

## CHAPTER TWO

“It’s been seventy days since [we] Chileans live once more in Democracy,” announced the newly elected president Patricio Aylwin Azócar on May 21, 1990. He continued his speech before Congress declaring that “The logic of war that divided Chileans into friends and enemies has been overcome by the logic of peace”, stating that the average Chilean now experienced a life that was fuller and safer, freed from the dreads of the past. By readily declaring the triumph of peace and reiterating the words *alegría* and *esperanza* throughout his message, Aylwin echoed the jubilant mood that typified much of the Transition period’s official discourse. Some forty years after the 1973 Coup d’état, however, Chileans are far from unified or reconciled over their conflictive past, and the bitter war of ideologies that severed the national fabric lingers in the dissimilar ways in which that past is interpreted and transmitted to younger generations.

In her 1998 collection of essays *Residuos y metáforas*, Nelly Richard analyzes the discursive and emotional legacy of the Dictatorship during the transition years as well as the literary and visual forms of resistance that explored silenced, or in her terms, ‘residual’ spaces of culture. The politics of the transition, marked by consensus and reconciliation, relied heavily on the “institutional obliteration of guilt... through laws devoid of punishment (pardon and amnesty)” (41.)

In addition to the lack of accountability from those who carried out the most atrocious acts of violence during the Pinochet regime<sup>1</sup>, the Chilean media, fully complicit with the country's future-oriented narrative, manufactured daily products of consumption that distracted viewers via the enjoyment of *telenovelas*, *fútbol* and quick narratives that hindered critical thinking and dwelling in the past (Richard.)

From Nelly Richard's reading, I'd highlight the dual concepts of amnesty and amnesia as key elements to understanding the Chilean transition. Authors Tomás Moulián and María José Contreras Lorenzini argue that the official story of silence and forgetfulness served to depoliticize the population and to discourage collective agency. For Contreras Lorenzini, this had the added effect of perpetuating the neoliberal system installed during the dictatorship (240). During the transition to democracy in 1990, she argues, the neoliberal model was radicalized and

... the discourse of the free market... [was] patched onto the idea of democratic freedom, confusing individual liberty (to consume) with civil rights. Chileans... regained some rights (the right to vote, to gather freely in the streets, and to express themselves more or

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<sup>1</sup> According to Teresa A. Meade's 2000 article: "Holding the Junta Accountable: Chile's "Sitios de Memoria" and the History of Torture, Disappearance, and Death", the Truth Commission's Rettig Report resulted in only two convictions: that of General Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda for the 1976 assassination of former Minister Orlando Letelier, and that of Colonel Pedro Espinoza Bravo, the DINA's (Directorate of National Intelligence) second in command. "Military leaders and members of the Pinochet dictatorship enjoy a self-declared amnesty; the doctors who assisted the military torturers continue to practice medicine; the camp guards, the military officers, and the functionaries of the torture apparatus live in Chile, most drawing hefty military pensions for their years of service to the *patria*" (125).

less freely) while irreversibly being transformed from repressed citizens to precarious subjects whose only agency is to consume (243.)

Rather than the logic of peace that Aylwin optimistically claimed before Congress, the logic of consumerism seems a more fitting assessment of the transition years. During the dictatorship, the Chilean economy was drastically restructured to adhere to Milton Friedman's tenets on privatization and market deregulation. The forces of predatory capitalism that characterized the so-called 'Chilean Miracle' had, according to Contreras Lorenzini, two noticeable outcomes: enriching the economic and political elites while bolstering oblivion.

The 1994 documentary "La Flaca Alejandra" follows a conversation between Carmen Castillo and Marcia Merino - the latter known as "La Flaca Alejandra." The film explores Merino's troubled past as a former MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria) leader who the DINA (Pinochet's secret intelligence unit) transformed into a collaborator via torture. The director Carmen Castillo was apprehended by the DINA with the help of Alejandra. In 1992 she returned to Santiago after living in exile for nearly two decades. Narrated by her voice-over, we learn that Santiago at the time,

Looks so alien, so indifferent to this story. By night, this city could well be Berlin, Houston, Paris... Towers, avenues, cars, merchandises... With money, anything can be bought in Santiago. An entire society is forced not to look, not to hear, not to know. A noiseless threat demands that one forget, forget even that there was something to forget<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Directed by Carmen Castillo and Guy Girard, the 57min documentary can be seen in its entirety in the following site: <http://www.cinechile.cl/pelicula-323>

The segment portrays Santiago as a capital lit by skyscrapers and vehicles, where ‘money talks’ and where citizens remain unaware and unmoved by the tragic unfolding of Carmen Castillo’s and Marcia Merino’s lives.

Behind the ever-present amnesia “lurked a desire to eclipse the traumas that divided Chileans”, asserts Michael J. Lazzara (17.) The ruling party feared that *too much memory* would compromise the still frail democracy. The weariness about memory seems to echo an insight provided by Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others*: “Heartlessness and amnesia seem to go together. But history gives contradictory signals about the value of remembering... too much remembering (of ancient grievances: Serbs, Irish) embitters. To make peace is to forget. To reconcile, it is necessary that memory be faulty and limited” (115.)

It is in this context of cultural amnesia that the collaborative project between writer Diamela Eltit and photographer Paz Errázuriz, *El infarto del alma*, emerges. Even though I question the use of terms such as amnesia and trauma to describe the cultural landscape in post-dictatorial Chile, it nonetheless serves to understand where Eltit and Errázuriz, as committed, left-leaning artists, were coming from when they embarked on this book.

It is widely accepted that Chile – as a nation - was traumatized by the dictatorship, with authors such as Nelly Richard, Michael Lazzara and Tomás Moulian suggesting that its citizens succumbed to a form of historical amnesia regarding their divisive past. While I dialogue with these terms in my introduction, I’ll clarify that both amnesia and trauma are used to describe the psychic harms and neurological injuries suffered by individuals, and it is therefore problematic to diagnose an entire society. Diagnosing a nation may seem counterintuitive but, as Ruth Leys (2010) notes in *Trauma: A Genealogy*, trauma has become one of the key concepts of our time

(10), frequently employed to describe the outcomes of “survivors of concentration camps and victims of military combat, [as well as] civilian disasters” (6), etc.

The fact that the expanding and divisive field of trauma studies was born as a response to collective experiences that shaped the twentieth century, “crucially the Holocaust but also including other appalling outrages of the kind experienced by the kidnapped children of Uganda” (2,) might suggest that – at least theoretically – it might be discussed as a social phenomenon. On the other hand, the very nature and reality of trauma is often subject to dispute. For Cathy Caruth, one of the most extreme examples of skepticism came from psychiatrist Sally Satel, who wrote for the *New York Times* warning against the dangers of looking for post-traumatic stress disorder in vets returning from Iraq, “Not only is the war in Iraq not like the war in Vietnam”, she argued, “but the very notion of post-traumatic stress disorder is, itself, a suspect diagnosis created by purely political purposes by the anti-Vietnam-war movement” (150.)

Physicians and therapists alike treated the psychic disturbances of returning soldiers since the First World War, known then as war neurosis, soldier’s heart or shell-shocked syndrome. It was not until the Vietnam War, however, that the post-traumatic distress of veterans was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association, which coined the term *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD) in 1980. In Leys’ perspective, it was “largely the result of an essentially political struggle by psychiatrists, social workers, [and] activists” (5) who saw the damning prospect of those returning from the war, and who questioned the government’s motives for entering and escalating the war in Indochina.

Amnesia, on the other hand, is mostly used to describe a neurological condition characterized by the restricted ability to recall events prior to the onset of a disease like Alzheimer’s, or as the outcome of a severe concussive head injury (Cfr. Alan Baddeley, 2009.)

Kerstin Bergman (2008) maintains that the cases of psychological trauma causing amnesia are highly contentious, quoting studies conducted by Schacter, who revealed that in the majority of cases “were someone suffers from amnesia triggered by stress or emotional trauma, previous brain injury is found to be a possible contributing cause” (146.)

While it is possible that amnesia could be triggered by psychological trauma, the “real cases of psychogenic amnesia are extremely rare, even among traumatized Holocaust victims, Vietnam veterans, or victims of sexual abuse” (146.) As a condition that tends to originate from concussive head injuries, the general use of amnesia to describe the consumerist and a-historical attitudes of Chileans during the Transition seems a gross appropriation of an ailment as metaphor. The widespread usage of the term, however, still lingers in Chile. When referring to a married couple in Patricio Guzmán’s *Nostalgia de la luz* (2010), the narrator declares the pair to be a metaphor for Chile: Miguel Lawner, an architect and former political prisoner who managed to recreate in his drawings clandestine detention centers with striking accuracy, represents memory; his wife, on the other hand, suffering from Alzheimer’s Disease, represents Chilean’s stubborn amnesia.

I won’t argue that the authors Eltit and Errázuriz nor the characters depicted in *El infarto del alma* are traumatized by the dictatorship nor suffer amnesia. If the words ‘trauma’ or ‘amnesia’ appear later in the chapter, it is merely replicating the discourses and the ways in which the Chilean intelligentsia – in the early 1990s - grappled with the country’s historical past during the post-dictatorship. If one reads the most canonical think-pieces that describe the Transition (namely from Richard and Moulian,) it is difficult to by-pass how Chilean intellectuals conceptualized the aftermath of the Pinochet regime in terms of cultural amnesia and trauma.

## Paz Errázuriz, Diamela Eltit and CADA

The self-taught photographer Paz Errázuriz's first series of images comprised her 1973 children's book *Amalia*. The story centers on a Japanese silkie hen whose ventures Errázuriz portrayed in the relative safety of her home. The first Sunday after the coup of September 11, 1973, her house was raided by Pinochet's police and many of her friends and acquaintances were detained. The dictatorship's first years were the bloodiest, and a woman with a camera "represented an empowered individual to a regime that ruthlessly crushed dissent and persecuted any glimmer of opposition associated with popular solidarity" (Aliaga, 11). It is therefore not surprising that Errázuriz first practiced photography within private and domestic spaces. The seemingly innocuous photographs, however, foretell some of Errázuriz's ethical concerns as well as her distinctive style: black and white portraits 'based on solemnity'.

In a capitalist society, a chicken is an object to be consumed, mass-produced, gobbled up; in pop culture, it stands as a symbol of cowardice. Against these notions, Errázuriz presents the fluffy Amalia as a protagonist in her own right, a crucial member of a household where she's nurtured alongside the children Daniela and Tomás, and who's allowed to wander freely around the kitchen, bedrooms, and the family's yard. *Figure 1* depicts Amalia inside a baby stroller, making it – almost - impossible for us to regard her as a source of food, revealing her instead as a being who is intimate with the playful and caring realm of family life. In the stroller the chicken sits solemnly upright, anticipating the formal poses that many of Errázuriz's human subjects exhibit in her later work. Reinforcing Amalia's acceptance within the household as well as her headstrong and inquisitive nature, *Fig. 2* presents the chicken in the kitchen sink, bathed in a crisp light that almost dissolves the edges between the feathers in her head and the translucent windows in the background.



*Fig 1.*



*Fig 2.*



Perhaps projecting some of her anxieties on *Amalia*, Errázuriz writes that the chicken was at first frightened by the immensity of the home and spent days paralyzed, too scared to roam beyond the garden plants that surrounded her. We also learn that, for reasons unbeknownst to her, she was made to sleep in an empty house that had been previously occupied by a dear friend of hers. Although conceived as a children's book, it is difficult to ignore the context in which *Amalia* was generated.

As John Dinges<sup>3</sup> claims, Pinochet made no attempt to hide the brutality of his counterrevolution, purposefully instilling an atmosphere of terror. For days, Dinges asserts, “it was common to see bodies along roadsides or floating in the Mapocho River, which traverses Santiago. City morgue workers filled all available refrigeration units and began to stack bodies in corridors, allowing families to walk through to identify relatives.” In addition, the sound of automatic rifle fire was heard every night during the dusk-to-dawn curfew, and tens of thousands were rounded up and packed into stadiums and makeshift concentration camps. By December, “the concentration camp population reached 18,000 prisoners.”

Furthermore, upholding Errázuriz's proclivity to portray difference, we read that Amalia, atypical in breed and color, was rejected by her peers. *Fig. 3* highlights this dynamic, as the other hens, in an almost humanized fashion, disapprovingly glance at Amalia while flocking to a corner of the room. Another image shows the same four hens turning their backs on Amalia.

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<sup>3</sup> Professor of journalism at Columbia University at the time *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (The New Press, 2004), was published.



*Fig. 3*

Steering clear from publicity's manicured, youthful bodies, Errázuriz photographs have often portrayed Chile's aging citizens, the unhoused, the blind; trans women, circus performers, dwarfs, and *luchadores*, among others. In terms of subject-matter, the connection with photographer Diane Arbus, whose work focused on "freaks" (her term), seems clear. What Susan Sontag found most troubling about Arbus' photographs was the presence of a naivety that was "both coy and sinister, for it is based on distance, on privilege"<sup>4</sup>. The camera held by Arbus functioned as a "kind of passport... that [annihilated] moral boundaries and social inhibitions," allowing her to expose otherness while dodging any responsibility toward her subjects. Analyzing the uncompromised yet intrusive distance that photographers like Arbus exercise, Jae Emerling goes on to say that the photographer resembles a "supertourist" (98,) someone who

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<sup>4</sup> *On Photography*.

merely visits but never intervenes in the lives of others, especially underprivileged others who are subsequently prepped for aesthetic consumption<sup>5</sup>.

For Nelly Richard, however, Errázuriz's photographs escape the moral fall of exploitation by being measured: "neither pitting nor indifferent, neither too close (that is, naively attached to *testimonio's* photographic-existentialist realism...) nor too distant" (241.) For Richard, Errázuriz displays the difference of others with 'deference'. Echoing this assessment, Gerardo Mosquera argues that Errázuriz manages to transcend the power dynamics implied in the relationship between photographer and sitter by investing her subjects with agency (47). There would also be, according to Mosquera, "a social dimension in Errázuriz's photography that does not exist in Arbus's work" (48.)

Subversive art under the Pinochet regime was first conceived in hiding, in underground networks that, in Nelly Richard's terms, sought to transform the Left's historical defeat into a rite of survival (103). Protest art strived to represent a collective identity defined by heroism and martyrdom, employing conventional modes of folklore, popular music, theater and community murals. This expression leaned on art tradition and on a referential use of language, speaking clearly of - and for- The People, Memory and Resistance.

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<sup>5</sup> In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag goes on to assert that photography invariably objectifies, for it can "turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed" (81). When in addition to this, the function of the camera 'beautifies' the object, "it tends to bleach out a moral response to what is shown" (Id.)

By 1977, a new movement emerged: the *Escena de Avanzada*, boasting a “neo-avant-garde inspiration and a deconstructive temperament” (Richard) aspiring to not only denounce the violence and oppression suffered under the dictatorship, but also to question the very nature of art and language. In Richard’s assessment, the *Avanzada*’s preferred artistic vocabulary, born of photography, cut-outs and collage, dealt with fragmentation and grammatical anomalies meant to destabilize the illusions of totality and transparent meaning. Carlos Leppe, Eugenio Dittborn, Catalina Parra, Juan Dávila, Lotty Rosenfeld, Diamela Eltit and Raúl Zurita, among others, were some of the main proponents of this movement.

At the center of the *Avanzada*, lay the public performances and interventions carried out by the *Colectivo de Acciones de Arte* (CADA). Aesthetically, according to Alice A. Nelson<sup>6</sup>, CADA “viewed the space of the city – the military occupied public sphere – and the more intimate space of the body as parallel stages where the terrible drama of the dictatorship played itself out” (153). Through their art actions, CADA members sought to demonstrate how the human body both illustrated the imprint of institutional violence and how it resisted coercive hegemonic discourses. In addition, CADA aimed at visually establishing the interconnectedness between individual anatomies and the social body of the nation.

The five panels that Elías Adasme titled *A Chile* renders these aspirations in a particularly effective manner. Produced between December 1979 and December 1980, Adasme literally inscribed Chile – and its *loca geografía* - on his body. In *Figure 4*, he projected the longitudinal map of Chile onto his naked body, contesting Chile’s puritanism under a dictator that considered himself to be a beacon of christianity, order and high morals, while highlighting the indelible

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<sup>6</sup> *Political Bodies: Gender, History, and the Struggle for Narrative Power in Recent Chilean Literature*. U.S.A: Associated University Presses, 2002.

mark that this kind of subjugation traced on Chilean mind /bodies. Nudity could also allude to the physical torture suffered by those who were detained, blindfolded and stripped off their clothes by the regime's secret police.

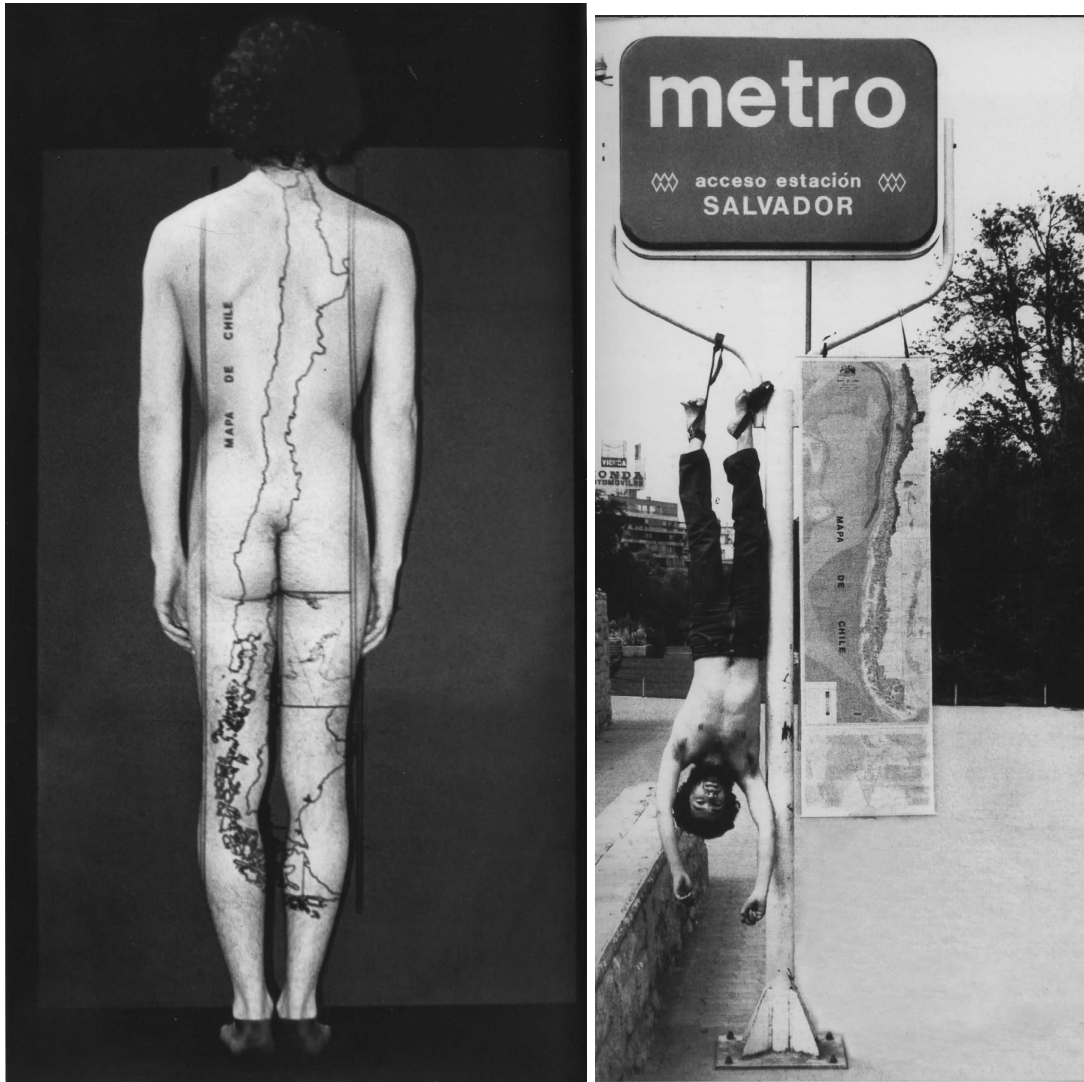


Fig. 4 “A Chile” | Source: *Copiar el Edén*, 174 | Fig. 5 | *Id.*, 175)

*Figure 5* shows the artist in bondage and hanging upside down, mimicking the vicious subduing that detainees suffered at the hands of their interrogators. The location: the Salvador subway station in Santiago de Chile, “also brings to mind the frustration of those who put their trust in the mired-down government of Salvador Allende”, claims Lola Hinojosa. Together, these images offer a graphic liaison between the artist's body and the woes of a muzzled nation.

In September 1985, as part of one of CADA's initiatives, Paz Errázuriz photographed a widow whose husband had been killed in a demonstration against Pinochet. The image, accompanied by the text: "Mirar su gesto extremo y popular. Prestar atención a su viudez y sobrevivencia./ Entender a un pueblo" circulated in the anti-establishment journals *Análisis*, *Cauce*, *Hoy*, and in the newspaper *Fortín Mapocho*. Subscribing to CADA's blurring of the private and public spheres, in the woman's stoicism and defiant grief one might see a reflection the people of Chile.



Though Paz Errázuriz was very much part of the protest art scene (as her “Viuda” project demonstrates), her preferred tactic, that she defined as ‘metaphoric resistance’, seldom made explicit references to the victims of institutional violence. However, as Juan Vicente Aliaga notes, Errázuriz’s photography “departs from the national script, presenting something of an inverse image, an antithesis of the hegemonic discourse, to the extent that one can see her work as a “metaphor for a broken nation” (12).

The collaboration between Paz Errázuriz and Diamela Eltit, another member of CADA and prominent figure in the *Avanzada* scene, seems natural.

Diamela Eltit, who began as a performance artist, had been publishing her work in small independent presses before attaining prestige and recognition as one of the most powerful voices of the post-coup scene. Though widely praised, she was also criticized by her peers (from the orthodox Left, mainly) who saw her writing as exceedingly obscure and inaccessible.

“As a sanctioned but ‘strange’ writer”, Nelson claims, “Eltit found herself neither wholly inside, nor entirely outside” (152) the literary establishment. Following the national referendum that ratified a new constitution and confirmed Augusto Pinochet’s presidency until 1989, Eltit engaged in “Zonas de Dolor I/ Maipú” (1980), a CADA art action that was filmed by Lotty Rosenfeld in a brothel of the working-class neighborhood of Maipú. Beckoning a sacrificial image with religious undertones, Eltit ritually cut and burned both her arms and legs, establishing a connection between her self-inflicted pain and that of her country. After wounding herself, Eltit proceeded to ruefully wash the stone sidewalk outside the brothel (*Figure 7*). She then read aloud early material from her novel *Lumpérica* to the sex workers and their male customers, while simultaneously projecting an oversized portrait of herself onto the exterior walls of the building. I cannot attest to how the crowd reacted to this experiment, but given the class and educational difference between the performer and her audience, and the fact that a ‘prostíbulo’ is not a space where people ready themselves for literary musings, I would assume that her message was mostly lost on the drunken audience.



Fig. 7 | Diamela Eltit performing “Zonas de Dolor I/ Maipú” | *Copiar el Edén*, 298.

Anticipating some of the problems that *El infarto del alma* entailed, Nelson questions the role that privilege played as the middle-class Eltit sought to represent the collective pain of the people in Maipú. The writer risked “appropriating or subsuming the collective “we” (the social body) within an authorial – and authoritative – “I,” readily identifiable with Diamela Eltit” (155). The larger-than-life slide of the author’s face projected onto the walls of the brothel, continued Nelson, “could be (mis)read this way” (Id.)

Beginning in 1980, Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld began an unstructured research by drifting through the city’s most marginal spaces (hostels, neighborhoods known for their sex workers, and drifters, etc.) and by registering their discoveries and encounters via video and/or tape-recordings. In Eltit’s words “I sought... to gain and capture an aesthetic that would generate



cultural meaning, understanding the vital movement of those zones as a sort of negative – like the photographic negative- necessary to shape a positive – the rest of the city; 11).

The vagabond's hoarding of discarded objects and their excessive layers of clothes, enacted, in Eltit's view, "a baroque corporeality" that defied hygienic stereotypes and highlighted their appearance as their only work-related concern.

Among the unhoused, a schizophrenic man who called himself El Padre Mío, stood out. Thin, rigorously clean, and perpetually delirious, his linguistic output seemed virtually endless. Between 1983 and 1985, Eltit tape-recorded El Padre Mío's monologues and turned them into a book that was eventually published in 1989 with the help of her friend and editor Francisco Zegers.

According to Michael Lazzara, *El Padre Mío's* testimony "with its elliptical, illogical prose, stood as challenge to the dictatorship's clean, linear vision of history and proposed, from the margins of society (poverty, madness, indigence), a counter-memory that could disrupt the process of scripting an official story" (39). Eltit's fascination with the long-winded and incoherent digressions of *El Padre Mío* provided her, in Lazzara's reading, with a "narrative lens through which to found a poetics of traumatic memory."

The vagabond's poetics of un-edited 'madness' challenged the reader into considering an alternative logic by which to understand – and speak out against - the disconnect between the dictatorship's call for peace, order and transparency, and the chaos and confusion that ensued state-sponsored terror.

However noble and transgressive Eltit's intentions, the fact of the matter is that *El Padre Mío* romanticizes destitution. There is an unequivocal difference between abject poverty and the

baroque excesses that emerge from the comfort and playfulness of someone who is not struggling to survive.

Like Errázuriz, who sought to portray Chile's most neglected and invisible citizens, Eltit shared the aspiration to deliver a reverse image of Chile, one that contested the national discourse's triumphalism and its summons for productivity and consumerism.

### **El infarto del alma**

Some years after the Coup, rumors were circulating that in addition to military prisons and detention camps, political prisoners were being held in psychiatric hospitals. This led Paz Errázuriz, in 1978, to visit the Santiago Psychiatric Hospital in hopes of finding some of her missing friends. When she arrived there, Juan Vicente Aliaga recounts, “she collided with an insufferable reality, with a world of deprivation and abuse. She didn't find any of those who had been “disappeared” ... but her conscience was now infected by the horrors of a different kind of prison” (26). The frustrated attempt of tracing her friends' whereabouts resulted in a decades-long commitment to unveiling the dismal reality of institutionalization (both at senior homes and at psychiatric hospitals).

The Hospital of Putaendo, located some sixty miles north of Santiago, was established in 1940 to aid the recovery of patients suffering from tuberculosis. When the usage of the TB vaccine became widespread and the hospital's mission was no longer critical, it was repurposed as a final dumping ground for the criminally insane, and chronically ill patients with no-known relatives.

Re-christened as Dr. Philippe Pinel Hospital, Errázuriz' wanderings inside the compounds were met with no major resistance, since their families “had all but abandoned them”

(Aliaga, 26). Her presence inside the mental institution was so common that the residents ended up calling her “Tía Paz” (Eltit 11.) In Diamela Eltit’s account, a joyous energy spread through the asylum with the arrival of “Tía Paz”, for it was her that proved ‘that they are alive, that after all they retained a small fragment of [their] being’ (11.). In Jacqueline Loss’ reading, however, the familiar salutation *Tía Paz!* embodied the “maintenance of Chilean society’s social strata – younger generations and lower classes are impelled to reinforce their difference idiomatically through constructions of familiar address” (81.)

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The thirty-eight photographs contained in *El infarto del alma* are accompanied by a “hybrid text that combines fictionalized testimonials of the photographed subjects, philosophical prose, and Eltit’s own testimonial of her visits to the patients” (Tierney-Tello, 80). Unlike conventional *testimonio*, we are not given names, ages, specific diagnoses or any sort of background information that would identify the inpatients.

In Ingrid Waisgluss’ (2013) view, the formal miscellany of Eltit’s avant-garde writing does not translate into a diversity in content, as the text is dominated by a sole voice, that of the authors and their unifying political agenda (58). Furthermore, Waisgluss critiques Eltit’s authorial voice as an authoritarian one, given that she reduces and typifies the disabled body, suggesting a great hegemony of couples in love, denying their individual differences while shrouding the fact that, as in any given “sane” amorous relationship, there may be room for discord, exploitation, physical and emotional abuse, or simple indifference (61.)

In “Love, Passion, Metropolitan Outcasts, and Solidarity at Putaendo” (2008), David William Foster notices the absence of homosexuality within *El infarto del alma*, offering instead, a cis utopia of sorts, in which the stereotype “is very much that of love birds, with the

implication of monogamous devotion” (167-8.) Despite obscuring relationships that exist beyond heterosexual monogamy, Foster deems the collaboration between Errázuriz and Eltit a well-meaning and heightening one, for the photographic eye does not regard them “as marginalized outcasts, to be viewed in a condescending fashion, but as amorous subjects” (167), adding that love “is putatively the most ennobling of all our human sentiments” (Foster.)

(...)

For Nelly Richard (2001), the presence of *El infarto del alma* within the literary market and the book fairs of transitional Chile meant bringing in discomfort: a forceful look at that photographic negative “that threatens to disfigure the self-satisfied face worn by a society that only reflects advertising glitter” (247.) The circulation of *El infarto del alma* would have called for pause or introspection amidst the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the 1990’s.

Moreover, by portraying the Dr. Philippe Pinel Hospital’s inpatients through the lenses of love, desire, and devotion, stood as a powerful symbol against the political amnesia promoted by the media and public discourse.

If we follow Eltit’s acceptance of the phenomenon of cultural amnesia as something that had to be fought against, I would argue that the way she portrays the psychiatric patients, as relentlessly fixated on the object of their desire – and stuck in the past-, offered a metaphorical counterexample to the materialistic rituals that aimed at distracting Chileans by inducing an exclusively forward-thinking narrative.

(...)

By bringing to the fore the lives of subjects who formed “the margins not only of the “gran familia chilena” espoused by the Pinochet regime’s rhetoric, but also of the new national family promoted during the Transition to democratic rule” (88-9), Mary Beth Tierney-Tello

claims that the testimonial impulse behind *El infarto del alma* offered a counter-discourse to authoritarianism. Against oblivion but also against homogenization, the radical otherness of the inpatients at Putaendo's psychiatric hospital defied the compulsion to comply with the 'new Chile' branding.

(...)

The use of photography in *El infarto del alma* further solidifies the project's connection with the political realm. For Michael Lazzara, photography - in the years pertinent to this discussion- was strongly tied to the epic struggle of the families of the disappeared: "I would argue" he posits, "that today it is practically impossible to think of the Chilean Agrupación de Familiares (or Argentina's Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) without simultaneously conjuring an image of ghostly photographs hanging from their necks, coupled with the words *¿Dónde están?*" (Lazzara, 112.)

The ubiquitous presence of photographs of the disappeared during the Chilean transition embodies the most visible act of resistance against oblivion. Unlike government issued IDs and penitentiary mugshots, smiles and family settings abound in these portraits, underscoring the fact that these men and women had normal lives before being declared enemies of the state.



*Fig. 8* | Soledad Mamani Armella and Eloisa Armella Muñoz, at a mass grave, commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Domingo Mamani López' execution | *Flowers in the Desert*



*Fig. 9* | General Cemetery of Santiago, Nov. 2015 | María J. Maddox