donde comienza el dolor* (Orlando Lübbert, 1983) or *La comunión de las manos* (Augusto Góngora, 1987), in which she is the main character. The first movie interested in González de Recabarren's story was *Chile, impresiones* (José María Berzosa, 1977). Her testimony is used to contrast with what Pinochet denied: the existence of political prisoners and missing detainees. In other words, the parallel editing of the dictator and the victim's images reveals evidence of the lies of the regime.

In fact, the parallel editing allows the social polarization in Chile to be seen. It illuminates different female roles during the dictatorship or opposite points of view regarding the coup. For instance, not only does the testimony of Ana González de Recabarren contradict the words spoken by Pinochet, but it also reveals enormous differences between women who were suffering during the dictatorship and those near powerful figures who were benefiting from the regime. That was the case of Generals' wives, who are portrayed in the fourth episode of *Chile, impresiones* as the most humane face of the repressive government. It seems that when Berzosa interviewed Generals César Mendoza, Gustavo Leigh and José Toribio Medina next to their wives, he did not want to trivialise evil, but to caricature power. The conversations were focused on hobbies, arts or the nature of happiness, and at the end, the interviewees denied the human rights violations, which contrasted to the testimonies of victims. The role of women here is to underline the everyday life of the repressive institutions and to reveal the secondary position allocated to women in the dictatorship. Even at high levels, they were limited to the domestic environment.



Right-wing women are also crucial to highlight the class struggle in Chilean society before the coup. In that sense, the film *La batalla de Chile I. La insurrección de la burguesía* (Patricio Guzmán, 1975) is worthy of note. At the beginning of the movie, Guzmán interviewed people from all socioeconomical levels about the results of the parliamentary elections two months before the coup. He wanted to film a documentary about the socialist revolution, but he ended up recording one about the bourgeois counter-revolution (Mouesca, 1988). In fact, the hostility and the violence inherent at the time in the wealthy classes are reflected better in women than men when Guzmán surveyed the political opinions in rich neighbourhoods. In that scene the most symbolic testimony is given by a woman, who spoke angrily and nervously about the Salvador Allende government in the following manner 'This is a corrupt and degenerate government (...). Disgusting communists have to leave Chile. All of them. On the 21st of May we will have, thank God, the purest and most beautiful government we have ever had. Democracy will win by removing all these communists. Rotten marxists. May they be cursed!'

#### 4. SUFFERING DIRECTLY THE REPRESSION

It is common to see and hear testimonies of women who have lost a relative, a husband, a father, brothers or children, in which the repression of the dictatorship is an essential part of the discourse of the documentary's story. However, women also featured in documentaries about dictatorship as direct victims. The first kinds of repressed women represented in these movies were those in exile. In that sense, it is interesting to note that many of them were artists, like the painter Cecilia Boisier, one of the main characters of the movie *Si viviéramos juntos* (Antonio Skármeta, 1982), or the singer Isabel Parra, whose return to Chile after eleven years of exile is recorded in the film *Regreso* (Joaquín Eyzaguirre, 1984). Others were politicians, like Beatriz Allende, one of Salvador Allende's daughters and a close associate of his, who committed suicide in 1977. Her tragic story is remembered in *Más fuerte que el fuego* (Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann, 1977).

However, not only was the figure of the female politician represented as a direct victim, she was also used as a spokesperson who denounced the oppression. This was the case of Fanny Pollarolo, from the Chilean Communist Party, who criticized the regime of Pinochet in several movies: *Chile, ¿hasta cuándo?* (David Bradbury, 1985) and *Acta general de Chile* (Miguel Littín, 1986).

As well as those in exile, it is also necessary to consider those tortured as another kind of direct female victim. One of the most chilling documentaries during

the dictatorship years was *Por la vida* (Hernán Fliman and Rony Goldschmied, 1986), produced at the request of the National Commission against Torture, which includes testimonies from tortured women like Amanda Velasco, who remembered when she was arrested and the different methods of torture she suffered. Another film with the same title, *Por la vida*, but directed by Pedro Chaskel in 1987 focused on the Movement against Torture Sebastián Acevedo in which women like Luisa Toledo or Irene Rojas were members. In the film they describe how the regime used violence against people. It is true that, at that moment, torture as a topic was still suppressed in documentaries, but the filmic interest for it was to increase over the years after the dictatorship.

If Estela Ortiz became a main character once documentaries dealt with the Beheading Case, another woman also had a lead role in another notorious case of human rights violations: the Burned Case. She is Carmen Gloria Quintana, a Chilean psychologist and social activist, who was burned with the photographer Rodrigo Rojas de Negri, who died in the military attack. It is true that the fact she survived, although 62% of her body suffered second and third degree burns, explains why she took a second place in the narrative of the case. Their story is crucial in the film *Los están quemando vivos* (Vitel S. A., 1986) and also appears in *Solidaridad: fe, esperanza y santuario* (Edgardo Reyes and Gillian Brown, 1989).

During the 1980s, notwithstanding, women were also victims of the poverty and unemployment caused by the 1982 crisis and forced to live in a chauvenistic society, inherent of the military regime. They were commonly filmed in observational documentaries that recorded the miserable conditions in which the lowest classes of Chileans used to live (Nichols 2010). Most of these women were settlers from La Legua or La Victoria, two of the most targeted places in Chile by the Pinochet forces. A paradigm of these circumstances is Myriam Acevedo, the main character in the film *El Willy y la Myriam* (David Benavente, 1983).

The documentary portrays the precarious living conditions in which she lived with her partner in a slum. In a natural way, they show the troubles they have to face within a socioeconomic depression after the crisis and how it affects their private life. She is forced to work on an illegal project, while he looks for a job unsuccessfully. So the domestic economy starts to falter and in consequence she falls out of love with Willy. In addition, she does not want to leave their children alone to go to work, what makes the situation untenable and reveals the sexist nature of their society. In fact, as we notice on media sources of those years, the official discourse was focused on keeping women out of the laboral market because female workers could put in danger the traditional family as the support of the nation (Tessada, 2010).



Two frames from the documentaries *Olla común* and *El Willy y la Myriam*.

During the dictatorship years, not only did women fight against the military regime, but they also fought for their rights. In fact, feminist demonstrations were related to the opposition forces against Pinochet. For instance, in *Chile, donde comienza el dolor* some images come from the International Day of Women in 1983 and to the IV National Meeting of the Working Woman. Another documentary focused on the feminist struggles was *Sólo para mujeres* (Hermann Mondaca, 1989), which records a demonstration for better working conditions. In that film some women interviewees discuss their situation within the dictatorship. Furthermore, they call for the exiled to return and to vote No in the Plebiscite. The female role also has a symbolic meaning in the marches for the No option. It does not seem to be coincidental that one of the anthems for the end of the dictatorship and the recovery of freedom was *Cambia, todo cambia*, performed by Mercedes Sosa: a female voice calling for democracy, as it is possible to watch in *Marcha del No en el Parque O'Higgins* (Hernán Filman, 1988).

## 5. WOMEN AND DOCUMENTARY CINEMA AFTER THE DICTATORSHIP

When democracy returned to Chile in 1990, the number of documentaries about the Pinochet dictatorship decreased. There were ten films a year recorded during the years of the military regime. However, from 1990 to 2000 only four movies a year were made. Moreover, there were two years (1993 and 1995) without any documentaries about Pinochet (Barroso 2018). As the enemy was defeated and all the exiled filmmakers had the opportunity to come home –many of them, like Carmen Castillo or Patricio Guzmán, continued living abroad–, the discourse of protest in artistic expression lost all meaning. This was the environment of political uncertainty that emerged during the Chilean transition.

The study of the representation of women in documentary films after the regime did not change in comparison with the situation previously analyzed. For instance, in *Huellas de sal* (Andrés Vargas, 1990), one of the first films recorded in

democracy the dance of *cueca sola* performed by only women continued being a symbol of memory. Not only did they preserve memories as dancers, but women also took part of the burlap workshops held by the Solidarity Vicarship and the Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared, in which they interwove the stories of their missing relatives. Interestingly, their activities are showed in two films directed by foreigners: Gayla Jemison (*Retazos de vida*, 1991) and Andrew Johnson (*Las arpilleras*, 1992), the only two outsiders who were still interested in the Chilean dictatorship. As Chile recovered democracy, the filmic narration of the Pinochet regime was almost totally monopolized by Chilean filmmakers, as if the external view did not have anything more to contribute.

After the dictatorship women continued to be represented as custodians of memories. Furthermore, the same characters featured in these post-dictatorial films, like Ana González de Recabarren in *Soy testigo* (Hermann Mondaca, 1990) and *El que se ríe va al cuartel* (Jorge Rueda and Maximiliano Salinas, 2011), Joan Jara in *El derecho de vivir en paz* (Carmen Luz Parot, 1999) and *Víctor Jara, n° 2547* (Elvira Díaz, 2013), or Salvador Allende's relatives in *11 de septiembre. El último combate de Salvador Allende* (Patricio Henríquez, 1998) and *Salvador Allende* (Patricio Guzmán, 2004): his daughter Isabel, his wife Hortensia Bussi and his secretary and lover Miria Contreras 'La Payita'. However, a majority of female custodians of memories appeared for the first time in democracy. There may be two reasons to explain this. The first one is the lack of freedom during the dictatorship which provoked self-censorship in victims what discouraged them from reporting human rights violations. Allegations could lead to being prosecuted and repressed. Despite this threat, lots of women took the streets to call for freedom, dignity and truth. The second is related to the process of truth which began in the early years of Chilean democracy. The *Rettig Report* provided official support to victims in their search for answers to what had happened to their relatives. Through this process, the Chilean government accepted the existence of human rights violations by the dictatorship and encouraged people to overcome the fear they had felt over the previous seventeen years (Moulian 2006).

In this sense, female testimonies continued the same path they had started out on during the years of the dictatorship. In other words, women featured in documentaries as direct victims: tortured and exiled people as they had done previously. It is true that in democracy there were not cases of torture anymore, but many people continued living abroad as is shown in the film *Eterno retorno* (Leonora González, 2003), about exiled women in Italy. Regarding torture, it was never filmed, so we know about it thanks to testimonies, which have accumulated

since the beginning of the military regime. However, the contrast between testimonies during and after the dictatorship should be made sense of in order to provide different narratives. The only distinction could be the way women tell their stories. Without censorship, they expressed their feelings and memories freely. It could be considered that women told their stories clearly, but time had passed so memories might have been blurred. This can be explained by the effects of traumatic experiences. Blocking things out can work sometimes as a defense mechanism for people who try to recover from a trauma. However, the verbalization of a trauma could also be used in a healing process (Vinyes, 2009).

## 6. FEMALE TESTIMONIES OF HORROR

We have to understand that testimonies are the most important evidence we have of crimes relating to torture. And cinema allows us to preserve them; notwithstanding, it can not offer images, but only words. Testimonies in these movies are limited by the present time which makes representation impossible. To balance this, these testimonies are explicit and stark, as are shown in *La venda* (Gloria Camiruaga, 2000), where ten women remember their horrific experiences. They show how they were tortured in every detail, turning spectators into a symbolic public tribunal. After the dictatorship, filmmakers also took a tour of the places where people were tortured: Esmeralda ship, National Stadium and Londres 38 house. As they visited these places of torture, they captured their new identities, in the sense they were transformed into memorials. Among the victims who give testimony about torture in these locations, we can find women like María Huerta or Mónica Moreno who remember their traumatic experiences on the Esmeralda ship in the non-fiction film *Chile en transición* (Gastón Ancelovici, 1991).

In a similar way, *Estadio Nacional* (Carmen Luz Parot, 2002) includes female witnesses like Nuria Núñez, who was jailed in the National Stadium and tells us how women were abused there. Also Ximena George-Nascimento, another prisoner who visits the stadium to remember the torture she endured. In her words, in total it could be more than one thousand women who were detained and taken to the National Stadium in Chile. Another focus point of torture was Londres 38 house, where several people were tortured, including women like Erika Hennings, the current president of Londres 38 as a memorial. The movie *Trazos de memoria* (Víctor Hugo Cisternas, 2012) chronicles her story and her memories about another two female prisoners who later disappeared.



Carmen Castillo returns to torture places with Marcia Merino in *La Flaca Alejandra*.

However, the turning point in the female representation in documentary films related to the regime of Pinochet was in 1994 with the movie *La Flaca Alejandra*. Carmen Castillo filmed it with a personal motivation. She wanted to find answers about her partner Miguel Enríquez's death. To do this, she meets Marcia Merino, who embodies the figure of the repentant traitor. Also known by 'La Flaca Alejandra', Merino cooperated with the Chilean National Intelligence Directorate (DINA) to reveal names and locations of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR)'s main leaders. One of them was Miguel Enríquez, general secretary of the party. Castillo and Merino visit the house in Santa Fe street where Enríquez was captured to relive that day, when Castillo was seriously injured as well –she would go on to do it again in the documentary *Calle Santa Fe* (2007), also to recover the memories of that event–. Then they go to Domingo Cañas' house, where the tortures took place. The building seems to be abandoned, which highlights the erosion of memories over time: Merino almost does not recognize the place, it is smaller than she remembers. Visiting places where torture was carried out is one of the main characteristics of the cinema of trauma (Traverso 2010). The importance of this film is not only related to the representation of the self-incrimination in human rights violations for the first time in Chile, but also to the performative narration in non-fiction films in Chile, which signifies a search for the truth.

## 7. POLITICAL DUALITY AND SYMBOLISM IN THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CHILEAN WOMAN

Twelve years after filming the story of a traitor for the first time, another one appears in the memories of Michelle Bachelet, whose story was released during the presidential campaign in order to review her entire political career. Bachelet remembers in *La hija del General* (María Elena Wood, 2006) when she was tortured in Villa Grimaldi and her exile in Australia and Germany. She also tells the story of Jaime López, a Socialist Youth's leader and her partner for some years. In a similar way to Merino, López was an informer for the intelligence services and his story is still an enigma. In 2014 Bachelet was re-elected as president of Chile. In that time, the other candidate for the presidency was Evelyn Matthei, whose father, Fernando Matthei, had been a member of the military government from 1978 to 1990. What is more, he was responsible for Alberto Bachelet's death, one of the loyal military figures prosecuted after the coup and Michelle's father. Those elections were seen as a confrontation between the victims and aggressors of the dictatorship, which represented the social fragmentation in Chile more than twenty years after the end of the Pinochet's regime.

The conflict between two different points of view about the dictatorship of Pinochet was not ignored by some filmmakers, who wanted to show the discord within the Chilean society regarding past events. One of them was Orlando Lübbert, the director of the movie *Chile, la herida abierta* (1999). Indeed, he used the figure of Evelyn Matthei to contrast the victims' opinion on the Pinochet arrest in London that year. From Matthei's perspective, Chilean people must not look back into the past because some old injuries could be reopened. This argument is contested by Patricia Hernández, a medical doctor from the Legal Health Service. She claims, referring to relatives who are still looking for people who had disappeared, that it is crucial to find the bodies to start mourning. In other words, it is essential to resolve the issues of the past before looking into the future. The film also reveals the existence of a part of Chilean society which justifies the dictator's actions. This political position turns into fanaticism as Pinochet's supporters are interviewed or the camera catches spontaneous conversations, like those recorded by Marcela Said in *I love Pinochet* (2001) between two students from Gabriela Mistral University with conflicting opinions: a man who condemned the crimes against humanity committed by the regime and a woman who legitimizes them because the opposition posed a danger to the country.

These two are not the only documentaries which use female figures to contrast positions about the dictatorship. There are some others like *Después de Pinochet* (Annabel Aguirre, 2008), which reflects the social rupture within the director's family. Aguirre compares her sister's opinion, supporter of the Yes option in the Plebiscite, with her niece's one, who is for the No option. In a similar way, Lorena Manríquez (*La odisea de Ulises*, 2014) plays the role of judge within her own family, when she tries to reconcile the antagonistic positions of her uncle Manuel, supporter of Pinochet, and her other uncle Ulises, union leader who went into exile during the dictatorship. It should be noted that both films were directed by women, although in the latter the different points of view are represented by men. Returning to the female figures used to compare both sides of the conflict, it would be appropriate to make reference to the movie *El Diario de Agustín* (Ignacio Agüero, 2008), which deals with, among other issues, the Case of Marta Ugarte, contrasting her tragic story –murdered and thrown to the Pacific Ocean to make her disappear– with the testimony of Beatriz Undurraga, journalist of *El Mercurio*, who invented a crime of passion to hide the real facts about Ugarte's death.

The story of Ugarte was retold by Patricio Guzmán in *El botón de nácar* (2015), the second film in his trilogy about the geography of Chile and memories of the Pinochet dictatorship. The cinema of Guzmán could be studied as an exercise of filmic archaeology to make visible memories that are hidden in the public spheres after the dictatorship (Gómez-Barris 2009). In *El botón de nácar*, Guzmán carries off an extraordinary elliptic exercise. He links the origin of water with the recent history of Chile and uses Ugarte's story, because she disappeared into the Pacific Ocean, to connect both. Guzmán composes a historic tale from two Bachelardian concepts: *maternal waters* and *deep waters*. The first ones are a lacteal metaphor and allude to water as source of life. To explain this, Guzmán shows the relations between Patagonian ethnic groups (kawéskar and selknam) and the environment where they lived, surrounded by fjords and glaciers. The latter are those dormant waters related to daydreams of death, the same waters used as a grave for Marta Ugarte. In that sense, the Pacific Ocean made people disappear. Thousands of Chileans were condemned to a double death during the dictatorship: the end of their own lives and the disappearance of their bodies.

The use of female figures in Guzmán's movies is very interesting. In fact, at the end of his latest documentary (*La cordillera de los sueños*, 2019) he shows his mother and grandmother in two pictures to evoke his childhood memories and the happiness in Chile before the coup that he dreams to recover. If water, as a natural element, played a symbolic role in *El botón de nácar*, mountains, specifically the



Andes, represent in some respects a mother who protects and hugs the Chilean people in *La cordillera de los sueños*. However, as it is mentioned in the film, the Andes also isolate the country, turning it into a jail. This double interpretation of Chilean geography also appears in the first documentary of the Guzmán's trilogy: *Nostalgia de la luz* (2010). In that case, it is the Atacama desert which plays a double role, related to a female essence again: the concept of inception. As the movie shows, Chilean astronomers look up at the stars to find answers about the beginning of the cosmos. They do it in the Atacama desert because it has the clearest sky on Earth. The desert, or preferably, the sky above the desert, gives clues to understand the creation of the universe, but at the same time it hides answers about what happened during the dictatorship. Chilean soldiers made hundreds of people disappear in Atacama. Nowadays their bones, compounded by calcium like the stars, still remain spread throughout the driest desert in the world. This parallelism converges in a woman: Valentina González, astronomer and daughter of detainees who disappeared, embodies the idea of looking into the future, but without forgetting the past.

## 8. GUARDING MEMORIES AFTER PINOCHET

Another female character that continues being represented in non-fiction films about the dictatorship of Pinochet is the custodian of memories. Not only did women play that role to not forget their relatives, but they also provided a collective memory to reaffirm themselves as alternative sources to those of the authorities. We cannot deny that the Chilean State in democracy did not break completely with the dictatorship. For instance, the Constitution of 1980 was drawn up under the military regime and Pinochet continued his political career as Senator and Commander of the Chilean Army until 1998. Sometimes those memories are triggered by unofficial documents, like movies or pictures. For instance, Carmen Vivanco evokes the images of her past when she watches the film *La batalla de Chile I. La insurrección de la burguesía* (Patricio Guzmán, 1975) in which she featured. This exercise of remembrance is performed by Patricio Guzmán (*Chile, la memoria obstinada*, 1997), who shows his emblematic documentary in order to film the reaction of Chilean people when they watch it in democracy.

As we have seen, women during the dictatorship inside a private sphere were still featuring from a daily perspective in documentaries after 1990. However, their portrayal was not the same. It was not due to the economic crisis of the time, but the structural poverty inherited from the military regime and the uncertainty of the new

times, as we can see in *Una vez más, mi país* (Claudio Sapiaín, 1990). In that film, women like Patricia and Nana represent the invisible face of the national and domestic crisis. Not only did documentaries focus on women as family support, but also on their nature. For example, the film *Apgar 11* (Cristián Leighton, 2003) tells the story of six women from different social classes who gave birth on September 11th, 1973. They remembered that experience on that crucial date. Some of them describe the anguish they felt during the coup and the raids on some hospitals carried out by soldiers, while others celebrate that day for two reasons: the births of their sons and the military uprising. What is more, one woman gave the name of César Augusto to her child in honour of the military generals César Mendoza and Augusto Pinochet.

It is also interesting to note that some movies continued focusing on women's demonstrations for their rights as part of the fight against the dictatorship. In the context of the election of Michelle Bachelet as president of Chile –the first woman who achieved it– *Calles caminadas* (Eliana Largo, 2006), a documentary about the Chilean feminist movement, was filmed. It is a historical view from the suffragist fight at the beginning of the 20th century to the role of women during the Pinochet government, when they became the main agent for social and political change. For instance, how they managed the family economy, created a female culture of resistance based on daily tasks like *common pots* and founded the most combative associations during the dictatorship, who called for the restoration of the democracy and the respect of human rights. However, women suffered more repression for having relationships with politically persecuted men as partners, postwomen or secretaries than for being political or union leaders. So, in Chile during the seventies and the eighties there were frictions and contradictions between those who were for the class struggle, considered as the main battle by the Chilean people, and those whose efforts were focused on the gender struggle, seen as a minor bourgeois battle.



*En algún lugar del cielo* and *Reinalda del Carmen, mi mamá y yo*, two performative documentaries.

In a similar way to the documentaries in the eighties, in post-dictatorial films we have found women musicians as direct victims because of their lives in exile. One of these examples is Ana Tijoux, the first female Chilean artist who narrates her story of living abroad due to the dictatorship. She represents inherited memory in the film *Los hijos de la rosa de los vientos* (Judith Silva, 2006). This role was already played in some non-fiction films before democracy arrived in Chile, as we mentioned before. And sometimes, the characters are the same, like Javiera Parada, who featured in *Javiera de Chile* in 1989 as custodian of her father's memories. A few years later another documentary was made about Javiera, called *Javiera de Barcelona* (Pilar Egaña, 2005), which portrays her life abroad and shows how her memories of José Manuel Parada remain intact. Obviously, the death of a relative is crucial to understand the importance of memories. It was also the case of Alejandra Carmona (*En algún lugar del cielo*, 2003), who uses her father Augusto Carmona's story to reflect on her own.

In the documentaries mentioned above inherited memory is a result, but other movies transform it into a process of transmission in which women are often involved. For instance, Carmen Castillo directed a performative documentary (*Desterría*, 2008) in which she reflects on her own condition in exile through her daughter Camila and granddaughter Leila. In contrast, in *Reinalda del Carmen, mi mamá y yo* (Lorena Gianchino, 2006), another performative documentary, a displacement of memories occurs. This research documentary is one of the most paradigmatic cases of postmemory movies. Gianchino tries to find answers about the disappearance of Reinalda del Carmen, one of her mother's best friends, who gives clues to Reinalda del Carmen's story. Suddenly, Gianchino's mother suffers a nervous breakdown which forces her to abandon the filming. Then, Gianchino continues the project, but without the main source to know what happened to Reinalda del Carmen. She becomes a rescuer of memory.

As we can see, in performative movies filmmakers provide portraits of themselves and, at the same time, they let the story move forward with the research that the documentary is based on (Bruzzi 2010). In a similar way the plot of the film *Allende, mi abuelo Allende* (Marcia Tambutti, 2015) is developed. In this movie the director is the granddaughter of Salvador Allende. Tambutti interviews her grandmother Hortensia Bussi, bedridden because of her old age in a cross-generational family postmemory exercise (Hirsch 2012). These conversations make up this documentary of research, but with some issues. At times they have to be aborted due to the pain of recovering a traumatic past. Furthermore, Hortensia

Bussi died during the filming, which alludes to the fragility of the sources of memory.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The small percentage of direct female victims of the repression does not sideline the reality that women lived through the Pinochet dictatorship and its aftermath. In fact, women were double victims due to the fact they lost relatives and they endured a lowly status as women in a male dominated world. Their presence in films denotes the social and political polarization of Chile during the seventies and the eighties, in which they took part as social agents of change. Documentaries elevate them as some of the main fighters against the dictatorial forces. Women looked for freedom and truth, but they also boosted the feminist movement, which was coordinated in a repressive environment. At the same time, they were portrayed in movies as custodians of memories, not only of individual remembrances, but also of collective ones. It could be said that women were the memory of Chile, and it was the documentaries that preserved their testimonies.

On balance, not only have women been represented in documentaries as custodians of memories, but they have also been seen as direct victims of torture and exile and even as qualified professional figures who contributed to the stories from an objective point of view. What is more, their presence is deeply meaningful as they illuminate the macho society inherent in the dictatorship. So women feature as a crucial force of resistance against the brutality of the military regime due to their female nature, but not always following a role traditionally assigned to them. So it is possible to understand that the fight against the dictatorship was intertwined with the struggle for the emancipation of Chilean women. On the whole, documentaries after the Pinochet dictatorship maintained the trends of the previous movies, but in a new context. However, similar roles are played by women, who continued featuring mainly as custodians of memories. Even if remembrance loses the battle against oblivion, women ensure the memory of Chile as they contribute to the postmemory process.

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