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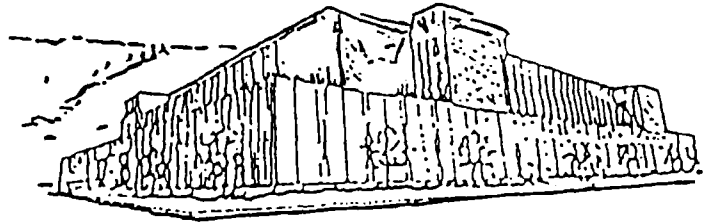
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Chilean Testimonial Literature: The Collective  
Suffering of a People

by

Ramona K. Flightner

B. A. Tufts University, 1997

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

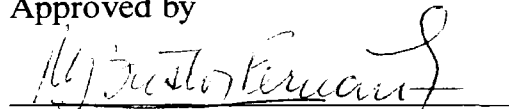
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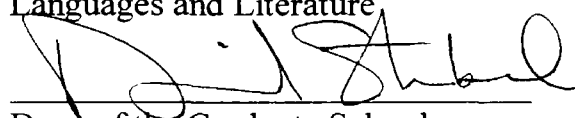
The University of Montana

1999

Approved by



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Chilean Testimonial Literature: The Collective Suffering of a People (71 pp.)

Director: María José Bustos Fernández MJB#

In this thesis I examine Chilean testimonial literature and its ability to represent the collective suffering of Chileans after the coup d'état of 1973. The first chapter focuses on the genre of testimonial literature, its emergence as an important component of the Latin American literary tradition, and characteristics that distinguish testimonial literature from other forms of writing. The history of Chilean testimonial literature and its influence on Chilean society is examined in the second chapter along with a discussion of Chile's practice throughout its history of granting amnesties after civil wars or coup d'état. This is vital so as to better understand the Amnesty Law of 1978 and the repercussions that the 1978 Amnesty Law has had in Chile since the formation of a more democratic government in 1990.

The coup of 1973 marked a new phase in the writing of testimonial literature in Chile. Writers such as Patricia Verdugo, Joan Jara and Hernán Valdés wrote about the collective suffering of Chileans as they were wrongfully arrested, detained in concentration camps, tortured, and murdered. These writers represent the suffering experienced by many Chileans and the indignation of the survivors that the men who carried out such horrible acts of brutality lived without fear of arrest due to the 1978 Amnesty Law. Although the writers write in stylistically diverse ways, they all desire to condemn the actions of their country's military and government. The experiences of Hernán Valdés in a Chilean concentration camp and the experience of Alicia Partnoy in an Argentine concentration camp are compared. These writers seek to inform their countrymen and the global community of the atrocities that occurred in their country.

Writers of testimonial literature such as Patricia Verdugo, Joan Jara, Hernán Valdés, and Alicia Partnoy condemn the violations of human rights that occurred in their homelands and seek the support of the global community so as to change the political situation in their country.

## Preface

My interest in testimonial literature began during a visit to Guatemala in 1985 when I was ten years old. At that time, Guatemala was embroiled in a bitter and lengthy civil war. My aunt worked as a nurse in Poptún, El Petén, training health promoters who worked in their rural villages. We traveled to distant villages with her in El Petén and experienced the government-sanctioned civil patrols on the roads. I began to have a better understanding of the types of government control that pervaded Guatemala. Along with spending time in El Petén, we traveled to the highlands of Guatemala to a town named San Mateo de Ixtatán that had been decimated by the army three times. While there, a priest we visited began telling of the atrocities he had witnessed and been told. The stories, the testimonies, he told were unbearable for me, a ten-year old, to hear. Such violations of human dignity and life had been unimaginable to me before he began to speak. From that day on, I have had a tremendous interest in personal testimonies, especially testimonies from Latin America.

I returned to Guatemala in 1992 when I was 17 and worked in my aunt's pharmacy. I spoke some Spanish and I listened intently when people spoke of the hardships in obtaining medicine, or of the injustices they suffered simply because they were Mayan. The political and army violence was not as prevalent then in 1992, though the threat always existed. I returned to the United States with a reinforced interest in testimonies.

I decided to write about Chilean testimonial literature because of a history class I took at Tufts University my sophomore year. I studied the Allende years and the subsequent coup. I was interested in learning more about life in Chile after the coup under the rule of Pinochet. I had also read Isabel Allende's novels The House of the Spirits and Of Love and Shadows. These works increased my interest in Chilean testimonies. While at Tufts during my senior year, I read The Little School by Alicia Partnoy and decided that I wanted to learn more about the testimonials from the southern cone of Latin America. In

the fall of 1997, I was encouraged to present a paper to the annual convention of the Rocky Mountain Conference of Latin American Studies, and I decided to write on Los Zarpazos del Puma by Patricia Verdugo. This experience led me to study Chilean testimonial literature more deeply, including the differences that exist between Chilean testimonial literature and Argentine testimonial literature such as The Little School by Alicia Partnoy.



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## Chapter 1

### Testimonial Literature: A General Discussion

Testimonial texts, or testimonios, did not emerge as an identifiable literary mode of the Latin American literary tradition until the late 1970's and early 1980's at which time they began to receive intense scrutiny and critical evaluation. The practice of analyzing all texts in their rhetorical aspects allowed for the utilization of literary strategies on texts which were not considered conventionally literary. The antecedents of testimonios were evident in colonial writings such as the diaries of Bolívar and Martí, and the colonial crónicas (Beverly, Margin, 13). Later, the practice of anthropologists, begun in the 1950's, of analyzing the lives of native peoples by tape recording their narratives, led to the emergence and the subsequent publication of testimonial texts. At the same time, the success of Che Guevara's book on the Cuban Revolution, Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War, promoted the emergence, throughout the Third World, [of] "a literature of personal witness and involvement designed to make the cause of those movements known to the outside world" (Beverly, Margin, 14).

The political turmoil that occurred in the southern cone of Latin America, specifically Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay, in the 1970's encouraged the utilization of the testimonio as a way to portray, document, and publicize the horror that had taken place. Authors such as Hernán Valdés (Chile) and Alicia Partnoy (Argentina) wrote testimonios in exile so that the global community would understand what was occurring in their respective countries. At the same time, many of their fellow countrymen who had not fled the country and who were not professional writers were waiting for an opportunity to write their personal testimony. The testimonios of Rigoberta Menchú (Guatemala) and Domitila Barrios de Chungara (Bolivia) brought the genre and the plight of their people to the literary stage and into the consciousness of the world community. Testimonios were

no longer at the fringe of the Latin American literary tradition. The marginalized now had a voice and an audience that was invited to listen.

What causes a text to be “testimonial”? What is the theoretical, structural or rhetorical difference between a testimonial, an autobiography and a news report? Is there a difference between a testimonial and an oral history? Why are testimonials now an integral component of the Latin American literary tradition? A testimonio, as defined by Beverly, is:

a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts and whose unit of narration is usually a “life” or significant life experience.

(Margin, 12-3)

Manuel Jofre writes, “El género testimonial pertenecería a la categoría de los relatos en primera persona. Pero lo esencial es la perspectiva que asume el sujeto narrador en el momento de la narración de la experiencia” (Literatura, 154). He goes on to write:

En este género, la visión y la vivencia personales se expresan de una manera peculiar. La literatura de testimonio es siempre la presentación de un conjunto de experiencias vitales del autor narrador. Lo que decide pertinentemente la adscripción de una obra a la categoría de testimonio no es solamente el grado de participación del autor en los hechos narrados durante la experiencia objetiva, sino la peculiar modalidad de acercamiento a ese fenómeno. El modo de enfoque de la experiencia vivida, su plasmación como narración, es lo que caracteriza al testimonio.

(Literatura, 154)

Both Jofre and Beverly show that the personal experience that is narrated must be a significant life experience in which the narrator/author was personally involved and which is described in a specific manner. The narrations, told in the first person, generally detail

what life was like before the event occurred followed by the description of the event. The great sense of immediacy and urgency expressed in the testimonio is one of its most vital characteristics. The immediacy is attributed to the minimum of distance that mediates between the narrator and the writer with the intent to minimize the factors which contribute to the distortion of the lived experience. At the same time, “es urgente que el lector se entere de los abusos que el autor sufrió o de los que fue testigo” (Jorge Roman-Lagunas, 16). This sense of urgency focuses on the lived experience to which Jofre refers and is characteristic of a testimonial text.

The autobiographical text is written in the first person, like the testimonio, and it relates a person's life or important events in a person's life, also like the testimonio. The testimonial “I”, like the “I” in the autobiography, demands attention and recognition (Beverly, Margin, 16). However, writers from within the dominant discourse write the majority of autobiographies, whereas marginalized citizens write nearly all testimonios. The dominant discourse signifies that the writer is a part of the empowered class or group of people who lead the country and its culture or are part of its cultural vision. The “autobiography or the autobiographical novel is essentially conservative modes (sic) in the sense that they imply that individual triumph over circumstances is possible in spite of ‘obstacles’ ” (Beverly, Margin, 23). These autobiographical writers are writing from within that group about experiences with which many members of the culture identify and understand. “Autobiography produces in the reader...the specular effect of confirming and authorizing his... situation of relative privilege” (Beverly, Margin, 23). For the testimonial writer “el relato testimonial se daba como el arquetipo del discurso de los dominados, que parecía ser la expresión más directa de los que no tienen derecho a la palabra” (Sarfati-Arnaud, 242). The testimonial writer had never before had the opportunity to express the story as there was neither the audience, the ability, nor the potential to tell the testimony. The testimonial writer is not a member of the dominant society, but a

marginalized member who has not been greatly valued or recognized as being part of the society and who is now challenging the dominant society.

Unlike the autobiography, the testimonio “produce una complicidad entre la narradora real y el lector de carne y hueso, una complicidad que no existe en la autobiografía” (Jenhenson, 78). The relationship between the author and the reader is important in differentiating autobiographies and testimonials because the testimonial is more than a mere story. The testimonial message is urgent and allows its readers to learn about a culture and people who may be different from their own culture. At the same time, the testimonial needs to evoke a response so that the readers act in order to help change the current condition of the people described in the testimony. “Testimonio... always signifies the need for a general social change in which the stability of the reader’s world must be brought into question” (Beverly, Margin, 23).

In a testimonio:

the presence of the voice, which we are meant to experience as the voice of a real rather than a fictional person, is the mark of a desire not to be silenced or defeated, to impose oneself on an institution of power like literature from the position of the excluded or the marginal.”

(Beverly, Margin, 16-7).

For the testimonial writer, “the rejection of the master narratives thus implies a different subject of discourse, one that does not conceive of itself as universal and as searching for universal truth but, rather, as seeking emancipation and survival within specific and local circumstances” (Yúdice, Testimonio, 44). Unlike the testimonio, the autobiography is only representative of a single person’s life and life experiences. The testimonio, on the other hand, is representative of a community and that community’s experience. The “I” no longer represents only one person, but the community or group of people who suffer in a similar way. As Beverly states, “Testimonio represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or

class situation marked by marginalization, oppression and struggle” (Margin, 23). The testimonial events are told in the first person which are representative of the people who suffered and were unable write or tell their own testimony. The testimonio expresses communal anguish and outrage through personal memories.

The testimonio also differs from the newspaper article or periodismo in that it is an experience told in the first person by the person who lived through the experience. The narrator is not detached because he or she was also the protagonist or a direct witness. The testimonial, “es la asunción verbal de una experiencia cuya característica esencial es el modo peculiar de fusión de lo subjetivo y lo colectivo, de lo individual y lo social, de lo humano y lo histórico” (Jofre, Literatura, 153). This fusion prevents the narrator/author from becoming detached from what occurred, unlike the journalist whose position is to remain distanced. This fusion creates the sense of urgency that is vital to the testimonio. The journalist writes in a detached manner with an overtly claimed objectivity, due to having been an observer rather than a participant in the event. As an observer, the journalist is professionally incapable of capturing the sense of urgency and personal suffering expressed in the testimonio. Journalists are inherently detached from the stories they are reporting for they are there to report only what they have seen and heard. In a testimonio, su función denunciativa is of paramount importance. The author has survived the experience and wants to denounce what occurred. The lack of a sense of urgency and of a denunciatory stance, coupled with merely being an observer, prevents most journalistic works from being considered testimonios.

Testimonials and oral histories have many characteristics in common although there are striking differences. Oral histories are generally preserved as tape recordings of personal narratives that have been transcribed and published by anthropologists and sociologists. Many testimonios have also been tape recorded in this manner. The oral tone, the sense that the story was spoken and then written down, is vital in both the oral history and the testimonio, though in the testimonio “la conciliación del material

recopilado ‘científicamente’ con una forma estéticamente válida le parece posible gracias a la preservación del tono oral del discurso original y la supresión del ego del autor” (Sklodowska, Miguel, 140). There may be an editor who compiles the testimonies into a book or article, who is similar in function to the anthropologist. However, the editor does not write or edit the testimonies, but solely compiles the information with the difference being that the narrative valued in the testimonio is the direct narrative from the witness or person who survived the event. In contrast, in the collection of oral histories, the recorder’s intentions prevail and that which has been recorded is seen as “data” (Beverly, Margin, 14). “In testimonio by contrast it is the intention of the narrator that is paramount. The situation of narration in testimonials has to involve an urgency to communicate a problem...” (Beverly, Margin, 14). This urgency to communicate epitomizes one of the centerpieces of testimonial literature. The narrator wants the events that the community and he or she lived through to be communicated to the world as quickly and forcefully as possible so that the world may know what occurred. At the same time, since “el testimonio es un documento político, nos hace recordar que la política es lateral, que tiene que ser un esfuerzo de la comunidad, y que nosotros somos *parte* de esa comunidad” (Jehenson, 78-9). The fact that the reader is also seen as part of the community--especially the global community--invites the reader to react to the urgency expressed in the testimonio and to respond to its urgency. In the oral history, the reader does not identify with the person telling the story, but the interlocutor, whereas in the testimonial there is a recognition of the narrator as the vital speaker. The political and social overtones of the testimonial also differentiate it from the oral narrative. The writer hopes to encourage a change in the current condition through the testimonio, which is possible because of the sense of community, violation and oppression expressed in the testimonio.

However, the narrator communicates for himself or herself and demands to be heard without the interfering analysis of the anthropologist or ethnographer. The narrator

may have a tactical need to speak with a journalist to represent or publicize the testimonial, though the testimonio itself is paramount, not the journalist's analysis. There exists a conscious refusal to allow the narrative to be seen as nothing more than "data."

In the testimonio:

former colonial peoples who were objects of the anthropological gaze are increasingly starting to write and speak for themselves. Peoples who were taken as objects are now insisting on being subjects, the distinction being that whereas the former are spoken about, the latter speak for themselves.  
(Gugelberger, 7)

The testimonial account needs to be valued for what it expresses and the concern is for its social, rather than aesthetic, value. The narrator wants to evoke a response and a reaction in the audience which will invite them to renounce the oppression and join in solidarity with the victimized. The desire and ability to speak and have the testimony be representative of a community's suffering, along with the denunciatory stance and the shared sense of outrage at the violation of human rights, differentiate the testimonio from the oral history.

Testimonial works are controversial because the narrators frequently write from memory a considerable time after the events took place. Sometimes the narrator writes immediately after the event took place, but often the person was in custody for days, weeks or months. The author/narrator describes the events, selecting what to detail and in what proportion and what to dismiss and not describe. For this reason, Amar Sánchez writes:

Es decir, no es posible leer los textos (testimoniales) como novelas 'puras' quitándoles el valor documental; pero tampoco puede olvidarse un trabajo de escritura que impide considerarlos como meros documentos que confirman lo real. El juego--y la ficción--entre ambos campos articulan lo específico del discurso no ficcional. (449)



Amar Sánchez argues that the testimonial texts cannot be seen as non-fiction or factual accounts because they are written from memory and the author has chosen what to include and exclude. The author has described the event in a manner which highlights and emphasizes those events believed to be most vivid and to best support both the sense of outrage and the implied call for change and genuine social justice.

However, the “real” and what is perceived as “real” are subjective. History is similarly subjective because a historian (author) has decided what to include and exclude and how the history should be represented. Stephen Greenblatt believes New Historicism to be “the study of the collective making of distinct cultural practices and inquiry into the relations among these practices” (qtd. in Dirks, 22). According to New Historicism:

1. There are two meanings of the word ‘history’: (a) the events of the past and (b) ‘telling a story about the events of the past.’...history is always ‘narrated’ and therefore the first sense is untenable. The past can never be available to us in pure form, but always in the form of representations.
  - 2....there is no single ‘history’, only discontinuous and contradicting ‘histories’...The idea of a uniform and harmonious culture is a myth imposed on history and propagated by the ruling classes in their own interests.
  3. Historians can no longer claim that their study of the past is detached and objective...The past is not something which confronts us as if it were a physical object, but is something we construct from already written texts of all kinds which we construe in line with our particular historical concerns.
- (Selden, 95)

Therefore, each person who survived the events can be seen as a “historian.” The survivor represents the personal version of the event, his or her history as it was lived. Some critics would say that this testimony, this personal history, is not as valid as the history of a historian who has studied many texts and created a version of past events based on

information gained from a variety of sources. However, the life experience of the survivor cannot be discounted. The events described are lived events, not events that were detailed in a book which themselves were transformed by the book's author. The testimonial narrator is able to describe the events that occurred and in which there was personal involvement. This is an important distinction because it gives special import to the testimonio written by the survivor. For the testimonial writer, "truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history" (Yúdice, Testimonio, 44). Therefore, the survivor's work may be seen in a political light and be condemned as political propaganda by those opposed to the testimonial version of the events because the narrator is attempting to change the official story of the ruling party. However, the historian's work must also be viewed as political as the historian describes the same events which may allow for the continuation of the "official history." The historian is not detached and objective because, by choosing which texts to incorporate, review, cite, believe, there is a loss of impartiality. By electing which texts to cite, the historian acts in a way similar to the testimonial writer who details specific memories. The historian's descriptions help form public opinion about a certain time period or event and have the ability to shape future opinion on the subject. Another important difference is that the historian often works from written texts or manuscripts whereas the testimonial writer works with memories or the spoken word. The writings of both the historian and the testimonialist have political undertones and neither can claim to be fully detached, objective or impartial. Both the historical and the testimonial texts and the varying views expressed in each are important for a greater understanding of the events that occurred and both must be seen as important for their documentation of historical events.

Therefore, the intrinsic value of the testimony is not lost because it is based on sorted memories of events that the author lived through and remembers. Furthermore, the

effect testimonios have on the reader constitute an important part of its inherent value. As Beverly states:

what is important about testimonio is that it produces, if not the real, then certainly the sensation of experiencing the real and that this has determinate effects on the reader that are different from those produced by even the most realist or 'documentary' fiction...to subsume testimonio under the category of literary fictionality is to deprive it of its power to engage the reader. (Margin, 22)

This ability to engage the reader while describing events that occurred and are "real" to the author, allows testimonios to be seen as more than recreated and, thus fictionalized. memories. It permits testimonios to be valued for their political, social, historical, and human content.

Testimonios differ from fictional narratives in that the events described are more important than the way they are described. The literary aesthetic value is not as essential to the authors as the information expressed in the testimonio. The author's suffering is representative of their community's suffering, and wants the accounts to be accepted and to be seen as truthful rather than fictional constructs or exaggerations of the events that occurred. One of the most important characteristics of testimonial literature is that:

lo literario se reduce al mínimo. El texto, aún escrito por un profesional, debe desliteraturizarse porque en la conciencia del lector no debe haber ninguna duda de que el escritor...cayó en la tentación de hiperpolizar, de elaborar. El texto debe ir desnudo, debe reflejar los abusos contra los más elementales derechos humanos...sin ningún comentario o adorno.

(Jorge Roman-Lagunas, 16)

The lack of commentary and adornment encourages the reader to identify with the work and to believe the author's account of the event because the author has not tried to dramatize the account. The events, the author believes, are significant enough that no

adornment is necessary to further engage the reader. Furthermore, the works are written quickly, often soon after the events occurred or after the narrator was freed, so that the memories of the events are as clear as possible. There exists a need to finish the account quickly so that it can be published immediately. As Hernán Valdés stated in his introduction to the first edition of Tejas Verdes, “estas páginas están escritas a toda prisa, ‘a calor de la memoria.’ Por lo mismo no debe buscarse en ellas ningún tipo de elaboración literaria. El lenguaje es fundamentalmente funcional...” (qtd. in Jorge Roman-Lagunas, 16). His introduction informs the reader that the events and the story he tells supplant various literary techniques. This is a marked difference from other literary works. Generally, the language, literary techniques, and the manner in which the story is told, are among the most vital aspects of the work. In the testimonio, the story itself and the message sent to the global community are paramount. The sense of indignation and outrage is vital in the message that is represented in the testimonio.

The language used in the testimonio is often colloquial. The author has tried to reproduce the language as it was spoken as the events occurred. As Sarfati Armand suggests:

Este sujeto, que habla y enuncia, no es un artífice de la palabra, no es un escritor de oficio que tiene experiencia con las técnicas de la tradición libresca. De allí que la forma narrativa que se adopta responda a condiciones propias de la comunicación oral en la que la estructura dialógica configura todo el enunciado. Además, el tono y el lenguaje utilizados son los de la cotidiana conversación familiar y generan nuevos códigos de lectura. (244)

The author uses the language that is common to the people and the area. It is necessary that the people described through their own words be correctly represented by how they talk. A soldier needs to speak like a typical soldier of the time. The testimonial writer

does not want to polish the speech of the people in the narration so as to maintain the authenticity of the people involved.

Testimonial literature is vital because it gives a voice to the voiceless.

Testimonios are vital because, “se ejercita en diversas áreas de la experiencia humana, y es un producto popular, del pueblo, y proviene de la extensión del habla, del diálogo, de la conversación. Emanan de cada ser humano” (Jofre, Literature, 155). The telling of a life story is powerful because it represents a human condition. The reader may not understand the events that occurred; however, the author invites the reader to understand the anguish of losing a loved one or the horror of imprisonment and torture.

Testimonios are often brought to the attention of writers because the citizens, who are most often women, protest what occurred and refuse to allow the atrocities to be forgotten. Patricia Verdugo, a Chilean journalist, wrote Los Zarpazos del Puma and Tiempo de Días Claros after interviewing women who were active in learning the truth about their disappeared family members. These women refused to forget what had happened to them and their community, and, by protesting what had occurred, they gained the interest of a journalist who wanted to publish their testimonios. Testimonios such as the ones published by Patricia Verdugo allow the narrator’s countrymen to realize that they are not suffering alone. In many societies, “...a ‘collective memory’ transmitted through popular...circles... encourages a healing and sometimes politically inspired form of closure” (Hartman, 7). Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo movement is an example of the “collective memory” of Argentine mothers. The group consists of mothers who have loved ones who are detenidos-desaparecidos<sup>1</sup> who decided to form a group to protest and expose the disappearance of their children and loved ones in Argentina. The sharing of oral stories and testimonies brought these women together, and their actions allowed

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<sup>1</sup>These are people detained by the military and were never seen again and most of the bodies were not returned to the families.

people from Argentina and from foreign nations to learn about what was occurring. Many books were written about Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo which contain the testimonies of these mothers. For example, one mother, María del Rosario de Cerruti stated:

I have one sister and she has three children. Some time ago she asked me, “But why are you continuing this struggle if you know that your son is not coming back?” She thinks I am only fighting for my son, that nothing is going to happen to her children. So I told her, “I am fighting for your children and for other children also.” “Why?” she countered. “My children are not going to be involved in anything.” I feel sorry for her because she has not gone through the process I have gone through. She still lives only for her children, like all mothers, each mother for her own child. So I feel sorry for her because I have learned something. I have socialized my maternity. (Bouvard, 175)

In Chile, the women who had lost brothers, husbands, sons, fathers, formed arpilleras where they sewed traditional cloths that, instead of depicting the customary scenes, showed the atrocities that had taken place and daily life under the rule of Pinochet. To protest the political situation, many Chilean women began to dance the Cueca alone to show that their partner was no longer present, or alive, to dance with them. The Cueca is the dance traditional to Chile danced by husbands and wives. These woman, by having the courage to begin discussing and representing what they had suffered, promoted a greater understanding of the Chilean political and social situation under Pinochet and the plight of the Chilean people to the world community. Their actions caused an international music star to write a song for them (Sting, “Ellas Danzan Solas (Cueca Sola)”/“They Dance Alone”), furthering the international attention which helped to promote a change from the political institution headed by Pinochet.

The reaction to testimonio by the people from the narrator's society and culture is representative of the state of that society. Many governments of Latin America banned the testimonios in the author's country for a period of time before allowing for their publication, though clandestine copies of the testimonio often circulated throughout the country. For example, Hernán Valdés first published Tejas Verdes in 1974 in Spain. Finally in 1996, he published his testimonio in Chile. As Jofre reminds us, "en sociedades no democráticas existe la supresión del testimonio, su represión lo cual atenta a la destrucción de una expresión de la cultura. Democracia, cultura, testimonio son prácticas sociales, procesos de creación de sentido" (Jofre, Literatura, 155). Testimonios play an important part in a country's culture because they allow for a different version or interpretation of history, which may conflict with the "official story." The freedom to express a different version of events allows for the cultural growth of the country and for the country's citizens to have a greater understanding of their history. In countries where testimonios are banned, there is not only a cultural loss, but often violations of human rights that prevent citizens from continuing the tradition of testimonio. The censorship of the ruling group is active and prevents the publication of articles and books which are against the official party and against the official story. At the same time, the powers in control are inadvertently showing the importance and the power of testimonios when they ban them.

As Epple states:

Su verdad se alza ahora en conflicto no contra otro discurso difundido en el mismo plano, sino contra el silenciamiento. De hecho, esa es la amenaza que grávita sobre el texto: al escucharlo 'oímos' también los intentos por silenciar. (Acercamiento, 1147)

Epple shows that the ruling group wants to silence all testimonios and all outcries against the injustices that occur. The group believes that with enough silence, the testimonios will disappear and that people will forget their existence. The testimonio must then survive in

a hostile environment until the possibility to publish it arises. The person who wants to speak must fight against the silence and the fear of being harmed in the future for speaking out. The first silencing of a testimonio in Chile, to which Epple also refers, is the radio broadcast made by Salvador Allende on the day of the coup d'état. On this occasion, the army forcefully prevented the continuation of Allende's testimonial. This was crucial because the Chileans listening to his broadcast realized what could happen if they spoke out. It also immediately and dramatically characterized the right and polarized the nation. The army's actions following the coup denied the traditional form of dialogue that had been present in Chilean political and daily life. At the same time, the Junta forced the Chilean Congress to recess, effectively silencing them and denying them their traditional right to represent the Chilean citizens.

A testimonial is essential because it denounces and broadcasts the atrocities to the outside world. It refuses to allow certain society altering events from fading from memory by their countrymen and by the world community.

El texto testimonio es una denuncia pública, un llamado a la opinión pública internacional... Cuando es la propia autoridad autoinvestida la que viola las más elementales leyes y derechos humanos es tarea de la literatura hacerlo saber a la comunidad internacional. (Jorge Roman Lagunas, 16)

The need to notify the international community and to show the international community the personal and communal loss and violation of human rights is vital. Testimonios seek to be heard so that the oppression will end. Their publication also allows the international community to see a personal viewpoint of what occurred and allows the events to seem more urgent, personal, and less distant.

Testimonials have played a vital role in the emergence and growing international concern for human rights. Because they document the brutality that occurred, they are critical for the global community to understand what happened in that specific country.



This growing concern and awareness, enhanced by testimonial texts, are becoming crucial components of international law and the defense of human rights.

## Chapter 2

### Brief History of Testimonial Literature in Chile

Chilean history has been marked by coup d'état and amnesty laws since it obtained independence from Spain.<sup>1</sup> The tradition of writing testimonies in Chile began during the years after Chile's declaration of independence. Most historians had not studied the cultural importance of testimonies and amnesty laws in Chile, though historians such as Brian Loveman have begun to expose their importance and acceptance in Chilean culture and society. In order to fully understand the intrinsic value of the testimonies that appear in the aftermath of the 1973 coup, it is crucial to understand the history of Chile with its varying amnesty laws.

The coup d'état of 1973 violently and dramatically ended the presidency of Salvador Allende. Even before the assault on the Palacio de la Moneda, which began immediately after noon on September 11, 1973, Allende's presidency had been repeatedly challenged since his election on September 4, 1970. Allende was the candidate who received the most votes in the elections of 1970, with 36.2% of the votes (Oppenheim, 38). Allende had in theory won the election, but "he was far from attaining a majority. According to Chilean law, when no candidate received an absolute majority, the Congress was to choose the president from between the two top vote-getters" (Oppenheim, 38). Allende formed a coalition with the Christian Democrats after he "agreed to a set of constitutional guarantees that were designed to ensure that ...he would respect the democratic rules of the game" (Oppenheim, 39). After his election, but before his inauguration, right-wing extremists tried to undermine the electoral process, Allende and the political left of Chile. A right wing group of military leaders attempted to kidnap the

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed analysis of Chile's amnesty laws, see Brian Loveman's forthcoming book, which is a collaboration with Elizabeth Lira, tentatively titled Las Suaves cenizas del olvido, La vía de reconciliación chilena, 1814-1998.

constitutionalist chief of the armed forces, General René Schneider, and claim that the left had kidnapped him, thus destroying Allende's agreement with the Christian Democrats. However, General Schneider tried to defend himself and was killed during the attempted kidnapping. The plot by the right wing extremists was uncovered and "sent shock waves throughout Chile. Not only did it mark a brutal act of political violence and an effort to subvert the democratic system, but it also raised questions about the political neutrality of the armed forces, [and] the potential of military intervention of some type" (Oppenheim, 39).

In 1970, after his election and inauguration, the country began to experience economic problems as the wealthy citizens of Chile invested their capital outside of Chile. In contrast to the political problems encountered during Allende's presidency, there occurred a burgeoning of artistic expression in Chile in the theater, in music, and in literature. Writers such as Hernán Valdés and singers such as Víctor Jara gained popularity during the Allende years. The road to Socialism also encountered many problems, especially with the reappropriation of natural resources and companies within Chile. As his presidency continued, the middle class became more and more dissatisfied with Allende due to the lack of goods in stores and the thriving black market. The middle class citizens, especially the women, began to march in the streets to protest their inability to buy food and other goods. The women marched in the streets, banging empty pots and pans to show that they were unable to buy enough food, and they complained loudly about the growing lines at the stores.

Various strikes took place, including a trucker's strike that proved disastrous for the economy which was in its 47th day on September 11, 1973. A merchant's strike, in its fourth day, also occurred on September 11. "The resulting polarization and disorder, whatever its causes, helped undercut the armed forces acceptance of civilian rule to the extent that a critical mass of officers lost faith in civilian dominance of the military and became convinced of the need for a new form of government" (Crahan, 63). The military,

which had become increasingly dissatisfied with the Marxist rule and Allende's attempt to transform Chile into a Socialist country, gave Allende an ultimatum: resign by noon on September 11th or face military action. Allende refused to resign, and immediately after noon, the military began bombing the palace. Allende gave his last radio broadcast which was interrupted by the military before he died. Even today, there exists controversy concerning whether he committed suicide or was murdered. Upon obtaining control, the four-man military junta stated in a radio broadcast that "its aim was to 'avoid violence and lead the Chilean people along the road to peace'" ("Junta"). At the same time, "a list of 68 prominent Socialist and Communist leaders was broadcast, and they were ordered to appear at the Defense Ministry or face arrest" ("Junta"). Congress was dismissed and on recess "until further order." The Junta closed the theaters and created a strict censor which controlled the newspapers, radio broadcasts and the publication of books, effectively ending the freedom of expression that occurred during the Allende years. The new government also banned all music by Víctor Jara and members of the movement La Nueva Canción Chilena. The military had taken control, beginning the sixteen years of oppressive and violent military rule.

One of the most important legacies of the Pinochet era was La Ley de Amnistía of 1978. This law granted amnesty to all military men who acted on behalf of the army after the coup d'état from 1973 to 1978, which was the time period when the gross violation of human rights occurred. The law means that no one from the military could be tried for the actions that they carried out, including severe torture and murder. After Pinochet was defeated in the plebiscite of 1988, the newly elected president, Aylwin, formed a commission to investigate the allegations of violations of human rights and murder by military officers and soldiers. The Commission of Truth and Reconciliation found that 2,279 people had been killed during the military rule. Even though many more Chileans had been wrongfully imprisoned and tortured, the commission's findings were only concerned with crimes of death. The main problem with the Commission consisted of a

lack of judicial authority and inability to present the names of the torturers and executioners from the military. At the same time, the Chilean Supreme Court, “in a case brought before it after Aylwin assumed office, declared not only that the Amnesty Law was legal but also that because of it, judicial investigation of such human rights violations could not take place” (Oppenheim, 217). Many Chileans protested the Supreme Court decision; however, the precedent of amnesties had long been established in Chile.

According to Brian Loveman, in a presentation at the Rocky Mountain Conference of Latin American Studies in April 1998, the history of amnesties began in Chile after the War of Independence in the early 1800’s. In 1817, pardons were granted under the premise of “conciliación y olvido.” One author, Juan Egaña, titled his memoirs, El Chileno consolado en los presidios, published in 1826, in which he transmits “the philanthropic sentiment of aristocratic generosity that would be translated into the interests of the privileged groups through the economic and intellectual betterment of the people” (Foster, 128). In 1830, the government passed the Ley del Olvido which granted each pardon one by one. After each civil war, the victors granted pardons and amnesties for all those who had fled and for the actions of those who had won the war. Thus in 1830, 1850, 1859, and 1891, there were various amnesties. At the same time, with each new constitution, the government ratified an amnesty for what had occurred before enacting the new constitution. This policy and tradition of amnesties continued into the 20th century. For example, in the 1950’s there were over 5,500 pardons in only two and a half years (Loveman, RMCLAS).

The common policies of the amnesties were:

- 1) Commutations of prison sentences, pardons and amnesties for political crimes
- 2) Return of political exiles with or without restitution of government positions

- 3) Concession by government laws or special laws concerning government pensions
- 4) Special laws for named individuals allowing for the reparation for injuries. (Loveman, RMCLAS)

Pinochet's amnesty law was similar to this model. In an announcement in 1978, Pinochet stated:

I wish to announce tonight that I pardon prison sentences or commute them to exile- that is, abandonment of the country- for all persons sentenced by military courts for crimes against the national security committed before or after September 11, 1973.

Although it is entirely improper to refer to persons found guilty of a crime as political prisoners, now, as a result of the amnesty decree which is inspired by humanitarian motives, no one will be able to say that there are persons deprived of their freedom in Chile because of political happenings. (Loveman, Chile, 326)

Pinochet's amnesty differed in the sense that he enacted only the first aspect common to Chile's amnesty policies. He allowed the release of prisoners or forced them into exile and he gave no encouragement for the return of exiled citizens. Also, "the amnesty decree contained enough exceptions- for example, it excluded those guilty of misuse of public funds and other 'economic crimes' to make it largely a public relations measure" (Loveman, Chile, 326).

Therefore, in Chile, amnesties were common in the political governance of the country. Impunity was a way of life in Chile which meant no accountability for one's actions. Reconciliation is tenuous because no reconciliation could take place until there occurred the elimination of the conditions that caused the rupture and punishment of those

guilty of causing the rupture that took place. In contrast, Pinochet felt that the people against his system and/or who lost in the coup d'état in 1973 needed to admit they had erred, and accept neoliberalism and capitalism. Once they had accepted the economic factors and reality of the country, reconciliation had occurred. Pinochet maintained the belief that he and the military did nothing wrong during their tenure as the leaders of the country. Until the two opposing sides could find a center ground, reconciliation and the healing of Chile's wounds would be tenuous and fragile (Loveman, RMCLAS).

During the 19th century:

the struggle for emancipation did nothing more than unleash the ambitions of minorities...Liberal discourse during the first half of the 19th century, on the other hand, had identification and persuasion as its goals. The writer, because the singer had disappeared, would assume with ease the images of the publicist, the orator, the tribune, the recreator of the historical past. The task was to convince the people that they also benefited from progress and that all modernity was synonymous with republic and democracy, with justice and equality. (Foster, Handbook, 134)

Many of the writers of the 19th Century, such as Alberto Blest Gana, Vicente Pérez Rosales, and Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna believed in the official version of the nation's history. They "reveal the realist and pragmatic traces of a bourgeoisie that knows its own possibilities and that sets for itself decisively the course of triumph" (Foster, Handbook, 137).

Due to the very nature of amnesties in Chile, testimonial literature, or its predecessor, the testimonial novel, has played an integral role in Chilean literature. As Epple states, testimonio:

es una opción discursiva que se ha ido ampliando justamente en las postrimerías de cada período álgido de su evolución político social: después de la revolución de la independencia, luego de la derrota de los

proyectos liberales de mediados del siglo XIX, después de la caída de Balmaceda en 1891, durante la crisis de los años 30, etc.

(Epple, Poéticas 158)

As Epple explains, many authors wrote in a testimonial manner during the 1800's after the Civil Wars and the subsequent amnesties. These authors justified their actions and often tried to show a different version of the events. Authors such as Juan Egaña, José Zapiola and José Victorino Lastarria wrote about the time period of the War of Independence. According to Epple, Juan Egaña's account, titled El chileno consolado en los presidios (1826), recounts life in a prison on the Juan Fernández Island during the time of independence (Poéticas, 158). José Zapiola, decided to write Recuerdos de treinta años (1810-1840) "para rectificar la versión oficial del período de la Independencia, que ha seleccionado protagonistas y sucesos donde el pasado se lee desde el proyecto conservador que ha cancelado los sueños liberales" (Epple, Acercamiento, 1145). One author wrote chronicles and remained anonymous by opting to

firmar sus crónicas con las iniciales O.O. No en un gesto de ocultamiento de la prosapia individual, sino para hacer presente simbólicamente una convicción: el hombre es una criatura histórica, y en tanto ser modelado por una patria que nacía, su memoria tiene el rango a la vez anónimo y autosuficiente de una personalidad colectiva.

(Epple, Acercamiento, 1145-6)

The single voice representative of the collective is present in Chile with the writing of crónicas such as these. This tradition of one person writing for the community continued in future generations as a part of their heritage.

The Civil War of 1891 and the political problems of the 20th Century brought an even greater emergence of testimonial texts in Chile. Baldomero Lillo (1867-1923) "[cries] out indignantly and impotently against the misery, the exploitation, and the disdain with which the triumphant classes treated miners and peasants in Sub Terra (1904) and



Sub Sole (1907)” (Foster, Handbook, 137). Eugenio González, Alberto Romero, Carlos Vicuña, and Agustín Edwards wrote about the political persecution experienced in Chile during the 20th Century. Another writer, Volodia Teitelboim, wrote about the concentration camp at Pisagua during the anti-communist persecution that existed during the government of González Videla. Most of these works by these authors are testimonial texts, though many of them were fictional testimonials that followed the realist aesthetic mode. (Epple, Acercamiento, 1146). Therefore, even though many of these texts were not written in the first person and were at times fictional representations of an event, they were crucial predecessors for the testimonial literature that would emerge in the 1970`s.

It was only after the military coup of 1973 and the systematic violations of human rights that the writing of testimonios burgeoned in Chile. The first testimonial text was that of Salvador Allende’s interrupted radio address on September 11, 1973 (Concha, qtd. in Epple, Acercamiento, 1147). In that broadcast, Allende remarks:

This is the last time I shall be able to speak to you...I shall not resign.. I will repay with my life the loyalty of the people... I say to you: I am certain that the seeds we have sown in the conscience of thousands and thousands of Chileans cannot be completely eradicated... neither crime nor force are strong enough to hold back the process of social change. History belongs to us, because it is made by the people.” (Joan Jara, 234)

Allende went on to say, “I will not resign. I will not do it. I am ready to resist with whatever means, even at the cost of my life in that this serves as a lesson in the ignominious history of those who have strength but not reason” (“Junta”). Allende’s defiance, his adamant refusal to resign and his desire to have Chileans remember what occurred are vital. He was willing to die so that Chileans would never forget what happened on September 11, 1973. The interruption of his radio address and his controversial death allowed many Chileans to understand that their testimonies would also be systematically silenced.

After the coup, Chilean testimonial literature was subdivided into two groups depending upon whether they were published within Chile or in other countries. The works written in Chile, where publication was severely censored, constitute “un *corpus* orientado por el imperativo de democratizar el discurso y postular la verdad de una experiencia alternativa a la que trata de modelar ideológicamente el sistema dominante” (Epple, Acercamiento, 1149). In books such as Memorias contra el olvido by Rosario Rojas and Miedo en Chile by Patricia Politzer:

predomina una perspectiva de articulación dialogante de la experiencia. En esos libros la voz personal busca insertarse en un espacio colectivo de sentidos...[y] se publican textos donde la convocatoria de voces testimoniales busca fundamentar una perspectiva de interpretación histórica de los hechos. (Epple, Acercamiento, 1149)

These works had the goal of changing what could occur in the future by working towards establishing a true functioning democracy within Chile. The works written from within Chile, “interpela implícitamente las versiones oficiales del mundo y pone en entredicho sus aseveraciones” (1149). The literature written in exile was published in the years immediately following the coup and focused on the coup d`etat and the political persecution that occurred after the military gained power. Its main objective, “es dar cuenta de la experiencia inmediate y compartir con el destinatario el drama vivido” (1148). It also had the intent of influencing world opinion and obtaining the allegiance of the intelligentsia against the dictatorship. Thus, within the genre, Chilean writers pursued similar objectives oriented toward different audiences.

Individuals produced testimonials in Chile to “configurar y defender una visión particularizada de la historia capaz de dar cuenta del derrotero ideal de la nación” (Epple, Poéticas, 161). This desire to represent a different version of events was significant to Chileans. For many, “la razón de ser del testimonio es... un reto al status quo oficial” (Jehenson, 78). The need to represent a version of the events different from that

expressed in the official history of the country was critical. At the same time, the desire to remember and not allow the horrific events of the past to reoccur was reason to dejar un testimonio so that there would be many voices speaking out against the voice of the status quo. However, as Brian Loveman argued during his presentation, memory in Chile had always lost to progress and to a desire to look towards the future. Even today, after 16 years under oppressive military rule which caused the death and torture of thousands of Chileans, and nearly ten years after the end of the oppressive military rule, many Chileans express that it is better to move ahead and not look back. This is shown by the response some Chileans have for Spain's extradition case against Pinochet based on the charges of crimes against humanity and the death of Spaniards during Pinochet's rule. It was evident from the moment of Pinochet's arrest that the debate in Chile would be highly charged and emotional and that the country would again be dramatically divided. Many citizens believed it would be best for the country, for the economy, and for the fragile transition to democracy to allow the Amnesty Law of 1978 and Pinochet's claim of diplomatic immunity to be upheld. For those who had suffered, were tortured, or who had lost loved ones, Spain's actions were welcomed because they felt that reconciliation could not occur until there had been a modicum of retribution. This crisis has forced Chileans to examine the events of the 1970's and to debate the best manner for the country to continue.

The testimonials of the post 1973 period have played an important role in informing Chile's national debate over retribution versus reconciliation and assuring that the nation's full history remains accessible to further generations. Chilean testimonials encourage Chileans to gain a new perspective of events from that represented by the official history or in the official history texts. The tradition of writing testimonials allows Chileans to remember and protest what occurred and has formed an integral part of Chilean cultural expression.

## Chapter 3

### Two Faces of Military Persecution

“Hay que mantener en un obstinado presente, con toda su sangre y su ingnomia, algo que ya se está queriendo hacer entrar en el cómodo país del olvido...” (Julio Cortázar, “Negación del olvido,” En Argentina: años de alambradas culturales.)

The Chilean coup of 1973 brought an immediate and dramatic end to the government of the democratically elected Marxist leader, Salvador Allende. Upon obtaining control, the military detained, tortured, and murdered men and woman, many of whom did not supporters of Allende or his policies. The people who survived the concentration camps and the torture, and the families of those termed detenidos-desaparecidos, could not tell their story to the Chilean public for years as many survivors and family members were afraid to denounce the government. Some marched in the streets and protested in front of important government buildings, though the military always arrived quickly to remove them from the area or to take them to jail. At the same time, there existed a very powerful, official censorship and many of the accounts submitted for publication were “lost” after being sent to the censor. Pinochet effectively prevented their publication within Chile.

Patricia Verdugo, a Chilean journalist, first wrote Una Herida Abierta: Detenidos-Desaparecidos in 1980 with Claudio Orrego. As she expresses in the introduction, the text was submitted to the censor in 1980, and subsequently disappeared. Verdugo and Orrego finally published the second edition in 1983 after Pinochet lifted the censorship of texts. The first part of the book chronicles the status of many of the Chilean prisoners according to the army. The text shows whether the prisoners had been declared dead, officially detained, or deemed “personas sin existencia legal.” This first part is journalistic in its approach, stating what the official story was for many Chileans. It gives the name and known status of the person. The second part of the book gives specific, in

depth analysis of the detainment and the struggle to determine what happened to the people who had died. Within each section there are short testimonials from the family members who speak of what happened on the day of detention or disappearance and what occurred afterwards. This book is testimonial in the conveyed urgency expressing the need to publish these stories so that Chileans can understand what occurred. The sense of indignation on the part of the authors and the people quoted in the book represents the belief that what had happened needed to be publicized because the community had suffered greatly and that the shared anguish needed to be discussed openly. Patricia Verdugo wanted to make public as many cases of detenidos-desaparecidos as possible, so the accounts are short. Therefore, because the family members were not given much space to develop their stories, the reader's identification with the families is not as great as in other texts written by Verdugo, such as Los Zarpazos del Puma (1989).

Two works written by Patricia Verdugo after the plebiscite are representative of the group of Chilean testimonial literature written from within Chile after 1983. These two works by Verdugo present a vivid denunciation of the sequestering and murder of civilians by elements of the Chilean Armed Forces during the first years of the dictatorship. The first book, Los Zarpazos del Puma, examines the role of key generals who planned the coup, their initial hesitation to become involved in the coup d'état, and their choice of the specific day the coup d'état had to occur to be effective. Immediately after the coup, General Arellano Stark traveled through northern Chile in the famous helicopter Puma. Arellano Stark's caravana de la muerte passed through the cities of La Serena, Copiapó, Antofagasta and Calama. In some areas, although there was no dissent, he would leave the military compound for dinner with the commander of the region he was visiting, returning a few hours later after citizens of the region had been taken from prison by his accompanying entourage and murdered. The local commander had no idea what was going to occur while his own officers believed him to be in agreement because he was with Arellano Stark during the time Arellano Stark's men were executing the prisoners.

Thus, they understood him to be informed and supportive. One conscript from Calama stated,

...el general Arellano le gritaba al coronel del regimiento, que lo retaba porque no los había hecho matar antes. Si ese general no va, no se habría hecho esta matanza. Porque el coronel, que se llamaba Eugenio, era muy amable con nosotros. Si hubieran estado los militares de allá no más, no habría pasado esto. De aquí de Santiago fueron a matar. (224)

Arellano Stark had several reasons for travelling through Chile and creating his trail of terror. He wanted to engender fear in the general population, maintain control of the local armed forces and show the power of the military. He wanted to assess the degree of obedience and cohesion to the new military regime of regional commanders and assert and demonstrate the absolute control exercised by Pinochet. Before he carried out the coup, Pinochet worried most about the area around Calama and the Chuquihamata mine for the threat of civil war (Pinochet, 133). Therefore, this journey on Pinochet's behalf by one of his generals was meant to determine the threat that existed in the north. Many times, especially in Calama, the men who were collected from jail were men who had been charged with minor offenses and were to be released in a few days. Instead of being released, they were rounded up, taken away and systematically assassinated. In Calama, the official story was that the group of prisoners had tried to flee, thus allowing the Ley de Fuga<sup>3</sup> to be applied. Their bodies were buried in the desert in places that were hard to locate so that they could not be examined to see if they had been shot in the back, as would be expected of someone who was fleeing. Stark and his men never wanted the bodies to be found.

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<sup>3</sup>La Ley de Fuga meant that if the army caught a prisoner trying to escape, the army had the right to shoot to kill that prisoner.

Although it gathers and documents in an objective, irrefutable manner these atrocities, Los Zarpazos del Puma clearly expresses the indignation of the citizens of Chile. Many of the local military officers were outraged by the treatment of their fellow citizens, outraged and confused that the army was breaking all codes of war, and outraged “porque tenían clara conciencia del tremendo error y del desprestigio que significaba para el Ejército” (234). All basic human rights were violated. There was outrage that these atrocities could occur without repercussions and that the military, which had previously existed to protect its citizens, would act in such a way. As General Lagos, who was the local military leader in Antofagasta and who voiced his disapproval to Arellano Stark in 1973 and later at hearings in Santiago, said, “Ver frustrado lo que se ha venerado por toda una vida: el concepto del mando, el cumplimiento del deber, el respeto a los subalternos, y el respeto a los ciudadanos que nos entregan las armas para defenderlos, no para matarlos” (248). There was also the outrage of the families and the priests that the army did not return the bodies to the families for a proper burial. The military stated that they buried the bodies immediately after the prisoners were killed for trying to flee for health reasons. The military assured the families that after a year the bodies would be returned. An army official admitted that the bodies had been buried in plastic bags so that identification of the bodies would be easier. However, many family members wanted to know how the army knew that plastic bags would be necessary if the men had been killed for fleeing, to which there was no response (Dance of Hope). For the duration of the Pinochet regime, no bodies were returned to the families for burial.<sup>4</sup>

In the conclusion of the book, Verdugo describes the future activities of many of the men who had been part of Arellano Stark’s elite group of exterminators. Some became founding members of the group DINA, a group equivalent to the Nazi Gestapo to

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<sup>4</sup>The families’ struggle for truth is documented in the video Dance of Hope and is also examined in the book Tumbas de Cristal by Ruby Weitzel.

many Chileans. They had proven to Arellano Stark during his caravan of terror their ability to carry out la guerra sucia. A few were involved with the secret torture house called “Villa Grimaldi” where most of the prisoners were detenidos-desaparecidos. Others were also implicated in the assassination of the ex chancellor- Orlando Letelier in Washington D.C. in 1976. All obtained early amnesty under La Ley de Amnistia without an investigation of their actions. The Ley de Amnistia pardoned the army officials of any wrongdoing during their service to the military after the coup of 1973 through 1978. As the lawyer Mónica Madariaga, the cousin of Pinochet, said,

La amnistía es perdón. Es el perdón conciliatorio de toda la sociedad, que en definitiva es la afectada por el delito y es la dueña de la soberanía, que en su gesto generoso busca la paz en el amor. Pero esa paz en el amor no puede pasar a llevar a la justicia, que se nutre de la verdad... La sociedad perdona cuando sabe a quién está perdonando. (278)

Although these men were given amnesty, the awkwardness and pathos of their relatives remained as they had to live with the knowledge of the crimes their loved ones had committed and to attempt to justify them. This was especially true in the case of Arellano Stark’s son.

Arellano’s son, Sergio Arellano Iturriaga, wrote a book entitled, Más Allá del Abismo: un testimonio y una perspectiva (1985), which discusses his role in the military and his father’s role in the cities to the north. According to Sergio Arellano:

En Octubre de 1973, mi padre recibió la orden de revisar numerosos procesos llevados en provincias, en especial en la zona norte, por consejos de guerra...Se abocó a esa tarea con la asesoría de tres auditores designados por el comandante en Jefe, dando prioridad a los juicios cuyas sentencias habían establecido pena capital, por lo que debió trasladarse a diversas ciudades. En la ingrata misión modificó la mayoría de las condenas, ratificándolas sólo en casos que revestían especial gravedad



según los antecedentes procesales. Durante su estada en Calama, donde se vivía una gran agitación ante la revelación de un frustrado proyecto de hacer volar la planta de explosivos Dupont, un grupo de presos políticos fue ejecutado, sin mediar sentencia alguna, en las afueras de la ciudad. Sólo a su regreso, en Antofagasta, mi padre se enteró de lo sucedido.

(62)

This paragraph is representative of the belief that his father did nothing wrong as he also expressed the same belief in Los Zarpazos del Puma when interviewed by Patricia Verdugo. However, a large number of soldiers and family members would contradict the assertion of his father's innocence.

In her second book written after the plebiscite, Tiempo de Días Claros (1990), Verdugo interviews families, and each family's narration sets the pace of the novel. Verdugo begins each chapter with the family members telling their own story in first person, and she continues their story by interviewing guards and leaders of different organizations. Verdugo's commentary connects each story with its predecessor. In some instances, she provides some history and explanations about the different components of the Chilean Government and Armed Forces, the judicial system and the various laws enacted. She specifically focuses on the group DINA, a secret police organization that carried out horrendous acts of violence without fear of repercussions. This book is especially powerful because the soldiers who arrived at the homes were all identified and named by the surviving members of the family. Verdugo's book assures that the men who carried out the arrests and murders will be recognized and remembered for their role in the destruction of so many lives. Most were protected by La Ley de Amnistía, but they will be remembered forever for the role they played in the aftermath of the coup d'état.

Manuel Jofre has written that a testimonial text is characterized by certain requirements of the genre:

La matriz conceptual y narrativa del texto es la asunción verbal de una experiencia cuya característica esencial es el modo peculiar de fusión de lo subjetivo y lo colectivo, de lo individual y lo social, de lo humano y lo histórico. (Literatura, 153)

Patricia Verdugo's works achieve this fusion of the subjective and the collective, the individual and the social, the human and the historical while avoiding the objective aloofness of the journalist. Verdugo's calmly denunciatory stance and her pronounced sense of identification with her fellow citizens as victims place her works among the first person testimonies rather than the impersonal reportaje. As a Chilean she feels and expresses the repression of her brothers and sisters and understands their loss because she lost her father. The military detained and murdered her father in 1978, and his body was later found in the Mapocho River. Due to this, she differs from the journalist in that she is not free from direct experience and the accompanying sense of being personally harmed but, rather, expresses indignation rooted in a sense of incredulity that these atrocities could occur in her country.

Verdugo's works are testimonial because the focus is on giving a voice to those who had not been able to tell their stories and allowing them to tell their stories in their own words. Verdugo's commentary is secondary to the stories told by the family members. These relatos are representative of a community's suffering, not descriptions of isolated incidents. Verdugo exposes the horrible acts carried out by the Chilean military to the Chilean public, many of whom had not known or acknowledged the severity of the military's crimes. Verdugo's work allows the global community to understand what occurred in Chile so that it can denounce the actions of the Pinochet regime. In Verdugo's work, both the Chileans and the global community need to first acknowledge the testimonies of the families, and then react and condemn Pinochet while working toward forming a truly democratic government.

Verdugo's works are concise, pointed attacks against Pinochet and his elite generals. Her primary concern is for them to be known for the anguish they caused the families of the detenidos-desaparecidos. She seeks their condemnation by Chileans and by the global community. Her inclusion of the accounts of the families of the disappeared serves to give a human face to the injustices committed by the military and to make her denunciation more powerful.

At the same time, Verdugo writes testimonials so as to counteract the tide of forgetfulness. She publishes testimonios of people who had not been able to tell their story. These people are not part of the dominant discourse, thus their beliefs and views are not presented to their society. These testimonios present a different version of the history represented by the Pinochet regime. Verdugo wants Chileans and the world to remember what happened in Chile and to acknowledge that crimes were committed even though the members of the army were subsequently protected by La Ley de Amnistía. As Hartman states, "Amnesty is lawful amnesia; and what takes place at this highly formalized level may also take place in the domain of the social or collective memory" (15). Verdugo attempts to prevent the official government- sponsored amnesty and amnesia from being adopted by the collective memory of Chilean citizens. It is important to Verdugo that Chileans remember the past as accurately as possible, not as it is portrayed in history books sanctioned by the Pinochet government.

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Porque...es el hombre que canta,  
 el que muere muriendo sin muerte.  
 -Pablo Neruda, "La barcarola"

Joan Jara published An Unfinished Song: The life of Víctor Jara(1984) after leaving Chile in 1973. The book is a testimonial to Víctor Jara and his importance in

Chilean society in the 1960's until his death in 1973. The majority of the work is written in a biographical style where Joan describes her life before Víctor, his life before her, and their life together. Joan writes about his trips abroad and incorporates letters that he sent her from places such as Russia. The first chapters are important to understand completely the impact his songs had on Chilean society.

The testimonial aspect of the work begins when Joan describes the last few days of the Allende government, September 11, 1973, and Allende's speech on the radio. Joan Jara never sees Víctor alive again after he leaves their house on the morning of the coup. After the 11 of September, she writes about each day in a diary format even though the accounts were recorded at a later date. This adds to the sense of authenticity and urgency as she waits for news of Víctor. At first it is a testimonial to what she suffered while waiting for Víctor's return, trying to determine where Víctor had been taken, and finally attempting to gain help by talking with the people from the British Embassy. Later it is a testimonial to the last days that Víctor Jara lived. While waiting for news of Víctor, Joan traveled to the Technological School, where her car was the only car in the lot. While there, she speaks with the man guarding her car and he gives her Víctor's identification card which he had found on the ground. It is most likely that Víctor threw it away in an attempt to simply be an anonymous prisoner, and not a famous singer and supporter of the Unión Popular (UP), Salvador Allende's party. Jara knew that being recognized would be dangerous for himself, because as Samuel Chavkin states:

In many ways Jara and Neruda were more of a threat to the anti-Allende forces than the oratory of its political opponents or even armed resisters. A speech can rouse hundreds and thousands...but with time it becomes an echo...A machine gun is as good as its supply of bullets...but a song that catches fire or a poem that takes wing can stir people indefinitely. Music and verse can become a part of a continuing present. they can be hummed

or recited in the privacy of one's home or among friends. And the images they bring to life each time can reinforce personal dedication. In effect, even posthumously Jara and Neruda were able to reach over the heads of the Junta generals. (qtd.in Hart, 100)

Joan also describes the phone calls she received, especially the call that told her Víctor was in the Estadio Chile. Later, on the 18th of September, a young man from the morgue appeared at her gate to tell her that Víctor's body had been found and was at the morgue. He told her she needed to identify the body so that it would not be buried in a common grave. After identifying Víctor's body, she buried it in a simple grave in Santiago not knowing it would become a place of pilgrimage.

Her last chapter tries to capture what happened to Víctor in his last days, first at the Technological School, where he threw out his identification card, and later at the Estadio Chile. Her testimonial is based on information that she received from fellow prisoners while Víctor was in the Estadio. This testimony is different from testimonials from families of detenidos-desaparecidos in that Joan Jara was able to learn about the time Víctor spent in the Estadio Chile. For most families, the testimony begins with the disappearance, continues with descriptions of the various searches for information, and either ends with the discovery of the body or with the families still not knowing what happened to their loved one. Joan Jara's testimony differs from other testimonies in that she was able to piece together stories from fellow prisoners. Víctor was a famous, well-known singer, and his fellow prisoners remembered much more about him than about other prisoners who were not well known. At the same time, her testimony is like that of many other families who speak of their lost loved ones and their struggle to discover the truth.

Joan learned from a prisoner who was with Víctor that the soldiers immediately recognized Víctor upon his arrival at the Estadio Chile. The guards separated Víctor from the group and after two days allowed him to be in the main part of the stadium. At this

time, it is believed that Víctor wrote his last poem, which he was unable to finish. He handed the scraps of paper to his friends as the guards grabbed him, entrusting them to smuggle the poem out of the stadium as they were being transferred from Estadio Chile to the Estadio Nacional. One prisoner said that they all tried to memorize it in case the person who had the paper was killed or lost the paper. It is his testimony to being held in the Estadio Chile. The poem speaks of the brutality of the camp and the loss of so many lives. He writes of the six men who had already died, one brutally beaten to death with the rest having committed suicide. The feelings of disbelief, anger, and despair permeate the poem. He severely criticizes the soldiers saying, “La sangre para ellos son medallas./ La matanza es acto de heroísmo.” There is little hope in the poem for the people imprisoned in the Estadio Chile and in places similar to it throughout Chile, but there is hope for the future. He expresses that some day in the future the death of Salvador Allende, “la sangre del compañero Presidente,” will allow for the end of fascism. After entrusting the poem to his friends, Jara is again beaten badly and the guard taunts him into singing. Víctor is barely able to sing, but manages to sing a few lines of “Venceremos.” The soldiers drag him away and he is not seen again. His body is later found on a street along with five other corpses before being brought to the morgue.

Joan was notified of Víctor’s death because a person at the morgue recognized Víctor’s face. If he had not been well known, he would have been buried in a communal grave, and Joan would have never known what happened to her husband. When Joan Jara describes Víctor’s body at the morgue, she describes the horrible wounds in his abdomen and “his hands seemed to be hanging from his arms at a strange angle as though his wrists were broken” (243). Her description of Víctor’s body at the morgue is similar to other testimonials on the discovery of the body at the morgue with the description of the body, clothes, gaping wounds, and lifeless eyes being the most commonly described. The disbelief and shock that a loved one had been brutally disfigured and murdered, common throughout testimonial literature, is also expressed.

The last chapters of her book are testimonial as she expresses the horror of not knowing what happened to a loved one, the desperate search, and the eventual identification of the body at the morgue. She believes that she is part of a community of people who have suffered and that she must write her book so as to represent what happened to an entire sector of the Chilean population. In her introduction she writes, "I felt as though I were not one person, but a thousand, a million...the agony was not only a personal one, it was a shared agony that linked so many of us..." (2). Her belief that her story is representative of the community's suffering is common to testimonial literature. Later, while describing the funeral march for Pablo Neruda, she writes, "There was too strong a sense of collective identity in the face of a collective tragedy, the sense of a people mortally wounded but going on fighting" (256).

These stylistically different accounts by Patricia Verdugo and Joan Jara demonstrate their different focus. They are stylistically different in that Verdugo interviews the family members of detenidos-desaparecidos and members of the military active in the disappearance of the men whereas Jara's account is a personal testimony that relates her story of losing a loved one. Verdugo's account is a condemnation of the methods used by the military whereas Jara's account is a personification of the consequences of such military action through the life experience of a well known victim and family. Verdugo's central theme is the ruthless and mechanically efficient violence employed by the Pinochet military. Although Verdugo does represent what happened to the victims' families, she focuses her attention on the persecutors, on the military leaders who destroyed the lives of many Chileans. As she retraces Arellano's actions in the fall of 1973, Verdugo places the man and the system causing the destruction at the center. Verdugo's testimony is not totally condemnatory as she also shows the two faces of the military, the differences in ideology that existed between the local and national officers. On the other hand, Jara portrays the affects of losing a loved one in a vividly personal, yet at the same time representational, manner. She emphasizes the effects the coup had on the

persecuted members of Chilean society who suffered during the first days immediately after the coup. The military that is portrayed is violently brutal and enjoys punishing the prisoners at the Estadio Chile but her account centers on what happened to members of Chilean society and the struggle their family members lived through to discover the truth.

Los Zarpazos del Puma and Víctor Jara: An Unfinished Song are complementary testimonies which, considered together, provide a panoramic presentation of the coup from its careful preparation and ruthless execution to the tortures, grief and enormous loss suffered by thousands of individual Chileans. Quite different in tone, each expresses a sense of outrage and a cry for social justice and each seeks international condemnation of the Chilean military and its actions.



## Chapter Four

### Parallel Visions of Two Coups

It has been observed by psychologists that survivors of traumatic events are divided into two well defined groups: those who repress their past en-bloc, and those whose memory of the offense persists, as though carved in stone, prevailing over all previous or subsequent experiences.

-Primo Levi, Moments of Reprieve

Hernán Valdés, a Chilean writer, and Alicia Partnoy, a writer from Argentina, survived life in concentration camps in their respective countries during the repressive rule of military regimes that obtained power through coups. There are many similarities in their accounts of the time they spent in prison, but their way of representing life in the camps is dramatically different. There are also similarities and differences in their attempts to publish their accounts. Both authors wrote their books while in exile. Hernán Valdés wrote Tejas Verdes: Diario de un Campo de Concentración en Chile in Spain in May 1974, just two months after being released from the concentration camp. Alicia Partnoy published The Little School in the United States in 1986, nine years after being released from the concentration camp. Valdés wrote his account in Spanish, his native language, whereas Partnoy had to learn English before writing her testimonio of the time she spent in the Little School. Both had problems publishing their accounts. Valdés was in exile living in Spain and, in 1974, Spain was ruled by the fascist dictator Francisco Franco. Tejas Verdes was only published because Chile canceled an order for trucks from Spain and bought them from the United States. Franco's government decided to allow the publication of Tejas Verdes as a way to protest Chile's economic actions (Valdés, 3). Partnoy had to add autobiographical chapters to her book so that her publisher, Cleis Press of San Francisco, would publish her narrative. She had wanted to make the book representative of the suffering of all people who had been in the camp, not just a personal testimony. She complied with the demands of her editor in order to publish her account

so that people from the United States would understand what had occurred in Argentina under military rule (Hintz, 323). Ironically, in addition to enhancing the commercial potential of the work, the inclusion of autobiographical chapters also furthered her goal of writing a representational testimony. The inclusion of autobiographical chapters allows the reader to have a greater empathy with the author and those like her who suffered at the Little School.

Hernán Valdés is not a typical testimonial writer because he does not include some of the common characteristics of the genre. Most testimonials are written by women whose accounts are recorded by a journalist or ethnographer because they are “either functionally illiterate or, if literate, not a professional writer or intellectual” (Beverly and Zimmerman, qtd. in Hunsaker, 358). For many of these women, the testimonial involving the assistance of a scribe is their sole way to communicate what they survived to the literary world and the world community. In contrast, Valdés is both a professional writer and an intellectual who became famous during the Allende years for his book Zoom (Hunsaker, 357-8). Enhanced by the author’s literary skill, Tejas Verdes is a powerful and eloquent testimonial of the atrocities committed at the concentration camps throughout Chile during the Pinochet rule.

The third edition of Tejas Verdes begins with a preliminary note by Valdés which commemorates its first publication in Chile. Valdés refers to the original challenges he overcame to publish it in Spain in 1974, and he refers to its strong impact on the world community as it was immediately translated into many European languages. Valdés maintains that he wrote Tejas Verdes “sin otra pretensión que la de conmover la opinión pública sobre la situación chilena, que varios meses tras del golpe era prácticamente desconocida, pese a la gran información periodística, en los aspectos íntimos de los métodos de represión” (3). He was successful in his goal of conmover and then, in 1996, he believed that the time was right to publish Tejas Verdes in Chile, even though its

publication might have appeared socially disruptive to some Chileans looking towards the future.

The prologue to the third edition of Tejas Verdes gives background information on Chile and Hernán Valdés. It is written by Manuel Garretón, a good friend of Valdés, who obtained asylum in Spain for Valdés after his release from Tejas Verdes. (Garretón, qtd. in Tejas Verdes, 12) In the prologue, Garretón refers to the time period when Valdés was imprisoned in Tejas Verdes. A reader unfamiliar with Chilean politics learns about life in Chile after the coup and its effect on Chilean society. The reader learns about the concentration camps that existed in Chile after the coup. Garretón and other friends of Valdés searched for Valdés and even spoke with the Church's lawyer in an attempt to discover what had happened to him. Garretón also speaks of the copy of Tejas Verdes he received after its publication in 1974 and his desire to see it published in Chile. The prologue gives an even greater sense of authenticity to Tejas Verdes as testimony.

Tejas Verdes is written in a present tense diary format. Writing in the present tense is a marked difference from the majority of diaries as many diaries or journals are written in the past tense as the person describes what happened during that day or time period. As Ariel Dorfman states, "El hecho de narrar en presente sintomatiza, desde este ángulo, otro propósito: no tener tiempo para reconstruir, interpretar, encubrir la materia prima de la experiencia. No se puede evangelizar lo que es inmediato, lo que está encima, por mucho que siempre se filtre por la práctica social que llamamos conciencia" (204). At the same time, a diary is generally written on the day that the person is describing the event, and the day's activities are relatively clear in one's mind. Valdés was unable to keep a diary while he was a prisoner in the concentration camp. Even though Valdés wrote, "al calor de la memoria," it is not possible for his account to be completely accurate. Living under such extreme conditions with little food or water, limited use of latrines and systematic torture causes the days to blend together. It would be remarkable if he were able to remember the events of each day exactly as they happened while at the

concentration camp because the days he spent at Tejas Verdes, especially the time before he was tortured, were very similar in his descriptions. To distinguish each day from the next over a period of two months when writing his account is unlikely.

The diary's rhythm gives the reader an enhanced understanding of daily life in a concentration camp. It becomes easier to comprehend the monotony of life and the basic struggles to survive under terrifying circumstances. The diary eloquently expresses the sensation of constantly living under fear. The diary gives a sense of immediacy and vitality to the narration of life in a concentration camp. The reader is able to better understand the fear of torture as each cell occupant returns from the torture room to gather a few things looking very frail. By using a diary format in *Tejas Verdes*. "no se habla de la degradación: se nos sumerge en ella" (Dorfman, 206). The diary allows the reader to comprehend the interminable wait, first for the torture and interrogation that is inevitable, and then for the subsequent release of the narrator from the camp. The urgency of life in the camp is well expressed in the use of the diary because the reader also experiences the tension each time the door to the cell opens unexpectedly, wondering if this time Valdés will be taken away for torture and interrogation. Therefore, the utilization of the diary is a powerful method for expressing the experiences of the concentration camp.

Valdés also adds descriptions of his thoughts. He tries to write an account that represents the prisoner's confusion upon having been arrested. To show this confusion, his narrator, after being taken from his home and while tied to a chair at the police headquarters, spends a large amount of time reflecting on his life since the coup. He writes about the confusion he experiences and his inability to think coherently.

No es que piense en todo esto; soy incapaz de reflexionar. Son visiones y sensaciones velocísimas que pasan por mí y se desvanecen, avasalladas por las siguientes. Soy incapaz de detener alguna, de pensar en ella. Todo intento de orden y de análisis de los actos que han formado mi vida en los últimos meses cede ante la fuerza de una sola obsesión: por qué me han

detenido, qué quieren de mí. (32)

Valdés's description of his thoughts allows the reader to imagine what a prisoner thinks about when violently detained and the confusion that exists in the prisoner's mind. The reader also has a greater understanding of the fear and uncertainty suffered by the prisoner.

Victoria Roman-Lagunas has stated that the use of the diary is a construct which causes the testimonial of Valdés to be best considered a testimonial novel. Victoria Roman-Lagunas does not argue that the use of the phrase "testimonial novel" reduces the value of Tejas Verdes as a testimonial for she states more than once that "this construct... does not detract from or diminish the text's validity as true testimony" (133). She merely attempts to differentiate Tejas Verdes from other works written within the genre of testimonial literature. She writes:

Clearly, even if he did have the possibilities of writing a diary while imprisoned, he would not be writing as he was being tortured. This is a device, a literary technique, another fictional construct which Valdés utilizes in order to:

imponerle al lector con más saña la reclusión claustrofóbica de la prisión para crear la verosimilitud desde la que pondremos copadecer la incertidumbre, el miedo, los límites, vivir la narración de la misma manera en que el autor vivió el arresto y la degradación. (Dorfman, qtd. in Victoria Roman-Lagunas, 131-2)

Dorfman's quotation illustrates Valdés's attempt to influence the reader's experience by using the diary format. Valdés creates a work that is irrefutable in its representation of life in the camp at Tejas Verdes. However, Valdés does not want people to simply read his testimonial; he wants to evoke a sense of camaraderie with his readers so that the readers identify personally with his experience and are compelled to reject the system that created the concentration camp. For this reason, the diary is

important because the reader has a better empathy with those who suffer in the camps.

Valdés' work is the first work from Chile that describes an experience in a Chilean concentration camp (Garretón, qtd. in *Tejas Verdes*, 14). Valdés writes *Tejas Verdes* so that the world community may understand what life was like in Chile under the Pinochet rule. He does not attempt to represent himself as a hero who survived a concentration camp, but as an ordinary person who was involved in a collective tragedy that occurred after the fall of the Allende government. The reader has a sympathetic identification with Valdés because he is seen as an imperfect, everyday hero. Due to this response to Valdés, the reader has a moral interest in what he describes and a readiness to condemn the injustices that are represented in the book. There is a sense of solidarity with Valdés which causes the reader to take a stance against the oppression that is occurring (Holub, 80-1).

Victoria Roman-Lagunas argues that the narrator with whom the reader identifies with is merely a construct of Valdés. The reader identifies with the person who writes daily in the diary while in the camp, even though the reader knows that the testimonial was written after the experience in the camp. Victoria Roman-Lagunas states:

The implied author is not the narrator (speaker), nor is it the real author. Chatman and Foucault agree that this fictional essence is actually the projection or the image which a real reader has of the author, and not the real author at all. As one reads *Tejas Verdes*, this projection or image is of an individual who wrote a diary during his imprisonment and who recorded events as they happened: this is fiction, not fact. (132-33)

The reader has a heightened identification with Valdés and the testimonial that he writes precisely because the diary is a somewhat fictionalized construct that represents what he and many other Chileans suffered in concentration camps such as *Tejas Verdes*.

Hernán Valdés's literary competency is evident in the use of repetition when describing his thoughts, the descriptions of his fellow cell mates and his ability to engage

the reader. The language he uses depends on the situation. When describing the Chilean soldiers, he represents their way of speaking. For example he writes:

--¿Y por qué estai solo aquí? ¿Por qué no te hai casao, huevón? (22)

--Así que aquí teníai las farras con Migel Enríquez y los huevones del MIR.  
(22)

--¡Concha`e tu maire, qué vení aquí a preguntar huevúa! (25)

--Te las vai a arreglar connigo, concha`e tu maire, si no hay dicho la verdá.  
Te voy a hacer pebre. (44)

--¿Pa qué lo negai? ¿Y esa pinta`e maricón que tení? (113)

Valdés represents the Chilean soldier as he heard them speak, and the reader familiar with Chilean Spanish recognizes the language used by the soldiers. The use of the language as it is spoken tries to authenticate the testimonial written by Valdés for the people represented in the story are represented linguistically.

When Valdés describes the Uruguayan or Argentine soldier who is present at the police headquarters, he transcribes the language as it is spoken, rather than simply asserting that he had heard the accent. He writes:

--La gran puta. ¿Me han tomado por una enfermera, che?...Vos sos un vivo, che. (36)

--¿Qué hay, pibe? ¿Tenés miedo? (44)

At the same time, Valdés's account of his thoughts and the narration of what occurred around him are eloquent. He writes,

Pero el aspecto de mis compañeros me recuerda en realidad otra cosa: es la visión de alguna fotografía impresa con manchas de tinta en algún mal papel de algún fiejo periódico popular. Mis compañeros parecen un grupo de fusilados...Cabellos revueltos, a veces enterrados, ropas arrugadas,

camisas sallidas de los pantalones, cabezas caídas. Posiblemente es la luz amarilla, distante, la que induce aún más esta impresión. (34)

This description of his compañeros is a powerful portrayal of the state of the prisoners in the police headquarters which allows the reader to perceive vividly the prisoners' condition. After depicting his fellow prisoners, Valdés quickly realizes that he must appear the same way. Upon describing the arrival of new prisoners Valdés writes,

Sólo la respiración, el miedo que expresa su respiración, los delata. Sin duda son más discretos que yo, nada de indignaciones ni preguntas sobre su detención. Quizá no es primera experiencia. Hay algunos que parecen haberse adaptado a las circunstancias y otros los imitan. Piden ser llevados a orinar con cierta regularidad. Algunos piden agua. La imagen del agua, entonces, como si hasta ahora hubiera estado disociada de su ruido, inhibida es recuperada violentamente por la memoria de mi cavidad bucal. Beber agua es como una esperanza de prosecución. (28-9)

As Victoria Roman-Lagunas states, "Tejas Verdes is filled with artful language and, in part, the success of this work rests on the fact that the aesthetic has not minimized or diminished the testimonial value of the novel" (V.Roman-Lagunas, 129). On the contrary, the aesthetic has enhanced the emotional impact and the socio-political criticism of the work.

While Valdés is at the military station, he does not feel that he is a member of the group as he does not identify himself with the men tied to the chairs. However, he quickly develops a sense of identification with his fellow prisoners. He writes, "La visión de mis compañeros--quienes sean--me ha permitido una mínima ruptura del temor individual, de la soledad individual ante el destino próximo. Percibo ahora la existencia de una suerte común-- por distintas que sean sus motivaciones--en manos de un opresor común" (34). By calling the people with whom he is imprisoned mis compañeros, Valdés shows that he



is a member of the group. He realizes that he is not suffering alone and draws some consolation from this sharing.

After being transferred to the concentration camp, his fellow prisoners begin to support him. He and his compañeros huddle together on cold nights to stay warm; they help him when he falls and is hurt, and keep watch for the guards. He writes:

Me doy cuenta, sorprendido, de que en todo este tiempo no he estado nunca solo. De que la constante proximidad de los otros, no sólo de sus cuerpos, sino que de sus pensamientos, sus voces y miradas, y la ininterrumpida vigilancia de alguna señal que se refiera a mi suerte, me han impedido pensar un solo minuto en mí mismo. En mi intimidad. Nunca he estado solo, íntimamente, sinceramente conmigo mismo en todos estos días. (111)

He now sees himself as a group member, much more so than when he described his compañeros tied to the chairs at the army station. In that instance, he did not realize fully that he was part of the group until after he had described them. As he spends more time in the concentration camp with the group of prisoners, he accepts that he is a member of the group and that what he describes is representative of their communal suffering. The anguish seen on one person's face is reflected throughout the group. For instance, Valdés is unable to see his face so he must watch the changes occurring in his compañeros to understand what is happening to his body. This allows Valdés to feel an even greater sense of identification because "he was able to imagine himself only as a reflection of what he saw" (Victoria Roman-Lagunas, 138). Valdés' constant contact with his compañeros allows him to realize that what he has suffered is shared by all in the group.

However, this is not to say that the prisoners always agreed and lived in harmony. They are basically trapped together in a small cell with limited food and water. Valdés writes:

La convivencia entre nosotros se ha vuelto asfixiante. Entre algunos casi no nos hablamos. Aparte de nuestras diferencias ideológicas- hay dos o tres militares-, en ciertos momentos nos detestamos unos a otros.

Detestamos nuestros temores, nuestros hedores, nuestros ruidos, nuestra hambre, las expresiones de angustia mil veces repetidas por lo que va a sucedernos...Nos peleamos por la comida, por el pan, nos robamos unos a otros las mejores razadas. No nos gustan nuestras caras...Lo cierto es que han conseguido degradar a la mayoría de nosotros. (110)

This quote shows the dissention that occurred between the members of his cell who lived together intimately for so many days and weeks. This is to be expected of a large group of people living closely together with no ability to leave the cell. Even though he represents their inability to co-exist without resentments, he is able to understand that it is the military's degrading conditions and treatment that have caused him and his compañeros to act as they do.

Before being tortured, Valdés feels as though he is a member of the group and that he is united with his compañeros against the inhumane treatment of the military. However, this sense of fellowship begins to change when he is separated from the group and is tortured. There is also a marked change in his use of language because he depersonalizes what happens to his body. He writes:

--Este cuerpo va a ser torturado, es idiota. (115)

--no seré persona, no tendré expresiones. Seré sólo un cuerpo, un bulto, se entenderán sólo con él.(115)

--No queda nada de mí sino esta avidez histérica de mi pecho por tragar aire. (117)

--Soy una pura masa que tiembla y que trata de tragar aire. (118)

--Realmente soy- mi cuerpo es- por un simplísimo sistema de reflejos condicionados insultos-castigo, todo lo que ellos gritan. (125)

--Pero, ¿por qué habría de preocuparme de un cuerpo que puede volver a ser humillado de ese modo? (132)

These quotations show the suffering of Hernán Valdés while being tortured. He is no longer a human being, but a mere body. His body is no longer his, but belongs to the torturers to abuse as they will. He has no control over it, and his only concern is with survival. Valdés realizes in the beginning while waiting to be tortured, that he will not be anything but a body that does not represent the person he is. For the men who torture him, only his body is important, not his thoughts, beliefs, and dreams which differentiate humans from animals.

The military's degradation of his conscience parallels the torture of his body. After receiving large quantities of electric shock treatment, Valdés is willing to agree to anything, as long as they cease torturing him. Valdés describes the scene where the questions come from the soldier in charge:

--¿Propuso actuar contra la Junta?

-- Muevo la cabeza de arriba a abajo, muchas veces, rápido. Sí, propuso todo lo que quieran que haya propuesto (127)

--¿Y dijo que estaba coloborando en la campaña internacional de marxismo contra Chile?

--Por supuesto que sí, todo lo que quieran. (128)

At this stage, Valdés is near the end of his torture session, though he does not know it. He is willing to agree to whatever the soldiers ask him and he gives them information

about a party he attended which the soldiers claimed was to plan a Marxist uprising, but which was merely a birthday party. At this time, Valdés must name the people who were there. He writes, “Nombro a algunos y en mi cuidado de omitir a alguien nombro a otro que no estaba allí” (127). Victoria Roman-Lagunas argues that his sense of identification dies in the torture chamber because he has become a conspirator with the enemy so as to survive. He has falsely accused acquaintances, and he is unable to free himself from that guilt. When he is returned to a new cell with people who had also been tortured, his new compañeros welcome him and try to take care of him. However, he desires to sit alone in the sun. Victoria Roman-Lagunas writes:

The other prisoners worry about him, they try to help him, believing he is still a companion in their collectivity. But, Valdés, embarrassed by his new situation as an accomplice with the interrogators, feels the need to be alone...He does not share a sense of collectivity with his fellow prisoners...because he chose to save his own life and alleviate his own physical torment by falsely accusing others.” (138)

The reader, who has suffered with Valdés as he is tortured, comprehends why he saves his life, while at the same time endangering the lives of his friends. He represents the torture session in a powerful manner that enables the reader to imagine the horror of being helplessly blindfolded, beaten, and tortured with electric shock. Therefore, the reader understands why he breaks under torture and agrees to anything the torturers want, just as the reader understands why he feels guilty about naming his friends and acquaintances. One might say that one would not break under torture, but it is impossible to know unless one has lived through the experience.

Ariel Dorfman condemns Valdés for falsely accusing his friends and conspiring with the army. He views Tejas Verdes as representing the Fascist victory over Chilean society. He writes, “...es, ante todo la historia de un éxito del facismo, y no...de un triunfo popular en medio de la muerte. El lector va a presenciar...un proceso victorioso de

“despolitización” de los prisioneros y, a través de ellos la neutralización a largo plazo de toda una nación” (199). Dorfman does state later in his essay that, “Lo único heroico, finalmente, para Valdés, reside en un acto de lenguaje: contar ahora la verdad sin máscaras” (205). However, Tejas Verdes must be viewed as one man’s ability to survive under extreme conditions. Hernán Valdés had the courage to tell his story truthfully, knowing that he would be condemned by critics such as Dorfman for not being able to survive the torture session without collaborating with the military. Due to Valdés’s account, there is an eloquent testimonial representative of the suffering experienced in Chilean concentration camps that denounces the injustices of totalitarian states and the brutal violation of human rights.

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Alicia Partnoy offers a contrasting feminine view of a somewhat similar experience. She is a highly educated woman who attended the university in Argentina when detained by the military. Unlike other women who utilized anthropologists or journalists to give their testimony, Partnoy wrote her own testimonial narrative. Partnoy obtained asylum in the United States, after being denied asylum in Spain, and had to learn English so as to be able to publish her testimonio (Hintz, 322). By learning English and representing herself, she obtained the freedom to express herself without the intervention of a third party. As stated earlier, The Little School was written so that United States citizens would have the opportunity to learn about what had occurred in Argentina during the military dictatorship and the “dirty war.” She specifically targeted U.S. citizens as readers and as an audience because she felt that the U.S. did not acknowledge the tragedy that had occurred in the southern cone of South America. U.S. citizens showed a fleeting interest in the Falklands/Malvinas War, and had read or seen The Kiss of the

Spiderwoman (Hintz, 318). However, they have never understood the extent of the suffering or tragedy that occurred in countries such as Argentina.

Partnoy states in the introduction to The Little School, “I knew just one Little School, but throughout our continent there are many “schools” whose professors use the lessons of torture and humiliation to teach us to lose the memories of ourselves” (18). Throughout Partnoy’s testimonial she challenges the military’s attempt to dehumanize her and her compañeros. At one point in her testimony, the army guards name her “Death” because she is severely malnourished and is little more than skin and bones. However, she refuses to forget who she is and reminds herself daily that she is Alicia Partnoy. She refuses to forget and “every day, when I wake up, I say to myself that I, Alicia Partnoy, am still alive”(43). By insisting on retaining her name, symbol of her individuality, she scores a small but significant victory over her oppressors.

To ensure an informed reception by the reader, Partnoy includes an introduction that describes life in Argentina before and after the coup, and two appendices, which are categorized as paratext. Gérard Genette “defines the paratext as that which accompanies the literary text to insure its reception to the reader” (qtd. in Hintz, 317). The dedication of the book to her brother Daniel who committed suicide rather than face the possibility of detainment and torture, represents the pain she feels for his suicide. The introduction provides a useful background for this testimony because the reader may be unfamiliar with the Argentine political situation. It is a concise testimonial that displays only the basic facts of her life, especially the dates of detention, the location of the Little School and her subsequent exile to the United States. The introduction attests to the authenticity of the chapters that are soon to be read, describing that what occurred at the Little School are based on fact and that Alicia Partnoy is a survivor of the Dirty War in Argentina. The introduction also expresses the sense of urgency that what happened needs to be acknowledged and condemned. The first appendix, which follows the last testimonial account, lists the prisoners present in the Little School with Partnoy. The second

appendix describes the guards present at the Little School, giving their physical characteristics so that some day they may be recognized for the horror and pain they caused the prisoners of the Little School.

The introduction and appendices are written in a drastically different manner from that of the twenty testimonials. Partnoy writes the testimonials in a literary style, using literary techniques such as ellipsis, reiteration, and parallelism whereas the introduction is written in a sparse, journalistic manner. The introduction does not utilize these literary techniques from the main chapters.

Many of the chapters are followed by poems or by drawings. The poems are written by well-known poets who present their sense of desperation and gloom in a world governed by despots who strip individuals of their liberty, dignity, and humanity. These poems highlight the international solidarity and kinship across time and continents of those experiencing political oppression. As one poem by Blas de Otero states,

You know it well,  
 they'll come for you, for me, for all of us  
 God will not even be saved here,  
 they've murdered Him.  
 It's the written word.  
 Your name is ready,  
 trembling on a piece of paper...

Another poem by Luis Paredes offers a similar view of strife and alienation yet also offers a glimmer of hope, a hope similar to the indomitable spirit displayed by Alicia Partnoy herself.

Alas for our generation!  
 It is this passion

that drifts and shipwrecks us on dry land

It is

a whirlwind and, perhaps, a seed-bed.

The paintings are by Alicia Partnoy's mother, Raquel. They add another level of credibility as they show how Alicia's family suffered by not knowing her whereabouts. The drawings universalize the horror experienced at the Little School. The drawings and poems are important for a greater understanding of the suffering of the Argentine people because they add a visual impact to what occurred in Argentina.

Partnoy's account is dramatically different from that of Valdés. She does not use a diary format. Instead, the testimonials are written in short chapters, similar to vignettes, that show specific activities in the camp and her relationship with her fellow prisoners. These chapters are not in chronological order, nor are they told solely in the first person. Partnoy writes all of the tales, yet she is not always the imagined author as many of the chapters told in the first person feature fellow victims Partnoy no longer has contact with or who died while in the camp. She speaks for them because she wants their voices to be heard, to save them from anonymity, even though they were prematurely silenced by the military. Other chapters are written in the third person, even though she is describing her own personal activities.<sup>5</sup>

The difference in the use of voice between Partnoy and Valdés is explained in their differing views of representation. Partnoy wants her testimonial to evoke the recognition of the individual suffering felt by each victim who were imprisoned with her in the camp. She does not want her voice to merely represent the people who were in the camp with her, but wants her fellow prisoners to also have a voice. Valdés tells his testimonial in the first person as a representational experience of the collective suffering of all of the inmates

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<sup>5</sup>For a chart describing each chapter and Partnoy's use of voice, see Suzanne Hintz's work, "Prisons of Silence: The Little School by Alicia Partnoy," 319-321.



who were in places such as Tejas Verdes. A few of his compañeros are granted a voice when they exchange stories, but the testimonial is mainly from Valdés's viewpoint. The different manner of expressing the communal suffering is a striking difference between the two authors and exemplifies the varying types of texts that exist within the genre of testimonial literature.

In her introduction, Alicia Partnoy writes, "Beware: in little schools the boundaries between story and history are so subtle that even I can hardly find them" (18). The varying voices add a greater understanding of the collective tragedy that occurred and allow the text to be a collective testimonial of the people imprisoned at the Little School. When Partnoy writes in the first person for other people such as Graciela in the chapter "Graciela: Around the Table," Partnoy acts as Graciela's voice. Partnoy, a good friend of Graciela's before being sent to the Little School, was able to write a testimonial for her friend on behalf of the person she had known. Graciela, unable to write a testimonial for herself and her child, disappeared from the Little School and was never seen again. It is plausible that Graciela would have felt the emotions expressed in the chapter had she been able to write a chapter describing her internment at the Little School. Upon returning to Argentina in 1984, Partnoy visited Graciela's family, who also lost another daughter, María Elena, at the Little School. When Graciela's parents requested information from the police, Adrianita, Graciela's daughter, "furiously pounded the table and demanded, 'Sir, give me back my parents and my little brother!'" (18). The chapter represents the communal suffering of the prisoners interned at the Little School and the unknown fate of the many children born in the camps, possibly adopted by the assassins of their mothers.

For the reader, it is potentially confusing to move quickly from a narrator to a first person account, and then to a first person who is assumed to be Partnoy herself, though it is unclear. At times it is difficult to determine who speaks and whose point of view is being expressed. The primary narrator disappears for a few chapters and then reappears. This technique shows the confusion, the instability of life at the Little School and the

collective, rather than individual, testimony. The change of voice leads to a heightened reader alertness and invites the reader to have a greater involvement. The prisoners never knew what was going to happen to them, just as the reader does not know who is going to narrate the next chapter.

The use of several voices is an integral part of Alicia Partnoy's testimony. Partnoy utilizes a third-person narrator in a few chapters that describes events in which Partnoy was central, yet Partnoy does not narrate these events in the first person. For example, in the first chapter where Partnoy is arrested, she describes it in the third person. She writes, "When they knocked at the door, she walked down the ninety-foot corridor, *flip-flop, flip-flop*. For a second she thought that perhaps she should not open the door; they were knocking with unusual violence...but it was noon time. She had always waited for them to come at night" (25). Later in the chapter, she mentions her daughter Ruth, and at this point the reader realizes it is Partnoy who is being violently arrested because Ruth had been discussed in the Introduction by Partnoy. The use of the third person narrator in situations such as her arrest allows the reader to understand that even though it was a personal experience, many other women and men throughout Argentina suffered the same treatment. As Marta Bermudez- Gallegos states:

*La escuelita* ha sido escogida como ejemplo de un testimonio argentino porque en ella se distingue una polifonía de voces y silencios que presentan una imagen totalizante de la experiencia de la desaparición. La narradora-testigo se desplaza desde la tercera persona narrativa, a la primera persona singular, a la primera persona plural; transitando de la corriente de la conciencia a la narración descriptiva y asumiendo voces de diferentes participantes en la experiencia de cautiverio. De acuerdo con Ariel Dorfman, la pluralización del sujeto narrante (implícita o explícitamente) en primera persona, es una de las características definitorias del discurso testimonial y, a la vez, una muestra de su dignidad. (470)

The soldiers present at the Little School and Tejas Verdes were similar. They inflicted great pain on the prisoners and some appeared to enjoy their role and their power. However, the descriptions by Partnoy and Valdés are very different. Partnoy names each soldier and describes each soldier so that they may be recognized for their horrible acts at the Little School. Even though she was blindfolded, Partnoy manages to peek out at the soldiers from under the blindfold and describe them. Valdés was not blindfolded, and he was able to see the soldiers daily. However, he rarely describes the soldiers. For Valdés, the soldiers are all similar in the sense that they obey their orders, enjoy their sense of power, and willingly support the military action. It is ironic that Partnoy, who was blindfolded, describes the soldiers and guards at the Little School whereas Valdés, who was not blindfolded, does not describe the soldiers at Tejas Verdes. Yet, they too, at times are “individualized” by occasionally showing kindness or variations in brutality. For example, when Valdés returned from being tortured, one of the soldiers who helped him out of the truck at Tejas Verdes showed disgust that they had used electric shock on him. Valdés’s descriptions of the soldiers is not nearly as detailed as Partnoy’s descriptions, nor does Valdés include an appendix describing the soldiers at Tejas Verdes. However, it did not matter whether a person was at the Little School or Tejas Verdes as many of the soldiers were the same in their desire to inflict pain and assert their dominance.

Partnoy’s descriptions of life at the Little School are at once similar and different to that of Valdés’s experience at Tejas Verdes. Partnoy was not able to exercise often, first because they were not allowed to exercise, and then because they were too weak whereas Valdés was forced to exercise daily at Tejas Verdes. Both Valdés and Partnoy spent a large amount of time discussing the limited latrine use and the constipation that resulted from the lack of food and time at the latrines. Even though there was the lack of food at the camps, Partnoy was willing to share her food with her fellow prisoners whereas Valdés was not as willing to share. Partnoy describes Benja who had just returned from being tortured, and writes:

I have some cheese and a small end of bread saved for tomorrow... If I cut them into little pieces, then put them between my toes. I can pass the bread and cheese to Benja...It's too bad I didn't save the quince jam! I cautiously stretch my leg to reach his hands; he bends his head over his tied hands and chews carefully. I've already told him there isn't any more. (46)

Valdés writes while waiting in the cell prior to being tortured, “Nos peleamos por la comida, por el pan, nos robamos unos a otros las mejores frazadas”(110). In the Little School, all prisoners, both men and women, all of whom had been tortured, were kept in the same room. The prisoners who had not spoken under torture were separated from the prisoners who had spoken during their torture sessions. At Tejas Verdes, the people who had been tortured were in another part of the camp and were allowed to eat as much as they wanted. This is a striking contrast to the treatment of the prisoners who had been tortured at the Little School.

The treatment of the prisoners was dramatically different in other ways. At Tejas Verdes, the prisoners were allowed to speak to one another and were left in relative peace in the small cell shared by many prisoners. The torture area was separate from where the prisoners were held, and they had limited access to people who had been tortured. They only knew from prisoners who returned from being tortured that it was duro. Also, at Tejas Verdes, the military separated the male and female prisoners and kept them in different parts of the camp. At the Little School, the guards punished the prisoners for speaking to one another, and kept the prisoners blindfolded and tied to their mattresses. The guards were always present and blows could come at any time. The torture room was down the hall, and the prisoners knew that when the guard turned the music up, someone was being brutally tortured. Both tortured and non-tortured prisoners were held together and most people who were at the Little School had been tortured more than once.

Another striking difference between the accounts is that Partnoy knew that the army was going to detain her at some point, whereas Valdés had no idea he was going to

be arrested. Partnoy knew that her arrest stemmed from her activities against the military, but Valdés had no idea why he was arrested. Valdés did not know any of his fellow prisoners and was more aloof, and more of a dispassionate observer. Partnoy knew many of her fellow prisoners because she had worked with them in Bahía Blanca. In fact, most of the people in the room with her were her friends. Also, Partnoy knew that her family would know about her arrest because of Ruth and because she had disappeared like so many other people. Valdés did not know if anyone would realize that he had been detained. In fact, at first, his friends came “a la conclusión que debía haberse arrancado con su tristeza a alguna playa” (Garretón, qtd in *Tejas Verdes*, 12). After Valdés’s prolonged absence, his friends did speak with lawyers who worked with the church, and after he was released from Tejas Verdes, were able to find him asylum in Spain (Garretón, qtd in *Tejas Verdes*, 12).

Valdés feels a sense of identification with his *compañeros* against a common aggressor, whereas Partnoy has a strong solidarity with her fellow prisoners. They both see themselves as a member of a group who suffers, yet are able to find strength in the communal suffering. However, Valdés does not immediately feel a sense of fellowship with his co-prisoners and never has a sense of solidarity with them. His sense of identification grows throughout his testimonial though it weakens after being tortured. After the torture session, Valdés shows his uncertainty about being a member of the group because he was disloyal to his friends who were not yet imprisoned. The other men who had been tortured try to include him in the group, but he desires to be alone. His feelings of identification and of being part of a group are lost while in the torture room. Throughout his entire testimonial, Valdés is primarily an observer, at times aloof, and he rarely participates in the group conversations. He takes comfort in the fact that he is not suffering alone, but this does not signify that he feels a sense of solidarity with his cell mates. On the other hand, Alicia Partnoy feels a strong sense of solidarity with her fellow prisoners. Neither Partnoy nor her friends speak while being tortured and she writes, “I

don't sell my friends for five minutes of sunshine...not even for all of the sunshine in the world" (36). Partnoy's ability to remain silent while being tortured may be attributed to the fact that she was very active in the anti- military campaign before her arrest. She had willingly risked her life many times to protest military action and the disappearance of her friends. Ironically, even though she had not spoken under torture, nor had any of her friends, most of her friends were brought to the Little School. Partnoy knew all of the people in her room at the Little School for they were her friends who worked with her to protest the military government. She felt a strong sense of solidarity with them because they were her friends and, like her, had been dedicated in the protests against the military. Valdés had no strong political ties, though he did protest the military regime. He had supported the Unión Popular and he had written articles that were sent out of the country that were against the military regime, though unlike Partnoy, he did not actively participate in groups that called for the end of military rule from within Chile.

Partnoy and Valdés represent two types of narrators who describe a similar lived experience in a concentration camp. Partnoy represents the hero who defies authority, feels a great sense of solidarity with her fellow prisoners and does not break under torture. She is passionate in her refusal to speak under torture and she remains dedicated to the fight against the military even while in the Little School. The army arrests Partnoy because she participated in anti-military activities. She knew that the military would detain her at some point. On the other hand, Valdés's situation is in striking contrast to that of Partnoy. Valdés is a victim who is not as obvious a candidate for arrest as Partnoy, and who had no idea that he would be detained. He portrays the isolated victim who is representative of the suffering of many others. He does not feel a strong sense of solidarity, though he does have a sense of identification with his fellow prisoners.

The torture sessions that are described are dramatically different. Valdés describes his session, showing his gradual dehumanization at the hands of the torturers. His ability to speak, think, and reason are destroyed and his only desire is to live. Valdés is unable to

think of anything due to the overwhelming pain. Partnoy, on the other hand, does not directly describe the torture she suffered. In one chapter, she writes on behalf of her husband and imagines his torture. The torture that she narrates is based on her torture experienced at the Little School because it is impossible for her to know what her husband thought of while being tortured for hours and days. The torture that is described consists mainly of electric shock treatment, similar to the torture at Tejas Verdes. The husband narrator thinks about his little girl, Ruth, and recites a poem that used to calm Ruth when she was afraid. He does not want to believe that he is an animal, although he knows he smells worse than a caged animal, and his screams are that of a tortured animal. The descriptions of the screams are similar in Tejas Verdes and the Little School. Both testimonials describe the screams as those which comes from a wounded animal. Neither Valdés nor the husband narrator can believe that they themselves scream in such a way. As Partnoy writes, “but that’s not my scream...That’s an animal’s scream” (95). Partnoy’s torture account is dramatically different from the one from Tejas Verdes because the narrator, though fictional, has the ability to think of a popular children’s rhyme while Valdés was unable to maintain a coherent thought. Partnoy tries to prevent the dehumanization of her husband by repeating, “I’m not an animal...don’t make me believe I’m an animal”(95). Both Valdés and Partnoy’s husband are concerned with survival and their descriptions of their torture show their struggle to persevere.

There are many similarities between Tejas Verdes and The Little School. Both have a foreign audience in mind and they want that foreign audience to be informed about what was occurring in their countries. They write in exile and both write their own accounts without the help of a collaborator. They display a conscious sense of style and aesthetic devices to enhance the reader’s interest in the narration.

Tejas Verdes and the Little School are eloquent testimonials that denounce the brutal military rule in their countries. Though different in the approach used to represent what occurred, both share the desire for a catharsis and to inform the world community

about what did occur. Both Valdés and Partnoy seek condemnation of the actions that occurred in Chile and Argentina. Their testimonies of their treatment and their countrymen's treatment by the military are powerful witnesses to the loss of civil liberties under totalitarian regimes and a call for activism and full participation in the defense of democratic institutions.



## Conclusion

The authors of testimonial narratives use several literary approaches to present their first-person testimonies and denunciations of the military actions in their country. Patricia Verdugo's accounts, Detenidos-Desaparecidos: Una Herida Abierta (1980), Los Zarpazos del Puma (1989), and Tiempo de Días Claros (1990), document the detainment and disappearance of Chileans by the Chilean military and show the anguish experienced by family members unable to learn about their missing loved ones. She writes in a journalistic style, interviewing family members of detendios-desaparecidos. Joan Jara's eloquent testimonial, An Unfinished Song. The Life of Víctor Jara (1984), is representative of the suffering, personal grief and trauma experienced by many Chileans upon the detainment and subsequent death of a loved one. Tejas Verdes: Diario de un Campo de Concentración en Chile (1974), by Hernán Valdés, expresses the conditions and the treatment of prisoners at a concentration camp. His personal diary allows the reader to understand the torture and suffering experienced by those interned at camps such as Tejas Verdes in Chile. Alicia Partnoy's The Little School (1986) portrays the confusion, anger, and indomitable human spirit needed to survive the torture experienced in concentration camps in Argentina such as the Little School. She utilizes a variety of voices to portray the communal anguish suffered in the Little School.

The introduction defines the testimonial genre by comparing it with other prose forms such as the autobiography, the oral history, and the journalistic report. Additional problems of definition merit consideration. Who publishes testimonials? Are the testimonials that are published representative of the suffering experienced in Chile and Argentina? How is the sense of community represented? Does there exist a problem of self representation?

Testimonials give a voice to the voiceless. However, whose voice is heard? In the texts analyzed, all of the authors had access to the publishing world due to their position in

their society. All were members of the cultural intelligentsia of their countries and members of the privileged class, though they did not share the values of those controlling their countries during the 1970's and 1980's. Hernán Valdés was a writer and a member of the Chilean intelligentsia before his internment at Tejas Verdes. Joan Jara had access to the publishing world because her husband was a renowned Chilean singer and activist. Patricia Verdugo, a distinguished Chilean journalist, published the accounts of families who had been active in trying to find their missing family members. Due to their activism and their very vocal stance against the Pinochet regime after the disappearance of their loved ones, these family members attracted the attention of Patricia Verdugo. Alicia Partnoy was a well-known activist against the Argentine regime and published her account in exile. All were members of the privileged class and used their access to the publishing world to present the suffering of those without voice, and to denounce what occurred in their countries and to call for a change in the reality lived by many of their fellow citizens

Are these voices, the voices of members of the privileged class, representative of their communities? These texts definitely represent the suffering experienced by a large number of Chileans and Argentines during the 1970's and 1980's. Even though the accounts considered representative of the community are written by dissenting members of the privileged class, they accurately represent the emotional, physical, and psychological suffering that occurred and are published so that the world community can better understand what occurred in their country. Patricia Verdugo's works are representative of the Chilean community because she publishes the accounts of many family members who suffered after the disappearance of their family members. The use of interlocutors such as Patricia Verdugo and the representative value of works such as Tejas Verdes by Hernán Valdés allows for a greater understanding of the reality lived in these countries. Without the publication of these texts by members of the privileged class, there would have been a loss of cultural expression and a partial loss of the country's collective

memory. Their accounts do give a voice to the voiceless because they are able to “speak” for the oppressed members of their society who are unable to give their testimonies.

Testimonials are written by marginalized members of the society who generally have not been able to publish their accounts. Marginalized is not determined by class standing, but by beliefs or treatment by the empowered members of the society. The four writers from this thesis are members of the privileged class, yet they are marginalized members because they do not share the values of the ruling sector of their class. They have lost civil liberties and many of them were exiled. Their testimonials represent the experiences lived by marginalized members of their society from a marginalized point of view.

Many testimonial texts are written in the first person with the intent of evoking a response from the reader. At times, the use of fictional constructs allows for greater reader response and a greater sense of urgency, which causes critics such as Ana María Amar Sánchez to classify testimonials as partially fictional works. However, critics such as John Beverly show that the importance of these testimonials is that it allows for “the sensation of experiencing the real” (Beverly, Margin, 22) by the reader.

The power to engage the reader, even when using fictional constructs, is one of the most important aspects of the testimonial. By using a diary format written in the present tense, Hernán Valdés utilizes a literary construct that allows for greater reader response. However, this technique demonstrates the thin line that divides fiction and non-fiction. The fictional construct of a diary that represents what he lived through, and in which the reader understands that the experiences described were lived experiences by the author, allows for a greater sense of urgency. However, testimonials are generally written in the past tense, not in the present tense as in Tejas Verdes. In this instance, Hernán Valdés not only writes from memory, an inherently problematic endeavor, but he adds another intricate layer to the blurred line between fact and fiction by writing a present tense diary. Moreover, the use of the diary suggests that Hernán Valdés remembers each day exactly

as it occurred. It is entirely credible that he remembers well the first few days of detention and his experiences in the torture chamber. However, it is unlikely that he could remember each day exactly as it occurred. This is an example of a case where the use of a fictional construct allows the reader to have the sensation of experiencing the real, even though the event may not be described exactly as it occurred. Because of the use of fictional constructs, Amar Sánchez states,

Es decir, no es posible leer los textos (testimoniales) como novelas ‘puras’ quitándoles el valor documental; pero tampoco puede olvidarse un trabajo de escritura que impide considerarlos como meros documentos que confirman lo real. El juego--y la ficción--entre ambos campos articulan lo específico del discurso no ficcional. (449)

This is also the case in Alicia Partnoy’s The Little School. She writes in the first person for her friends who have died so that they may have a voice denouncing what they lived through. However, even though it is very likely that they would have written in such a way, their thoughts and beliefs are fiction created by Partnoy. As in Tejas Verdes, it allows for a greater reader response and identification with those who suffered in concentration camps, but the fine line between fact and fiction is blurred. The reader knows, on some level, if only by reading the appendix at the end, that Gabriela died and never had the opportunity to write her testimonial. However, by including a testimonial representative of Gabriela’s suffering, Partnoy allows the reader to understand the communality of the experience lived in the Little School. By writing in the first person for people who died in the Little School, Partnoy does not strictly adhere to the tendencies of the genre wherein the survivor describes personal experiences. Nevertheless, these chapters are vital to her testimonial because they add depth to her representation of the communal experience described in The Little School.

The use of such fictional constructs allows for greater complicity between the reader and the author. As Jehenson states, a testimonial “produce una complicidad entre

la narradora real y el lector de carne y hueso” (Jehenson, 78). This complicity allows the reader identify with the author and the author’s experiences. The authors of testimonials promote this sense of complicity because they write their texts in first person and desire to provoke a sense of outrage and urgency in the reader that the situation described must change. For example, Hernán Valdés’s use of a diary allows for greater reader identification with him and those who lived through similar experiences because the diary lends a sense of immediacy to his testimonial. Because the reader feels that he or she has lived through the experience with Valdés, there is a greater complicity between the reader and the author. Alicia Partnoy’s use of voice also tries to evoke a greater sense of complicity between the reader and her text. The reader not only identifies with Partnoy, but with the other prisoners who are described in the first person such as Gabriela. Due to the use of many voices, the reader has a strong sense of identification with many of the prisoners at the Little School, quite unlike Tejas Verdes where the reader mainly identifies with Valdés.

The sense of identification and outrage that the reader feels upon reading the testimonials is guided by the authors. The authors write in such a manner that the readers are provoked into a sense of outrage. All of the memories are guided by the author who decides which memory to emphasize, and which memory does not need to be elaborated. Consequently, the reader obtains the writer’s vision of the experience, which may not be the complete vision. It is a personal, intimate account of the lived experience. The author may also try to evoke certain emotions in the reader. For example, Alicia Partnoy describes the prisoners as either victims or accomplices and there are no positive aspects to the guards. The prisoners who spoke while under torture are, in her mind and her description, no better than the guards and the torturers. She wants the reader to understand her suffering and to have a greater respect for her because she did not speak while tortured and refused to name her friends. Hernán Valdés does not portray life in Tejas Verdes in such black and white terms. He describes the time the guards helped him

after he fell into the Eucalyptus trees and their genuine concern for him. Valdés also writes about the guard who, upon helping Valdés out of the van after his torture session, is appalled that the men in the torture room had used electrical current with him as a torture device. Valdés wants the reader to understand the complex reality lived in the concentration camp and to realize that the people involved are not so easily categorized.

The communal voice expressed in these texts varies from text to text. Each text has a different focus and a different sense of voice and representation. For example, the voice expressed in Tejas Verdes is not a voice that shows solidarity with his fellow cellmates. It is a voice of an observer who does not readily participate in the conversations nor the activities within the cell. Valdés remains aloof and separate from his cellmates, though there are moments when he feels a real sense of identification with them. Nevertheless, Valdez's work is representative of the type of experience lived in a Chilean concentration camp by many Chileans. The reader is aware that this work represents Valdés's experience in the concentration camp and that Tejas Verdes represents life in the concentration camp and the experiences lived by many Chileans.

The voice of The Little School's conveys a greater sense of community to it because Partnoy writes using different narrators. Her goal is to write a work representative of the people imprisoned with her in the concentration camp, and to accomplish this she writes in the first person for herself and for others by adopting the first person voice for people who died or with whom she no longer has contact, and by writing in the third person. The use of different voices provides varying perspectives which allow the reader to understand the great sense of solidarity that existed between the prisoners. Alicia Partnoy wants to represent the communality of her experience in such a way that the reader realizes that her experience was shared by many others, not only in Argentina, but throughout Latin America.

Testimonials attempt to evoke a response from the reader that will cause the reader to denounce these atrocities. However, certain testimonies evoke a greater reader

response than others. In Patricia Verdugo's works, the reader identifies with the outrage and condemnation expressed in the work. Nevertheless, there exists a measure of distance between the person giving the testimonial and the reader. The reader identifies with the family members, but the first person testimonials are not fluid but, rather, disjointed and pieced together by Verdugo. The testimonials of Joan Jara and Hernán Valdés have a greater resonance with the reader because they are told in the first person concerning a painful personal experience. Hernán Valdés utilizes a diary so that the reader has a greater sense of identification with what he, and many other Chileans, suffered and lived through. There is the sensation that the reader is in the cell with Valdés and this permits the reader to understand in an intense manner the horror and complete loss of personal freedom experienced in concentration camps such as Tejas Verdes. Alicia Partnoy writes using varying voices so that the reader can comprehend the communal suffering experienced in a concentration camp. She wants the reader to recognize that her story is representative of the suffering experienced by everyone in the concentration camp, and that her suffering represents the horror lived by many. The reader has a sense of identification with her writing, though the reader is at times confused because of the rapid change of voice and the non-linear use of time. The reader has a heightened understanding, due to the preface, that the testimonial was written for all of the people who lost their voices through death and disappearance. All of the testimonials succeed in allowing the reader to understand that these horrible acts must be condemned and that there exists a need to fight against these injustices.

In the testimonial there also exists the problem of self representation. The testimonial writer is criticized for the accuracy of memories detailed or the means of representing these memories. For example, Hernán Valdés describes certain days in the concentration camp in a detailed manner whereas other days are barely discussed. Valdez's diary is problematic in the sense that it was impossible for him to write a diary while in the camp. However, the partially fictional construct of the diary allows the reader

to understand the monotony of daily life in the camp, the fear of torture, and the horror of the experience in the torture chamber. Hernán Valdés did not attempt to represent himself as a hero but, rather, as a flawed man who was violently detained and tortured. His description of the time he spent in the torture chamber is representative of the torture experienced by many prisoners because he shows the prisoner's desperation to leave the chamber alive. To do so, he willingly agrees to anything the soldiers say. By accurately representing himself and the experiences that he survived, Hernán Valdés made himself vulnerable to criticism by critics such as Ariel Dorfman. Dorfman criticizes Valdés for speaking under torture, but does not recognize that Valdés's testimonial is commendable because Valdés does not alter the events that occurred so as to portray himself as a hero. In his testimony, Valdés represents what happens to prisoners, the helplessness they feel, and their desperation to survive when they are tortured. Valdés also shows the sense of guilt experienced by the survivor of torture and the sense of having become an accomplice with the enemy. Valdés represents himself as a victim of the Pinochet regime who had to conspire with his torturers so as to survive.

The testimonial provides a voice for the illiterate or for those who are not generally given a public voice. Each testimony is crucial for a greater understanding of the events that took place in Chile and Argentina during the 1970's and 1980's. The authors of these testimonios want their fellow citizens and citizens from the global community to acknowledge and condemn the suffering that occurred at the hands of the military. The authors also want their fellow citizens to learn a different version of events than those taught in the official history books that relate only the official story.



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