

## **Digging up memory:** suppressed objects during the dictatorship in Chile 1973–1990

*Marcela Vera Oliva*



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Supervisor: Heléne Martinsson-Wallin  
Campus Engelska Parken, Uppsala

# Abstract

Vera Oliva, Marcela 2023. *Digging up memory: suppressed objects during the dictatorship in Chile 1973–1990*. Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University.

This work deals with objects suppressed by individual people after the 1973 coup in Chile, due to the repression exerted by the installed civic-military dictatorship. It collects the memories of those who had to get rid of compromising objects to save their lives, pointing out the strategies chosen for this purpose, as well as the places to carry them out. It shows that the strategies varied and depended on different circumstances. This work is also about the values given to objects and the way in which the functions of objects change according to political circumstances. It highlights the memory created in contrast to the discourses of official history and to forced oblivion.

Keywords: *materiality, agency, memory, counter-memory, Chile, dictatorship*

Vera Oliva, Marcela 2023. *Att gräva fram minnet: undertryckta föremål under diktaturen i Chile 1973–1990*. Institutionen för arkeologi och antik historia, Uppsala universitet.

Detta arbete handlar om de föremål som förtrycktes av enskilda människor efter statskuppen i Chile 1973, på grund av förtrycket som den installerade civil-militära diktaturen utövade. Det samlar in minnen av dem som var tvungna att göra sig av med kompromissande föremål för att rädda sina liv, och pekar ut de strategier som valdes för detta ändamål, såväl som platserna för att utföra dem. Det visar att strategierna varierade och berodde på olika omständigheter. Det här arbetet handlar även om de värderingar som ges till föremål och hur föremålsfunktioner förändras beroende på politiska omständigheter. Det lyfter fram minnet som skapats i kontrast till den officiella historiens diskurser och till påtvingad glömska.

Keywords: *materialitet, agency, minne, counter-memory, Chile, diktatur*

Magister's thesis in archaeology 30 credits.

Supervisor: Heléne Martinsson Wallin.

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Department of Archaeology and Ancient History,

Uppsala University, Campus Engelska Parken

Box 626, 751 26 Uppsala, Sweden.

Cover image: LP-record by Victor Jara (DICAP/Warner Records, 1969), buried in 1973 and unearthed in 1990, by the father of one informant of this thesis.

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***The first step in liquidating a people, said Hübl, is to erase its memory.  
Destroy its books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history.  
Before long, the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was.***

— Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

# 1. Introduction

On September 11, 1970, socialist Salvador Allende won the presidential election in Chile, backed by a coalition named *Unidad Popular*, made up of the following political parties: Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party, Communist Party, Christian Left, Unitary Popular Action Movement (MAPU), Independent Popular Action, and the Radical Left Party (Library of the National Congress of Chile 2023). By the time in Chile, there was widespread poverty and the exploitation of workers and peasants had not changed much since colonial times. One of the main goals of Allende's government was Chile's economic independence through the nationalization of the country's resources. Chile possessed 20 % of the world's known reserves of copper (Tesar & Tesar 1973), but the copper mines were in the hands of the US companies Kennecott Copper, Anaconda, and Cerro. Moreover, 70% of the Chilean Telephone Company was in the hands of the US company International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (Editorial Quimantú 1972). Chilean oligarchy aspired to keep economic power through the establishment of market economy, and their main ally was the US government, which had done everything possible to keep Allende from being elected in three previous presidential elections, but this time was not successful.

According to declassified documents, days after the 1970 presidential election in Chile, the U.S. President Richard Nixon ordered the CIA to destabilize the Chilean economy and create conditions to overthrow Allende (National Security Archive 2023). The ITT company helped the opponents of the *Unidad Popular* government financially to prepare the coup, whilst Chile's main newspaper El Mercurio received funds from the CIA and the White House in Washington to discredit the newly elected government (ibid.). In October 1970, the Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean army, René Schneider, was killed in an attack by a group of military and civilians backed by the CIA (Jarufe 2019). Schneider respected the Constitution and opposed to armed intervention to overthrow the government, and two days later after his death, the Chilean Congress was to ratify Allende as the new President. Schneider was replaced by General Carlos Prats, who also respected the Constitution. In January 1972, General Pinochet was appointed as Chief of the General Staff, and seven months later he succeeded Carlos Prats, who resigned from his post because he did not have the support of the generals of the Armed Forces (Memoria Chilena 2023a).

During the Allende government, the agrarian reform initiated and carried out by the two previous governments, was deepened. In 1971, the National Congress unanimously approved the nationalization of copper, and the government presented a bill that established three areas in the economy: social, mixed and private (Memoria Chilena 2023b). Law nr. 17398 of the same year ensured political pluralism and freedom of the press, granting all political parties access to state medias, as well as to private ones. It also stipulated that no one could be prosecuted for holding or expressing any political idea (Brett 1998: 83). Great importance was given to culture and the democratization of books and magazines (ibid: 882–

83). The Quimantú state publishing house made a massive production and distribution of books at low cost for the population, reaching different age groups and social groups. Each publication consisted of 50,000 and 80,000 copies (Moral & Ramos 2019). It also published between 80,000 and 120,000 weekly copies of classics of universal and Chilean literature, and biweekly it published between 30,000 and 50,000 copies of essays and research (Peñaloza 2011: 77).

The democratically elected government of Allende did not finish its mandate, being interrupted by a military coup on September 11 of 1973, and followed by strong repression against citizens. A dictatorship led by a military *junta* was installed, with army general Augusto Pinochet at the head, and a state of war was declared (Monsálvez 2020). The National Congress and the Constitutional Court were dissolved, the military *junta* took command of the Executive, Legislative and Constituent powers, as well as of public and private universities, appointing senior officers of the armed forces as rectors. Political parties were banned, strict censorship was imposed on all the media, and a curfew was established for years. Thousands of people were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and assassinated (Valech I Report 2005). From then on, anyone who was found with material representing ideas or attitudes contrary to the new regime, was in grave danger.

## 1. 1 Problem formulation

There are many events linked to the coup of 1973 in Chile that are still unknown for most people. It is a past present whose protagonists for the most part are still alive, and who quite often keep stories that have never been told. Since the return to democracy in Chile, in the national media there has been a tendency to avoid testimonial memories about the violent events occurred at that time, since most of the media still belong to those who supported the dictatorship. The first school textbooks that addressed the coup of 1973 were published only in the year 2000 (Gazmuri 2013: 46). A study about history schoolbooks during the period 2002–2014 shows that the word *dictatorship* is avoided, replacing it with *military regime*, *military government*, or simply *government* (Fernández-Silva & Morgado 2018).

During the government which started its mandate in 2010, it was decreed to reduce the hours of history and social sciences classes in primary and secondary schools. However, the decree was rendered null and void, due to citizen protests (Gazmuri 2013: 50). The History content taught in the present was established in the Curricular Bases of 2013 and 2015, during the same government. The events of 1973 are presented as the result of a polarized society where the military had “a role”, and no judgements are done regarding their unconstitutional actions (ibid.: 172).

A study on teaching, done in a Chilean primary school, shows a tension between the teacher's unwillingness to express his personal opinion about the dictatorship period and the pupils' desire to express the memories of their families (Toledo & Magendzo 2013). This difficulty of integrating family history with collective history occurs even at a national level. Thus, people in the periphery have individual memories that have not managed to become



collective. One of the results of this is that there is no vast and widespread knowledge about surviving strategies during the Chilean dictatorship. Oblivion was a condition for peace and reconciliation when democracy was restored, and for many years officiality tried to omit memories about the dictatorship period in the public space (Lira 2010). The consensus meant that the memory of the victims was invalidated, and the vision of the victors was privileged (Peñaloza 2011). In general, the actions and strategies taken during the dictatorial period by those defeated, have been devalued and left out from public discourses.

## 1. 2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to find out what kind of objects were thrown away, destroyed, buried or hidden by Chileans during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet 1973–1990. Also, to rescue the memories and stories about these and about the strategies used to suppress them. The questions are: what type of material was suppressed? Is there material which was rescued or could be rescued? What individual memories exist about the material, and what is its significance to collective memory in the present?

## 2. Theory & Method

### 2. 1 Theoretical framework

I have chosen three theoretical points of departure for this thesis: *materiality*, *agency*, and *memory*. The idea that objects have a social life was coined in 1986 by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who explains that people find value in things, and things add value to social relationships. For him, persons and things are not completely different categories (2006: 15), because things are surrounded by transactions carried out with characteristics from social relations. For Olsen (2010: 159), people and things constitute each other, he points out that human agency is inseparable from the world of things, since creation and innovation implies cooperation. He thinks that, as symbols, objects can stabilize relations and can be manipulated to attain certain ends. González-Ruibal's approach to materiality insists on this, and he also suggests the inclusion of a psychoanalyst approach to stress the unconscious nature of material culture. According to him (2014: 49), objects can convey meanings that are not explicit, and silences can be traced through them. He means silences, gaps, or absences which are often excluded by discourses, but can be revealed by small forgotten things.

*Agency* theories recognise that people are affected by social structures, but they have also the capacity of making changes in these (Bourdieu 1990). According to Hodder (1982: 212), material culture transforms social organisation according to the strategies of groups. However, acts of resistance to domination are not about changing, but about opposing to change, according to González-Ruibal (2014: 6). He (ibid: 19) differentiates between resilience, resistance and rebellion as different forms of being against domination. When people resist to change, their cultural relationship to objects play a significant role, since in these they can find a support to detain change. González-Ruibal (ibid: 50) also states that resistance is not made only in an active conscious way, but also unwittingly, in the sense that unreflectively incorporated gestures and manners of doing and using things, can become acts of resistance, in the eyes of others.

According to anthropologist Kopytoff (1986), things change and take on new roles in new cultural and social circumstances. Identical objects can have completely different values, since the value lies on the life history of the object (Shanks 1998). Objects can have associative or emotional values and have the quality of awakening memory. Individual memory is influenced by the group to which the individual belongs to, its link with the group allows the individual to remember and reconstruct its own experiences (Halbwachs 2004). Collective memory is shaped through dialogue, it is a process of interaction through which identities are being shaped, and it enables people to define themselves. For Halbwachs, every social event is a memory, and memory is knowledge. The participants in collective memories

belong to the broader group of a nation, but the history of the nation has only a few points of contact with the history of individuals.

Unlike history, which is only one, memory is multiple and it is not installed and learned, but it is lived, it is experienced within an affective community (Lavabre 1998). An individual memory is the recollection of personal experience, while *emblematic memory* is collective memory that allows an interpretative framework for individual memory, and gives meaning to it. A bridge is built between both memories when they are marked by special historical events. Building memory is the process of making sense of these events, and it may include carrying out a community project that was transgressed by the events that are remembered (Stern 2013). These events make that one or two generations of people feel that they, or their families, have lived a personal experience linked to a great historical episode, or rupture (Stern 2000).

State terrorism determines the emergence of various memories. On the one hand, there are the memories of people who recall the events seeking for justice, and on the other, the memories of people who try to legitimize the violence of the State. The existence of winners and defeated makes it difficult for the defeated to express their memories in the public space, since history is forgotten by the victors, not only written by them, as Peñaloza says (2011: 23). The transmission of memory depends on a process of identification, for which spaces for reflection are needed. For the intergenerational transmission to take place, it is necessary to give the possibility for younger generations to reinterpret and give their own meaning to the past (Jelin 2002).

Memory involves remembering and forgetting, and while some materials and events continue to be in conscience, others are forgotten. Memories are marked by omissions and, as said by writer Mario Benedetti, oblivion is full of memory. For Van Dyke, forgetting is memory's complement and counterpart. Totalitarian states create the conditions for domination of others by deleting the past and the references from early times that might be favourable for resistance (Van Dyke 2019). By studying how the past is remembered and by whom, it is possible to better understand how power functions in memory politics (Starzmann 2016).

Memory is part of group identity, and totalitarian states have tried to manipulate it, even forced citizens to forget (Ricoeur 1999: 17). Thus, the memories about violent past events told by people who experienced them, have been associated with anti-totalitarian resistance (Todorov 2000: 14). Todorov calls the learning dimension of memory *exemplar memory*. He states that *exemplar memory* is liberating, and it allows the people involved to use the lessons of the past, acting in the present. That means to learn from the injustices and fight against them in the present. But where memory is being avoided or ignored, it becomes an element of resistance against institutional history (Peñaloza 2011).

Established official narrative and insurgent histories often come into conflict with each other. *Counter-memory* is the social and political memory that goes against the official histories, it is an act of resistance which questions the veracity of history as knowledge (Foucault in Bouchard 1977). According to archaeologist Van Dyke (2019),

archaeology's most important work is being a tool of *counter-memory* for purposes of social justice, and justice is needed to heal trauma and oblivion caused by totalitarian regimes. She points out that archaeology is the construction of social memory, and that all archaeology is political. She claims that there is a disconnection between archaeologists engaged in practices of *counter-memory* and symmetrical archaeologists like Olsen. She (2019: 220) thinks that the latter neglect their responsibility by letting things speak for themselves and not activate their materials for critique.

According to archaeologist Wollentz (2020), communities may have different ways of approaching the past, and it is important to take an appropriate approach in dealing with their different perceptions of memories, as well as to present and negotiate sensitive memories, since it can cause different responses. The memories reclaimed from people of the past and the memories affirmed through archaeological excavations often inform and constitute each other, and as past memories are being reclaimed, new memories are born. For Wollentz (ibid.: 152–154), an archaeology of reclaiming memories can be regarded as a moral responsibility towards people from the past and affected in the present, which means a more ethical archaeology

## 2. 2 Method

An ethnographic method was used to collect personal memories about objects which had to be suppressed by its owners in the time period 1973–1990. I started by asking my relatives and acquaintances in Chile and other countries if they had to get rid of things after the military coup, and I got favourable responses. I asked them to put me in contact with other people who they thought might have done the same, and it showed to be more of them. One of the informants was sought by me after reading an article in the press in which she is named.

The interviews were done depending on geographic distance and the availability of the informants: in person, by telephone, voicemail or messenger. Eight informants living in different countries were interviewed simultaneously in a group online (focus group), whilst one of these informants interviewed her husband and her brother in law. When the informants were interviewed in person or by telephone, their words were written down meanwhile they talked. Everyone got the opportunity to express freely about the issue concerned in this study, and questions were put during the conversation. These were the following:

What object/s did you or your family had to get rid of after the coup of 1973? How old were you at the time? What did you do with the material (buried, threw, hid, burned, etc.?) In case you buried it, do you remember where (place and town)? Did you recover the material? In case of not, do you think it can still be where it was buried?

## 3. Sources

### 3.1 Sources

A total of 30 persons participated as informants for this thesis. They are 17 women and 13 men, in an age range of 49–88 years. They were altogether between 6–39 years old at the time of the events; eleven of them were under 18 years of age. Of the total, 25 informants were involved in suppressing compromising things in 1973. Of the resting five, 3 have vivid memories of their family getting rid of things, whilst two of them inherited the memories of their parents. All the informants were interviewed in Spanish. Their places of residence in the 1970's vary between low-income, to upper-middle class neighbourhoods. At the time of the events they lived in the following cities: Santiago, San Bernardo, Talcahuano, Temuco, Lautaro, Talca, Concepción, Puerto Montt, Punta Arenas, Antofagasta, Valparaíso. Today they live in the following countries: Chile, Sweden, Germany, Canada, Venezuela, Netherlands, United States of America.

### 3.2 Previous studies

The material culture of the South American dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s has been moderately studied by archaeologists since a couple of decades. In Argentina, an archaeological excavation was carried out to rescue a library buried in the 1970s (Vanella et al. 2017), and another library was rescued from the secret walls of a house from where its owner was kidnapped by the military. Both procedures were documented in films: *The Red Library* (2017) and *The House of the Lost Books* (2016). The archaeology of the dictatorship in Chile has mainly dealt with studies on detention and torture centres, the objects manufactured by political prisoners, the exhumation of the bodies of the disappeared and their personal belongings (Fuenzalida 2017). Outside the field of archaeology there are some studies about prohibited music (Jordán 2009) and prohibited literature during the dictatorship (Rojas & Fernández 2019), and even a project that led to the rescue of books that were banned (Libros Prohibidos 2019). However, there are no studies about other types of material that people in Chile had to suppress as a precaution in the event of military house raids. Neither are there studies about the strategies used to suppress compromising material.

Musicologist Rodríguez Aedo studied the relation between music and political repression during the times of Pinochet, in the period 1973–1990. Musicologist Jordán (2009) examined the development of music that represented resistance, with focus on clandestine recordings, underlining the key role of recording cassettes. Rojas & Fernández are librarians, and their study is based on files and interviews, it is a historical review of the censorship mechanisms applied to books and the libraries of the University of Chile (2019). As for

Morel, he is a social worker, and Ramos is a sociologist. Their study (2019) analyses the causes that motivated the prohibition of literature, the procedures as it was carried out, and the ways in which this influenced the social representation of books. In the framework of their investigation, they gathered a collection of books that were banned during the dictatorship, and donated this to O'Higgins University.

Among designers there has been a great interest in the posters published during the Allende period. Both Godoy (1995) and Vico (2015) studied Chilean posters from this period (1970–1973), and along with it they rescued original posters. These are linked to the activities of the political left, they illustrate the electoral campaign of the *Unidad Popular* coalition, as well as the announcements to social, political and cultural events. Castillo Espinoza (2004) examined Chilean posters of the period 1963–1973, whilst Aguirre (2021) studied posters of the period 1973–1990.

### 3. 3 Source criticism

Some interviews are not so detailed as others, although they are concise. The reason is simply because the informants in these cases do not recall the details about the objects they had to get rid of, and have nothing more to add. Several informants did not recall all the things they had to suppress. However, this is also valuable information, since forgetting is also part of memory. The forgotten objects are also important because they highlight the meaning of the objects that on the contrary, are remembered.

### 3. 4 Ethical considerations

The informants received clear information about the propose of this study and the purpose of the interviews conducted with them. Each one of them sent me a voicemail giving his/her authorization for the use, in this study, of the data contributed by them in the interviews. Although none of them requested it, their real names have been replaced by a fictitious given name, in order to protect their identity.

### 3. 5 Background

Directly after the military coup of September 1973, a campaign was launched by the new regime to erase the imagery and material culture of the *Unidad Popular* period. With the aim of erasing the memory of the time before the coup, censoring knowledge, and eliminating freethinking, the possession of any material related to the times of democracy, or to any idea contrary to the newly installed political regime, was strictly prohibited. Chile's public television channel was raided by the military and the personnel was ordered to erase all the material registered during the Allende government (TVN 2023). Many film rolls were burned, and the same thing happened at Chile Films, the national film company (Villegas 1990).

Large amounts of books were burned from the National Library and the libraries of several universities (Moral & Ramos 2019; Rojas & Fernández 2019). Also books from private homes were burned, confiscated during military house raids. These were burned on the streets, and the images of soldiers burning books were broadcasted worldwide, by television channels (Castillo Inostroza 2015).

The building of the Quimantú state publishing house was raided and closed, and most of its books were banned, including poetry and children's tales (Bergot 2004). Muralist brigades were banned and their murals were removed, including those by renown artists, like Roberto Matta and Julio Escámez (Chilean Council of National Monuments 2023; Cabello 2019). The cultural practices promoted by the military regime covered areas of daily life, architecture, publicity, iconography, scenic manifestations, etc. In general, it was an aesthetic associated to cleanliness, order, and national symbols (Errázuriz & Leiva 2012). The walls of the cities were cleaned, graffiti and posters removed, and the mayoress of Santiago even promulgated a law decree through which the use of the black colour on the facades of the houses was prohibited, as well as "other violent tones" (ibid.). Some works of art at the National Museum of Fine Arts were destroyed in an armed attack by army soldiers (Moral & Ramos 2019), and even music performed with Andean instruments could be damning (Jordán 2009). Singers were blacklisted, and self-censorship was imposed on record labels. Only the Odeon record label had to withdraw 39 LPs and 21 EPs from sale. In the factory of the IRT state record label, military units destroyed 50,000 vinyl records (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 164), and they also destroyed the material of DICAP record label (Memoria Chilena 2021). Musicians were exiled, imprisoned, and investigated by the police, or even killed (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 171).

Starting from the days after the coup, the main mode of application of massive violence was carried out through the practice of house raids, which followed the same pattern throughout the country. The military did not find any armed resistance from citizens (Valech I Report 2005: 173). Along with the house raids, mass arrests were made in neighbourhoods, industries, universities, public buildings, farms, mining centres (ibid.: 192). The raids were massive military operations, and many times included an entire population. House raids along with deprivation of liberty were dominant mechanisms during the period 1973–1990, and most of the times were carried out in low-income neighbourhoods (Moya et al. 2005: 73). According to the Report of the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture, 41.5% of the people imprisoned during the Pinochet dictatorship participated in some type of political organization. Of that percentage, the majority was linked to a union or to a student movement. Of the total, 4% was under 18 years of age (Valech I Report 2005: 482).

## 4. Analysis of the sources

First, the most recurrent places where the informants suppressed compromising objects, were identified. Then, the objects were classified depending on the material they were made of. The manner in which they were suppressed was specified, and each object was analysed within its own context. Finally, some memories which did not have a direct relation to the suppressed objects were also examined, since they talk about the process of remembering, and the transmission of memory. Before getting to these points, I will talk in brief about the informants and the interviews with them. The transcription of the interviews are to be found in the appendices (in Spanish). The names of the informants have been changed due to ethical reasons, and each one of them will be called by a first name:

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Anna     | 16. Felipe   |
| 2. Marcos   | 17. Flavia   |
| 3. Alex     | 18. Gina     |
| 4. Amelia   | 19. Gabriel  |
| 5. Andrea   | 20. Jessica  |
| 6. Ariel    | 21. Laura    |
| 7. Arturo   | 22. Luis     |
| 8. Barbara  | 23. Mariana  |
| 9. Camilo   | 24. Milén    |
| 10. Carla   | 25. Ricardo  |
| 11. Carlos  | 26. Rodrigo  |
| 12. Claudio | 27. Rosa     |
| 13. Elena   | 28. Sonia    |
| 14. Eliana  | 29. Veronica |
| 15. Emilio  | 30. Ximena   |

### 4. 1 A memory exercise

It was not so easy to get to the point with most of the informants, since previously they had not delved deeply in their memories about the things they had to suppress after the coup of 1973. At first, most of them answered briefly, without stopping to recall the details. Others concentrated in other memories from the time, without putting much attention to the objects in question. However, with a bit of insistence it was possible to get to the specifics. Many started saying they got rid of “books and other things”. Only after inquiring about those “other things”, the memory of more objects emerged. Some remembered quite well some of the objects, whilst others did not remember them much or not at all, but everyone recalled the time when they got rid of them. They were moments of fear which sometimes seemed to have



been left far behind in memory, but emerged little by little. Getting rid of compromising objects was not an isolated activity, it was part of a chain of events which are not always easy to remember. As Carla, who was 29 years old at the time, says:

*I had forgotten, but I remembered it now. It's sad to remember it, because so many things happened...which are so ugly and so horrible, and that actually you have never forgotten, but have let them go somehow... I mean, they are not constantly latent, because they hurt. But when it comes to denouncing, yes, you have to remember.*

Concealment of the own identity, due to the political circumstances, is mentioned by several informants. Getting rid of everything that could be proof of ideas contrary to those allowed, all at once, meant to close a life cycle abruptly. The action was even a symbolic act, in which people stopped acting according to who they were, to disguise their identity. It meant to stop expressing own thoughts and to start being extremely careful in each and every action, from that moment on. The campaign aimed to erase the imagery of the *Unidad Popular* coalition, included the suppression of colours, haircut and clothing. The new direction of Secondary Education defined norms on personal appearance, and it was no longer allowed to wear blue jeans, red and black clothes, clogs, handmade necklaces and bags, neither beard nor long hair in the case of men, nor make-up in the case of women (Errázuriz & Leiva 2012: 24). Amelia was 18 old at the time and says that she and those like her who continued in resistance tasks after the coup, got rid of the physical look they had during the *Unidad Popular* government, assimilating themselves to a more conservative appearance. She says:

*I think the most difficult was the need to set up a different identity and hide the real one. Talking stupidities at the office and in the neighbourhood, and leaving any political expression to privacy.*

Felipe recounts that after learning about the coup in the morning of September 11, the young man to whom he was renting a room, an 18-year-old university student, went to the bathroom and when he came out he was unrecognizable, since he had cut his long hair, very short. As for Arturo, he was 25 years old and says that he learned immediately that life is more important than anything else:

*(...) before mentioning objects, I think we should remember people, human beings, who also had to hide. Or disguise. To try to leave the country, to continue fighting in a militant clandestinity... or just to survive unleashed fascism, capable of killing someone just for having a beard, or having long hair, or possessing some 'dangerous' book.*

Arturo writes in his autobiographical poem “The torturer played soccer” (appendix 1), that his best theatrical role as an actor was in November 1973, when he was under interrogation in a prison called “La Patilla”, located in the subsoil of the Civil Registry, in Santiago. Apart from dedicating himself to dramatic art, he had been a national tennis champion and a South American athletics champion, something he knew how to use in his favour, and which finally

saved him. “*Actors are all communists*”, said his torturer. So Arturo assumed his identity as a sportsman instead.

For most of the informants, the interview for this study was a memory exercise, but at the end, several said they were surprised of how much they still remember after 50 years. As for the group interviewees, the interaction between them gave rise to reflections on their memories, and those who were teenagers at the time talked also about the dream they had before the military coup. They were left with the feeling that they had to give up their identity, and to repress their memories. Those who were not yet born also had something to say about this, as shown in the following dialogue, which is an extract from the online focus group (appendix nr. 2):

Andrea, born in 1974:

*I think that everything was so traumatic, that many details of what each of our parents, uncles, cousins, etc., lived at that moment, were put away just like those buried objects.*

Veronica, born in 1974:

*That's how it is. They go out for a walk in dreams, nightmares, readings...*

Marcos, 14-15 years old in 1973: *They have been encapsulated for decades.*

Andrea: *They said that after four decades people would get over it. We are reaching 50 years since then, and those wounds are still there for our families.*

Camilo, 11 years old in 1973: *Somehow, we ourselves were buried.*

Luis, 16 years old in 1973: *That's the feeling, Camilo, many times when we stop to reflect, we feel that.*

## 4. 2 Burning and burial places

Why Vikings buried their treasures, why they chose certain places to do it, and why they never dug them up again, are questions that many archaeologists have tried to elucidate. The same happens in relation to other cultures and contexts, since burying objects is a practice that has occurred everywhere and at all times. Things have been intentionally buried worldwide for lots of reasons. The Saami people buried the objects of their religion when banned by the Christian church (Zachrisson 1991: 88), and people in Estonia who escaped from the advancing Red Army in 1944 buried their valuables before leaving their houses, with the hope of returning one day (Burström 2012). It is believed that the Mapuche people in southern Chile buried their silver jewellery in a clay jar to save it from European invaders (Hernandez 2007). Sometimes, when an armed confrontation against the Spaniards was over, they arranged a ceremony called *Koyag*, a reunion where the two armies in conflict met and talked

for days until they reached a peace agreement. Then, a hole was dug in the ground at the foot of the sacred *Canelo* tree (*Drymis winteri*), and the heads of both parties buried their weapons (Goicovich 2018: 444). Although it can be forgotten over time, there is always a reason for things being buried at a certain time, on a certain place.

Directly after the 1973 coup, the informants of this study got rid of things in different places, but some of these were more recurrent than others. Some chose the roof eaves to hide things, or the attic, when this was difficult to find and its entrance was not visible at first sight. In fact, it worked quite well most of the times. Felipe hid compromising books in the roof eaves of his house because he did not want to burn them in the backyard, since the smoke could arise suspicion. The same with Barbara and Gina. Both of them had neighbours who were supporters of the military *junta*, and therefore Barbara hid her compromising things in the attic, instead of burning them in the backyard. Gina burned her things in the kitchen sink, so as not to raise smoke outdoors. As for Amelia, she burned documents in the bathroom sink of her family's apartment. She chose to do it in the smaller bathroom of her apartment, because in the bigger one there was a window which had been shot with a gun before the coup. She and her family suspected that those who shot were the right-wing neighbours who disliked Amelia's younger brothers, who were left-wing. It was important to be careful with neighbours. Gabriel was 19-years old and his house was raided by the military because a neighbour told them that he had weapons. Nothing compromising was found in his house, but he was imprisoned for 15 months, with no charges against him. His certificate of detention shows no cause, crime or sentence<sup>1</sup>. Still, they gave him probation.

Most informants burned compromising things in their backyard, even though this alternative was risky, since the backyard walls communicated with neighbouring houses, and it also had no roof. Emilio was 15 years old at the time, and says:

*(...) we burned literature and the newspaper El Siglo in the backyard at night, while an army helicopter flew around, every time the helicopter appeared over us, we put out the fire.*

In the Valparaíso neighbourhood where Alex lived, people seemed to be less careful. He says, "*there were bonfires everywhere, everyone was burning things*". The people who lived in this neighbourhood worked for the same state company and most of them knew each other, many were left-wing or members of trade unions.

Another chosen alternative was to bury the objects. In the city of Punta Arenas, Carla and her husband chose to bury their things instead of burning them, because of the strong winds of Southern Patagonia, which made it difficult to light a fire. She says that Punta Arenas was a totally controlled city, and the only way to get out of there was by plane, so when leaving, she could not take compromising things with her. She thought about her children who were in Santiago, and she sensed what was going to come from the first moment, so she and her husband buried their compromising things next to their house, the same day of the coup. Even other informants buried their things, and on some occasions the

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<sup>1</sup> Certificate granted and signed by the Mayor of the Puerto Montt Penitentiary Compliance Centre, Chilean Gendarmerie, 2001. Sent to me by Gabriel.

burial place (in the backyard) was covered with cement. Others just buried them, and later left the house forever. Only two informants were able to dig up them again.

The San Carlos Canal in Santiago is other recurring place in the testimonies, where objects were suppressed. Its waters run from the Maipo River in the Andes Mountains and descend to join the Mapocho River, which runs through the capital and flows into the ocean. The canal crosses six capital communes, but the informants in this study dumped their things on its route of La Reina, an upper-middle-class commune. The objects were usually dumped there when it was impossible to destroy substantial amounts of books, when the items were difficult to destroy because of the material they were made of, or when the person lived in an apartment. The canal was even a place where army soldiers dumped dead bodies, at the same period. One of them was the body of Emilio Antonio Pinto, a 12-year-old boy who was killed by soldiers in November 1973, while he was playing outside. Today there is a commemorative plaque in tribute to him on a bridge over the canal, placed by neighbours and social organizations of La Reina (Villa Grimaldi 2019).

A great part of the things burned by the informants were documents that could compromise either themselves or others politically, and these were the first things that were suppressed. For Barbara it was urgent to get rid of written information. Thus, first she got rid of address books, notebooks, pamphlets, party membership cards, and letters. She says:

*We burned all of that, and also history books, philosophy, novels, poetry. But not many books, because there was a lot of smoke coming out of the backyard and we lived near an informer...*

Even Anna started with burning documents, and also magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers. As for Amelia and her companions, the first thing they did was to get rid of documents, books, posters, certificates, music records, and all printed material indicating their adherence to the *Unidad Popular* coalition. She says:

*Secondly, we had to hide or make disappear personal defence elements such as nunchakos, colihues<sup>2</sup>, and in some cases -the least- handguns. Either the own or someone else's.*

Things were either burned or hidden/buried depending on each individual case and situation, and also on the material the things were made of. However, there are similitudes in the characteristics of the objects and the places chosen to suppress them. The paper material was burned starting from the first day of the coup. Handguns could not be burned, but had to be made disappear in some way, so they were thrown in different places, or buried along with books and other things. Sometimes the objects were buried because it was safer or easier to dig a hole than to make a fire, due to different circumstances. Other times, the owner resisted to get rid of the objects and decided to bury them, with the aim of preserve them. According to the thought of González-Ruibal, this can be called an act of resistance to change.

Informant Arturo points out that nothing was more important than saving life, so the objects did not matter much. However, he also says:

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<sup>2</sup> colihues = sticks of Chilean bamboo (*Chusquea culeou*).

*I think that many people who are forced to disguise quickly and radically what they think or do because death is lurking, still take the time to safeguard something significant.*

The strategies taken to get rid of compromising objects were varied. These depended on the circumstances of the moment, and also on the informant's habitat and its surroundings. For example, different strategies are required when living in an apartment, than when living in a house with a backyard, or with a well-hidden attic. The proximity to water, like a river or a canal, can also make a difference, as well as living in a house with a chimney. Even neighbours can play a significant role in the election of strategies, since they can be either informers or accomplices.

### 4.3 Books

The destruction, prohibition and censorship of books took place from the first moments after the coup of 1973. A study about the destruction of books in the city of Valparaiso shows that not only literature and writing practices (such as graffiti) were destroyed, but also the book's symbolic value, the idea of it as a space of freedom and identity (Armas & Mardones 2020). Literature was what was suppressed the most by the informants of this study, and there were many ways to do it. The most common was to burn it, but the smoke could bring up suspicion, specially coming from a chimney, since September is a spring month in the southern hemisphere. The alternative was to bury it, or to destroy it some other way. All kind of literature was removed from the house: history, philosophy, poetry, novels, tales, etc. Some informants talked about how hard it was to get rid of the books that were dear to them, and described them in detail. Some of the books had already a story before being suppressed, whilst others were brand new.

Anna was 27 years old in September 1973, when she buried books in her backyard. In the mid-1980s she unearthed some of them, but she buried them again, when there was danger of house raids. She buried books by Karl Marx and Franz Fanon, novels by Pushkin, Gorky, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and also Che Guevara's diary. She even buried Russian and Chinese folk tales. But her most beloved book by that time was one by Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal, which she buried and unburied a few times. It was a banned book called *In Cuba* (Libros Prohibidos 2019). Anna says:

*I wrapped the books with many plastic bags and they kept quite well, despite the humidity of the South. (...) I unearthed all the books definitely in 1990, and Cardenal's book was just a little wrinkled. Years later, Cardenal came to my city and presented his latest book at the University of Concepción, the auditorium was packed and there was a long line to sign his new book. I showed him the book of his that I had unearthed, and told him: "This book helped me live during the dictatorship". Now it is signed by him.*

Those who lived in apartment buildings had to find out other ways to get rid of things. Both Carlos (in Antofagasta) and Marcos (in Santiago) chopped their books with scissors. Marcos was not yet 15 years old at the time, and says:

*For days we dedicated ourselves to destroy our home's library, we chopped the books with scissors, the pieces had to be very small so as not to reveal any dangerous words.*

Even single words taken out of context could be compromising. In an interview for the BBC Mundo (Millán 2022), Luis Costa says that he had a book named *Cybernetics and the Industrial Revolution*, which was confiscated by a military officer because of the word "Revolution". According to him, the officer said the word was dangerous. Costa also tells how he ate 30 sheets of rolling paper with handwritten information about a left-wing political party, while soldiers were searching his house. Even colour names could be compromising. In the School of Medicine in Santiago, the military confiscated and burned a collection of books on red blood cells, called *Red Series* (Ramírez 2015).

Gina was 26 years old, and since she did not want to rise smoke in the backyard because her neighbours were right-wing, she and her siblings burned books and documents in the kitchen, at her parent's house. She says:

*We put a shovel in the sink and burned the papers there little by little: we burned a small amount of paper, and immediately poured water on it. Then we threw the ashes into the garbage can, and continued with the same procedure on and on.*

Rodrigo was 20-years old and had already finished high school, but he dressed in his younger cousin's high school uniform to go and dump "literature and other things" into the San Carlos Canal, in the commune of La Reina. He thought that in this way he would arouse less suspicion. The things he dumped belonged to his older cousin, and he did it to help him, he calls it a "cleaning mission", and says that it left him feeling sad. Even Luis dumped things into the same canal. He was 16 years old and threw away a collection of books by Leon Trotsky. He did this along with his younger brother, and when they dumped the books into the water, they sounded less than they thought they would.

The military also burned books, many times in primary schools. Milén was 10 years old and was a pupil at the Artistic Experimental School, in Santiago (La Reina), which was raided when the spring term began. The soldiers painted over the school's murals with white lime, and burned books and art in the schoolyard. Ricardo and Camilo attended the same school, they were 10 and 11 years old respectively. Ricardo remembers that when they left school to go home, there were soldiers in the street checking their school bags. The soldier in charge checked them, and then kicked them. The school was located right at the foot of the Andes mountains, and everything around it was field. When they had a break, Camilo and his classmates used to play on a hill, and one day they were playing there, when bullets began to brush against them. The soldiers were shooting in their direction, so they quickly left.

In April 1974, a list of "objectionable study texts" were sent by the education minister to the interior minister, indicating the pages and paragraphs that should be censored

from a series of schoolbooks. Among others, he wrote that from a fourth grade Mathematics book (by Villaroel), the following statements needed to be “corrected”:

*Saturn, the largest planet of all those that revolve around the sun. Mercury, the smallest of the planets* (Villa Grimaldi 2016a).

Another book in the list was on geography, written by Pedro Cunnil Grau, director of the Department of Geography at the University of Chile. The minister’s remark was concise: “Delete poetry from page 239”. Several schoolbooks were banned completely, particularly on Social Sciences and Spanish Language (Moral & Ramos 2019; Libros Prohibidos 2019). The military in charge of the state of siege in Valparaíso, through a statement in the newspaper *El Mercurio*, ordered the burning of prohibited schoolbooks, declaring that the offenders would be punished with “maximum severity” (Libros Prohibidos 2019).

Milén’s family burned books in the backyard of her house, but her father saved a few of them by painting their spines and sending them in a box by boat to Sweden, where he was about to leave. As for Alex, he was 12-years old when his family burned books in the backyard, but he only remembers some of them: Chinese books that a relative had brought as souvenirs from his trip to China, some history books, and books by poet Pablo Neruda (Nobel Prize in Literature 1971). Gabriel and his family buried books under the kitchen floor of their house, whilst other books were burned. The latter were books by Karl Marx, Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong and Sun Tzu. There were also other ways of getting rid of books at the time, as told in a study on memory:

*(...) one day my mother took the books hidden in the attic and threw them into the bathroom tub full of water, to then tear them to pieces. I was a child and suffered when they were doing this, I said mom, why?! Let's keep one, just one! (...) My mom said it's impossible to keep one, if you keep one you're screwed anyway, one or a hundred doesn't matter. Damn how I suffered...* (Piper 2005: 90).

Mariana’s family house in Lautaro was raided many times, and the soldiers confiscated almost all the books they found, including a collection of Chilean history, because its title was *Military Stories*. Curiously, they left a book by Czech journalist Julius Fucik, who was a communist, and whose book *Report from the gallows* was banned by the military *junta* (Libros Prohibidos 2019). But it is well known that the soldiers were not so cultured, rather the opposite. They also left the *Diary of Anne Frank*, which is also contradictory, somehow. Especially considering that in 1979 the Secretary General of the Government (Julio Fernández) sent a letter to the Minister of Education requesting to prohibit the exhibition of the film *Holocaust* (1978, USA), “because of the serious effects it could have”, according to himself (Villa Grimaldi 2016b).

#### 4. 4 Magazines

Carlos’s younger sister rolled up a large number of youth magazines and hid them in the ventilation tube of their apartment, in the city of Antofagasta, and remained there for almost

two decades. Carlos was 23 years old and he only remembers the name of three of these magazines, which were stopped being published in 1973: *Onda*, *Paloma*, and *Ramona*. The first two were published by Quimantú, the state publishing house. *Paloma* magazine was aimed at women and edited by women, and *Onda* magazine was on music and youth culture. This latter was created with the participation of the national Youth Centres, the University of Chile, and the Ministry of Social Development (Sol del Saber 2019). *Ramona* magazine contained song lyrics, gossips, and politics. Its editors were left-wing students or graduates from the University of Chile (Fernández-Niño 2014). The day after the coup, the military burned books in a public *auto-da-fé* at the Quimantú building. Three members of the editorial staff were taken prisoner and are still missing today, constituting the list of *desaparecidos*: a proof-reader, and two journalists. One of the journalists worked at *Hechos Mundiales* magazine, and the other worked at *Onda* magazine (Bergot 2004).

One or two days after Carlos and his sister hid the magazines and got rid of other things, the military raided their apartment. Carlos says that the soldiers were not so fierce that time, compared to those who raided his workplace, a law firm where he worked as a lawyer. There, they destroyed everything, including furniture and the law degree certificates that hanged on the wall. Carlos still finds it absurd and he believes that the soldiers were drugged, because they acted like possessed, he says. They also raided the Theatre of the University of Chile, where Carlos took classes with Pedro de la Barra, a well-known actor, playwright, and National Art Award laureate. The theatre had recently premiered a play in which some of the characters were Indigenous people wearing spears, so the military confiscated the spears and all the theatre props.

According to Carlos, the Theatre of the University of Chile had been inaugurated by Salvador Allende years before when he was a senator, and his presence in Antofagasta was a great event which made an impression on people, because no politician from the capital used to visit that city in the desert. The university's Department of Arts, of which the theatre was part, included a symphony orchestra, a ballet ensemble, and a choir. After the raid, it was abolished (López & Rocco 2016: 49). Pedro de la Barra was the theatre director and he was forced to resign from his post. The financial support for the theatre was withdrawn, and it was separated from the university (Memoria Chilena 2021).

Barbara was also 23 years old at the time, and she burned many magazines, she says there were lots in her house, but she only remembers the name of one of them, called *En Viaje*. It was published by the State Railway Company for 40 years, in the period 1933–1973. Besides news about railway services and tourist information, it contained narrative and poetry by renowned writers, reportages and articles on literature, art, cinema, history and geography (Memoria Chilena 2023c).





Fig. 1. Onda, Paloma, Ramona, En Viaje (magazines).

#### 4. 5 Other paper material

*You think they were killed by time and absence,  
but their train sold a return trip ticket.  
It's those little things  
that left us a time of roses,  
in a hideout, on a paper, or in a drawer.*

— *Those little things,*  
song by Joan Manuel Serrat, 1971.

Other suppressed paper material consisted of notebooks, address books, letters, posters, photographs, pamphlets, and party membership cards. In 2006, some workers who were remodelling a building in a central neighbourhood of Santiago, lifted the parquet and found a notebook that had been hidden there for 40 years. It contained telephone numbers of well-known national artists, including singer Victor Jara, who was assassinated days after the coup, and other people who are still missing to this day (*El Desconcierto* 2016). Address books could put in danger a lot of people. Ricardo says:

*(...) one day we went to a friend of my uncle's, and inside the house everything was upside down, because the military had raided it, and my uncle's friend was taken prisoner (...). Everything was lying on the floor. The front door was open and nobody was there, so we entered and started looking for an address book everywhere throughout the house. My uncle was worried and wanted to know if the military had taken it or not.*

Barbara burned address books, notebooks, pamphlets, party membership cards, and letters. She burned letters her father had sent to her mother in 1955, while visiting a socialist country in Europe. He had been in Bucharest, at the International Youth Festival. She also burned a letter addressed to her parents which revealed that in the 1940s they hosted Pablo Neruda in their home, when the poet was being persecuted, during the government of González Videla. Of gratitude, Neruda gave her parents a book of his with a humorous dedication, and his signature. But since the Nobel laureate was a member of the Communist Party, Barbara better hid that book in the attic, and over time it was destroyed by humidity.

Just like other books that she hid in the attic, which she had to throw away after the return to democracy, since they became useless. Other books that she hid in the same place were eaten by mice.

Three informants threw away material by poet Pablo Neruda. Various titles written by him were banned, and at least two of them contained love poems: *Inmortal Poems*, and *Popular Antology 1972* (Memoria Chilena 2022). An exemplar of the latter was taken by soldiers from the school library of the Commercial High School in the city of Coronel, and burned in the schoolyard (Libros Prohibidos 2019). Early this year it was confirmed that Neruda was killed of poisoning by the military *junta*, twelve days after the coup, while he was lying at the hospital (Sanhueza 2023). At the date, his funeral was transformed into a demonstration of popular resistance, despite the strong repression.

In September 1973, in the backyard of the public television channel (TVN), the military burned all the film rolls containing television news from the preceding four years, and the production manager wanted archivist Amira Arratia to erase all the film rolls containing images of the time of the Allende government, including the images of Pablo Neruda in Sweden, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Arratia thought it would be terrible to erase part of national history (Arratia 2023), and she managed to hide the material. Among others, she saved images of Pablo Neruda along with writer Gabriel García Márquez, being interviewed by journalist Augusto Olivares, TVN's press director who died at the presidential palace the day of the coup. Arratia also saved images of Fidel Castro's visit to Chile, images of Salvador Allende, and the television channel's oldest recording: a recital by Joan Manuel Serrat in Santiago, in 1969 (ibid.; Gil 2006). Amira Arratia was 20 years old at the time and according to herself, her action was a duty towards society and history (Arratia 2023).

A simple piece of paper could be significant and enough for getting in trouble. Arturo remembers a small piece of paper that he got from a prisoner when he was released from prison, in November 1973. He made an incision on the sole of his sandals and hid the paper there, at the same time as he memorized the address of the prisoner's family to whom he would deliver it, saying that the prisoner was alive. For his part, Ricardo remembers a peculiar event. One day he was accompanying his uncle in his car, and the military stopped them to search the vehicle. A soldier looked inside the car and into the compartment in front of the seat, where there were some documents of the Socialist Party. He grabbed the paper and shook it, but he did not stop to look closer at it, and left it where it was. Ricardo says that maybe the soldier was only interested in weapons, or maybe he just played the fool. Or probably, he did not know how to read.

**Posters.** Eliana was 6 years old and remembers her grandmother burning things every day, in a metal barrel, in her backyard. Some of those things were photographs, books and posters. While Alex, he burned the posters he had on the walls of his teenager bedroom. They were many, but he only remembers some of them, which pictured Che Guevara, Ho-Chi-Min, and the music group Quilapayún. Days after the coup, the military *junta* released a decree of law that referred to the prohibition of text and graphic material. A systematic censorship of images was imposed in order to shape a new national imaginary, and posters

were considered instruments that attempted against the new order (Vico 2015). Schools and university careers linked to art and humanities were intervened, or even closed.

Eliana's family burned lots of posters with drawings illustrating the social program of the *Unidad Popular* government. Chilean lottery state company published this kind of posters, which were widely distributed before the coup. They illustrated social measures, like the creation of a universal free health service, the development of sports, the protection of children, etc. The funds of the lottery would be designated to these areas, as well as to firefighters, universities, hospitals, housing services, public lighting, drinking water, and others (Vico 2015: 468–469).

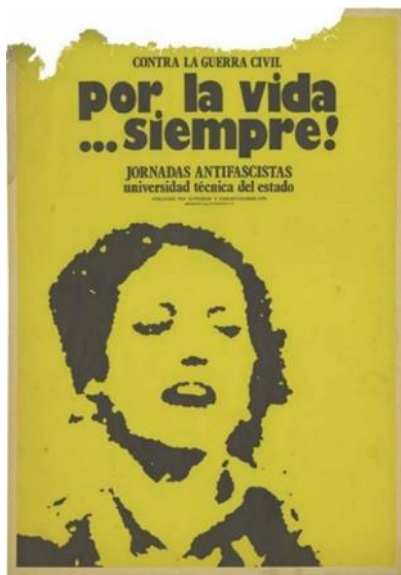


Fig. 2: One of the posters saved by Olivares. “Against civil war. For life... always! Antifascist days. Sept. 1973.

The day of the coup, the State Technical University (UTE, actual Universidad de Santiago) was raided by the military. Teachers and students had recently inaugurated an exhibition within the framework of “anti-fascist days”, and that day it would count with the presence of President Salvador Allende. Eighteen posters made by the university's Graphic Workshop at the Extension & Communication Department had been reproduced in large format and installed in billboards on the front of the central house. Moreover, sets of the same posters had been sent to regions, to be displayed simultaneously at UTE's venues and technological institutes (Vico 2015: 497). None of them came to be exhibited due to the coup. The military destroyed the billboards, the authors of the posters were arrested, and Victor Jara, who worked at the university's communication department, was murdered. But in the city of Viña del Mar, teacher Teobaldo Olivares Rozas

hid a set of the same named posters, in the attic of his house. Years later they were found by his son, who donated them to the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, in Santiago (Aguirre 2021: 14).

**Photographs.** Along with half of his father's library, Alex's family burned photographs of Fidel Castro during his visit to Valparaíso, in 1972. But other informants had to get rid of family pictures. As known, photographs are important for the individual and collective identity, as for the construction of memory and family history. These record important moments for those who lived them, and over time they can become testimonial documents. Barbara says that her father got rid of a suitcase with all the photographic stories of her family, including her childhood. Now she takes great care of her photographs, she points out. Eliana's family burned family photographs where left-wing friends appeared, in order not to compromise them, and also hid packages of family photographs between the beams of her grandmother's house. However, when Eliana and her family left into exile, her relatives took them away and burned them as well.

Ximena's family had to burn a photograph of her mother when she was high pregnant with her, because she was pictured along with Salvador Allende, during her campaign as a candidate for councillor, in the city of Temuco. While north of Temuco, Mariana and her family both burned and buried all the photographs of her parents. Her father was a city councillor and was imprisoned, whilst her mother was a governor and was searched by the military. They wanted a portrait of her to publish in the newspaper, so even her relatives hid the photographs of her. Mariana was 12 years old.

**Party membership cards.** One of the most compromising things were party membership cards, containing information about the member's political affiliation, signature, home address, and other. Just before the coup, the Communist Party and its youth organization in the city of Lautaro had renewed all its membership cards, and all of them were kept by a 24- year-old woman who was a party leader and friend of Mariana's mother. Since the young woman did not have a place of her own and lived at the town's hospital, she had left the cards at Mariana's home. After the coup they were all buried in the backyard, along with family photographs. These may still be buried there.

Even Gina kept party membership cards, because she was a treasurer of the Socialist Party in the capital commune of San Miguel, where she lived. She burned them along with notebooks of the Socialist Party and brand new books by Mao Zedong, in the kitchen sink, as told before. On the other hand, Ricardo's grandmother had a hard time looking for her dead husband's old party membership card. She could not find it, but it was found immediately by the soldiers when they raided her house. Luckily, she did find her husband's death certificate. Apparently, this was helpful, by chance. Ricardo thinks that the military thought that his grandfather was his son who had the same name as him, since they never looked for him, despite being a local political leader. Those were times without internet, and no immediate information was available, even less in those tumultuous days.

#### 4.6 Stella Corvalán's material

In August 2022, in the backyard of an elementary school in Santiago, named *Arreboles del Panul*, children were removing the soil to make a vegetable garden, when sheets of paper began to come out from the earth. They found books, unpublished poems, photographs and manuscripts by Chilean poet Stella Corvalán, which had been buried there for a long time. The schoolteachers contacted the University of Talca and professionals took charge of the material, which is now in a conservation process at the university's Heritage Documentation Centre. Nobody knows how the material got there, neither when nor why, but it is assumed that it was buried during the dictatorial regime. However, the reason for its burial is a mystery. Stella Corvalán died in 1994 and did not leave descendants or close relatives that could possibly explain it.

I was able to have a phone conversation with a friend of Corvalán who lives in Chile, who I will call Sonia. She does not believe that among the material found there are texts that could have been compromising during the dictatorship, since Corvalán did not write

about politics (Sonia phone conversation 2023-02-10). This is confirmed by Eduardo Bravo Pezoa, Director of the Heritage Documentation Centre of the University of Talca (Bravo e-mail 2023-02-12). However, Sonia thinks that possibly among the material there are letters from left-wing characters who were friends of Corvalán's. Conservator Katina Vivanco, who works at the Talca documentation centre, does not mention letters among the poet's material (Vivanco e-mail 2023-02-27), but a written note by lawyer David Stitchkin Branover, who in the 1960s was rector of the University of Concepción. He was the son of Jewish immigrants from Russia, a freemason and member of the Radical Party (Diez Schwerter 2021), a party of which a fraction formed part of the *Unidad Popular* coalition (Library of the National Congress of Chile 2023).

I asked the staff of the school "Arreboles del Panul" (by e-mail) if they know who used to live in the place where the school is now, but I got no response. According to Eduardo Bravo, next to the place where the school is located, during the dictatorship there was a Vicariate of the Catholic Church (*Vicaría de la Solidaridad*), which provided social and legal assistance to people whose human rights were violated. He thinks that maybe some people came there carrying objects to hide. Personally, I find this hardly likely. Bravo says that the material was buried superficially, and it was spread over a wide radius, but it is hard for them to know how long it was underground.

The unearthed books of Corvalán's authorship were part of her personal library and contain handwritten annotations, small fragments of poems, and loose photographs. Sonia thinks that these might have been buried just as many things that had nothing to do with politics, but that people buried anyway, just in case. Even Bravo thinks that someone mistakenly thought that the material might put her/him at risk, and buried it out of fear. Stella Corvalán was not a member of any political party, and apparently she was not involved in politics, but her ideals are defined by Sonia as socialist. According to her, Corvalán used to socialize with right-wing people in cultural environments, but she considered them uncultivated and with a lack of creativity, and said that the right-wing mutilates art.

The heritage documentation centre in Talca has not investigated about possible reasons for the burial of Corvalán's material. Conservator Vivanco says that she heard that Stella Covalán moved to a nursing home before she passed away in Santiago, and that she possibly left some things there, but this had not yet been confirmed (Vivanco e-mail 2023-02-27). During our conversation, Sonia mentioned that things were stolen from Corvalán quite often, by insincere people around her. When asked if she thinks that the found material could have been stolen, she says that it is one possibility. Stella never told her something about having lived in the commune where the material was found, and she thinks that it might have been buried by someone else. However, Sonia also thinks that the poetess had a penchant for burying things, because of something she said to her in her home in the city of Talca, in the times of dictatorship. Stella gave her a taste of the apricots from every tree that grew in her garden, and said:

*Each one of these apricots is from a tree trunk that has something mine, in the roots of each trunk there is something mine.*

Sonia took this to mean that Stella had buried things under the trees. Whether it was just a metaphor or not, perhaps we will never know.



Fig. 3: Stella Corvalán's books and photos found at the school "Arboles del Panul", La Florida, Santiago. Photos: Heritage Documentation Centre, University of Talca.

#### 4.7 Vinyl

The New Chilean Song movement was developed in the 1960s and consolidated at the end of the same decade. It was baptized as such in 1969, when its first Festival was held, and one of the winning songs was *A ploughman's prayer*, by Victor Jara. It was part of a LP album called *I put in your open hands* (image on front page of this text), which was a milestone of the movement, according to Alonso (2014). A copy of this record was buried by Emilio's father in a backyard, in Santiago. In 1970, members of the named music movement participated in the electoral campaign of the *Unidad Popular* coalition, during which Salvador Allende said: "There is no revolution without songs. There have never been so many folklorists, and of such quality." Music artists found great support in Allende's government, and they were notoriously active during his mandate period (González 2000: 37).

Days after the coup of 1973, the General Secretary of the new military regime, colonel Pedro Ewin, told the senior executives of the Emi, Philips and RCA record labels to stop disseminating Andean music, and even said that the folklore of the north of the country was not Chilean. In a meeting with the members of the Chilean Folklorists Union, he said that their attitudes and songs would be carefully reviewed, and told them not to use *quenas* or *charangos* (Andean musical instruments), because these represented "social songs". Many artists were persecuted, 150 musical groups were disintegrated, and nearly 2 000 dancers and musicians were expelled from their working place (Rodríguez Aedo 2018).

One of the ensembles that used Andean musical instruments was Quilapayún. Emilio's father buried records by this group, one of them was called *Cantata de Santa María de Iquique*, composed by Luis Advis. It is a mixture of folk, classical, and religious music,

and the lyrics talk about a massacre of saltpetre workers committed in 1907, in northern Chile. Days after the coup, colonel Pedro Ewin said that this record was a historical crime against the fatherland (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 165). Its master tapes were destroyed, the album was banned, and Quilapayún was forced into exile.

While exiled in Europe, Quilapayún recorded the named composition again. However, the lyrics were modified by writer Julio Cortázar, the original cover was replaced by an image by painter Roberto Matta, and new musical arrangements were added to suit European taste (Campos et al. 2022). The author of the work, Luis Advis, was very upset because of this. For him, the result of the new version of the album was “a disaster”, and he described the changes made by Cortázar as “*cambios huevones*”, which means “stupid changes” (Advis 1984). All this confirms the value of the original album. In 2008, the Chilean edition of Rolling Stone magazine placed it in fourth place among the 50 best Chilean LP-albums (RYM 2003).

Other records buried by Emilio’s father contained poems by Pablo Neruda recited by himself (DICAP 1969), music from the First International Festival of Popular Song, and songs by Victor Jara and Violeta Parra, who were blacklisted. The military *junta* drew blacklists of artists and distributed them to record labels, radio channels, and Chilean television. These included artists adherent to the New Chilean Song movement, as well as other interpreters of folk and popular music, including foreign singers, like Joan Baez (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 167). Singers and songwriters were investigated by the political police, and even among these were foreigners artists, like Joan Manuel Serrat and Yves Montand (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 171). A way to preserve censored music later on, was recording music in cassettes and broadcasting it clandestinely (Jordán 2009), but even cassettes had to be burned. Veronica’s father had to get rid of them in the 1980s, and he burned them in her grandparent’s backyard.

Gina burned vinyl records in the kitchen of her parent’s house, in the same manner she burned her paper material. But she only remembers one of these, by the group Quilapayún. Jessica was 11 years old when her family buried vinyl records in the backyard, along with other things that she does not remember. But she recalls that some of the vinyl records were by Inti-Illimani and Victor Jara, while others contained Chinese music and speeches in Chinese. The latter had been given to them by an uncle. The Chinese records were transparent, some were light blue in colour, and others were neon pink. Jessica’s sister said that they came along with goods from China, with the boats that arrived at the port of Talcahuano, where they lived at the time. It is possible that the material is still there where it was buried.

Amelia does not remember well where her family dumped their vinyl records, but she thinks it was into the Mapocho River. She only remembers two of them: *Leña Gruesa*, by the group Quelentaro (EMI Odeon 1969), and *La Población*, by Victor Jara (DICAP 1972). As for Elena (39 years old at the time), she had no music of the New Chilean Song, but she got rid of a LP record with a speech by Fidel Castro during his visit to Chile, she dumped it into the San Carlos Canal. Laura was 17 old and says that her parents burned many vinyl records in their backyard in San Bernardo, but she does not remember the titles. Her three

years older brother remembers just one of these records, it contained Cuban revolutionary songs that he liked very much.

Singer and composer Violeta Parra was first to revalue the roots of Chilean culture and worked arduously in the recompilation and preservation of popular music. In September 1973, her records were blacklisted (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 167, 171), but some people still defied the restriction. Ricardo remembers one day in 1974, when he and his mother were in a music store in the capital commune of Ñuñoa, looking for Chilean music to take with them abroad, since they would soon be leaving the country. He says:

*(...) my mom was looking in a bunch of Long Play records, when suddenly, super surprised, she said whispering: "Violeta Parra!". She took out the record and went very fast to the cashier to buy it. It was Violeta's "Last compositions", which we took with us into exile.*

In 2008, the album named *The Last Compositions of Violeta Parra*, mentioned by Ricardo, was placed in the first place among the 50 best Chilean LP-albums by the Chilean edition of the Rolling Stone magazine (RYM 2023). Its first edition was released in 1966 by RCA Victor, and a copy of it was also among the records buried by Emilio's father. He buried many records in 1973, and unearthed them in 1990. He buried them in the backyard of a friend of his, and Emilio still does not know who this friend of his father was, since his father never revealed his name, and he has passed away now. Neither does Emilio know how, in what way, the records were buried. Anyhow, they were preserved very well.

## 4.8 Metal

Metal objects were the most difficult to get rid of, and some of them were handguns. The informants were not directly its owners, in all cases the gun thrown belonged either to a friend, a relative, or a close family member. Both Amelia and Elena says that some people had weapons for personal defence, while the rest of informants seem not sure about why people possessed them, their impression is that it was nothing strange at that time. Until 1973, private persons in Chile didn't need a permit to own a handgun, and only in October 1972 it was decreed that it had to be registered at a police office (Ministry of National Defence, Law 17798).

Gina's grandmother kept an old pistol that had belonged to her own's grandfather, and she liked it because it was antique, but Gina's father dumped it into a latrine pit at the train station where he worked. Gabriel and his family dug a hole under the kitchen floor, underneath the dishwasher, where they buried a pistol, along with books. Years later, one day a plumber was fixing the pipes, and found two bullets. But apart from these, the buried things remained there till the house was sold and the new owners demolished it. Gabriel lived in the city of Puerto Montt. In Valparaíso, Alex's grandfather had a revolver to protect his home, which he also did, one day when thieves assaulted it. It is unknown what he did with the gun after the coup. As for Milén, she lived in the capital and says that her father went out with his pistol "to defend Allende" in the early hours of the coup, but that same



morning the gun was buried in the backyard of her house, along with other things. It is possible that it is still there.

Other informants dumped handguns into the San Carlos Canal, in La Reina. This seems to have been the riskier alternative, particularly judging by Flavia's account, who was 27-years old back then. She and her husband were on their way on a jeep to dump a pistol into the named canal, when they found themselves on a street where soldiers were stopping the cars for requisition. Flavia was holding the gun on her lap, thinking that it was not even hers. She says:

*At that moment I thought our lives would end there. My husband slowed down the car and was going to stop the engine, when the soldier in charge of stopping the vehicles gave him a signal so that he would not stop and continue on. My husband had very short hair, he was wearing a black T-shirt and dark sunglasses, and he was driving an olive green jeep, so the soldier thought he was a military.*

Finally, Flavia and her husband managed to dump the gun into the canal. In the days after the coup, 14-year old Marcos did not sleep at his house and his mother took some objects out of his bedroom to get rid of them, among which there was a Walther brand pistol, which she dumped into the San Carlos Canal. Even Luis, Camilo, and Elena threw handguns into the same canal. Camilo accompanied his uncle to throw his gun next to Fontecilla street. Elena dumped her husband's pistol at the intersection of Larraín Avenue with Tobalaba Avenue, from a small bridge in the middle of the road where military jeeps and trucks full of soldiers passed by all the time. She noticed that under the bridge there were other people dumping things, they were throwing a LP-record and something in a plastic bag.

Eliana was 6 years old and was lying on her parent's bed when the military broke into her house in Santiago. They entered the bedroom and took out everything from the closet, while other soldiers scattered and broke everything in the rest of the house. Eliana knew that above the closet there was a pistol wrapped in a white scarf, and she could see it from the bed where she was lying. She stared at it while the soldiers threw everything on the floor, and she couldn't understand why they did not see it. To this day, she still can see the white scarf in front of her eyes. The soldiers did not find compromising things in her house, but they did find money which they took with them, along with her mother's jewellery, and a fur coat.

Arturo remembers one night when a colleague from his dance group arrived at his house with her elderly mother, wanting to bury a couple of old weapons. They were two pistols which the women, who were exiles from the Spanish Civil War, had treasured for many years, from the time of Francisco Franco's dictatorship. The guns were actually useless, just relics from another time. They were buried at a wasteland right next to the house where Arturo was staying, in the capital commune of Ñuñoa. Maybe they are still buried there, if that place stays the same, although Arturo doubt it. He says:

*Hiding those weapons made us more sad than nervous. It was an emotional "Farewell to Arms", like the title of Ernest Hemingway's book.*



Fig. 4: Confiscated items: a worker helmet and books. Santiago, September 1973. Photo by Koen Wessing.

Other metal objects mentioned by the informants are a firefighter helmet, a worker helmet, a photographic camera, a small bust of Lenin, and medals from socialist countries. The latter were thrown away, but Barbara does not remember where.

The firefighter helmet belonged to a 3-year-old boy who lived at Mariana's house. Its inside protection was gone, only the shell of the helmet remained, and the child used it as a toy.

When the military raided Mariana's house, they found the firefighter helmet and interrogated the 3-year-old boy. The military asked him if the adults in the house used to fire guns, and he answered as the innocent child he was. Mariana says:

*Of course, he would see it as something cool, because of the films on television and all that, so he said that yes, that the adults fired guns, and they did "bang-bang!"*

The military confiscated the boy's helmet, took photos of it along with other items they found somewhere else, and days later it was published in the newspaper *El Austral*, as a sample of subversive elements found by the army soldiers. As for the worker helmet, it belonged to 14-year-old Marcos, and it was dumped into a canal by his mother. The photographic camera belonged to Camilo's uncle. It was minuscule, and it could be used to photograph documents, so it was buried because it could be linked to espionage activities. It was buried in the backyard along with books and other things which Camilo does not remember specifically. The bury place was cemented, and a pantry was built on top of it. The same thing was done with the bust of Lenin which belonged to Rosa's family. She was 6 years old and says that even other things were buried there along with it, but she does not remember what they were. The bury place was cemented, and on top of it a workshop was built by her father.

#### 4.9 Other materials

The 18-year-old university student who rented a room in Felipe's house had two helmets made of hard plastic, and a *nunchaco*, which Felipe helped him to get rid of. Both secondary and university students clashed often with far-right groups supported by the paramilitary organization *Patria y Libertad* (Pérez 2020). This organization used to carry out terrorist attacks (Petras & Petras 1973: 166), and after the coup many of its members were recruited by the national intelligence agency, responsible of torture and 'disappearing' people (Webber

1999: 526). An example of this is what happened in Santiago when this organization, along with a group called *Comando Rolando Matus*, tried to take over the city's high schools and colleges, because of their disagreement with the educational reform of the Allende government. Faced with the threat, the students at the capital's Girls High School nr. 5 spoke with the construction workers who were labouring in a building next to their school, and the workers offered their support in the case of an emergency. So when the emergency occurred, they went to the school with their helmets, shovels, and other work tools, and helped the girls to defend the establishment from the attacks of right-wing extremism (Pérez 2020: 182). Clashes and confrontations were not rare, and they form the context in which the *nunchakus* and the helmets appear. Amelia calls these sort of items for "personal defence elements".

Elena got rid of several sealed glass capsules containing minerals that she had in her house for decoration, because the military might have thought that they were explosives. The capsules were from the 19th century and contained minerals from a mine in Stassfurt, Germany. They were heavy, the largest were 26 cm high and the smaller, around 17 cm. At first they were buried by her son in her garden. But Elena unearthed them, and along with her daughter and sister, they dumped them into the San Carlos Canal. However, one of them was saved in the last minute by her sister, who grabbed it and put it in her bag. The others contained powdered material, but this one contained only stones. So she took it with her to the South of the country, and thirty years later she gave it to her niece when she visited Chile from exile.

The military executing the house raids seemed to have a certain level of obsession with explosives. There is the case of Hernán Castellano Girón, who was arrested because they found chemical substances in the laboratory where he worked as a chemistry professor, at the University of Santiago. The officer in charge accused him of having material to manufacture bombs (Larkin 2010: 24). As for informer Claudio, he was 8 years old when the military raided his house and entered his bedroom, where he was lying in bed with a fever. A lieutenant told a soldier to look under Claudio's bed. There could be a bomb there, he said, and then he asked Claudio: "*Sure you have a bomb, don't you?*" Claudio says:

*Next to my bed there was a wicker basket where we left our dirty clothes, and the soldier began to insert the bayonet there, with the bayonet he pricked it. I was impressed. (...). My mom was at the door yelling at the soldiers to leave, and one of them put his machine gun to her temple...As a child I was shocked to see that.*

Things like these made people take precautions. Camilo says that his uncle disassembled a system he had invented with the purpose of waking up with music in the morning. He had connected the radio set to an alarm clock, with wires, and he thought that the military could imagine that it was a bomb.

Rodrigo dumped a pistol holster made of leather, and Lorenzo got rid of a wooden *nunchaku* which belonged to the same student who owned a pair of worker helmets. Mariana's family even hid the medicines and bandages they had in the house, because her parents were accused of preparing themselves militarily. These were hidden in the attic, which the military never found, in all the times they raided the house.

Other objects suppressed were made of textiles: flags, uniforms, shirts, and an armband. Marcos says that he had a couple of flags of the Socialist Party which he cut to bits, and one of them was turned into napkins. He also tore up two olive green shirts of the Socialist Youth. Even Felipe's renter destroyed some flags. As for Carlos, he and his family chopped with scissors several military uniforms which his father kept from a past time when he served in the army. Also a pair of military boots which Carlos chopped with a knife, and later he burned them in the water boiler of the building where he worked. As for the armband, it was of the Socialist Party and it was burned when Gina's husband found it in his jacket's pocket, entering his home. He had been carrying it without knowing, and had walked through several street points where soldiers were checking people. He was just lucky they did not search him.

#### 4. 10 More memories

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.  
(Matthew 5:10)*

Far from being passive witnesses, the informants who were children at the time of the coup were also participant in the clandestine activities of the adults. Among the youngest, when referring to who got rid of the things in their family, Milén and Claudio include themselves, using the pronoun "we". Others alternate between "we" and "they" (referring to their family members), including and excluding themselves from the activity. Alex participated in burning his posters, but adults burned Castro's photographs. Jessica was participant in burying things in the backyard, but it was her older sister along with her friend who dug the hole in the ground, and the image of them at that moment is clearer in her mind. In the case of the younger children, it was others who decided which things to throw away, where and how, but they got involved as well. As for Jessica's sister, she was 14 years old, and her friend was about the same age. Even other adolescents around this age (and a bit older) had more prominence, and decided some of the procedures and steps to take, in order to get rid of compromising things. Some of them even acted without the company of adults.

The characteristics of some of the objects described by the informants reveal a social atmosphere marked by global politics, the Cold War, and the liberation struggles of the peoples of the so called *third world*. The colonial past and its influence in the society of the time was relevant for the left-wing, as for nuns and clerics who solidarized with the oppressed. The memories of the objects unfold dramatic situations in which many were involved, within a society which may have been polarized, but in very unequal terms. On one side there was a minority who opted for the armed route, declaring a state of war and exercising terror. On the other, an unarmed people who had chosen the polls, and who's ideals suddenly were declared illegal. As said by informant Amelia, this side had to hide their identity, while the other would take over and decide over its fate. These are the terms that are

left aside and not recognized in official public discourses, when speaking of "a polarized society."

For most informants, remembering the suppressed objects after 50 years brought back memories which they thought they had forgotten. In turn, these made possible for other memories to emerge, sometimes linked to objects in other ways, or to other people. Around each object suppressed there are many stories, and some of them have been transferred to new generations, forming now part of family history. In the case the protagonists are no longer alive, their descendants are there to tell it. The stories' main characteristics are shared by many, and the objects are a good reference point for the integration of individual memory with collective memory. Both the memory of the objects and the objects it selves play an important role in this. Some memories are not conscient, as shown by Eliana. She says that when she recovered a doll of her childhood after 34 years, she did not remember it. She observed it and nothing came to her mind, until she touched it, only then the memories aroused. It had not been her favourite toy, so she had forgotten it.

Solidarity is also present in the memories of the informants, at the opposite side of betrayal. Gina remembers that every night she expected the soldiers to come and raid her house, so she slept in her street clothes, because she didn't want them to take her away in her pyjamas, as she had heard happened to others. She also says that a neighbour told the military that she and her husband were "strange", and that he thought they were left-wing. Favourably, the head of the neighbourhood council told them this was not true, and spoke in their defence, telling they were good and nice people. Gina says:

*In those days you could see the two extreme sides of people. Some showed their worst side, whilst others showed their very best one.*

Another person who was saved by the goodwill of others, was Mariana's mother. After hiding here and there, she finally reached the capital and was saved by Catholic nuns. They gave her refuge, and their highest authority facilitated for her to leave the country with the help of the Vatican embassy. Mariana heard from her mother that the nuns used to go to the shore of the Mapocho River and rescue the dead bodies of people killed by the military, which floated in the water. With the aim of keeping something that later could serve to recognize the bodies' identity, they took away their personal objects. It could be a ring, a medal, a keychain, a belt, etc. Afterwards they buried the corpses on the shore of the river. According to Muñoz (2016: 8), the nuns dug with shovels and with their hands, while they prayed in a loud voice.

The nuns who helped Mariana's mother belonged to the Slaves of Merciful Love Congregation (*Congregación Esclavas del Amor Misericordioso*). They were adherents of Liberation Theology and stood in solidarity with the oppressed and persecuted, helping many people to escape from torture and death. Despite of this, they are unknown for most people. Some of them were Blanca Rengifo, Elena Chaín, Juana Ramírez, and two others, whose names are remembered by Mariana: Francisca Morales and Filomena Donoso (Muñoz

2016). Among them was also Odile Loubet, a French Dominican nun who's birth name was Nadine. According to Juana Ramírez (2019), her self-chosen assumed name during her clandestine activities was Jeanne d'Arc. She used to disguise herself and play a farse to confuse the soldiers in front of the Italian embassy, while others helped the persecuted sneak into the building, jumping over the exterior wall. Two of those jumping over the wall to be safe in Italian territory, were Mariana's parents, who also had to take shelter from the bullets of the soldiers, since they started to shoot at them when they saw them climbing. Also Blanca Rengifo used to disguise herself to help persecuted people, she helped them to get inside the Apostolic Nunciature (Muñoz 2016: 56).

The nuns mentioned above organized the first so called "common pots", starting in 1973. This consisted in purchasing and preparing a large pot of food with the help of the entire community, and consuming it together. It became a common practice in impoverished neighbourhoods during the dictatorship, due to the precarious economic situation of its inhabitants. Odile Loubet had some notebooks in which she wrote daily for about a year recounting about the violence exerted by the military *junta* in the underprivileged area where she lived, being careful not to write person names and locations, to not compromise people. In October 1974 she asked Michel Donabin, a Salesian priest who was leaving Chile, to take her notebooks with him, and he kept them in France for many years (Laurent Xu 2022). In 2018, they were known to a university student in Santiago, who the following year made a documentary film about Loubet. Many were the sisters and the so called "worker priests" who were involved in the resistance. However, the "worker nuns" are the less known.

Only a few memories of the informants are from the period of the 1980s. Veronica remembers her father burning cassettes, and Barbara recalls that she had a scare because of some books that she was carrying when she passed the boarder to Chile from Argentina. She forgot to hide the books on politics that she kept in her handbag, and she was just lucky that the customs official was not so meticulous when he searched it. Later she had to give up the anthropological research on unions that she was doing in Chile while living in Canada and studying at the Laval University, because she was being investigated by the Chilean police.

Anna regrets that she borrowed some of the books she unearthed in the mid-1980s. She borrowed them to the political prisoners she visited in prison, and they were never returned. As for Carlos, a bit annoyed he says that at the end of the 1980s, his sister took out the magazines hidden in the ventilation tube and distributed them among her friends. He lives far away from Chile, and he is not sure if his siblings kept some of the magazines. For her part, Ximena finds it unjust that her mother was never officially recognized as a person who was politically exonerated from the Catholic University in Temuco, where she worked as a teacher. She was fired after the coup in September, but the authorities documented that she worked there only until the month of June. After the return to democracy, she made a legal demand, and even presented witnesses in her favour, but had no positive results. She used to call herself "a missing academic", because they made her disappear in the documents.

The stories told in the last two paragraphs above, reveal discontents with some of the situations aroused in the period around the end of dictatorship and the return to

democracy. As for Amelia, she points out the connection between the social outbreak started in Chile in October 2019 and the lack of social justice, along with imposed oblivion. For those who experienced dictatorship, the deployment of the army and the repression applied during the social outbreak brought up memories from the times of dictatorship, awakened by the presence of fear. However, fear was not perceived in the same way, or at the same level by the newer generations. During the social outbreak, hidden memories blossomed into the light of day, and the imagery of the *Unidad Popular* period resurfaced. Graphics, slogans, and songs from the time before the coup were reproduced in public spaces in innovative ways. Allende appeared in murals, posters, banners, t-shirts, stencils, stickers, and even personifications. Some social sectors even took up ideas for social transformation from Allende's political project (López et al. 2020). The memories of the young of the past were revived by the rebellion of the young of today, and their imageries interacted. The popular contemporary character called *Matapacos*, a black dog with a red scarf representing street fighting against authority, suddenly was seen together and getting along with *Tevito*, a folkloric musical dog from the 1970s that resurfaced to represent the *Unidad Popular* period.

Archaeologists Lindsoug & Martinez documented the material remains of the violence exerted by the state during the social unrest of 2019, identifying protection and resistance modes, and different alterations of the public space. They affirm that archaeology can play an important role in contributing to the understanding of socio-political and socio-cultural conflicts, while challenging current social injustices (2023: 80). The materiality of the social outbreak shows that state institutions tried to hide the traces of violence exerted by these on citizens, and also the need of Chilean society to reconnect with its past.

## 5. Discussion

Remembering was not easy for informant Carla, but she assumed it as a duty, she forced herself to remember in order to denounce. This can be called an act of resistance. According to Todorov (2000: 18), when the experiences of an individual or a group are exceptionally tragic, the right to the transmission of the own memory becomes a duty in order to oppose oblivion, in favour of justice. The past becomes a beginning of action for the present when people uses memory to understand new situations, and to build an example from which a lesson can be extracted (ibid.: 31). During the dictatorship, the Chilean state tried to erase the traces of Human Rights violations, while in democracy the medias have preferred oblivion, and justice has been slow. Survivors and new generations have assumed the recovery of memory as a form of resistance to official history. Carla's assumed duty is about loyalty towards the victims and those who are absent. For Ricoeur (2004), it is a work of remembering that can operate in support of justice.

In general terms, it is shown by the cases in this study that despite the *junta's* effort to erase memory, memory persisted, and it has been passed on to new generations. However, the informants have also forgotten many things, which is what happens when events are traumatizing, memories can be repressed and forgotten. Along with memories there is trauma, which can also be transmitted through generations of descendants (Volkan 2020). Oblivion is one of the manners in which trauma can manifest itself, and it can be prolonged by the silence of officiality. According to an educational study carried out in an underprivileged neighbourhood in Santiago, the effects of dictatorial politics, along with oblivion and a lack of transmission of memory, created a change in cultural identity. Although this neighbourhood had a long history of struggles and resistance, this meant the constitution of a generation with a lower degree of community ties and with no interest in the past, or even the future (Meneses 2014).

Memory can be maintained through meaningful objects, and some are essential in the memory of a society, collective memory is made possible on the basis of these (Mendoza 2014). Artefacts give meaning to past events and allow the registration and communication of experiences and knowledge. When these are destroyed, it is no longer possible to communicate certain events of the past in the present, and the result is social oblivion (ibid.: 114). Anyhow, narratives and ideas around the objects are needed to allow memories to appear. People remember while they share memories with others, collective memory is defined by the oral transmission of collective events, as stated by Halbwachs (1968). Unfortunately in Chile, the public spaces open to this practice have been scarce, due to the unwillingness of official medias to delve into the recent past; and that is why the role of objects is so important.



Collective memories are often connected to specific power relations. González-Ruibal's account on Equatorial Guinea (2016) shows how national amnesia was created, a situation in which the past and the practices associated to it may be invented, leading to memories of things that never happened. This easily can open the way for several scenarios, for example, an idealized and glorified past. Anthropologist Trouillot (1995) analysed conventional historical narratives to understand why certain parts of history are remembered and others are not, what is remembered and what is forgotten, and what these silences reveal about inequalities of power. He points out that violations on human rights may be silenced through persuading or forcing people to forget, as it occurred after the Spanish Civil War in Spain, through a so-called "pact of silence". However, the efforts to try to erase memory may also lead to alternative ways of remembering. Trouillot states that participants in any event may enter into the production of a narrative of that event before historians get involved. He points out that silences enter the process of historical production at crucial moments which imply making the archives, the sources and the narratives, to finally make the history (ibid.).

The past events that bring back memories are not what constitutes memory, but the meanings that are attributed to these events in the present (Stern 2013). Memories are constructed, they take shape according to current meanings. What awakens the traces of the past in us is what happens to us today (ibid.). Archaeologist Wollentz (2020) talks about a lack of recognition of remembrance oriented towards future. He recognizes a necessity of places that can be used to start discussions and reflections about the upcoming time, creating the future through activities in the present. The Museum of Memory and Human Rights, in Santiago, has been trying to fill the lack of places where to gather and remember, and has rescued many of the objects that witnessed Chile's recent past, through which collective memory can be created. The demands of society regulate the possibility of remembering an event or not, at the same time that they impose a distortion of the past (Lavabre 1998). But memory is different from history in the sense that it does not represent just one single truth, and it can be created in places where social groups gather and are recognized.

The life history of the objects recovered by some of the informants, changed their value. Anna's buried and unburied book is no longer an ordinary book, and neither the stones which Elena saved from being dumped, are just simple minerals. The same can be said about the vinyl records buried by Emilio's father, through which a silent story can be traced, and even a whole country's history. Things changed after the coup, and so did even the meanings of things. A helmet was no longer just a helmet, quartz was no longer just crystal, and people threw away objects to avoid misinterpretations and pretexts. Personal letters, folk tales and novels from socialist countries were dangerous simply because of their origin, and even the origin of music became important.

Chile was not an Andean country in the eyes of the new regime, and it saw the music with Indigenous roots as a threat to the political and economic interests of the oligarchy, mainly of European origin. Besides, music and song lyrics are some of the things that awaken memory the most, and ideas along with melodies can last long in time. Thus, a great part of it was banned from circulation and instead, the medias broadcasted hymns and military marches, as well as folkloric music of Spanish descent, played by groups like *Los*

*Huacos Quincheros* (McSherry 2019: 152). The broadcasting of Chilean popular music declined also in the face of music from abroad, mainly from the United States (Rodríguez Aedo 2018: 164). Music had no longer the role it had during the time of *Unidad Popular*.

On the other hand, even people's resistance gave new roles to things. Apart from things being saved within the national borders, the exiles spread Chile's banned culture around the globe. The songs of Victor Jara and Violeta Parra were translated to other languages and were known to the world. Banned songs like "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" became internationally recognised. This song, written by Sergio Ortega and interpreted by Quilapayún, was released in Chile just a few weeks before the coup, and was included in the record of the same name (Alonso 2014: 12). The music of the New Chilean Song movement became a symbol for resistance (D. J. Olsen 2021), as it happened with other Latin American music movements as well. The song "Like the Cicada", by Argentinian composer Maria Elena Walsh, was originally a personal song about its author's frustration as an artist (Pujol 2010), but during the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America it came to represent people's resistance against totalitarianism. In Chile it was particularly endorsed by women's movements who fought against the Pinochet dictatorship. They even published an underground bulletin called *The Cicada* (Patrimonio y Género 2023).

A copy of the only master tape which ever existed of Quilapayún's original music album *Cantata de Santa María de Iquique*, destroyed by the military in 1973, was found in 2014. Maritza Las Heras found it while she was about to moving house, among her saved things that she had forgotten (Alarcón 2014). For four decades it had been hidden in the depths of her memory. However, large amounts of material of all kinds was lost forever in bonfires, either lit by the military, or by citizens who feared for their lives. The culture of a unique period in the country's history was made disappear, along with the traces of a social process that at that time had the eyes of the whole world on it.

In 1976, the Vicariate of the Archbishopric of Santiago was founded and was called "Solidarity Vicariate" (*Vicaría de la Solidaridad*). This body of the Catholic Church was autonomous and independent in its decisions, and its officials belonged to different religious creeds (Peñaloza 2011: 398). It provided medical, psychological, legal and material help to the victims of human rights violations, and its personnel archived each and every case. In 1989, the last year of the dictatorship, the intelligence service tried to seize all the files that the vicariate kept on the people it had assisted. Vicarious Sergio Valech asked his collaborators to hide the files and not tell him where, in case he was interrogated (ibid.: 266). Fortunately, the actions carried out by clerics and human rights organizations prevented the police of getting its hands on the material. It consists of thousands of documents and testimonies which illustrates human rights violations in Chile from 1973 to 1990, including copies of judicial files, legal appeals, international complaints, reports of torture, forced disappearances, etc. According to Peñaloza (2011: 113), this was the beginning of a battle for the preservation of memory.

Although many people remember the period of the *Unidad Popular* government as a happy one, the memory installed by officiality was the one of the victors, who interpreted the coup as a salvation, a liberation from a Marxist evil. Later, the crimes against humanity

committed during the “salvation” were called “excesses” and “errors” (López et al. 2020). Moreover, the responsibility was laid on the victims. Many have heard the simplistic discourse which emphasizes the queues at the stores during the Allende government, caused by the same political sector who blame them. The good memories and the achievements of the *Unidad Popular* coalition were relegated to the private sphere. Even the spirit of justice was cornered, since after the period of dictatorship it was perceived almost as something to be ashamed of. However, the reappearance of the imagery of the *Unidad Popular*, first during the student protests of 2011, and later during the social outbreak of 2019 (López et al. 2020), shows an untamed and committed memory which dares to leave the shadows and the periphery, to be at the center of attention.

On the 50th anniversary of the triumph of the *Unidad Popular* coalition, numerous activities summoned the memory of the political project led by Salvador Allende. In the midst of the global pandemic, social networks facilitated the irruption of memory, and anonymous people dared to recount their remembrances of that day of the triumph, in 1970 (Austin et al. 2020). During the 17 years of dictatorship, the memory built by the military regime was promoted in propaganda publications to justify the coup with a supposed threat from an alleged irregular army that was planning a self-coup, including a series of murders. It was the incredibly fanciful scenario named “Plan Z”. This version of the events was published in a book named *The White Book*, edited by historian Gonzalo Vial, in collaboration with members of the Chilean Navy. Several actions were conducted in order to establish this vision of the past, including the cancellation of the *Unidad Popular* imaginary.

During the 2011 student protests, high school students demanded free public education, which led people to remember the social losses and the new conditions to which citizens were forced to accommodate to during the dictatorship, many of which have transcended and lasted during the subsequent democratic governments. Public education was free during the Allende government, being education one of the most important points in its social project. But during the Pinochet dictatorship, the fundamental right to education became a commodity. During the 2011 student protests, the figure of Allende emerged like never before, and suddenly on the city walls and banners it was possible to read: “Allende's dream still exists”, or “Allende’s dreams are still possible” (Austin et al. 2020). Later on, during the social protests of 2019, once again memory managed to rebel despite the attempts to silence it, and phrases such as “Allende lives” appeared more often in the public sphere, as well as a phrase told by Allende the day of the coup: “History is ours, and it is made by the peoples”. This shows that the destruction of materials intended to erase the past, at the end was backfired. As said by Van Dyke (2019) in accordance with Bernbeck, what is supposed to be eliminated can be amplified instead, creating *counter-memory*, as in this case.

Each year on September 11 in Chile, the memory of the country's recent past comes to light, particularly through the activities carried out by human rights organizations. This year marks 50 years since the military coup, and several commemoration events are already being organized to be carried out in the month of September, in which individual memories will converge with collective memory. Also in this study have converged both memories, and the narratives of the informants are in opposition to the dominant history, which is usually vertical and hierarchical. As stated by McGuire (in Van Dyke 2019), including memories in archaeological research means to recover evidence of censored past

events, with the aim on social justice. Memory requires many memories, and a variety of different narratives can contribute with a more nuanced image of past events. Not everyone remembers the same things about a same incident, and thus, the focus is not fixed in just one, or some few aspects of the past. The suppressed objects treated in this study reflect people's attempts to stay alive, haunted by the terror spread by a ruthless political regime with no respect for life. For the informants, human life was most important than anything else, and objects lost their material value when faced with the danger of death. Overtime, most of these objects were forgotten, or left behind in time and space. However, the memories about these have persevered, embodied in their symbolic and sentimental value. The informants in this study transmitted their memories generously, with the awareness that forgetting does not contribute to justice. Their contribution is an ethical act of justice and respect towards the victims of repression, and of responsibility towards society in general. It is necessary knowledge concerning a crucial moment in the history of Chile.

## 6. Conclusion

The informants had to throw away objects that were dear to them, and in many cases were part of their personal family history. Apart from the objects burned, some objects were hidden or buried to be preserved, but only a few could be recovered. Most of them were left behind due to different circumstances, mainly because of change of residence or exile. Remembering the objects played an important role in the rise of memories about things that had seemed forgotten. Many objects were forgotten, but others were still preserved in memory, with the awareness of having witnessed their existence and the dramatical events of that time. According to the stories told by the informants, many objects may still be buried underground, and it is not impossible that some could even be underwater. Considering the data provided, it may be that in a much larger group of people, whether locally or nationally, there is knowledge about a much larger number of burials yet to be unearthed.

The memories told in this study describe some of the strategies that people were forced to invent when objects had to be suppressed due to political terror. It talks about values given to objects, and about their roles under changed political conditions. The memories of the informants show that archaeological material from the time of dictatorship could be found in the cities where they lived, most probably in the backyard of a house, under a floor, or in the waters of a canal. Depending on each individual case and situation, the objects were either burned or hidden/buried. The same with the place of deposit, however, some of the bury places were more recurrent than others. In the case of handguns, they were either buried or thrown away into a canal or a latrine. The material buried and unearthed by one of the informants shows that, well wrapped and packaged, paper can keep quite well after almost two decades underground, despite high humidity. The same can be said about the buried vinyl records by another informant in the center of the country, in a much warmer latitude,. However, is in doubt how the material unearthed would have looked if they would have been unearthed today. Most of the informants had to burn their material, but ten (10) of them buried it, of which only two (2) were able to recover it. Six (6) informants dumped their material into a canal or a river (not counting the mother of one of them), and five (5) of them hid the material, either in the attic, the roof eaves, between the beams of the house, or in the ventilation tube. Three (3) of them recovered the hidden objects.

The purpose of the Pinochet dictatorship of prohibiting cultural expressions and ideas was to erase collective memory, restrict knowledge and destroy free thinking. The memories told in this study show the climate of vulnerability and terror created by this regime from its beginning. The growing spirit of democratization of society and the hopeful thought of a national majority, were placed outside the law and pushed to death, marginalization and secrecy. Along with it, even objects and personal memories. They were testimony of a peaceful awareness of change, that the armed political class declared inadmissible. Today

there are still innumerable witnesses to these events, as well as unearthed objects and memories from this recent past.

## 7. Summary

This thesis is about objects suppressed directly after the coup in Chile, in September of 1973, when house raids and mass arrests were executed by military units, following the newly installed dictatorship's attempts to erase the imagery and material culture of the overthrown government of Salvador Allende and the *Unidad Popular* coalition. It rescues the individual memories of 30 informants about objects suppressed by them within this context, about the places where these were suppressed, and about the strategies used to suppress them, which vary depending on each individual case. The used theoretical framework is about materiality, agency, and memory. The study shows that the material suppressed consisted of books and documents, as well as items made of long lasting materials, such as vinyl, metal, and other. Most part of the buried material was never recovered and it is very possible that it still exists underground, in different cities. Much material was also dumped into the water, mainly into a canal. The suppressed objects are a common point in the stories told by each informant, and are part of shared memories that converge in a process of conformation of collective memory. Despite the attempts of officialdom to erase the memory linked to the violent events that occurred directly after the 1973 coup in Chile, it has endured and has been transmitted to younger generations.

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## Appendix 1: interviews

### 1. Anna

**27 years old in sept. 1973, lives in Chile.**

**Buried books in Concepción.**

**Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022:**

Anna: Enterré libros, entre otros, el más querido, uno de Ernesto Cardenal, lo desenterré después de muchos años, y solo estaba un poco arrugado...con los años Cardenal vino a mi ciudad, Concepción, a la Universidad de Chile. El auditorio estaba lleno, a tope, estaba presentando su último libro y al final, ese libro que lo vendían, todo el mundo quería que lo firmara. Llevé mi libro y le dije con voz fuerte (porque había mucha gente esperando) con el libro en alto: "'Don Ernesto", este libro me ayudó a vivir durante la dictadura". Él levantó la vista de lo que estaba firmando...me firmó el libro, lo ojeó y le vi un dejo de emoción.

Marcela: ¿Lo tienes todavía?

Anna: Si, obvio.

Marcela: ¿Los libros se conservaron a pesar de la humedad?

Anna: Los envolví con muchas bolsas plásticas.

Marcela: ¿Cuántos años tenías cuando enterraste los libros y en qué año fue? ¿Te acuerdas qué otros libros enterraste?

Anna: Tenía 27 años, enterré los libros el 11 de septiembre en la tarde, en el patio de mi casa, y quemé muchos documentos, revistas, panfletos, El Rebelde (periódico del MIR), etc. Enterré El Capital, libros de materialismo dialéctico, materialismo histórico, el Diario del Che, Los Desterrados de la Tierra, de Franz Fanon ...cuentos rusos, novelas etc.

Marcela: ¿Te acuerdas qué novelas eran?

Anna: Eran novelas de Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Pushkin...etc....no me acuerdo todos los nombres, estaban La Madre, Los Hermanos Karamazov, otros sobre campesinos, los zares, etc.

Marcela: ¿Los cuentos eran del folklore ruso, u otro tipo de cuentos?

Anna: Los cuentos, obvio eran del folklore, también cuentos chinos. Y lamento que, al desenterrarlos, presté libros y nunca me los devolvieron...por ejemplo los llevaba a las cárceles para prestárselos a los presos políticos.

Marcela: ¿Cuándo fuiste a las cárceles y prestaste los libros, fue en los años '80?

Anna: Si, en la década del ochenta. Obvio, en la primera etapa habría sido un riesgo... Además, yo estuve en la Isla Quiriquina...así que tenía cuidados. Es una larga historia...

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### 2. Marcos

**14-15 years old in Sept. 1973, lives in Chile.  
Threw away things in Santiago (Independencia).  
Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (focus group):**

Marcos: Nos deshicimos de libros, pistolas, banderas, camisas verde oliva de la Juventud Socialista. En nuestro depto. destruimos todos los libros y un par de banderas, una de ellas se convirtió en servilletas. Durante días nos dedicamos a destruir la biblioteca de nuestra casa, picamos los libros con tijeras, los pedazos tenían que ser bien chiquititos para no revelar palabras peligrosas.

Marcela: ¿Qué hicieron con los pedazos?

Marcos: Los tiramos a la basura. Mi madre, como no llegué esos días a casa, abrió un mueble que yo mantenía con cierta discreción en mi dormitorio y encontró un casco, dos banderas del Partido Socialista, una pistola Walther, y la acompañó un vecino que era escultor y la botaron al Canal San Carlos.

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### **3. Alex**

**12 years old in 1973, lives in Sweden.  
Burned things in Valparaíso.  
Phone conversation, 21<sup>st</sup> Mars 2023:**

Alex: En mi casa quemamos la mitad de la biblioteca de mi papá, en el patio trasero. No recuerdo todos los libros, pero sé que quemamos libros de historia y libros de Pablo Neruda, también unos libros chinos que el esposo de mi tía había traído de China, como souvenirs. Él era abogado del Ministerio de Salud y había ido a China en visita oficial, entonces nos llevó esos libros de regalo. Los libros se quemaron el 11 de septiembre, también quemamos los posters que yo tenía en mi dormitorio, eran un montón. No me acuerdo de todos, pero eran del Quilapayún, el Che Guevara, Ho-Chi-Min...etc. Esos tuve que sacarlos y quemarlos todos. También documentación y fotografías, teníamos unas fotos de Fidel en Valparaíso, cuando fue para allá, esas las quemaron también, los adultos las quemaron.

Marcela: ¿Eran fotos de su visita a Chile en 1972? ¿Quiénes habían tomado esas fotos?

Si, del '72, cuando estuvo en Valparaíso. No sé, creo que se las regalaron a mis papás, no eran fotos tomadas por ellos.

Marcela: ¿Tenían discos de música?

Alex: No sé qué hicimos con los discos de música, pero supongo que los rompieron. Mi papá era contador, trabajaba en una empresa que administraba los puertos, era del Estado, no me acuerdo cómo se llamaba. Las casas del barrio donde vivíamos eran de esa empresa y casi todos los vecinos trabajaban allí, todos se conocían. La mayoría eran miembros de los sindicatos o eran de izquierda. Después del golpe, en el barrio se veían fogatas por todos lados, todo el mundo estaba quemando cosas.

Marcela: ¿En tu casa había algún arma?

Alex: Mis papás no tenían armas, pero mi abuelo tenía un revólver, no sé por qué. Quizás para defender su casa, porque un día entraron unos ladrones a su casa y se salvó gracias al revólver. Pero no sé qué hizo con él después del golpe. Mucha gente tenía pistolas, pero no sé por qué.

## 4. Amelia

**18 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.**

**Threw away things in Santiago.**

**Chat online, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2023:**

Amelia: En primer lugar, tuvimos que deshacernos de documentos, libros, afiches, certificados, discos, y todo material impreso que indicara nuestra adhesión al gobierno de la Unidad Popular. En segundo lugar, esconder o hacer desaparecer cualquier elemento de defensa personal como linchacos, colihues y algunas personas, los menos, un arma corta, propia o ajena. En algunos casos, con especial cuidado quienes continuamos en tareas de resistencia, era hacer desaparecer la “facha” que usábamos en el tiempo de la Unidad Popular y asimilarnos a una apariencia más conservadora.

Ese esconder también se extendía a personas que estimábamos en riesgo, militantes, familiares, amigos o uno misma. De todas estas cosas creo que la más costosa fue la necesidad de montar una identidad diferente y esconder la verdadera. Hablar “huevadas” en la oficina y en el barrio. Dejar cualquier expresión política para la intimidad.

Marcela: ¿Te acuerdas del nombre de algún disco o libro?

Amelia: El Long Play “Leña Gruesa”, de Quelentaro, y “La Población”, de Victor Jara.

Marcela: ¿Qué hicieron con ellos, y dónde escondieron las demás cosas?

Los discos se botaron, los libros se botaron, algunos los guardaron en casas de familiares en pueblos chicos. Los cientos de libros que tenía mi primo Nico los tiraron mis hermanos al Canal San Carlos, mis papás quemaron muchos documentos del PS (Partido Socialista) en casa de mi tía, en la chimenea.

Marcela: ¿Te acuerdas dónde tiraron los discos?

No me acuerdo dónde fueron los discos, tal vez al Mapocho. En nuestro pequeño depa el baño chico fue la chimenea de documentos. Los documentos eran del PS todos, la mayoría de Educación política.

Marcela: ¿Los quemaron en el baño?

En el depa usamos mi baño chico, era muy chico, al lado de mi pieza. No podíamos usar la tina del baño grande, ya nos habían disparado un balín en una ventana de ese baño que daba a la calle.

Marcela: ¿Quién disparó a la ventana?

Los fachos, en el tiempo de la UP. Siempre pensamos que fue porque cachaban a los chicos (mis hermanos) que militaban en el PS. Había unos momios en la esquina. En ese tiempo los fachos estaban sublevados.

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## 5. Andrea

**born in 1974, lives in Chile.**

**Her parents dumped things in Santiago (La Reina).**

**Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (focus group):**

Creo que todo fue tan traumático, que muchos detalles de lo que cada uno de nuestros padres, tíos, primos, etc. vivieron, quedaron guardados igual que esos objetos. Decían que en cuatro décadas esto se “superaría”. Vamos por los 50 y esas heridas están ahí para nuestras familias.

---

## 6. Ariel

**20 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.  
Her parents burned things in San Bernardo.  
Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (focus group):**

Mis padres rompieron discos, uno de ellos era cubano y tenía canciones de la revolución, era orquesta más coro, una de sus canciones empezaba de la siguiente manera: “Guerrilleros, guerrilleros, adelante, adelante” ...a mí me encantaba escucharlo.

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## 7. Arturo

**25 years old in 1973.  
Buried things in Santiago (Ñuñoa).  
Text sent by himself + chat online, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023:**

Crecí en el Sur del continente americano. “Volver”, ese tango cantado por el famoso argentino Carlos Gardel, me acompañó más a menudo que el “Volver, Volver”, del también icónico mexicano Vicente Fernández. Mi padre y mi madre cantaban ese tango muy bien. Desde pequeño, el oír “¡que 20 años no es nada!” me daba vueltas por la cabeza. Me resistía un poco a lo que decía esa apasionada letra. “¿Cómo que 20 años no es nada?”, me decía. Es entendible. A los 8 años de edad, la vida parece un infinito. Con suerte, un sinnúmero de emociones y sitios por descubrir. 20 años, en la infancia, es un largo espacio. Una eternidad. Pero, a medida que vivimos, las nuevas vivencias regalan nuevas perspectivas. El 11 de septiembre de este año 2023 se cumplen 50 años del Golpe Militar en Chile. ¡50 años! En verdad parece una eternidad. Hoy puedo cantar esos versos del “Volver” de Gardel y sentirlos pequeños. Sobretudo cantando los recuerdos de ese fatídico 11 de septiembre. Vivos, aún candentes en la memoria. “Nuestro Once chiquito” decimos muchos chilenos, ironizando un poco al compararlo con “El Otro Once”, el que ocurrió en los EEUU de América en el 2001.

Por todo el mundo, chilenos y no chilenos se preparan a conmemorar ese 11 “chiquito”, el que dio paso a 17 años de la dictadura de Augusto Pinochet en Chile. Hoy, esa dictadura ha sido reemplazada por una fragilísima democracia. No tan representativa como muchos la soñamos. Desde Europa, una amiga exiliada chilena me preguntó si podía escribir acerca de alguna cosa que hubiera escondido cuando se desató el Golpe en Chile. Algo que simplemente no pude abandonar. ¿Libros, música? ¿Fotografías, armas? ¡Claro que escondí cosas! Creo que mucha gente que se ve obligada a disfrazar, rápida y radicalmente lo que piensan o hacen, porque la muerte acecha, igual se toman el tiempo para salvaguardar algo significativo. Sin embargo, antes de mencionar objetos, pienso que debemos recordar a la gente, a los seres humanos, que también se debieron esconder. O disfrazar. Para tratar de salir del país, para seguir luchando en una militante clandestinidad...o solo para sobrevivir el fascismo desatado, capaz de matar a alguien por el solo hecho de llevar una barba, o tener el pelo largo, o poseer algún libro “peligroso”, un adjetivo de uso acezantemente amplio. Un libro en “El Arte del Cubismo”,

(¡cubano!), o un pelo largo, o un acento extranjero, llevaron a la muerte a muchos/as. Conozco, personalmente, varios ejemplos.

Pocos días después del 11 chileno, estando entonces en Chile y siendo un jovencito de poco más de 25 años de edad, descubrí lo precaria que era la situación de quienes defendíamos el gobierno de Salvador Allende. La segunda noche de toque de queda, cuando se acercaba la hora en que ya no se podía circular por la calle, so pena de muerte, diversas personas golpearon en la puerta de mi casa. Esa primera noche (y por tres semanas seguidas), muchos jóvenes izquierdistas, algunos de ellos/as importantes líderes en sus varios partidos, buscaron asilo en mi casa. Nunca supe cómo “se corrió la bola” de que yo era un “Ayudista confiable”. A las tres semanas, por razones que también ignoro, los golpes en mi puerta cesaron. Gran parte del problema que tuvo (y sigue teniendo) la izquierda, tanto chilena como mundial, es la falta de confianza mutua, la falta de franca comunicación, el sectarismo. Sin embargo, en esas tres semanas después del 11 de septiembre, cuando mi casa fue misteriosamente designada como “Casa de Seguridad”, hubo interesantísimas discusiones políticas. Entre mis huéspedes. Esas conversaciones debieron haberse tenido mucho antes. Ellas siguen siendo necesarias. En el precario asilo de esa casa se discutió con pasión, pero en voz baja, pues el vecino era un militar retirado, partidario del nuevo régimen. Lamento contar que varios de esos amigos y amigas que llegaron a esconderse a mi casa después perdieron la vida. Algunos asesinados vilmente, otros luchando hasta el fin, en encuentros muy desiguales con las fuerzas armadas y policiales del dictador Augusto Pinochet.

Cuando vino “el Golpe”, aprendimos de inmediato que -más importante que cualquier cosa- es salvar la vida. Casas, automóviles, libros, todo, fueron abandonados sin muchas dudas ni arrepentimientos. No solo ayudé a esconder gente. También me tocó ayudar a esconder libros, pinturas, incluso armas. En este último caso, recuerdo una noche cuando una compañera de mi grupo de danza llegó con su anciana madre, quién deseaba enterrar un par de antiguas armas. Eran dos pistolas, que esa familia de exiliados de la Guerra Civil Española de 1936 había atesorado por largos años. Armas ya inservibles, reliquias de otro evento que había creado la necesidad de abandonarlo todo. Menos la vida. El esconder esas armas nos dio más pena que nerviosismo. Fue un emocionante “Adiós a las armas”, como el título del libro de Ernest Hemingway. Muchos y muchas logramos sobrevivir y rehacer nuestras vidas. Dentro o fuera de Chile. A 50 años de esa terrible fecha, cuando esparcidos por el mundo recordamos esos cruentos sucesos, la lección no se olvida: ningún objeto vale más que la vida misma. Honor a los líderes que pasaron por esa casa “de seguridad”, hoy desaparecidos/asesinados: Bautista, Carmen y Alejandro.

.....

Marcela: ¿Dónde enterraron las armas? ¿Crees que puedan estar allí mismo todavía?

Arturo: Las armas las enterramos justo al lado de la casa donde estaba quedándome (les cuidaba una casa a amistades que estaban de viaje). En Santiago, barrio Nuñoa. Tal vez estén ahí todavía, en ese sitio eriazo. La verdad es que el entierro era (en parte) algo simbólico. Esas armas, si fueron usadas, fueron usadas para luchar en contra de Franco. Sin embargo, en ese Chile justo en medio del golpe militar, TODO era peligroso. Si ese sitio sigue eriazo, ahí estarán esas armas. Lo dudo. ¡50 años!

Estuve preso por unos 3 o 4 días, escribí un poema al respecto, llamado “El torturador jugaba fútbol”, donde cuento cómo logré salvarme, desviando la interrogación hacia el deporte (fui Campeón de Tenis juvenil de Chile y Campeón Sud Americano de Atletismo, en los 200 metros planos). Al salir de esa cárcel, que llamaban “La Patilla”, ubicada en las oficinas del Registro Civil, en el subterráneo, uno de los que quedaron presos me pidió que, si podía escribir un pequeño mensaje, para que yo lo entregara a su familia. Así lo hice: logré cortar un pedazo de la suela de goma de mis sandalias y ahí metí el pequeño mensaje. Al día siguiente, lo llevé a la dirección indicada, que me la había aprendido de memoria. ¡Algo exitoso y emocionante! Sin embargo, como te digo en lo que escribí: lo más importante fue esconder (o ayudar a esconder) a mucha gente.

.....

Note: Arturo sent me the text above, and he wanted to include the following poem, written by him. It is an autobiographical poem which tells how he was saved when he was imprisoned in November 1973. The translation was done by himself:

**El torturador jugaba fútbol**

**The torturer played soccer**

Me interroga  
una montaña de carne  
amenazante  
Un anónimo dinosaurio  
encorbatado  
me mira  
prometiéndome consecuencias  
dolorosas  
“¡Mas dolorosas que la chucha,  
conch'e tu madre!”  
...si es que no digo  
toda la verdad

Toda la verdad,  
por supuesto  
lo prometo  
humilde  
protestando  
mi inocencia  
sonriendo  
mi nerviosismo  
“¡Es un error nomás!”  
repito  
meloso  
Sé que tan solo  
una fracción de  
toda la verdad  
una frase casi honesta  
puede sumergirme en  
el horror  
de la tortura  
esa tortura que ya visitó  
a la mayor parte  
de mis compañeros  
ésos que me esperan  
abajo  
en la celda “La Patilla”  
que me reservan  
el privilegio  
de un improvisado colchón  
asignado a la última  
víctima  
la que llega sin uñas  
sin dientes  
sin lágrimas  
sin palabras  
sin aliento  
sin confesar nada  
sin nada que  
confesar  
Después de todo  
¿qué es toda la verdad?  
De verdad  
no sabría decirlo  
pero sé que un cachito  
de mi verdad  
acaso un sueño  
un poema  
un chiste fome  
que se me ocurra decir traerá

A threatening  
mountain of flesh  
interrogates me  
A nameless  
tie-wearing beast  
looks at me  
promising painful  
consequences  
“Very fucking painful,  
motherfucker!”  
...if I don't tell  
the whole truth

The whole truth  
of course  
I promise  
humble  
protesting  
my innocence  
smiling through  
my nervousness  
“It's all a mistake!”  
I repeat  
sweetly  
I know that just  
a fraction  
of the truth,  
a quasi-honest phrase  
could submerge me  
in horror  
submarine me in the  
torture that already visited  
most of the people here  
my comrades  
those who await for me  
below  
in “La Patilla” prison,  
who reserve me  
the privilege  
of an improvised mattress  
assigned to the latest  
victim  
returning without nail  
without teeth  
without tears  
without words  
without breath  
without a confession  
without something to  
confess  
After all  
what is the whole truth?  
Truthfully  
I could not say  
but I know that just a bit  
of my truth  
a dream perhaps  
a poem  
a silly joke  
will bring

consecuencias dolorosas.  
“¡Dolorosas, mierda!  
¡Lo que se llaman dolorosas!  
¡No te estoy hueveando!”  
Mi padre decía:  
“No muestres miedo al perro  
que gruñe:  
el perro te puede oler el miedo.”

Sentado en frente mío  
hay un perro gruñón  
un perro tomando notas  
con un brillo de oro  
en el hocico  
y un brillo de odio  
en los ojos.

“No muestres miedo al perro  
que gruñe”  
“¡Sí papá!”  
“Señor perro,  
solo soy un actor.  
Estudié teatro  
en California.  
Ahí no mezclan política  
con arte.”  
“¡Actores!”, ladra el hombre,  
despectivo,  
“¡Todos los actores son  
comunistas!”  
¿Cómo escalar esta montaña?  
¿Cómo pasar esta prueba?  
“Mire, señor torturador  
me podría haber arrancado  
fácilmente.”  
El energúmeno levanta sus orejas  
y deja de escribir:  
“¡Ah! ¿Vái a nombrar cómplices?”  
Serio, le largo mi respuesta  
Relajada, como una pluma:  
“Sí...lo voy a hacer.  
Nombraré cómplices.”

Los peludos nudillos  
del macizo compatriota  
bailan vertiginosos  
sobre el añejo teclado  
de la maquina

“¡Ya! Listo. Canta nomás.  
¿Quiénes son tus cómplices?”  
Espero un momento  
(efecto dramático)  
y le largo la respuesta:  
“Mis piernas, señor.”

El hombre-can no se mueve,  
esperando mi explicación.  
Solo le ofrezco silencio.

painful consequences.  
“Painful, asshole!  
Really painful!  
I’m not bullshitting you!”  
My father used to say:  
“Don’t show fear to a  
growling dog.  
Dogs can smell your fear!”

Across from me  
there is a growling dog  
a note-taking dog,  
with a shine of gold  
in his jaw  
and a shine of hatred  
in his eyes

“Don’t show fear to that  
growling dog!”  
“Yes dad!”  
“Mister dog,  
I’m just an actor.  
I studied theatre  
in California.  
They don’t mix art  
and politics there!”  
“Actors!”, barks the man,  
scornfully,  
“All actors are  
communists!”  
Can I climb this mountain?  
How can I pass this test?  
“Look, mister torturer:  
I could have easily  
escaped!”  
The beastly one lifts an ear  
and ceases writing:  
“Will you name accomplices?”  
Serious, I throw my answer.  
easy-like. A feather:  
“Yes... I will!  
I’ll name accomplices.”

The hairy knuckles  
of my massive compatriot  
feverishly dance  
upon the typewriter’s  
aging keyboard

“OK. Ready! Sing!  
Who are your accomplices?”  
I pause for a moment  
(for dramatic effect)  
and I throw my answer:  
“My legs, sir.”

Dog-man does not move  
awaiting my explanation  
I only offer him silence.

Después, su hocico se tuerce  
y sus ojos se achican:  
“¿Me estái hueveando?  
¡Porque si me estái hueveando...”  
“¡No! ¿Cómo se le ocurre?”  
Es que yo era un famoso atleta...  
¿tal vez recuerda  
mi nombre...?”  
(¡y ojalá que este tipo lea  
la página deportiva!)

Suspenseo...  
y luego:  
“¿No tenís dos hermanas.?”  
Mi sonrisa y mi alivio son verdaderos:  
“¡Claro! Juegan vóleibol!  
Son muy buenas jugadoras.”  
Pauso, brevemente, y sigo:  
Pero usted no conoce  
sus caras...”  
“¿Qué?”, ladra el perro,  
“No te estái diciendo que  
las conozco... ¡saco’e wuéas!”  
“¡Usted les conoce el culo, señor!  
¡no la cara!  
“¿Que qué?”, vuelve  
el ladrado.  
“¡No me huevís! ¡Ya te dije!”  
“¡No lo estoy hueveando señor!  
¿No se ha fijado  
que los fotógrafos siempre  
le sacan fotos a las mujeres  
desde abajo p’a arriba?  
¡Pa’mostrar el culo, pues!”  
El tipo arruga el seño, piensa  
y luego ¡acepta!  
“Cierto, ahora me acuerdo de tu nombre.”  
¡ Sí, Don Perro! Si hubiera querido,  
¡chís! ¡habría corrido de verdad, pus!

“¡Claro!”, bromea el perro,  
“¡Con esas sandalias de hippie  
no habríai llegáo a ni una parte!”  
Me sumo a su carcajada,  
celebrando el chiste.  
“Y usted, señor Don perro  
amigo torturador  
¿acaso no hace deportes?  
¡Con esos mansos ni que músculos!  
¡Apuesto que es el mejor de su equipo!”  
El perro es modesto:  
“No soy tan pior.”  
Insisto, con un interés  
más falso que Judas:  
“¿Qué puesto juega? ¿Back centro?  
¡Me lo imaginaba!”  
Orgullosa, el hombre ladra:  
“¡Claro pu’ñor! Pasa la pelota,  
¡pero no el jugador!  
¡Ja, ja, ja!

Then, his snout twists  
and his eyes get smaller:  
“Are you fucking with me?  
‘Cause if you are...!”  
“No! How can you think that?”  
The thing is, I was a famous  
athlete... You might remember  
my name?”  
(Let’s hope this guy  
reads the sports page!)

Another pause...  
and then:  
“Do you have two sisters?  
I smile, truly relieved:  
“Yes! They play volleyball!  
They are great players!”  
I pause. Briefly. Then add:  
“But you don’t know their  
faces.”  
“What?!” barks the dog,  
“Ain’t I saying that I do  
know them? Asshole!”  
“You know their asses, sir!  
Not their faces!”  
“Say what?!”, the bark  
returns.  
“Don’t fuck with me!”  
“I’m not fucking with you, sir!  
Haven’t you noticed  
that photographers always  
shoot pictures of women players  
from below?  
To enhance their asses!”  
Dog frowns, thinks  
and then, concedes!  
“True. Now I remember you.”  
“Yes, Mr. Dog! If I’d wanted,  
Man! I would’ve run for real!

“Sure!”, jokes the dog,  
“with those hippie sandals  
you wouldn’t get far!”  
I add myself to his laughter.  
What a great joke!  
“And you, mister dog,  
my torturer friend,  
Aren’t you into sports?  
Such humongous muscles!  
You must be the team’s best!”  
The dog is modest:  
“I am OK!”  
I insist, false, with a Judas-like  
interest: “What position  
did you play? Center half?  
What I thought!”  
Proudly, the man barks:  
“Of course, buddy! The ball  
may pass, but not the player!  
Ha, ha, ha,,ha!



¿Sabís que más? Como que...  
te estoy creyendo...  
Hummm...”  
Por la ventana del cuarto se filtran  
silbidos de pájaros  
frenadas de autobuses  
y un grito:  
“¡Maní! ¡Tostáo y confitáo! ¡Maní!”  
Suspenso...suspenso...suspenso.

“Hummm...¡Ya!, te voy a ayudar wueón,  
pero que conste:  
te creo como atleta.  
Como actor, ¡las huinchas!”  
Voy a escribir que hubo  
un error.  
Saldrás mañana.”  
Ese día, en ese triste cuarto  
corrí una feliz carrera  
actué mi mejor papel  
Una vez en la calle  
sin importarme  
las miradas curiosas  
de otros transeúntes  
respiré la dulce libertad  
y un diluvio de alivio  
salada mezcla  
de sudor y lágrimas  
me nubló los ojos.

You know? I’m kind of starting  
to believe you...  
Hummmm...”  
Through the window I hear  
bird whistles  
screaming bus brakes  
and a familiar call:  
“Peanuts! Toasted! Sweetened!”  
Suspense...suspense...suspense

“OK, asshole! I’m gonna help  
you!...but get it straight:  
I believe the athlete in you.  
The actor...no way!  
I’m gonna write that  
there was an error.  
You’ll get out tomorrow.”  
That day, in that sad room,  
I ran a happy race  
I acted my best role.  
Once out in the street  
unconcerned  
with the curious glances  
that came from passers by  
I inhaled the sweet freedom  
and a torrent of relief  
a salty mix  
of sweat and tears  
clouded my eyes.

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## 8. Barbara

**23 years old in 1973, lives in Canada.  
Burned and hid things in Concepción.  
Chat online, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023:**

Barbara: Fue importante deshacernos de información escrita y panfletaria, carnets de militancia, cartas que nuestro padre le escribió a mi madre cuando fue a los países del Este en los años 1955, cuando fue al Festival Mundial de la Juventud, en Bucarest. También cartas de agradecimiento de parte de la militancia por la estadía de Pablo Neruda en casa de mis padres, en los momentos de persecución al poeta.

Se quemaron carnets y algunos libros, pero pocos, por el humo que salía en el patio y vivíamos cerca de un delator que venía de descubrir después de haberle considerado un buen vecino. El resto lo guardamos en el entretecho de la casa, donde mucho material se humedeció, e incluso un libro donde Neruda le hace a mis padres una dedicación de agradecimiento. Como mi madre se llamaba Abigail y mis padres le pasaron su cama (lo mejor atendido), el poeta escribió en el libro: “Abigail, desde tu cama, recibe mis agradecimientos...”

Teníamos muchas fotos de acontecimientos importantes. Mi padre tenía un amigo que era un representante de la Metro Goldwyn-Mayer en Chile y había fotos de amigos y familia espectaculares. Pasaron los años y mi padre enfermó mentalmente, con los años y se fue a la capital, y en esa maleta iban las historias fotográficas de nuestra vida familiar, social, política y un compañero de Santiago nos llamó para decirnos que nuestro padre estaba en la

capital, muy mal de la cabeza y que andaba con una maleta. Todo desapareció, nunca recuperamos esa maleta con nuestra infancia. Ahora guardo las fotos como hueso santo.

Teníamos muchos libros, ya sea novelas, de historia, poesía, etc. Después los libros fueron sacados del entretecho y repartido entre nosotros, otros tirados a la basura, salimos algunos al extranjero, ya no queda nada de nada. Tenía medallas de los países socialistas, muchas revistas que llegaban a casa, me acuerdo de una que se llamaba "En Viaje ". Se hizo una casa nueva, todo se tiró por estar en mal estado, algo mis hermanos rescataron, otros comidos por los ratones, o humedecidos por el tiempo. Los ratones se comieron muchos libros.

Marcela: Qué pasó con las medallas?

Barbara: Las botamos, pero no me acuerdo dónde.

Tengo una anécdota muy impresionante de cuando hice una investigación sobre la sindicalización de los educadores argentinos. Primero vine a Chile porque pensaba hacer esta investigación en Chile, pero no fue posible, porque salí siendo investigada yo, en 1988-89. Yo podía entrar a Chile, no estaba en la lista. Entonces tuve miedo de continuar con esta investigación en mi país y me acordé de un profesor de la universidad Laval que me dijo: ¿Vale la pena morir por una investigación? y me fui a Argentina. Mi vuelo hacia Canadá salía desde Chile, así es que volví, y cuando paso la aduana en Caracoles, el paso entre Mendoza y Argentina, me revisan un bolso que venía lleno de libros sobre sindicalismo, de política y de antropología, que compré en Argentina. El hombre que fue a revisar abre el bolso y saca el primer libro y se lo muestra a su oficial, era un libro sobre las tribus de no sé dónde, con ilustraciones a color. Pero si hubiera sacado otro libro, sobre el sindicato, o de política, ahí nomás quedo. ¡Qué imprudente fui!

Marcela: ¿Qué pasó con la maleta que llevaba tu papá? ¿Y te acuerdas qué cosas (o libros) rescataron tus hermanos?

Barbara: Maleta y fotos nunca aparecieron, perdimos nuestros recuerdos. Los títulos de los libros te los digo: El Hombre Mediocre, de José Ingeniero; El Capital, Materialismo Dialéctico, libros de Althusser, unos libros que venían de Rusia en español para comprender el Manifiesto, libros de Mao Tse Tung, de la República Popular China, sobre Rusia, libros sobre Vietnam, libros de escritores rusos, sobre Cuba y el Che, etc., etc.

Marcela: ¿Cuántos años tenías?

Barbara: Yo tenía 23 años. Mi padre seguro llevaba libros en su maleta. Libros en español sobre la Revolución Cubana, libros sobre Lenin, sobre Ho-Chi-Min; La Sagrada familia, de Engels. Éramos una familia política y ya no habitábamos la casa, pero nuestros muebles y todo permaneció allí. Íbamos a veces, yo me casé, mi hermana también, salimos al extranjero, mis padres se fueron al campo y venían de vez en cuando a la casa. Desolación total.

Marcela: ¿Qué pasó con el libro que Neruda les dedicó a tus papás?

Barbara: Creo que desapareció. Pudo haber sido "Las Uvas y el Viento", me parece, y dejó una dedicatoria en la primera página. Ese libro permaneció largo tiempo, pero no sé si se salvó o desapareció. Tendría que preguntarle a uno de mis hermanos cuando vaya a Chile.

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## 9. Camilo

**11 years old in Sept. 1973, lives in Sweden.**

**Burned and threw things away in Santiago (La Reina).**

**Personal interview, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023:**

Camilo: Me acuerdo que un día después del golpe mi tío desarmó un reloj despertador que había conectado con cables a la radio, era un invento que había hecho él para despertarse con música en la mañana, y lo desarmó porque los milicos podían pensar que se trataba de una bomba. Una vez lo acompañé a botar unas pistolas en el Canal de San Carlos. También quemamos varios libros en la chimenea de su casa, pero como era primavera, el humo podía ser sospechoso, así que el resto de los libros los arrojaron al canal, y otros quedaron debajo del piso de cemento de la despensa que construyó mi tío en el patio de atrás de su casa. También enterró otras cosas allí mismo, pero solo me acuerdo de una cámara fotográfica en miniatura. Servía para fotografiar documentos, así que podían creer que se trataba de espionaje, por eso la enterró.

Marcela: ¿Crees que las cosas todavía puedan estar allí?

Camilo: Puede ser, la casa todavía existe, pero imposible saberlo. No tengo idea quien vive allí ahora. También me acuerdo que... yo iba a la Escuela Experimental Artística, en La Reina, que estaba ubicada al pie de la Cordillera, y cuando teníamos recreo, con mis compañeros íbamos a jugar a un cerro que había allí. Un día estábamos allí jugando, cuando sentimos disparos, y las balas que nos rozaban. Nos dimos cuenta de que los milicos estaban disparando en nuestra dirección, así que nos fuimos rápidamente de allí.

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## 10. Carla

**29 years old in sept. 1973, lives in Germany.**

**Buried things in Punta Arenas.**

**Chat online and voicemail, 2<sup>d</sup> February 2023:**

Carla: Nos tuvimos que deshacer de todo y perdimos todo, incluso nuestra casa propia que se quedó allí y nunca se recuperó. Vivíamos en Punta Arenas, frente al estadio de la ciudad que convirtieron en un campo de concentración, donde estaba condenado mi compañero. Allí no fue fácil, lo que pude lo regalé. Los niños estaban en Santiago con mis padres y piensa, qué podía llevar conmigo? Donde vivía era una ciudad totalmente controlada y el único medio de salir de allí era el avión. Los objetos que teníamos, y escritos que nos acusaban que éramos de izquierda, fueron eliminados cuando empezó el golpe. Además mi marido era nacido en Punta Arenas, un hombre público y conocido. Y ello quedó para todos nosotros como una parte de nuestra historia de vida que nos tocó.

Marcela: ¿De qué forma eliminaron las cosas?

Carla: Donde guardó las cosas mi marido esa vez fue a un costado de la casa, porque tú comprenderás que Punta Arenas es la ciudad más austral de Chile, hace frío todo el año, no hay verano casi, hay mucho viento, es terrible. En ese momento, cuando fue el 11, estaba mi marido con nosotros, porque me fue a buscar incluso a que saliera de la empresa donde yo trabajaba, que era la ENAP. Nos vinimos a la casa, estábamos aterrados, porque ya nos imaginábamos lo que nos podía pasar... Y bueno, realmente mi marido vivió muy poco conmigo en ese momento, en la casa esa que nos habíamos cambiado hace poco, porque mi marido había estado en Santiago y nos habían pedido la casa y yo había arrendado esa casita, me la arrendó un colega de la Empresa Nacional del Petróleo, y no la conocía él tampoco la casa, cuando llegué tuve que hacer todo eso yo. Y justo después cuando él viene, viene el golpe. Y ...bueno. Esa parte era donde se estacionaban los autos...pero había un pedacito de tierra también, y ahí lo enterró, me acuerdo yo. Y bueno... no creo que mi marido lo haya sacado. No le puedo preguntar, porque él falleció hace unos años, solo yo quedo viva, pero no lo recuerdo, no sé. No tengo idea, ni tampoco he ido a Punta Arenas. He ido muchas veces a Chile, pero a Punta Arenas no he ido. Pensaba ir este año, pero no estoy bien de salud, entonces...tampoco he ido. Y pienso que toda esa gente ha muerto, porque era gente mayor la que vivía allí, era toda gente de la ENAP, la que vivía en esas casas. Eran casas que vendió la ENAP, pero eran casas propias. Si. Y bueno...eso es todo. Es todo lo que sé nomás, y que recordé ahora, lo había olvidado, pero lo volví a recordar ahora. Es triste recordarlo, porque pasaron tantas cosas...tan feas, y tan

horribles, que una nunca las ha olvidado, pero también a veces las ha dejado pasar...O sea, una no las tiene latentes constantemente, porque nos hacen daño. Pero cuando se trata de denunciar, sí que hay que hacerlo.

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## 11. Carlos

**24 years old in 1973. Lives in Sweden.  
Chopped, burned, and hid things in Antofagasta.  
Personal interview, 3<sup>d</sup> Mars 2023:**

Carlos: Nos deshicimos de hartas cosas. Los libros los picamos con tijeras y los tiramos a la basura. Mi papá era dentista, pero había sido militar y en la casa había guardados varios uniformes militares en una maleta, así que mi familia y yo tuvimos que cortarlos con tijeras. También cortamos un par de botas militares, con un cuchillo, y después los quemamos en una caldera de agua.

Marcela: ¿Caldera de agua?

Carlos: Sí, una que había en el edificio donde yo trabajaba. Y mi hermana menor escondió un montón de revistas en el tubo de la ventilación, las enrolló y las metió allí. Eran revistas juveniles, solo me acuerdo de las revistas Onda, Ramona y Paloma. Uno o dos días después, los militares allanaron nuestro apartamento. No fueron tan brutos esa vez, comparado con los que allanaron el bufete de abogados donde yo trabajaba. Esos deben haber andado drogados, porque estaban como poseídos. Destruyeron todo, los muebles, los sofás, hasta los títulos de los abogados que colgaban de la pared. Yo me había graduado de abogado hacia poco, solo un par de meses antes, así que todavía no había colgado mi título. Pero todo era tan absurdo... ni una lógica. También allanaron el teatro de la Universidad de Chile donde yo tomaba clases con Pedro de la Barra, que era el director en ese momento. Hacía poco habían estrenado una obra de teatro en la que unos de los personajes eran indígenas y salían con unas lanzas, así que los milicos confiscaron las lanzas, y toda la utilería del teatro. Ese teatro había sido inaugurado por Salvador Allende, años antes cuando era senador, su visita a Antofagasta impresionó mucho a la gente, incluso a los de derecha, porque para allá no iba ningún político de la capital. No les importaba mucho que fuera de izquierda, siendo senador, se le veía como una persona muy importante.

Marcela: ¿Y qué pasó con las revistas?

Carlos: Cuando se acabó la dictadura, mi hermana las sacó y las repartió entre sus amigos. Imagínate. No sé si le dio algunas a mis hermanos, o no...O si ella guardó algunas, pero eran muchas, algo debe haber guardado... tengo que averiguar eso.

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## 12. Claudio

**8 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.  
Burned and buried things in Puerto Montt.  
Voicemail, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

Quemamos libros y revistas, y enterramos una pistola debajo del piso de la cocina, debajo del lavaplatos. Un día, años después, vino un gasfiter a arreglar las cañerías de cobre, abrió el piso de madera para llegar a las cañerías, y encontró dos balas. Pero las cosas quedaron ahí hasta que nos mudamos, vendimos la casa y después los nuevos dueños la demolieron. Enterramos las cosas inmediatamente después del golpe de 1973, yo tenía 8 años. Poco después, un día yo estaba acostado en mi cama, porque tenía fiebre. Estaba solo en mi cama y de repente entraron los milicos a la casa, uno entró a la pieza donde yo estaba acostado, y detrás de él entró un teniente. Al lado de mi cama había un canasto de mimbre donde dejábamos la ropa sucia, y el milico empezó a meter allí la bayoneta, con la bayoneta lo pinchaba. Yo me quedé impresionado. El dormitorio era bien chiquito, y el teniente le dijo al milico que mirara debajo de mi cama, que ahí podía haber una bomba, dijo, y me preguntó a mí si yo tenía una bomba. ¿Verdad que tienes una bomba? me dijo. Mi mamá estaba en la puerta gritándole a los milicos que se vayan, y uno de ellos le puso la ametralladora en la sien...Siendo niño me impresionó ver eso.

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## 13. Elena

**39 years old in 1973, lives in Sweden.  
Threw away things in Santiago (La Reina).  
Personal interview, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023:**

Elena: Me deshice de varias cápsulas de vidrio con minerales, eran del siglo XIX, de una mina en Alemania, de la ciudad de Stassfurt. Porque los militares podían pensar que eran explosivos. Eran pesadas, la más grande medía unos 30 centímetros de alto y los otros unos 15 o 20 cm. No teníamos música de la Nueva Canción Chilena, no escuchábamos ese tipo de música, pero teníamos un LP con el discurso de Fidel Castro durante su visita a Chile en 1972, ese lo botamos junto con una pistola que tenía mi esposo.

Marcela: ¿Por qué tenía una pistola?

Elena: No sé por qué, en realidad. No sé qué le habrá dado.

Marcela: Mucha gente tenía pistolas, por qué?

Elena: No sé, pero algunas personas decían que había que tener una pistola para defenderse de los grupos de extrema derecha.

Marcela: ¿Dónde botaron las cosas?

En el Canal San Carlos, mi hermana, mi hija de 7 años y yo. Las tiramos desde un pequeño puente en medio de la avenida, por donde pasaban jeeps militares y camiones llenos de soldados, a cada rato. En la intersección de la Avenida Irarrázaval con la Calle Tobalaba. Debajo del puente había otras personas tirando cosas, me acuerdo que estaban tirando un disco LP y algo en una bolsa de plástico. Ese día en el puente, mi hermana salvó una de las cápsulas de vidrio en el último minuto, cuando la iba a tirar al agua, junto con las demás. Me dijo: "este no tiene polvo, son solo piedras", así que lo guardó en su bolso, y después se lo llevó al sur, donde vivía ella. Treinta años después se lo regaló a mi hija cuando fue de visita a Chile, después del exilio. Habíamos olvidado por completo que ella lo había guardado, así que fue una tremenda sorpresa. Contiene piedras minerales y cristales, son lindos. Es lo único que nos queda de nuestra casa en Chile, en ese entonces los teníamos de adorno encima de la chimenea. Poco después de ese día en el puente mi familia y yo tuvimos que abandonar la casa, y luego tuvimos que abandonar el país.

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## 14. Eliana

**6 years old in 1973, lives in Sweden.  
Her family burned and hid objects in Santiago.  
Phone interview, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023:**

Eliana: Perdimos todo tipo de cosas, dejamos una casa con todo adentro, y una cabaña en la playa. Estas no aparecen en ningún documento legal ahora. Todo con respecto a las propiedades se borró de todas partes, y las cosas de adentro, ¿quién sabe? Pero lo inmediato era deshacerse de las cosas más personales y de lo que te podía comprometer políticamente. Quemamos fotografías, libros y afiches en un barril de metal, de esos de aceite, en el patio trasero de la casa de mis abuelos, recuerdo a mi abuela quemando cosas ahí todos los días.

Marcela: ¿Te acuerdas qué afiches eran?

Eliana: Tenían dibujos sobre las nuevas leyes sociales de la Unidad Popular, eran muchos, un montón. Los enrollaron y los pusieron en un balde de metal. Me acuerdo de uno que tenía el dibujo de un minero. También quemamos fotos familiares donde aparecían amigos, para no comprometerlos, todos eso se quemó. Creo que lo único que se salvó fue el libro del Che, su diario de vida. Ese se escondió entre las vigas de la casa de mi abuela, junto con fotografías de la familia, hicieron unos pequeños paquetes y los escondieron allí. Pero cuando partimos al exilio, mis tías los sacaron de allí y los quemaron.

Mis papás, en su dormitorio tenían un ropero grande de madera, de esos antiguos. Cuando los milicos allanaron nuestra casa, yo estaba acostada en la cama de ellos y sabía que encima del ropero había una pistola envuelta en un pañuelo blanco, la veía desde la cama. Los milicos entraron a la pieza y empezaron a sacar todo del closet, mientras los otros milicos rompían todo en las otras habitaciones, yo escuchaba como quebraban los platos en la cocina, y como tiraban todo al piso por toda la casa, ¡todo, todo! Desde la cama yo miraba el pañuelo blanco encima del ropero, mientras los milicos sacaban y tiraban todas las cosas, y yo no podía entender cómo no veían el pañuelo! Hasta el día de hoy puedo ver ese pañuelo blanco frente a mis ojos.

Marcela: ¿Y encontraron algo?

Eliana: Al final, los milicos no encontraron nada comprometedor, pero sí encontraron plata, eso sí encontraron, y se la llevaron. Se llevaron la plata, las joyas de mi mamá, y un abrigo de piel.

Después de 34 años recuperé una de mis muñecas, ahora está tuerta. Eso es lo que quedó de mi infancia. Mi abuela la había guardado y la había envuelto en papel de diario, se la dio a mi tía cuando volvió a Chile y ella me la trajo. La muñeca estaba desnuda cuando la recuperé, y no la reconocí. Pero cuando la miré de bien cerca y la toqué, entonces me acordé. Ahí sí me vino el recuerdo a la mente. No era mi juguete favorito, no era un artefacto que marcara un desapego, había otras cosas que despertaban mi memoria.

Marcela: ¿Como qué, por ejemplo?

Eliana: Me acuerdo de un tacón de zapato de mujer que encontré en casa de mi abuela, donde nos fuimos a vivir cuando tuvimos que irnos de nuestra casa. Vivimos tanto en casa de los padres de mi mamá como de mi papá, en ambas casas. Me encantaban los zapatos con tacones y quería ese tacón para ponerlo en mi zapato. En la casa de mis otros abuelos había otro tacón, y yo quería juntar los dos tacones. Pero eso quedó a medias. Ahora pienso: ¿eran realmente dos tacones, o solo uno? No sé si fueron dos solo en mi imaginación. Es algo que quedó en el aire, no se pudo concluir. Es un recuerdo que me motivó a recordar otras cosas, me llevó a otras imágenes. Esa idea inconclusa me llevó a recordar cuando tuvimos que abandonar nuestra casa. Recuerdo que nuestra casa tenía dos cerezos en la entrada, y un suelo de baldosas. Cuando llegaba el verano, el piso se llenaba de flores rosadas, se veía hermoso. Cuando fui a Chile pasé una vez por allí, pero ya no es como antes, ahora hay un solo cerezo y el jardín está todo descuidado. La casa también, está vieja y rota.

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## 15. Emilio

**15 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.  
Burned and buried things in Santiago (Independencia).  
Chat online, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022:**

Emilio: Escondimos discos bajo tierra fuera de la casa, la literatura y el diario El Siglo los quemamos en el patio en la noche, mientras un helicóptero del ejército volaba alrededor, cada vez que el helicóptero aparecía sobre nosotros, apagábamos el fuego.

Marcela: ¿Crees que los discos todavía estén allí?

Emilio: Los rescatamos y los tengo yo.

Marcela: ¿Sabes cómo los enterraron para que se conservaran?

Emilio: No, mi papá los enterró en la casa de un amigo suyo, no sé quién era, ya que mi padre nunca dijo su nombre, y ya falleció. Los discos eran de Víctor Jara, Violeta Parra, Quilapayún, el Festival de la Canción Popular, etc., eran muchos. Los recuperamos en 1990.

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## 16. Felipe

**34 years old in 1973, lives in Chile  
Threw away and hid things in Talcahuano  
Phone interview, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023:**

Felipe: El día del golpe yo estaba de vacaciones del trabajo, me levanté temprano, como a las 08:00 de la mañana, encendí la radio y me encontré con la noticia del golpe. Nosotros le arrendábamos una pieza a un estudiante de la universidad, el Mario, tenía unos 18 años. El día anterior le había pedido la máquina de coser a mi esposa para coser unas banderas, y cosas por el estilo, las tenía que llevar a la universidad al día siguiente, o sea, el mismo día del golpe. Después de oír las noticias en la radio, fui a su pieza a despertarlo y le dije que se deshiciera de todas las cosas que tenía, todo, todo...las banderas, los libros, los cascos...También tenía un linchaco. Le dije que los hiciera pedazo, y después lo ayudé. El linchaco lo aserruchamos, y los cascos los partimos con un martillo, en pedazos chiquititos. Después salimos a la calle, y en unos callejones de tierra que había por allí cerca de la casa, los fuimos tirando de a poco, mientras caminábamos. En la casa también quedaron unos libros, eran sobre la revolución, y toda la cuestión.

Marcela: ¿Los cascos no eran de metal?

Felipe: No, eran de plástico, plástico duro. Por suerte, porque si no, no hubiésemos podido hacerlos pedazo. Deben haber sido de los más baratos. Los estudiantes, como no tenían plata, seguramente compraban de esos porque no les alcanzaba para más.

Marcela: ¿Y los libros eran tuyos o del Carlos?

Felipe: Del Carlos, yo no tenía de ese tipo de libros. Yo no me metía en política, no me gustaba. Mi papá era comunista y me acuerdo que cuando yo era chico, mi tío iba todos los días a la casa en la tarde y se quedaba hasta la noche hablando de política con él. Mi tío era socialista, entonces discutían mucho, me acuerdo. Hablaban y hablaban, y nunca llegaban a nada. Yo me aburrí de eso, igual que de los políticos, porque nunca llegaban a un acuerdo.

Marcela: ¿Y qué hicieron con los libros?

Felipe: No podía quemarlos en el patio, porque hubiese sido muy sospechoso el humo, así que me subí al alero de la casa, y gatié, gatié, y gatié hacia el fondo...y allí los escondí. Los amarré con una pita, el extremo de la pita la dejé cerca de la entrada, en caso de que alguna vez tuviera que quemarlos, entonces podría tirar la pita y sacar los libros rápidamente. Me acuerdo que el Mario se fue al baño, y cuando salió de allí no lo reconocí. Él tenía el pelo bien largo, y se lo cortó bien cortito. Pero yo aún no dimensionada bien lo que estaba pasando, pensaba que en un par de unas semanas todo se calmaría y habría elecciones, o algo así... no me imaginaba lo que vino después. En la calle los milicos paraban las micros y hacían bajar a la gente con los brazos en alto, los revisaban y los trataban de una manera denigrante, muy denigrante. Igual en el banco donde yo trabajaba, iban a buscar a la gente y se la llevaban. Al final, los libros que escondí en el alero de la casa se quedaron allí para siempre, con el tiempo me olvidé de ellos. Hace unos años tuve que mudarme de casa y revisando, los encontré.

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## 17. Flavia

**27 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.**

**Dumped things in Santiago (La Reina).**

**Phone interview, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2023:**

Después del golpe fuimos en el jeep de mi marido a tirar una pistola al Canal San Carlos, pero cuando doblamos una esquina, la calle estaba llena de milicos deteniendo los autos para requisarlos, y ya no podíamos dar media vuelta y regresar. Yo llevaba la pistola en mi regazo, envuelta en un pañuelo. Ni siquiera era mía, y me preguntaba por qué mi marido me la pasó a mí. En ese momento pensé que nuestras vidas terminarían allí. Mi marido redujo la velocidad e iba a parar el motor del auto, cuando el milico encargado de detenerlo le dio una señal para que no se detuviera y siguiera adelante. Yo no lo podía creer. Mi marido tenía el pelo bien corto, llevaba puesta una polera negra y gafas oscuras, y el jeep era verde oliva, así que el milico creyó que era milico. Así nos salvamos ese día, y al final logramos tirar la pistola al canal.

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## 18. Gina

**27 years old in 1973, lives in Sweden.**

**Burned things in Santiago (San Miguel).**

**Personal interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

En septiembre de 1973 quemamos papeles en la cocina de la casa de mis papás, con mucho cuidado de no levantar mucho humo, porque un vecino de un lado de la casa estaba a favor del golpe, y el otro del otro lado,



sabíamos que era de derecha. Así que quemamos las cosas en la cocina, pusimos una pala en el lavaplatos y quemamos los papeles allí, poquito a poco: quemábamos una pequeña cantidad de papel, e inmediatamente le echábamos agua. Después tirábamos las cenizas al basurero, y así seguíamos con el mismo procedimiento, una y otra vez. Quemamos unos libros nuevos de Mao Zedong, eran bonitos, de bien buena calidad; tenían tapa dura, era roja me acuerdo, y con hojas de papel de arroz. También quemamos cuadernos con apuntes del Partido Socialista, y muchos carnets de miembro del partido, que los tenía yo porque yo era tesorera del Partido Socialista, en la comuna de San Miguel. Quemamos discos también, pero me acuerdo de uno solo, del Quilapayún.

Me acuerdo que mi abuela tenía una pistola vieja que había sido de su papá, era bien antigua...ella la guardaba porque la encontraba bonita y porque era una reliquia. Debe haber sido muy, muy antigua. Después del golpe mi papá la llevó a la estación de tren donde trabajaba, y la tiró en un pozo de letrina.

Mi marido llegó un día a la casa, y cuando se sacó la chaqueta, revisó los bolsillos. Metió la mano en uno de los bolsillos de la chaqueta y se dio cuenta de que andaba trayendo un brazalete del Partido Socialista, y no se había dado cuenta. Camino a la casa había pasado por un montón de lugares donde los militares estaban revisando a la gente...No sé cómo tuvo suerte de que no lo detuvieran, porque andaba más o menos confiado, pensando que no tenía nada comprometedor. Así que el brazalete lo quemamos también. De todos modos, todas las noches yo esperaba a que los soldados allanaran nuestra casa, así que dormía en ropa de calle, porque no quería que me llevaran en pijama, como había oído que le había pasado a otra gente. Mis tres hijos estaban en casa de mis papás. Un vecino les dijo a los milicos que mi marido y yo éramos "raros" y que él pensaba que éramos de izquierda. Pero el jefe de la junta vecinal les dijo que eso no era cierto, que nosotros éramos muy buena gente y que le parecía imposible que fuéramos de izquierda. En aquellos días se podían ver los dos lados extremos de las personas. Algunos mostraban su peor lado, mientras que otros mostraban lo mejor de sí mismos.

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## 19. Gabriel

**19 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.  
Burned and buried things in Puerto Montt.  
Voicemail, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

Quemamos libros en el patio, me acuerdo de algunos títulos: El arte de la guerra, de Sun Tzu; El capital, de Karl Marx; Mi lucha, de Adolf Hitler; El libro rojo, de Mao Zedong. Enterramos libros, una pistola, todo. Hicimos un túnel debajo del piso de la cocina y enterramos las cosas allí. La primera vez que allanaron nuestra casa fue por un vecino que dijo que teníamos armas, él era el soplón. Leal era su apellido, esposo de Marta López, vivía en el pasaje número 5. Era alcohólico, ahora ya está muerto. Tres veces allanaron nuestra casa, la segunda vez me buscaron, pero no me encontraron. La tercera vez me salvé porque estaba en la calle y otro vecino me dijo que me escondiera, porque había visto a los milicos allanando mi casa. Pero fui tonto, porque después de que se fueron los milicos yo volví a mi casa, y a los tres días me vinieron a buscar de nuevo, como a las 2 o 3 de la mañana. Después me llevaron preso. Era finales de octubre de 1973, y estuve preso durante 1 año y 8 meses. No sé si las cosas que enterramos todavía están ahí, no lo creo. Tiempo después dejamos la casa, y los nuevos dueños la demolieron para construir una nueva.

## 20. Jessica

**11 years old in 1973, lives in Sweden.  
Buried things in Talcahuano (Dinavisur).  
Personal interview, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

Jessica: Nosotros enterramos cosas en el patio, panfletos y discos de música. Eran hartos discos, pero solo me acuerdo de uno, de Víctor Jara... y parece que también había uno de Inti-Illimani. También enterramos unos discos chinos, con música china y discursos en chino. Eran transparentes, unos eran celestes y otros eran rosados, color neón, así fuerte.

Marcela: ¿Discursos en chino?

Si, hablaban en chino, ¡vaya a saber uno qué decían! pero también tenían música, música china. Un tío nos regaló esos discos, me acuerdo. Mi hermana dijo que venían junto con mercadería que llegaba desde China, en los barcos que llegaban al puerto de Talcahuano. Mi tío era del Partido Socialista y parece que a través del partido los había conseguido, algo así. Algunos de los discos eran de 45 RM, y otros eran Long Play. También enterraron otras cosas, pero no me acuerdo qué eran. Tengo clarita la imagen de mi hermana y el Mario cavando el hoyo en el patio, en la noche. Todavía puedo verlos parados ahí, enterrando cosas. Me acuerdo que los panfletos los enrollaron antes de enterrarlos.

Marcela: ¿Crees que las cosas todavía puedan estar enterradas allí?

Jessica: Puede que los nuevos dueños de la casa las hayan encontrado, pero también puede ser que todavía estén allí. Tengo contacto con la vecina de esa casa, un día voy a pedirle que mire para el patio del vecino, a ver si han construido algo encima, ¿viste que a veces la gente hace construcciones en el patio?

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## 21. Laura

**17 years old in 1973, lives in Chile.  
Her parents burned things in San Bernardo.  
Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2022 (focus group):**

Mis papás quemaron muchos libros y discos de música el patio de su casa, no me acuerdo de los títulos. Conozco gente que escondió dinero en los tubos de las cortinas del baño, y en tinajas que enterraban en el jardín de su casa.

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## 22. Luis

**16 years old in 1973, lives in Venezuela.  
Dumped things in Santiago (La Reina).  
Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2022 (focus group):**

Yo me deshice de la Historia de la Revolución Rusa, de Trotsky, era una colección de varios libros que envolví en paquetes. Eran tremendos, encuadernados con tapa dura, y con hojas de papel de arroz. Mi hermano y yo los tiramos al canal de San Carlos... y sonaban menos de lo que pensábamos. También tiré unas pistolas, al mismo canal.

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## 23. Mariana

**12 years old in 1973, lives in Sweden.  
Burned, buried and hid things in Lautaro.  
Personal interview, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

Mariana: Mi mamá era amiga de la encargada del Partido Comunista en Lautaro, ella no tenía casa y vivía en el hospital, así que guardaba sus cosas en nuestra casa. Justo en septiembre de 1973, el Partido empezó a cambiar sus carnets, y todos los carnets del PC estaban en mi casa, los de la Juventud Comunista también. Después del golpe los enterraron en el patio de nuestra casa. La casa la allanaron un montón de veces, todos los días la allanaban. Rompieron todo, todo lo tiraron por el suelo, los sacos de harina los rompieron con las bayonetas...todo lo hicieron pedazos. Se llevaron todos los libros que encontraron, solo dejaron unos pocos, me acuerdo que dejaron el Diario de Ana Frank y un libro de Julius Fucik, que en realidad eran más comprometedores que los que se llevaron. También se llevaron una colección de libros de Historia de Chile, solo porque se llamaba "Historias Militares". A mis papás los acusaban de prepararse militarmente, incluso se llevaron un casco de bombero que era del hijo de la empleada, que vivía en nuestra casa. El casco no tenía protección por dentro, era solo el cascarón, y el niño lo usaba para jugar. Tenía como 3 años, y los milicos lo interrogaron, le preguntaron si los adultos de la casa disparaban con armas, y como niño inocente, dijo que sí. Claro, él lo vería como algo capo, por las películas de la tele y todo eso, entonces dijo que sí, que los adultos disparaban y hacían "púm-púm". El casco después apareció en el diario "El Austral", junto con otras cosas que los milicos decían que eran elementos subversivos que habían encontrado en los allanamientos. Mi familia escondió hasta las vendas y remedios que había en el botiquín, las escondieron en el entretecho.

Marcela: ¿Y no encontraron el entretecho?

Mariana: No, nunca entraron allí, en todas las veces que allanaron la casa, nunca lo vieron. También quemamos y enterramos todas las fotos familiares en las que aparecían mis padres, en especial mi madre, ella era gobernadora y los milicos andaban buscando una foto de ella para publicarla en el diario. Todos los familiares tuvieron que esconder las fotos de ella. Y las fotos de mi papá también, él era regidor y estaba preso.

Mis papás tuvieron que saltar el muro de la embajada italiana para asilarse, los milicos se dieron cuenta y empezaron a dispararles, pero por suerte se salvaron. A mi mamá los milicos la buscaban por su segundo apellido, no el primero, por eso yo creo que se salvó. O por lo menos, eso la ayudó, creo yo. Durante un tiempo se escondió en el campo, y en otros lugares. Después se fue a Santiago y allí la ayudaron unas monjas católicas, le dieron refugio y después la ayudaron a asilarse. La máxima autoridad de las monjas le facilitó la salida del país con la ayuda de la embajada del Vaticano. Mi mamá me contó que las monjas iban a la orilla del río Mapocho y rescataban los cadáveres que flotaban en el agua, les sacaban algunas pertenencias y las guardaban para después poder reconocer su identidad, por ejemplo anillos, medallas, llaveros, cinturones, etc. Después enterraban los cadáveres a la orilla del río.

Marcela: ¿Te acuerdas de qué congregación eran las monjas?

Mariana: No me acuerdo como se llamaba la congregación...pero eran monjas que no usaban hábito, trabajaban en una población. Una de ellas era francesa...había otra a la que le decían Panchita...Francisca Morales se llamaba ella, y otra que se llamaba Filomena. También me acuerdo de un cura que se llamaba Michel, al que lo hecharon de Chile.

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## 24. Milén

**11 years old in sept. 1973, lives in Chile.  
Buried things in Santiago (Ñuñoa).  
Chat online, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022:**

Milén: Mucho lo quemamos el día 11 de mañana en el patio. Y al fondo del patio, a mano izquierda, en una bolsa plástica enterramos la pistola con la que mi papá salió ese 11 a defender a Allende. A los libros se les pintó el lomo... y así...

Marcela: ¿El arma todavía estará allí? ¿Y los libros?

Milén: El arma debe estar allí... Los libros, muchos mi papá los puso en una caja de madera y por barco los envió a Suecia...uno tenía el lomo pintado de celeste, todavía hay alguno.

En 1973 yo estudiaba en la Escuela Experimental Artística, en La Reina. Cuando volvimos a la escuela ese año, la allanaron. El semestre lo comenzamos tarde, como en octubre, o noviembre debe haber sido, no sé, yo tenía 10 años. Por supuesto que destruyeron muchas cosas en la misma escuela. De hecho, pusieron a un militar a cargo. Revisaron los libros y los quemaron ahí mismo, en el patio. Los murales los pintaron con cal blanca, quemaron el arte y los libros que teníamos en la escuela, y rompieron todo. Pintaron, rompieron, tiraron, y quemaron también.

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## 25. Ricardo

**10 years old in Sept. 1973, lives in Sweden.  
Burned things in Santiago (La Reina).  
Personal interview, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023:**

En la casa de mi abuela quemaron libros en la chimenea, y me acuerdo que mi abuela se puso a buscar el carnet del PC de mi abuelo, fallecido hacía años. Lo buscó y buscó por toda la casa, y no pudo encontrarlo, pero cuando allanaron la casa, los milicos lo encontraron al tiro. Estaba en el bolsón que mi abuelo usaba para ir a trabajar, había quedado allí mismo donde lo había dejado él antes de morir, en los años '60. Él era profesor y nunca dejó de trabajar, trabajaba en una escuela de la Villa Olímpica. Cuando el milico vio el carnet, dijo que nunca había visto uno tan antiguo. Por suerte mi abuela encontró el acta de defunción de mi abuelo, y al parecer los milicos pensaron que él era su hijo que tenía el mismo nombre que mi abuelo, porque a mi tío nunca lo buscaron, a pesar de ser dirigente del PS.

Yo iba a la Escuela Experimental Artística, en La Reina. Después del golpe, un día que salimos de la escuela para irnos a la casa, había milicos en la calle revisando los bolsones de los alumnos, y uno de ellos nos revisó y después nos tiró una patada. Creo que a todos les hacía lo mismo. Era bien joven el milico, se lo veía como un cabro chico. Un día yo andaba con mi tío en su auto y los milicos nos pararon para revisar el auto. Un milico revisó el auto por dentro y abrió el compartimiento ese que hay en la parte de adelante, frente al asiento, y allí había unos documentos del Partido Socialista. El milico tomó los papeles, los sacudió así, y ni los miró, los dejó

allí mismo. Yo pensé que quizás andaba buscando armas nomás, quizás se hizo el tonto...o capaz que no sabía leer.

Otro día, fuimos a la casa de un amigo de mi tío, y adentro de la casa estaba todo patas pa' arriba, porque los milicos la habían allanado y se habían llevado preso al amigo de mi tío, nos dijo alguien que encontramos en el camino hacia allá. Todo estaba tirado en el piso, no se veía nada del parquet, el piso estaba tapado de cosas. La puerta principal estaba abierta y no había nadie, así que entramos y comenzamos a buscar una libreta de direcciones por toda la casa. Mi tío estaba preocupado y quería saber si los milicos se la habían llevado o no. Era una casa bonita, con un jardín bonito, estaba en una calle que tenía árboles a ambos lados, como la calle Dublé Almeйда, así. Puede haber sido esa.

Antes de salir de Chile, mi mamá y yo fuimos a comprar música chilena para llevarnos, fuimos a una disquería en Irarrazabal con Macul (comuna de Ñuñoa), y ahí estaba mi mamá mirando un montón de discos, cuando de repente, súper sorprendida, dijo susurrando: "¡Violeta Parra!" Sacó el disco del montón y se fue super rápido a pagarlo a la caja. Eran las "Últimas composiciones" de Violeta, que nos llevamos al exilio. También me acuerdo que un día nuestra vecina de al frente se desmayó al llegar de la calle al portón de su casa, porque había visto cadáveres flotando en el Canal San Carlos.

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## 26. Rodrigo

**20 years old in 1973.**

**Threw away objects in Santiago (La Reina).**

**Chat online, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022:**

Me deshice de literatura y ayudé a eliminar cosas comprometedoras en casa de mi primo mayor. Unos días después del golpe, por acuerdo/encargo familiar, recuerdo haberme puesto el uniforme de estudiante de uno de mis otros primos (yo ya había terminado la secundaria y como estudiante pasaba más piola), y partí con uno de ellos a casa de mi primo mayor en la Reina. Sacamos literatura y otras cosas. Recuerdo haber encontrado en el closet una preciosa cartuchera de pistola. Me costó tirarla al canal San Carlos, cuando regresamos sentí tristeza, eso es lo que sentí cuando regresamos de esa misión de limpieza.

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## 27. Rosa

**6 years old in 1973, lives in the Netherlands.**

**Her family buried things in Santiago (La Pintana).**

**Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (focus group):**

Mis papás quemaron libros, pero había mucho humo, así que mejor empezaron a enterrar todo, incluida la famosa cabeza de Lenin. Enterraron muchas cosas, pero no me acuerdo qué eran. Después, el lugar donde enterraron las cosas lo cubrieron con cemento, y encima mi papá construyó un taller. Después de un tiempo vendimos la casa y nos mudamos de allí. Quizás las cosas todavía están enterradas allí.

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## 28. Sonia

**About 18 years old in 1979.  
Her friend possibly buried things in Talca.  
Phone interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023:**

Sonia: Estela no escribía sobre política, escribía poemas de amor, aunque al final de su vida ella quiso entenderlo desde una perspectiva política. Pero sí tenía libros y cartas de personas de izquierda, tenía algunos escritos de otras personas que sí podían comprometerla. Ella estuvo ligada a personas de izquierda, por ejemplo, tuvo contacto con Pablo Neruda, y otros escritores de izquierda. También conocía a la escritora chilena esa que le disparó a su amante, no me acuerdo en este momento como se llamaba. Ema Jauch, esposa del pintor Pedro Olmo, la conocía.

Marcela: ¿Stella tenía afinidad con algún partido político?

Sonia: No era militante, pero tenía conciencia social, y yo diría que su ideal era socialista. Decía que los que tienen más deben compartir con los que tienen menos. También decía que en el futuro el arte gobernará el mundo. No era de derecha, pero se metió en ese ambiente, en el ambiente artístico se juntaba con gente de derecha. Desilusionada de esa gente igual, decía que de un pollo cocinado se encontró con puros huesos pa' chupar, "huesos que no dan caldo, pura pompa", decía. Decía que no existe la poesía de derecha, que la derecha mutila el arte. Ella se movía en ambientes de elite, viajaba mucho, estuvo en varios países de Europa, la invitaban para todos lados, le pagaban el pasaje y la estadía. También entraba gratis a los conciertos. Tuvo amores con varios escritores conocidos de este país, pero su gran amor era un italiano, y a veces ella pensaba que era espía. Él llegó a Talca y conoció varios artistas, hubo una pintora que se suicidó por él.

Pero Stella también era bien reservada, decía que todos se limpiaban la boca con los escritores. Mucha gente se acercaba a ella para sacar algo, por status, por sus contactos, siempre la querían usar. En su casa tenía una infinidad de libros en todos los idiomas, y los libros se le perdían, yo misma vi una vez cómo un escritor que fue a su casa se echó un libro al bolsillo sin que Stella lo viera. Un libro que se llamaba "Poesía Mística" también se lo robaron. También se le perdió la máquina de escribir que le había regalado Pío Baroja, era de nácar. Cuando ella vivía en Santiago, después del terremoto se le perdieron muchas cosas, vestidos que había traído del extranjero, pinturas, etc. Me acuerdo que tenía un escritorio grande con libros y textos que eran parte de su vida privada y ella decía que se los llevaría a la tumba, porque no quería que nadie los viera.

Marcela: ¿Cómo crees tú que sus cosas fueron a parar a La Florida?

No sé, ella vivía en Ñuñoa y nunca la escuché decir que vivió en La Florida, o algo parecido. Quizás con el tiempo le pidió a alguien que las enterrara. También puede ser que alguien las enterró por temor, tú sabes que en esa época la gente muchas veces enterraba cosas que nada que ver, que no tenían nada que ver con política. Pero Stella tenía una afición de enterrar cosas, sabes? Yo era vecina de ella en Talca, su casa era hermosa, era una casa antigua con muchos árboles de damascos. Un día estábamos allí en el jardín, y ella trajo un canasto lleno de damascos y me dijo que los probara. Yo los probé y me preguntó si estaban ricos, después me miró y me dijo: "¿Qué te dice?". Yo no entendí la pregunta, y ella me dijo: "Cada uno de estos damascos es de un tronco que tiene algo mío, en las raíces de cada tronco hay algo mío." Así que yo creo que tal vez había enterrado cosas debajo de los árboles. Esto fue en plena dictadura. Después ella se fue de esa casa, y después del terremoto esa casa fue demolida. Una prima de ella se quedó con la propiedad, pero estaba abandonada, durante un tiempo hubo unos ocupantes.

## 29. Veronica

**Born 1974, lives in Chile.**

**Her father burned things in San Bernardo.**

**Chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (focus group):**

Marcela, me remueve hasta el tuétano la pregunta y el tema de este trabajo. Tengo recuerdos de mi papi quemando cassettes y muchas revistas en el patio de mis abuelos. Creo que todos los que pusieron su pellejo nos honran... creo que de adolescentes chicos, quizás era un sueño. Pero sigo viendo a mis padres y lo que veo en ellos es convicción. De verdad mi profunda admiración y cariño por mis papás, tíos, abuelos y tantos y tantos que quedaron/quedamos heridos. ¡Los honro!

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## 30. Ximena

**2 years old in 1973.**

**Her parents burned things in Temuco.**

**Chat online, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022:**

Mis viejos botaron y quemaron todo: libros, panfletos de la campaña de Allende. Y, según ellos, una verdadera joya fotográfica en donde aparece mi mamá hipermegaembarazada (de mí), postulándose para regidora en Temuco, junto a Allende.

Mi hermana dice que aunque Temuco era una ciudad muy pequeña, vivíamos lejos del centro, en un barrio residencial, "un buen barrio". Aclara: a una cuadra del Colegio Alemán, y a cinco de la Universidad Católica, donde trabajaba nuestra madre. Allí trabajó como docente, y también en la Universidad Técnica del Estado. Las cosas que quemaron eran cosas nuestras, eran sus libros, las fotografías, folletos, etc. Los quemaron en nuestra casa. Lo que digo con esto es que, aunque a nuestra mamá la echaron de la Universidad Católica después del golpe, resulta que en los archivos consta que trabajó sólo hasta junio de 1973. Así de tonto. La hicieron desaparecer de antes, en los archivos. Así se llamaba a sí misma, "una académica desaparecida". Ella denunció, trajo testigos de sus compañeros, pero nunca pasó nada.

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## *Appendix 2: group chat*

### Group chat online, 28<sup>th</sup> December 2022; eight (8) informants:

**Luis:** Recuerdo que Nico tenía la Historia de la Revolución Rusa de Trotsky. Cada colección de 2 o 3 libros. Vivían en Pepe Vila el '73 y con Marcos llevamos varios paquetes a botarlos a un canal que pasaba cerca. Sonaban menos de lo que creíamos en ese entonces.

**Camilo:** Muchos libros quedaron bajo el cemento del fundamento de la bodega que mi tío Nico había hecho en el patio trasero de la casa.

**Andrea:** No sabía esto, gracias por compartirlo.

**Luis:** Y mi tía deshaciéndose de unas pistolas.

**Marcos:** Libros, pistolas, banderas, camisas.

**Camilo:** Si, recuerdo haber acompañado a mi tío a tirar unas pistolas al Canal San Carlos, el que pasaba ahí cerca. ¿Estarán todavía esos libros en el patio de esa casa?

**Andrea:** Puede ser que sí.

**Camilo:** Iría a preguntar si fuera.

**Marcos:** Los milicos encontraron el carnet de PC del tío Paulino en un allanamiento.

**Camilo:** No sabía eso.

**Marcos:** Yo tampoco sabía.

**Luis:** Así es, la tía Aura buscó y buscó ese carnet y no pudo encontrarlo, en el allanamiento los milicos lo encontraron.

**Camilo:** Ja, ja, ja

**Marcos:** En nuestro depto. picamos con tijeras todos los libros, un par de banderas y luego a la basura. Un par de banderas se convirtieron en servilletas.

**Laura:** Mis viejitos quemaron muchos libros e hicieron desaparecer discos.

**Ariel:** Uno de los discos era cubano, y tenía canciones de la revolución, era orquesta más coro, una de sus canciones empezaba de la siguiente manera: "Guerrilleros, guerrilleros, adelante, adelante" ... A mí me encantaba escucharlo.

**Veronica:** Marcela, me remueve hasta el tuétano la pregunta y el tema de este trabajo. Tengo recuerdos de mi papi quemando cassettes y muchas revistas en el patio de mis abuelos. Creo que todos los que pusieron su pellejo nos honran... creo que de adolescentes chicos quizás era un sueño. Pero sigo viendo a mis padres y lo que veo en ellos es convicción. ¡Un abrazo a todos!

**Laura:** Un matrimonio amigo ya mayor, sus hijas se fueron exiliadas a Dinamarca y escondieron las joyas en los tubos de la cortina del baño. Mis papás quemaron muchos libros e hicieron desaparecer discos. Hay gente que escondió plata que enterraba en el patio.

**Andrea:** Creo que todo fue tan traumático, que muchos detalles de lo que cada uno de nuestros padres, tíos, primos, etc. Vivieron, quedaron guardados igual que esos objetos.

**Veronica:** Así es, Andrea.



**Marcos:** Encapsulados por décadas.

**Veronica:** Salen a pasear en sueños, pesadillas, lecturas...

**Camilo:** De alguna manera fuimos enterrados, sí...

**Luis:** Esa es la sensación, Camilo, muchas veces que nos paramos a reflexionar, sentimos eso.

**Luis:** Destruyeron la vida de un par de generaciones. Vidas truncadas. Rehechas o “remendadas” con el tiempo.

**Andrea:** Así es. Decían que en cuatro décadas esto se “superaría”. Vamos por los 50 y esas heridas están ahí para nuestras familias.

**Veronica:** De verdad mi profunda admiración y cariño por mis papás, tíos, abuelos y tantos y tantos que quedaron/quedamos heridos. ¡Los honro a uds., familia querida!

**Andrea:** Así es (aplausos).

**Rosa:** Andrea, yo recuerdo también, como tú, que mis papis también quemaban los libros, pero había mucho humo y mejor comenzaron a enterrar todo, incluida la famosa cabeza de Lenin!

**Marcela Vera:** Rosa, te acuerdas dónde enterraron las cosas tus papás?

**Rosa:** Me acuerdo, pero quedó tapado de cemento, encima de eso una construcción, un taller de papá, y quedó ahí en nuestra primera casa que vendió papá en La Pintana.

**Marcos:** Mi madre, como no llegué esos días a casa, abrió un mueble que yo mantenía con cierta discreción en mi dormitorio y encontró un casco, dos banderas del PS, una pistola Walther, y la acompañó un vecino que era escultor y la botaron a un canal.

**Luis:** En la casa se quedó todo el núcleo del PS, de la escuela de trabajo social de la Universidad de Chile. Más un amigo mío, sobrino de Aniceto Rodríguez. Esperábamos combatir al día siguiente. Aún esperamos...

**Marcos:** Ja, ja, ja

**Camilo:** Ja, ja, ja... Menos mal que nunca llegó esa hora.

**Luis:** Yo siempre he pensado que era nuestra hora. Debimos haberlo hecho, en pelotas o como fuera...

**Camilo:** Te tocó otra cosa y lo puedes contar.

**Luis:** Así es, Camilo. Estábamos dispuestos a pelear por nuestro sueño.

**Camilo:** Entiendo eso. Yo, hasta aproximadamente los 17 años todavía lo habría hecho...pero...era solo un sueño.

**Luis:** Yo tenía 16; era un sueño, sin duda.

Un abrazo, Marcela, magnífico el ejercicio de memoria.

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### *Appendix 3: permits*

Each one of the informants gave me her/his permission to include the interview with her/him in this thesis, by sending me a voicemail in Spanish, telling the following:

*Yo (nombre y apellido), autorizo a Marcela Vera Oliva para que utilice la entrevista realizada a mi persona, en su tesis sobre objetos suprimidos durante la dictadura en Chile, para la Universidad de Uppsala. Estoy al tanto de qué se trata, y cuál es la finalidad (Lugar y fecha).*

Translation:

I (name and surname), authorize Marcela Vera Oliva to use the interview conducted with me, in her thesis on objects suppressed during the dictatorship in Chile, for Uppsala University. I am aware of what it is about, and what is the purpose (Place and date).