

# Re-Politicizing the Traumatic Body through Art: Guillermo Núñez, Ariel Dorfman and the Political Transition in Chile

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the potential of art to create alternatives to hegemonic narratives in post-traumatic societies and the role of art in the re-politicization of both the artist and the audience. It discusses the role of art in constructing the ethics and memory of Never Again through the visual artworks of Guillermo Núñez (1930) and Ariel Dorfman's (1942) play *Death and the Maiden* (1990). Such artistic productions enable the re-participation of the traumatized body in political life not only through the represented story but also through the active reflection and agency of the art producer and the viewer. In this way, they contribute to making visible the passive remembering that is often underestimated in the battle of memories, and to transforming abstract and generalizing facing practices in transitional periods into individual and specific 'face-ings.'

**KEYWORDS:** Ariel Dorfman, arts, Chile, confronting the past, Guillermo Núñez

## INTRODUCTION: ART, POLITICS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

In 2007, the Chilean National Art Prize was awarded to Guillermo Núñez, who was tortured during the Pinochet coup d'état, was forced to live in exile for many years and since then has continuously depicted his experience of torture and trauma in his work. In 2010, the Chilean government headed by Socialist Michelle Bachelet, herself a victim of torture, launched the Museum of Memory and Human Rights (Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos) in Santiago. In addition to images, documents and letters about the deaths, torture and rape after the Pinochet coup, the museum has shown and continues to show works by painters including Fernando Botero and Guillermo Núñez, an installation inspired by the verses written by Victor Jara just before his assassination and thousands of films and documentaries about the suffering caused by the coup in many parts of the world. Again in 2010, Isabel Allende, a distant relative of Salvador Allende, who has blacklisted herself while helping blacklisted people escape and later had to flee to Venezuela, was awarded Chile's National Prize for Literature.

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In the case of Chile, the examples mentioned above are much more than the fact that the artists who have experienced the pains of the traumatic past in their own lives and have tried to express their individual/collective pain through the arts have – finally – received the respect they deserve. In recent years, it has been increasingly recognized that art can be a highly effective intermediary in terms of confrontation, justice, forgiveness, forgetting and reconnection to life for societies in transition. A considerable amount of academic effort on artworks draws attention to the many traumatic situations that are frozen in the dull reports of truth commissions, ignored by states and missed by people caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, focusing not only on those who lost their lives but also on the tragedies of those who survived and disrupting the post-transitional rhythm of society, making the suffering the subject not only of the past but also of future generations.<sup>1</sup> Case studies from different parts of the world have shown that theatre,<sup>2</sup> cinema,<sup>3</sup> literature<sup>4</sup> and contemporary art practices<sup>5</sup> can contribute positively to transitional justice. Recent neuropsychological studies have also empirically supported the positive results of art therapy at the individual level in the treatment of traumatized people.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, it is misleading to take for granted that art can contribute to the establishment of transitional justice in the aftermath of collective trauma. As Cohen stresses, 'creative initiatives can and too often do reinforce power inequalities, retraumatize communities, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, trivialize suffering, reactivate hostilities and demean sacred cultural forms.'<sup>7</sup> Rachel Kerr also reminds us that national and individual reconciliation processes are different and that individual reconciliation is complex, nonlinear, emotional and hence very personal.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it should not be assumed that a work of art contributes to collective confrontation practices and transitional justice just because it deals with suffering or helps overcome individual traumas. What is of significance is the *potential* of artworks to promote both healthy mourning and the revitalization of legal, political and social confrontation practices by bringing back to the agenda the harrowing experiences.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carrol Clarkson, *Drawing the Line: Toward an Aesthetics of Transitional Justice* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Vikki Bell, *The Art of Post-Dictatorship: Ethics and Aesthetics in Transitional Argentina* (Routledge: London and New York, 2014); Peter D. Rush and Olivera Simić, eds., *The Arts of Transitional Justice: Culture, Activism, and Memory after Atrocity* (New York: Springer, 2014); Sanja Bahun, 'Transitional Justice and the Arts: Reflections on the Field,' in *Theorizing Transitional Justice*, ed. Claudio Corradetti, Nir Eisikovits and Jack Volpe Rotondi (New York: Routledge, 2014), 153–166; Sherin Shefik, 'Reimagining Transitional Justice through Participatory Art,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 12(2) (2018): 314–333; Arnaud Kurze and Christopher K. Lamont, eds., *New Critical Spaces in Transitional Justice: Gender, Art, and Memory* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019); Eliza Garnsey, *The Justice of Visual Art: Creative State-Building in Times of Political Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Anne Dirnstorfer and Nar Bahadur Saud, 'A Stage for the Unknown? Reconciling Postwar Communities through Theatre-Facilitated Dialogue,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14(1) (2020): 122–141; Olivera Simić and Dijana Milošević, 'Enacting Justice: The Role of Dah Theatre Company in Transitional Justice Processes in Serbia and Beyond,' in *The Arts of Transitional Justice: Culture, Activism, and Memory after Atrocity*, ed. Peter D. Rush and Olivera Simić (New York: Springer: 2014), 99–112; Noe Montez, *Memory, Transitional Justice, and Theatre in Postdictatorship Argentina* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Mariana Cunha, 'Reckoning with Perpetrators and Collaborators: Accountability and Transitional Justice in Latin American Postdictatorship Cinema,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 15(2) (2021): 448–458; Carolyn Patty Blum, 'Visions of Justice and Accountability: Transitional Justice and Film,' in *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach*, ed. Clara Ramírez-Barat (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2014), 460–488.

<sup>4</sup> Carlos Thiebaut Luis-André, 'Literature and Experiences of Harm,' in *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach*, ed. Clara Ramírez-Barat (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2014), 529–561; Paul Greedy, 'Novel Truths: Literature and Truth Commissions,' *Comparative Literature Studies* 46(1) (2009): 156–176.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rothberg, 'Progress, Progression, Procession: William Kentridge and the Narratology of Transitional Justice,' *Narrative* 20(1) (2012): 1–24; Vikki Bell, 'Contemporary Art and Transitional Justice in Northern Ireland: The Consolation of Form,' *Journal of Visual Culture* 10(3) (2011): 324–353.

<sup>6</sup> See Linda Gantt and Louis W. Tinnin, 'Support for a Neurobiological View of Trauma with Implications for Art Therapy,' *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 36(3) (2009): 148–153; Karin Alice Schouten et al. 'The Effectiveness of Art Therapy in the Treatment of Traumatized Adults: A Systematic Review on Art Therapy and Trauma,' *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 16(2) (2015): 220–228.

<sup>7</sup> Cynthia E. Cohen, 'Reimagining Transitional Justice,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14(1) (2020): 1–13.

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Kerr, 'The "Art" of Reconciliation,' *FICHL Policy Brief Series* 78 (2017): 1–4.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, supra n 7 at 2; Olivera Simić, 'Arts and Transitional Justice,' in *An Introduction to Transitional Justice*, ed. Olivera Simić (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 241–267.

As Bennett discusses, contrary to conventional theories that see the artwork associated with any trauma as ‘the transcription or deposit of a prior mental state,’ it should be seen as an affective as well as critical production that allows for new expressions of trauma.<sup>10</sup> The crucial point here is that the artistic transmission of traumatic memory is not a mere representation, but also considers the emotional dimension in the dynamic relationship between the artwork and the spectator in the present time. Following French poet Charlotte Delbo, Bennett distinguishes between ‘common memory,’ which is the frame of history written for the ordinary person, and ‘deep memory’ or ‘sense memory,’ in which the physical trace of trauma is embedded in the victim. According to her:

As the source of a poetics or an art, then, sense memory operates through the body to produce a kind of ‘seeing truth,’ rather than ‘thinking truth,’ registering the pain of memory as it is directly experienced, and communicating a level of bodily affect.<sup>11</sup>

Following in Bennett’s footsteps, this article aims to contribute to such literature through discussions centred on the works of two important Chilean artists, Ariel Dorfman (b. 1942) and Guillermo Núñez (b. 1930). As I argue below, it is important for the individual as well as for social recovery that art that centres the traumatic past creates new affects as soon as it meets the audience, that this dynamic relationship reserves the potential of continuing in new generations and that artists, especially those with traumatic pasts, regain their political presence by contributing to a political future. I suggest that the concept of coming to terms with the past implies not only an abstract practice of confronting the truth but also a concrete ‘face-ing’ of the (potential) victim and the (potential) perpetrator with and among themselves. Both the torture victim and the perpetrator confront their face in the mirror every day. The gaze of the torture victim meandering in their own body through the mirror searches for the completeness of their pretortured body, but never finds it. Therefore, ‘face-ing’ the perpetrator breaks the unfulfillable monologue that the individual establishes with himself/herself. The perpetrator’s confrontation with himself and the torture victim, on the other hand, leads to the emergence of unpredictable and incommensurable emotions ranging from hatred to regret, from pride to humiliation. In this context, art may transform abstract facing practices into concrete ‘face-ing’ both by enabling the viewer to encounter their face through the use of mirrors in the artwork and by mirroring social traumas to the viewer through the artwork itself, as is visible in the works of Dorfman and Núñez.

The fragmented discussion points of the article, which are constructed similarly to the intermittent forms of remembering of the traumatized body, will converge on the point that, since the struggle between the official narrative and alternative narratives is not limited to the transitional period, the performative and affective qualities of artworks dealing with past social traumas that extend into the future may play a crucial role in constructing the memory and ethics of *Never Again*. The political stance embodied in the slogan *Never Again* seeks to construct a society in a way that the systematic violence and oppression of the past do not recur and bequeaths this stance to new generations. The ethics of *Never Again* is based upon ‘knowing what is possible, what should not become possible and what should on no account be possible.’<sup>12</sup> As Hans Kellner notes, *Never Again* is always embodied in an eternal present after the traumatic event: ‘Never

<sup>10</sup> Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider, *Memory and Forgetting in the Post-Holocaust Era: The Ethics of Never Again* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 5.

Again Is Now.<sup>13</sup> Although this is an impossible task,<sup>14</sup> it is worth contributing to the formation of such an ethic through ‘face-ing’ art practices and passing them on to new generations.

According to Eliza Garnsey, there are three paradigms in the literature on the relationship between transitional justice and art:

The first relates to the dialectic of memory, where art serves both as witness and as memorial to the past. The concern with memory arises out of transitional justice’s deeply embedded commitment to addressing past atrocities and trauma to prevent future reoccurrence. The second paradigm is about temporal complexity, where artworks simultaneously reference the past, present and future. In doing so, they intervene in the complex practices and directionality of transitions. The third paradigm of productive antagonism furthers a commitment to dissensus being valuable in the pursuit of transitional justice and political change, where art contests ‘histories’ and brings about catharsis.<sup>15</sup>

This article does not intend to converge to one of the dominant paradigms Garnsey states; on the contrary and in line with her, it suggests that the unique combination of art’s own formal language, its context and its production and reception processes should be considered in a holistic manner. In support of this position, throughout the article, Guillermo Núñez’s and Ariel Dorfman’s personal stories, as well as the aesthetic values of their works, their relationship with the viewer, their contribution to practices of confrontation and their capacity to influence future generations, will be evaluated together.

### NÚÑEZ, DORFMAN AND CHILE 1973

The first of the catastrophes that the world witnessed on 11 September was in 1973 in Chile. When military forces under General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the world’s first elected socialist leader, Salvador Allende, in a military coup, setting the stage for 17 years of repression, it was an omen that Chile would undergo a radical change in every field without exception. The Pinochet government, considered to be the first implementer of neoliberal policies,<sup>16</sup> led Chile through a restructuring from economy to culture, politics to art, a process dubbed the ‘Chilean Miracle’ that left countless victims in its wake.<sup>17</sup>

The reasons why the Popular Front (Unidad Popular – UP), led by Allende, was so intimidating to its opponents should be sought in the party’s economic objectives and what it achieved in three years. The structural reforms proposed by the UP included the nationalization of the main resources of the country (especially copper, coal, iron, nitrate, steel, etc.), the biggest industrial companies and the banking system, the realization of agrarian reform and increased state con-

<sup>13</sup> Hans Kellner, “‘Never Again’ Is Now,” *History and Theory* 33(2) (1994): 127–144.

<sup>14</sup> “The most massive and lethal upheavals, especially genocides, are inevitably followed by pledges “never again” to tolerate genocide. “Never again”—again and again.” Paul Farmer, *Never Again? Reflections on Human Values and Human Rights*, Tanner Lectures on Human Values (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Eliza Garnsey, ‘Rewinding and Unwinding: Art and Justice in Times of Political Transition,’ *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10(3) (2016): 473–474.

<sup>16</sup> See Jean Batou, ‘Les 1000 Jours De L’unité Populaire Au Chili: Pourquoi Le Peuple A-t-il Perdu Confiance?’ *solidarités*, 20 August 2003, <https://solidarites.ch/journal/31-2/les-1000-jours-de-l-unite-populaire-au-chili-pourquoi-le-peuple-a-t-il-perdu-confiance/> (accessed 7 October 2023); Karin Fischer, ‘The Influence of Neoliberals in Chile before, during, and after Pinochet,’ in *The Road from Mont Pélerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press), 305–346.

<sup>17</sup> See Peter Winn, ed. *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973–2002* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); Jean-Pierre Unger, Pierre De Paepe, Giorgio Solimano Cantuarias and Oscar Arteaga Herrera, ‘Chile’s Neoliberal Health Reform: An Assessment and a Critique,’ *PLoS Medicine* 5(4) (2008): 542–547.

control over the wholesale and distribution of basic goods.<sup>18</sup> In 1971, for example, the government nationalized all mines operated by branches of the American companies Anaconda and Kennecott in a single law at no cost. Allende's policies, which contrasted sharply with the interests of the Centre-Right, laid the groundwork for the coup d'état.

The most severe attacks of the Pinochet era took place in the five years following the coup. Although the exact number of people killed, tortured, disappeared and raped has not yet been established, we can get an idea of the horrendous magnitude of the situation from a few examples. According to the Rettig report published in 1991, 2,279 people were recognized as victims of the Pinochet regime.<sup>19</sup> Another report published in 2004 (the Valech report) named 27,255 people as direct victims.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent additions put the number of victims at 28,459. In 2011, the number of victims was updated to 40,018.<sup>21</sup> Another example that shows the brutality of the coup in a very striking way is the 'Caravan of Death.' After the overthrow of Allende, 75 Chileans who believed in a legal trial surrendered or were captured without engaging in combat. In October, while one General announced that those who surrendered their weapons to the army would be protected and would not be killed, another General, Sergio Arellano, travelled through five cities to collect these prisoners from prisons and massacred them.<sup>22</sup>

Both Núñez and Dorfman were politically active during the Allende era, were forced into exile after the coup<sup>23</sup> and focused their work on making sense of their suffering. On the morning of 11 September 1973, Dorfman, a cultural advisor of Allende and the survivor of the raid on the Chilean presidential palace La Moneda because he had switched shifts with his friend Claudio Gimeno, agreed to go into exile, which would last 17 years, after seeing his book *How to Read Donald Duck* burned on television and being told that as a writer he would be more useful to his party outside the country.<sup>24</sup> Núñez, an internationally acknowledged artist and the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art during Allende's reign,<sup>25</sup> on the other hand, was arrested on 3 May 1974 and tortured for four months and 10 days, being blindfolded except for 20–30 minutes a day and listening to the voices of those being tortured.<sup>26</sup> After his release, instead of remaining silent, he sought ways to express what he had experienced (and what others were still experiencing). During this period, he attempted to change the form of objects and give them artistic content, much like Marcel Duchamp's readymades. In the exhibition *Pinturas y Exculturas*, which he opened with a group of artists, his works expressing military oppression through various objects placed in a birdcage did not go unnoticed. Núñez was arrested and sent to Tres Alamos and Cuarto Alamos camps. He was later tortured at Villa Grimaldi and

<sup>18</sup> Patricio Meller, *The Unidad Popular and the Pinochet Dictatorship: A Political Economy Analysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 29.

<sup>19</sup> Chilean National Committee for Truth and Reconciliation, 'Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation,' 1991, [http://www.usip.org/files/resources/collections/truth\\_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf](http://www.usip.org/files/resources/collections/truth_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Cristián Correa, Julie Guillerot and Lisa Magarrell, 'Reparations and Victim Participation: A Look at the Truth Commission Experience,' in *Reparations for Victims of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity: Systems in Place and Systems in the Making*, ed. Carla Ferstman, Mariana Goetz and Alan Stephens (Leiden: Brill| Nijhoff, 2009), 400.

<sup>21</sup> BBC, 'Chile Recognises 9800 more Victims of Pinochet's Rule,' 18 August 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-14584095> (accessed 7 October 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Patricia Verdugo, *Chile, Pinochet, and the Caravan of Death* (Coral Gables: North-South Center Press, University of Miami, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Ostracism was a common repressive practice in Chile at the time of the coup. See Thomas C. Wright and Rody Oñate Zúñiga, 'Chilean Political Exile,' *Latin American Perspectives* 34(2) (2007): 31–49.

<sup>24</sup> Sophia A. McClennon, *Ariel Dorfman: An Aesthetics of Hope* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 16–17.

<sup>25</sup> From the 1950s onwards, Núñez travelled to different countries in Europe, studied art and engaged in important art circles of the period. Between 1964 and 1965, he lived in New York and started to adopt pop aesthetics. After returning to Chile, Núñez blended pop aesthetics with political content and took an active role in Allende's election campaign. Guillermo Núñez's hundreds of works, notes and writings, as well as writings about him, can be found on his archival website: <http://www.archivoguillermo.nunez.cl/> (accessed 10 October 2023).

<sup>26</sup> Núñez later published his testimony about these dark days. See Guillermo Núñez, 'Mirar por Detrás de un Espejo Algo Sucio: ¿Autorretrato?', in *Retrato Hablado*, ed. Daniela Serani (Santiago: Editorial Antártica, 1993), 70–140.

Puchuncaví.<sup>27</sup> After four more months of imprisonment and torture, Núñez was taken directly from the prison to the airport and sent into a 12-year exile in France.<sup>28</sup>

In 1988, when Pinochet unexpectedly lost the referendum, the country was forced to hold elections and the Centre-Left coalition candidate Patricio Aylwin came to power with 55 percent of the vote in 1990. Aylwin embarked on the work of establishing a truth commission, as promised. But Pinochet was still commander in chief and his power within the state was still very high. Therefore, considering the political reality of this ‘paced’ transition, the limitations of the abovementioned reports will be better understood.<sup>29</sup> Numerous studies focusing on Chile’s transition to democracy and making a significant contribution to the transitional justice literature also reveal the sensitive sociopolitical backdrop that constitutes the limitations of these reports.<sup>30</sup>

At this point, it would be useful to give a brief overview of Dorfman’s play *Death and the Maiden*, which will be the case study in the following pages.<sup>31</sup> The three characters of the play, Paulina, Gerardo and Roberto, are similar to the three main groups of a post-coup society. Paulina is a political woman who was tortured and raped during the coup. She was raped by people whose faces she had never seen. One of those rapists, a doctor, makes Paulina listen to Schubert’s ‘Death and the Maiden’ quartet during the torture and rape. Gerardo, Paulina’s husband of 15 years, is a lawyer and has been invited to participate in a truth commission. Roberto is a doctor who comes to Gerardo’s rescue when his car breaks down on the road and gives him a ride home. Paulina recognizes Roberto’s voice as the doctor who was her torturer and rapist. One night Roberto sleeps over, Paulina wakes him up with a pistol, ties him to a chair and in the morning interrogates him in the living room of their house. Until the end of the play, it remains unclear whether Roberto is indeed a torturer, but the dialogues between the three of them cross the main topics of discussion in all countries in transition. As McAuliffe notes, not only did the play address early on the debate about how to confront past human rights violations, but the staging of the play ‘constituted a form of transitional memorialization in itself.’<sup>32</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the play quickly gained worldwide attention and was adapted into a film shortly after its premiere.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Macarena Gómez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and Violence in Chile* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2009), 91.

<sup>28</sup> Amanda Suhey, ‘Conceptual Strategies in the Art of Guillermo Núñez: Object, Document, Testimony & Nation,’ *Sztuka i Dokumentacja* 10 (2014): 45–51.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Ensalaco, ‘Truth Commissions for Chile and El Salvador: A Report and Assessment,’ *Human Rights Quarterly* 16(4) (1994): 656–675.

<sup>30</sup> See Cath Collins, ‘Truth-Justice-Reparations Interaction Effects in Transitional Justice Practice: The Case of the “Valech Commission” in Chile,’ *Journal of Latin American Studies* 49(1) (2017): 55–82; Hugo Rojas and Miriam Shaftoe, *Human Rights and Transitional Justice in Chile* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> This seminal work of Dorfman has attracted much attention in the academic field to date. See David Luban, ‘On Dorfman’s “Death and the Maiden,”’ *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 10(1) (1998): 115–134; Padraig McAuliffe, ‘Ariel Dorfman’s Death and the Maiden as a Mirror Reflecting the Dilemmas of Transitional Justice Policy,’ in *The Arts of Transitional Justice: Culture, Activism, and Memory after Atrocity*, ed. Peter D. Rush and Olivera Simić (New York: Springer, 2014), 81–98; Patrícia Vieira, ‘Twists of the Blindfold: Torture and Sociality in Ariel Dorfman’s *Death and the Maiden*,’ *Chasqui* 38(2) (2009): 126–137; Pilar Zozaya Aritzia, ‘Alternative Political Discourse in Ariel Dorfman’s *Death and the Maiden*,’ *Atlantis* 18(1/2) (1996): 453–460; Robert A. Morace, ‘The Life and Times of Death and the Maiden,’ *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 42(2) (2000): 135–153; James Weaver and Jeanne Colleran, ‘Whose Memory? Personal and Political Trauma in Ariel Dorfman’s *Death and the Maiden*,’ *Performance Research* 16(1) (2011): 31–42; Jean-François Jacques, ‘A Relational Approach to Trauma, Memory, Mourning, and Recognition through Death and the Maiden by Ariel Dorfman,’ in *Shared Traumas, Silent Loss, Public and Private Mourning*, ed. Lene Auestad (London: Routledge, 2017), 137–151; David Schroeder, ‘Dorfman, Schubert, and Death and the Maiden,’ *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9(1) (2007): 1–9; Paul B. Miller, ‘I Hear, Therefore I Know: Post-Dictatorial Traumatic Expression and Death and the Maiden,’ *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 32(2) (2013): 121–140.

<sup>32</sup> McAuliffe, *supra* n 31 at 81.

<sup>33</sup> The play was adapted into a film by Roman Polanski in 1994, starring Sigourney Weaver, Ben Kingsley and Stuart Wilson. Ariel Dorfman co-wrote the screenplay with Rafael Yglesias. For a detailed analysis of the film, see Orit Kamir, ‘Cinematic Judgment and Jurisprudence: A Woman’s Memory, Recovery, and Justice in a Post-Traumatic Society (A Study of Polanski’s *Death and the Maiden*,)’ in *Law on the Screen*, ed. Austin Sarat, Lawrence Douglas and Martha Merrill Umphrey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 27–81. The play was also adapted into an opera with music by Jonas Forssell and libretto by Ariel Dorfman, which premiered at Malmö Opera in 2008.

One of the main reasons for my attempt to read Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden* and Núñez together is that the fictitious Paulina and the flesh-and-blood Núñez experience similar crises of living with and after torture. The survivors of torture, or 'the nation's living ghosts' as Gómez-Barris calls them,<sup>34</sup> cannot synchronize with the rhythm of the nation's change because, to use Agamben's terms, they lack the institutional means to elevate their bare life, reduced by the experience of torture from political life (*bios politikos*) to mere breathing (*zōi*), back into the political sphere.<sup>35</sup> For example, the Rettig Report published in 1991 focused on disappearances and political murders, while neglecting the torture and rape of surviving prisoners.<sup>36</sup> In a similar vein, neither the reports of the Rettig Commission nor the Valech Commission made specific room for Mapuche victims.<sup>37</sup> Both Dorfman and Núñez have been trying to overcome the politico-institutional doors that have closed in their faces and to reassert their existence as political bodies through their artworks. They are also contributing to the political positions that future generations will take to prevent such experiences from recurring, as the artwork reproduces itself every time it meets the viewer.

### THE DISMEMBERMENT OF THE POLITICAL BODY/LANGUAGE/IMAGERY

Physical and psychological torture is an essential part of authoritarian regimes, even if its dosage fluctuates as the occasion requires. It is not only the dismemberment, injury and pain of the organic body but also the dictatorship's dismemberment of the social structure. Therefore, the aim is to intimidate society through the body. Any possible resistance on the part of the torture victim is taken as an individual manifestation of social resistance, and the dose of violence is increased until the body cannot take it anymore. The dictatorship does not operate to eliminate the people who are the subjects of the existing social structure. It uses this more instrumentally. The point is to create and strengthen the steps of the hierarchy, not to abolish it. As Carlos Casanova mentions, death and torture do not only eliminate the enemy, but as they are seen and spoken about in society, they make society submit to the new order through fear.<sup>38</sup> The dictator is in need of dictation. Therefore, torturing many people beyond direct mass killings is essential to create the conditions for the existence and continuity of the dictatorship. In ancient wars, some people from the defeated side would be sent back to tell what they had seen and to tell the rest about the reputation (and, of course, the intimidation) of the defeated. The act of torture does something similar through the deformed body. Dictatorial regimes send tortured people back into society, expecting them to show society the dictatorial seal they have carved on their bodies and souls. Any active/passive resistance to this reproduces the dictatorship to use violence.

A fragmented body also leads to a fragmented language. A torture victim's ability to speak may be temporal, discrete, unexpected and differentiated. Dorfman's Paulina is never able to tell Gerardo what exactly she has been through in the intervening 15 years. It is only when she ties up Roberto, whom she thinks of as her tormentor, and points her gun at Gerardo that she begins to untie her tongue.

**GERARDO:** While you point it at me, there is no possible dialogue.

<sup>34</sup> Gómez-Barris, *supra* n 27 at 77.

<sup>35</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Gómez-Barris, *supra* n 27 at 97.

<sup>37</sup> Jara Daniela et al., 'Tracing Mapuche Exclusion from Post-Dictatorial Truth Commissions in Chile: Official and Grassroots Initiatives,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 12(3) (2018): 488–489.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Teresa Macías, "'Tortured Bodies': The Biopolitics of Torture and Truth in Chile,' *The International Journal of Human Rights* 17(1) (2013): 113–132.

**PAULINA:** On the contrary, as soon as I stop pointing it at you, all dialogue will automatically terminate. Because then you can use your superior physical strength to impose your point of view.<sup>39</sup>

The possibility of dialogue appears only within the possibility of the victim's monologue. Paulina's ability to speak depends on the simultaneous fulfilment of two separate conditions: the presence of an environment in which Paulina can confront her trauma (the presence of her torturer Roberto with his hands tied), and the suspension of the 'new normal' that has emerged in the period from the time of the trauma to that moment (the presence of Gerardo, who has risen to become a member of the truth commission, in the firing line). Although Paulina seems to have power in the setting by holding the power to kill, this power is no more than a guarantee of the power to speak/act. Because when the victim is a political activist, the torturer violates the victim's political rights and political identity, transforming him/her into a mere body over which he rules; and if the victim is a woman and the torture is rape, this humiliation is multiplied.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Paulina's ability to speak is only possible through her transition from mere body to her ability to reassert herself politically.

This is why the famous concluding sentence of Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, *Dixi et salvavi animam meam* (I have spoken and saved my soul), which has its origins in the Bible, does not apply to torture victims.<sup>41</sup> Not only because no language or form of expression can convey the experience of torture in its entirety, but also because the experience of torture is remembered over and over again in a way that interrupts one's experience in the present. For this reason, both artists have produced numerous works revolving around the same themes and problems.<sup>42</sup> There are two complementary movements here. On the one hand, the artist searches for new narrative techniques of torture and tries to collect his fragmented memories through multiple perspectives. On the other hand, since each encounter of the viewer with the work leaves a direct and spectator-specific mark on their imagery, it contributes to the construction of a politico-institutional ground where the torture victim can speak more freely in the future. Of course, the artist is aware of the utopic dimension of this perspective, but fighting for it can give the depoliticized bare lives a sense of beginning to participate in the political struggle again.

It is important to emphasize not only that the experience of torture is repeated every day, but also that this experience produces 'an impossibility of reattachment to the national project.'<sup>43</sup> In the last scene of *Death and the Maiden*, Paulina and Gerardo go to a concert and listen to Schubert's famous namesake quartet, but Paulina sees, or imagines, that Roberto is in the back row. At this scene, we conclude that the white page on which the national project is being built has not yet been opened for Paulina. This is also true for many political victims, including Dorfman and Núñez. For political figures like Dorfman and Núñez, who embraced left-wing values and a socialist perspective, and who experienced all the social pain of the 'Chilean miracle,' reconciliation becomes even more impossible in the long transitional period when neoliberal policies are not retreating but expanding.<sup>44</sup>

The same difficulty of expression works a little differently for the visual arts. Núñez's fragmented language takes place in the studio space where no other eye communicates with the

<sup>39</sup> Ariel Dorfman, *Death and The Maiden* (New York: Penguin, 1994 [1990]), 24.

<sup>40</sup> Luban, supra n 31 at 132–133.

<sup>41</sup> Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme. 1890–91. Marx/ Engels Selected Works. Vol. 3* (Moscow: Progress, 1970), 13–30.

<sup>42</sup> For some of Dorfman's numerous articles, plays and books contributing to the literature on confrontation, see Ariel Dorfman, *Exorcising Terror: The Incredible Unending Trial of Augusto Pinochet* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002); Ariel Dorfman, *Mascara* (New York: Viking, 1988); Ariel Dorfman, *Reader* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995); Ariel Dorfman, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* (New York: Viking, 1987 [1982]); Ariel Dorfman, *Widows* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983 [1981]).

<sup>43</sup> Gómez-Barris, supra n 27 at 33.

<sup>44</sup> See William L. Alexander, ed., *Lost in the Long Transition: Struggles for Social Justice in Neoliberal Chile* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Marcus Taylor, 'Success for Whom? An Historical-Materialist Critique of Neoliberalism in Chile,' *Historical Materialism* 10(2) (2002): 45–75.



work, where he can project his own monologue, his own tirade on the canvas. The emotions that the painter tries to convey to the potential viewer through abstracted and fragmented body images can be read as a personal testimony as well as the murmurs of many people who have experienced these sufferings. In this respect, it is important to point out that although Núñez's forms are stylistically convergent with Francis Bacon (1909–1992),<sup>45</sup> he also differs sharply from him. Núñez's art is internationalist in line with his political perspective. In the 1960s, Núñez produced works dedicated to different revolutionary movements of the world, from Algeria to Vietnam, from El Salvador to the black movement in the United States, and even when he tried to make his individual experiences of torture audible through painting, he did not miss the social dimensions of this situation. The social suffering he expresses through thorns, which emerged as a symbolic form in his paintings of the 1960s, is in line with the abstracted images of the 1970s that centred on the pricking, stretching and disintegration of disjointed body images – bones, marrows, teeth and muscles. In other words, from the beginning, Núñez gives as much importance to the representation of the factors that produce horror as to the horror itself. Bacon's fragmented body images, on the other hand, are more concerned with the spiritual and physical deformation of the individual crushed under the weight of the world. As Bacon himself enunciates:

You could say that a scream is a horrific image; in fact, I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror. I think, if I had really thought about what causes somebody to scream, it would have made the scream that I tried to paint more successful. Because I should in a sense have been more conscious of the horror that produced the scream. In fact they were too abstract.<sup>46</sup>

The artist initiative Equipo Crónica, founded by the Spanish artists Juan Antonio Toledo, Rafael Solbes and Manolo Valdés, had little difficulty in finding the source of the horror that seemed so abstract to Bacon. In their painting *El Arrastre* (1971), the group members parodically depict the figure in Bacon's *Study for a Portrait* (1967) being carried into custody by three police officers. Moreover, this scene takes place against the background of one of Bacon's most emblematic paintings, *Painting* (1946). In a twist of fate, Equipo Crónica donated this painting to the Museo de la Solidaridad por Chile in 1972, which was inaugurated before the military coup, as if it had foreseen the artistic paths that would cross between Bacon and Núñez.

## THE STRUGGLE OF ART TO OVERCOME THE CONFORMISM OF FORGETTING

**GERARDO:** (...) Do you want these people back in power? You want to scare them so they come back to make sure we don't harm them? You want the times back when these people decided our life and our death?<sup>47</sup>

The transitional period defines a blurry space where the old regime is weakening but the new regime has not fully established its supremacy. Thus, considering collective memory as a field of struggle in which state-led approaches suppress alternative ones to be hegemonic in the Gramscian sense becomes crucial. Berthold Molden conceptualizes the dialectics of memory and politics from a broader perspective as mnemonic hegemony which:

<sup>45</sup> See Jaume Peris Blanes, 'Testimonio y Visualidad: De la Visión del Ciego a las Imágenes del Vacío,' in *Donde No Habite el Olvido: Herencia y Transmisión del Testimonio en Chile*, ed. Laura Scarabelli and Serena Cappellini (Milán: Colección Di-Segni – Universidad de Milán: 2017), 77–92; Grinor Rojo, 'Las Novelas de la Dictadura Chilena: La Tortura,' in *Homenaje a Jaime Concha: Releyendo a Contraluz*, ed. Ignacio Álvarez, Luis Martín-Cabrera and Greg Dawes (Raleigh: Editorial A Contracorriente: 2018), 81–95.

<sup>46</sup> David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon 1962–1979* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 48.

<sup>47</sup> Dorfman, supra n 39 at 36.

encompasses not only the competitive relations between hegemonic and proactively counter-hegemonic agencies often described as memory wars, but also the coexisting communities of passive remembrance; and that describes the interactions between these fields.<sup>48</sup>

The inclusion of passive remembrance within the concept of hegemony emphasizes that the confrontation practices of torture victims may not fit the schedule of counterhegemonic memory practices. Paulina's attempts to cover up and live a 'normal' life until her encounter with Dr Roberto, and refusal to share her husband Gerardo's belief that the past can be confronted through the truth commission, summarize the position of many torture victims. However, there are also people like Núñez and Dorfman, who could not tolerate the reduction of their lives to the *zōi* and tried to continue their political struggle through their art as both witnesses and victims during the years of exile.

Per contra, remembering also presupposes taking responsibility for what happened in the past and compensating for material and moral destruction. This is precisely why the official narrative does not remember; at most it reminisces, and constantly circulates the concept of coming to terms with the past as an attack on national integrity. Thus, talking about the past is equated with threatening the sacred unity of a nation. The oft-used discourse on the 'need for unity and solidarity' not only covers up all the disasters of the past but also emphasizes the 'treason' – and of course the criminal sanction – of talking about it. As Brysk puts it, rather than optimistically defining the blurry space of transitional periods as transitional democracy, it would be healthier to see it as a 'recovering authoritarian.'<sup>49</sup> The return of power from an authoritarian personality or party to the people does not necessarily mean that the entire state apparatus and power relations are rapidly transformed. It is thus difficult to say that the arts in transitional justice will necessarily make a positive contribution to the victims.<sup>50</sup>

While national cults and myths develop a discourse based on the destruction of the other, they also create new myths – even utopias – about living together. The irreconcilable distinction between the two myths is both the *raison d'être* of the official narrative and its means of survival. As Shefik warns, 'state-run memorialization efforts' threaten to directly or indirectly exert control over the practices of remembering.<sup>51</sup> Constructing remembrance as a site of struggle, then, depends primarily on the creation of tools that can challenge both of these myths. In other words, approaches that question to what extent national cults and myths are symbols that embrace all citizens and uphold universal human rights, and to what extent they contribute to the politics of confrontation/accountability, can be effective in cracking the official approach of 'remembering but not confronting.'

When we examine the transformative effects of the Chilean military coup on culture and memory, we can observe that it primarily sought to stop the democratic development of the existing culture.<sup>52</sup> As Goldman points out, the emergence of alternative cultural models in the face of the military coup, which attempted to destroy the cultural model left over from the Allende era with all kinds of repression and violence, is directly linked to the lack of other political alternatives.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, symbolic gestures served as reminders to individuals of the pre-coup cultural and political life.

<sup>48</sup> Berthold Molden, 'Resistant Past versus Mnemonic Hegemony: On the Power Relations of Collective Memory,' *Memory Studies* 9(2) (2016): 125–142.

<sup>49</sup> Alison Brysk, 'One Election Does Not a Democracy Make,' *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 1994, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-05-24-me-61414-story.html> (accessed 11 October 2023).

<sup>50</sup> Bahun, *supra* n 1.

<sup>51</sup> Shefik, *supra* n 1 at 320–321.

<sup>52</sup> Shifra M. Goldman, *Dimensions of The Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and The United States* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 251; Manuel Alcides Jofré, 'Culture, Art, and Literature in Chile: 1973–1985,' *Latin American Perspectives* 16(2) (1989): 70–95.

<sup>53</sup> Goldman, *supra* n 52.

However, the fact that the transitional period was initiated does not mean that society was ready for a real confrontation. As in the case of Chile, the reality was quite the contrary where armed forces were reluctant to cooperate and post-transitional justice has been mostly driven by private endeavours.<sup>54</sup> This is one of the reasons why Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*, while resonating around the world at the time it was written, did not attract enough attention in Chile. This play, which is highly didactic and contains explicit references to Chile, failed to trigger the debate it intended at a time when the shadow of Pinochet was felt everywhere, new governments were trying to quickly open a 'white page' and leave the past in the past<sup>55</sup> and confrontation practices had only begun on paper and in a limited way. A similar situation emerged in the indifference that Núñez encounters when he returned to Chile in the late 1980s.

A scene in *No* (2012), the final film of the director Pablo Larrain's coup trilogy, perfectly captures the pangs of confrontation during Chile's transition. A short dialogue about the current situation takes place between René, who is running the 'No' campaign for the 1988 referendum that Pinochet lost and that forced the country to hold elections, a woman who works at his house and takes care of his son and several people working on the campaign:

- Can you tell us why you will say YES?
- [CARETAKER] I am well off. My son is at university. My daughter has a job.
- What about the deaths, torture and disappearances?
- [CARETAKER] I can't say I don't care, but ... That's in the past. We are on the road to democracy now.

This is precisely why Paulina despairs of truth commissions. A confrontation under the auspices of former generals, judges and state officials does not seem possible to her:

**PAULINA:** And then? (Gerardo is silent.) You hear the relatives of the victims, you denounce the crimes, what happens to the criminals?

**GERARDO:** That depends on the judges. The courts receive a copy of the evidence and the judges proceed from there to –

**PAULINA:** The judges? The same judges who never intervened to save one life in seventeen years of dictatorship? Who never accepted a single habeas corpus ever? Judge Peralta who told that poor woman who had come to ask for her missing husband that the man had probably grown tired of her and run off with some other woman? That judge? What did you call him? A judge? A judge?<sup>56</sup>

While the text suggests that after years of silence the tortured may be ready to translate their pain into language, it also emphasizes that the experience of torture can never be fully understood.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, a real confrontation is pointed out as perhaps the only possibility to hold on to life again. In Dorfman's words:

(...) *Death and the Maiden* touched upon tragedy in an almost Aristotelian sense, a work of art that might help a collective to purge itself, through pity and terror, in other words, to force the

<sup>54</sup> Cath Collins, 'Human Rights Trials in Chile during and after the "Pinochet Years"', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4(1) (2010): 67–86; Onur Bakiner, 'From Denial to Reluctant Dialogue: The Chilean Military's Confrontation with Human Rights (1990–2006)', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4(1) (2010): 47–66.

<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, and surprisingly, democratic authorities opted for a discourse of forgetting the past so as not to reopen wounds (which were in fact open) and to look towards the future. Thus, the official discourse of the political class was that the country had been reconciled; that the transition was successful; that an experiment in democracy was being attempted, as perfectible as any of them; that the military were subordinated to civilian authority; that the political right was back to being democratic; that the subject of human rights did not interest anybody, and furthermore, that the subject had been resolved with the Truth Commission Report of 1991. Roberto Garretón, 'Chile: Perpetual Transition under the Shadow of Pinochet,' in *Neoliberalism's Fractured Showcase: Another Chile Is Possible*, ed. Ximena de la Barra (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 79–80.

<sup>56</sup> Dorfman, *supra* n 39 at 10.

<sup>57</sup> Vieira, *supra* n 31 at 130.

spectators to confront those predicaments that, if not brought into the light of day, could lead to their ruin.<sup>58</sup>

### FROM FACING TO 'FACE-ING'

After his torture experience in 1974, Núñez, looking for ways to express both his experiences and the terrible situation in the country, placed bread, flowers, names, paper hands, a reproduction of the Mona Lisa, a tie with the colours of the Chilean flag (which resembled a noose because it was hung upside down) and a mirror in bird cages in the readymade works he produced as part of the *Pinturas y Exculturas* exhibition in 1975.<sup>59</sup> Spectators looking in the mirror would feel themselves in prison. Moreover, depending on the spectator's point of view, everything in the life reflected in the mirror suddenly appears to be behind bars. Here, Núñez tries to instil in the ordinary spectator a sense that they could be a victim of torture at any moment and invites them to be in solidarity with torture victims. In other words, he pushes the viewer to 'face' themselves and others as (potential) victims and/or perpetrators.

Núñez continues his 'face-ing' practices with several interventions on his self-portraits reproduced through serigraphy. In these serigraphs, he often makes abstract interventions on his eyes, referencing the fact that he was blindfolded during torture, while at the same time making us feel that the colours and forms of the inexpressible are constantly in front of his eyes, that he cannot see without this mediation.

The 'face-ing' practices that Paulina has continued throughout the *Death and the Maiden* reach their peak in the last scene of the play through the mirror. At the end of the play, the curtain does not close, and instead a giant mirror descends from above. The audience watches their reflection in the mirror and the other people in the hall for a while. This 'face-ing' moment causes the audience to make eye-to-eye contact with themselves and the possible perpetrators in the audience and opens the door for everyone to rethink their own responsibility. The mirror comes between the fictitious and the non-fictitious, returning the viewer's gaze from the stage back to the viewer, and visualizing Horace's famous quote: *de te fabula narratur!*<sup>60</sup>

In real life, to turn the facing practices between victim and perpetrator into 'face-ing,' the victim needs a self-determined format, time and space to express her/his feelings and opinions. This is one of the reasons why the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee's (TRC) televised hearings have received severe criticism despite positive responses.<sup>61</sup> Broadcasting the TRC's hearings led to a media mediation of the testimony of victims and perpetrators, thus dramatizing the victim hearings and representing the amnesty hearings as less emotional.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, as Bowsler notes, the subjective suffering of each victim was synchronized with the help of media coverage and dissolved into a 'community of emotion' in the interests of post-apartheid neoliberalism.<sup>63</sup> Belser claims that:

Within the performative space of the [South African] TRC process, which was often gripped by a sense of theatricality and drama, the trauma of the private space of individual witnesses

<sup>58</sup> Ariel Dorfman, *Other Septembers, Many Americas: Selected Provocations 1980–2004* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), 189.

<sup>59</sup> Goldman, supra n 52 at 252.

<sup>60</sup> The tale is told of you.

<sup>61</sup> Rory Bester, 'Trauma and Truth,' in *Experiments with Truth. Documenta11\_Platform2*, ed. Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash and Octavio Zaya (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2002), 155–173; Annelies Verdoolaege, 'Media Representations of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Their Commitment to Reconciliation,' *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 17(2) (2005): 181–199; Martha Evans, 'Televising South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: What Liveness Tells Us About the Commission; What the Commission Tells Us About Liveness,' *Media, Culture & Society* 38(5) (2016): 704–720.

<sup>62</sup> Verdoolaege, supra n 61 at 192.

<sup>63</sup> Josh Bowsler, 'The South African TRC as Neoliberal Reconciliation: Victim Subjectivities and the Synchronization of Affects,' *Social & Legal Studies* 29(1) (2020): 41–64.

was transformed into the public spectacle of the violated body. Effected, in part, through the role played by the print and electronic media, spectacle runs the risk of reducing performative space to a cultural traffic in body parts. The dismembered identities of trauma are traded as the currency of different cultural psychoses.<sup>64</sup>

The ‘face-ing’ experience of the audience through art becomes even more meaningful as the real-life confrontation practices between the victim and the perpetrator might be troublesome and manipulative. Because it is equally important to confront the network of structural relations behind the perpetrator and to establish the ethics of Never Again as the direct confrontation between the victim and the perpetrator. The space that art encompasses through abstraction has the potential to cut across these three needs in common. Núñez’s and Dorfman’s art practices in that sense go beyond their confrontation with their perpetrators as victims and open the doors to ‘face-ing’ with themselves, society and the political system.

## CONCLUSION

In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym explains that the concept of nostalgia is a combination of the words nostos (return home) and algia (longing) and states that there are two types of nostalgia, the restorative and the reflective:

Restorative nostalgia stresses nostos and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in algia, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt.<sup>65</sup>

What needs to be constructed as an alternative political memory is algia’s collective dismemberment of nostos and its collective reconstruction. In other words, there is a need for the capacity to create a unity that allows for both confrontation and mourning without bypassing the pain. The aim here should not be to clear the past but the future. The affective potential of art can help construct a movement away from algia towards a new and non-impermeable alternative nostos.

As I have tried to show throughout this article, many factors such as the victims’ practices of remembering and forgetting, their language, their relationship with the ‘new normal,’ the difficulty in re-establishing their damaged political ties and the complexities of confronting themselves and the perpetrators prevent the narrowing of the gap between the national agenda of confrontation and the individual and unique suffering of the victims. However, artworks that centre on the traumatic past allow the viewer to look through the lens of his or her own wound, offering the possibility of individual healing.

Núñez’s and Dorfman’s works offer an alternative narrative of historical memory by showing the structural connection between the pain of the body and national concealment.<sup>66</sup> The contrast and struggle between the pain of the body, which emphasizes algia, and the national discourse, which focuses on nostos, is embodied in the artistic works. Visual artists who confront torture try to reflect the common experience of all those who cannot speak, and those who suffer, making it both public and universal, and enabling the increase and proliferation of alternative symbols of memory. Buchenwald, Auschwitz and Chile’s Villa Grimaldi coexist on Núñez’s

<sup>64</sup> Bester, supra n 61 at 170.

<sup>65</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xviii.

<sup>66</sup> Gómez-Barris, supra n 27 at 89.

canvases,<sup>67</sup> as they do in traditional patchwork pictures *arpilleras* and in the work of artists who witnessed the violence of the past in different ways, including Ariel Dorfman, José Balmes, Roser Bru, Gracia Barrios, Cecilia Vicuña, Lotty Rosenfeld, Alfredo Jaar and Pablo Larrain.

In 2010, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights invited Núñez to reopen his forcefully closed exhibition. Instead of replicating the work he had done during the dictatorship, Núñez set up the exhibition in a way that would address both the troubles of post-coup Chile and the suffering in different parts of the world.<sup>68</sup> Núñez emphasizes the importance of the continuous construction of the struggle for human rights as contemporary and international, which is precisely why the victim of torture can never be subsumed into a national identity. Alternative memories proliferate from the gap between the fragmented language of the torture victim and the official discourse. In this way, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights is prevented from becoming a dull state-run memorial site and the new generation is made aware of the current political suffering and takes an early position. While art becomes an active soldier in the struggle for memorialization, it paves the way for artists, especially victims of torture and exile, to become political bodies again.

<sup>67</sup> Francine Masiello, 'Art and Violence: Notes on Botero,' *Working Papers: Center for Latin American Studies, University of California, Berkeley* 18 (2007): 11–23.

<sup>68</sup> Suhey, *supra* n 28 at 50.