

Editorial.

Tanya Harmer* and Gloria Miqueles.

*Corresponding Author: t.harmer@lse.ac.uk.

Fifty years later, the legacies of the Chilean military coup of 11 September 1973 live on. Despite half a century having passed and more than thirty years since the end of a dictatorship, painful memories of the coup and the 17-year dictatorship that followed endure in those who experienced it directly, those who suffered horrific torture and lost loved ones, as well as in the hundreds of thousands forced into exile around the world. Certainly, for more than 3,000 Chileans who sought refuge in the United Kingdom, the trauma of displacement continues to shape families, friendships and everyday life.

This special issue is devoted to them, to their accounts and memories of exile in the United Kingdom. It is compiled in the name of remembering, recording and preserving history of what happened in Chile half a century ago to say: never again.

In the introductory article of this issue, Paul Dudman, archivist at the Living Refugee Archive, explains the aims and ideas behind its ongoing, and growing, Documenting Chile Archive. He explains the origins of the collection and the “living archive” methodology that guides it. Our sincere thanks to Paul for convening this special issue and for his tireless work with the Chilean community in London over the last few years to launch the Documenting Chile Archive and preserve the history of Chileans in the UK.

Beyond Paul’s article, the special issue is comprised of three parts. The first reflects on the coup itself, the violent dictatorship that followed and the fight for justice. As is well known now, the civil-military dictatorship that held power in Chile from 1973 to 1990, murdered more than 3,000 people as well as imprisoning and torturing tens of thousands more. As of writing, more than 1,162 of those “disappeared” are still to be found. And although the Chilean government recently announced a national “search plan” to find them, hope of recovering the truth of what happened to all of those disappeared remains elusive, not least amid a growing trend on the right to rehabilitate the dictatorship and give strength to those who collaborated with it. In fact, such is the atmosphere in Chile of denialism about the extent of human rights abuses, that we find ourselves, 50 years on, in a position of having to spell out its horrors, to recognise the brutality of the regime and to give voice to those who survived and can testify to what they lived through.

In Part I, we therefore hear from Paula, who writes about her experience of the coup and its indescribable impact. We also include a haunting poem by Sandra Trafilaf, and translated for this special issue by Dinah Livingstone, written while Trafilaf was a political prisoner in the Santo Domingo prison. The poem details the long-lasting scars that the dictatorship had on people’s selfhood and self-perception – in this case of a Mapuche woman - thereby depicting the dictatorship’s long-lasting and transformative trauma. Next, Camila Krauss Ruz, gives a heartfelt account of what meant to grow up as the daughter of an executed political prisoner, how it prevented her from knowing the person her father was. And we hear from Ana María

Pelusa, a Chilean who arrived in Britain as a refugee in 1974 and has lived here ever since. In an extended and exclusive interview for this special issue, she explains what living under the civilian-military dictatorship was like, why she was forced to leave and the experience of arriving in London as a refugee. She also talks about her involvement in the fight for women's rights in the UK and her unrelenting fight for justice ever since, including her memories of Pinochet's arrest and detention in London in 1998, twenty-five years ago this year.

In a second section on memories of exile, Loreto Rebolledo, author of *Memorias del desarraigo. Testimonios del exilio y retorno de hombres y mujeres de Chile* (Catalonia, 2006), a seminal book about exile and return, offers a short article that contextualizes the history of those who were forced to leave Chile, including those who came to the United Kingdom. She not only explores the pain and trauma of exile, but also the way exile shaped identities and allowed people to 're-write' their lives after 1973 in unforeseen ways. Echoing Pelusa's interview, for example, she reflects on the influence European feminism had on exiles and how this in turn shaped their resistance to the dictatorship. Cristina Godoy-Navarrete, Hernando Fernandez-Canque and Helia Lopéz then share their own histories of exile. Godoy-Navarrete recounts the impact that exile and life in the UK had on her professional career as a medical technologist and pays homage to a Chilean pregnant colleague who was thrown into the sea. Fernandez-Canque details an initiative led by Chilean exiles in Sheffield to set up a school for their children so they could retain a link to Chile, improve their Spanish and learn the values that had embodied their parents' revolutionary generation which underpinned Chile's Popular Unity government. Lopéz's article offers an intriguing new perspective on the rupture and dislocation caused by displacement, as well as the continuity of violence in Chile's history, through the lens of family pets. We also have three poems that evoke the way the coup devastated and upended the lives of so many as a result of exile. María Eugenia Bravo's poem, "On Exile and Defeats" powerfully underlines the painful alienation of exile amid a broader history of repression. María Vasquez-Aguilar and Jose Cifuentes reflect on what it means to have lived in Britain for decades, to experience displacement and its impact on identity and belonging. While Jose Cifuentes's and María Eugenia Bravo Calderara's poems put exile into context of the coup and violent repression after, María Vasquez-Aguilar reflects poignantly on what it has meant to grow up and live as a Chilean exile in Britain ever since arriving aged 2 in 1978.

The special issue's third section on memory and archives includes articles on the urgency of keeping memory alive to combat denialism and silencing of Chile's past. Mauricio Redolés, who lived his exile in London until the dictatorship's restriction on his right to return to Chile was lifted in 1985, took up the invitation of this special issue of *Displaced Voices* to unearth from his rich body of work a reflection on the need for – and difficulty of – remembering. Claudio Ogass Bilbao, Richard Smith, Marieke Riethof and Andrew Reddon shed light on an innovative and exciting collaborative project between Chile and Liverpool, to digitize thousands of resistance posters, produced by the Tallersol workshop in Santiago in the 1980s. Gloria Miqueles explains the path that led to 'Ecomemoria', a moving project to plant trees in

southern Chile for each and every one of the dictatorship's victims as a living and enduring memory to them.

Documenting Chile is as important as ever fifty years on. With those who witnessed events and lived through the hopes and dreams of the Popular Unity government getting older, it is also urgent to preserve their memories and record them for future generations to learn from. We therefore invite anyone interested in donating material or being interviewed for a new Oral History project within the Documenting Chile Archive to get in contact with Paul at p.v.dudman@uel.ac.uk or library-archives@uel.ac.uk.