Después de un largo silencio: Local Memories and Hemispheric Accountability in the Democratic Transitions of Chile and El Salvador

by

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Para mi Mamá, quien me enseñó la importancia de seguir mis sueños y quien me retó a cumplirlos. Y para todas las víctimas de la dictadura en Chile y la guerra civil en El Salvador. Siguen vivos en las memorias de su pueblo.
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Introduction

¿Para qué recordar?: The Urgency to Remember, Recall, and Represent Memories of Violent Conflicts

“Luego de una guerra hay muchas memorias, memorias contradictorias y eso es algo que historicamente ha pasado en todos los conflictos y nosotros [El Salvador] no somos la excepción…” – Carlos Henríquez Consalvi

After decades of State-sponsored violence, people remember their experiences during that time period differently. The idea of contradictory memories, which Carlos Henríquez Consalvi raises, illuminates the struggle of remembering the past in nations recovering from oppressive regimes and moving towards a restructured society. In June of 2012, an editorial in El Mercurio, Chile’s most important national newspaper, ignited a polemic about the purpose of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights (Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, MMDH), which was inaugurated two years earlier by former President Bachelet. The editorial criticized the museum for failing to explain the reasons behind the 1973 coup d’état and, therefore, for not revealing the complete history of Pinochet’s dictatorship. Sergio Rillón, a right-wing lawyer close to former dictator Augusto Pinochet criticized the museum as being “paralyzed”, claiming that it only showcases acts of human rights violations without explaining its causes.

“[MMDH] Padece de hemiplejia, porque sólo muestra situaciones en detrimento del gobierno militar. Los hechos expuestos allí [violaciones a los derechos humanos] nacen y mueren incausados, aunque provienen de un largo

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1 “After a war, there are a lot of memories, contradictory memories, and this is something that historically has happened in all conflicts, El Salvador is no exception…” Director of the Museum of Word and Image. Carlos Henríquez Consalvi. Interview by author. San Salvador, El Salvador. August 8, 2012.
ancestro, una verdadera dinastía cuyo apellido es legión. Hacer una omisión tan grave no puede evitar la calificación de mentira."²

The director of MMDH responded to Rillon’s claim that the only version of the dictatorship present in the museum is that of Socialist and Marxist supporters of ousted president Salvador Allende, and clarified what the museum’s mission is: to educate new generations about the nation’s horrendous past, to fortify democratic values, and to not allow history to repeat itself.³ Some people defended the museum and its mission to educate visitors of human rights violations at the hands of the State during the dictatorship in Chile, while others continued criticizing the lack of information that explains what caused the dictatorship. This complex dispute on the role and historical perspective that MMDH presents reveals a deep division for Chileans in their process of remembering their past history.

Remembrance is an individual and social process in which the past is registered in the present, and it is through remembrance, silences, and oblivion that collective memories are produced on a given matter. In this context, the aforementioned debate, as well as others, which reflect on how to showcase memories of national traumas such as the dictatorship in Chile, underscores the complexities societies face when commemorating violent historical events.

Though the museum was purported to display the ‘complete’ history of human rights violations during the dictatorship, some historians disagree. This difference of opinion illuminates the prevailing sympathy for Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile and

² “[MMDH] suffers from a hemiplegia, because it only shows situations in detriment of the military government. The exposed acts are born and die without cause there, although they come from a long ancestry, a true dynasty whose last name is legion. Making such a grave omission cannot avoid being characterized as a lie.” Sergio Rillon. "Museo de la Memoria II." El Mercurio (Santiago) June 20, 2012, A2.
the tensions of narratives that question it. Sergio Villalobos, a historian from the University of Chile, and Magdalena Krebs, director of the DIBAM⁴, agreed with Rillón, arguing that, in order to understand the narrative of MMDH, it would first need to include information on the political and social situation of the country decades before the dictatorship and, in particular, mention the destruction of public ethics, abuses, deceit and governing style of the Popular Unity’s party of Salvador Allende that ruled before the coup. They disputed that, since the museum’s collection is limited to seventeen years of the dictatorship, remembering only those who were affected by the military government, the museum does not accomplish their function of memorializing a longer history of human rights violations in Chile.⁵ Villalobos argued that it is only after considering these facts that one can recognize the general reaction of the country and the military movement in order to understand the period that stemmed after the dictatorship.⁶ The museum’s directory responded to such attacks by stating that the awareness that the museum promotes is not a political one but a moral one. Their job, the directory claims, is to promote the notion of “Never Again”, a cry uncommon to Latin Americans fighting for government accountability for previous transgressions.⁷

Javiera Parada, daughter of a sociologist who was brutally murdered by the Chilean police, argued in an important reply, “No hay nada que justifique la violencia ejercida por el Estado de Chile en contra de ciudadanos inermes. Nada. Menos aún

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⁴ DIBAM, Direction of Libraries, Archives, and Museums, is an agency of the Chilean government operating under the Ministry of Education, in charge of defining public policies on culture related to libraries, archives, and museums in the State. <www.dibam.cl>.
Parada affirms that Pinochet’s dictatorship cannot be justified and, therefore, the museum has the right to educate future generations about what should not happen in Chile. This entangled polemic involving political actors for and against the museum is without a doubt an example of the clash of contradictory memories that determine public debates in nations experiencing redemocratization.

The recent creation of museums, memorials, and monuments in places like Chile and El Salvador, countries marked by a recent history of violence and political conflict, highlight the attempts of the State and of citizens to commemorate events and people in symbolic ways as a process of recreating their own past. Examining the recent processes of commemoration in these two countries will allow us to investigate the different ways in which victims are represented, and to explore various memory debates that arise around the articulation of what Argentine scholar Elizabeth Jelín has called marcas territoriales or territorial markers. Territorial markers are spaces where a particular memory is being produced. These markers are physical reminders of a difficult past that lead to negotiations in constructing a collective memory.  

We can only begin to understand these cases, however, once we have situated Chile and El Salvador in their historical contexts. In the early 1960s dictatorships reigned in the Southern Cone while civil wars of ideological and of an ethnic nature

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8 “There is nothing that can justify the violence practiced by the Chilean State against the defenseless citizens. Nothing. Let alone coming from State agents whose responsibility is to maintain public order and not its alteration.” Javiera Parada. "Museo de la Memoria I," El Mercurio (Santiago) June 26, 2012, A2.

ruled in Central America. Citizens of eleven Latin American countries suffered human rights violations committed by their States from the 1970s to the 1990s. These violations resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths of men, women, and children. Political instability plagued many Latin American countries during the Cold War, but by the late 1980s, the “re-democratization” of some countries began. The political and cultural relationship between various Latin American countries during the Cold War was not only a series of events but involved a complex resonance of those events amongst the countries. In the case of Chile and El Salvador, there are a series of compelling connections that beg to be made; they range from the participation of the United States government in hemispheric politics, to regional and cultural debates and influences that transcend State borders, to present-day work on monument building as a form of reparation to the victims of national crises.

While Chile and El Salvador do not share common internal, political, economic, social, or cultural histories, relationships and parallels can be found during their respective social revolutions and their so-called ‘transitions into democracy.’ Both countries had strong, armed, leftist insurgencies: in the case of Chile during the 1970s, and in El Salvador during the 1980s. Additionally, in the 1990s, both Chile and El Salvador established a Truth Commission to report human rights violations.

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11 For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the term social revolution to explain both historical crises. According to Alexander Berkman, social revolutions “involve the reorganization of the entire life of society.” In Chile, the dictatorship took hold of every aspect of society including what Chileans could read. In El Salvador, the military government wanted to reorganize society to eliminate any contagion of Marxist-Leninist thinking. Alexander Berkman, Gene Fellner, and Howard Zinn. *Life of an Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader.* (New York: Seven Stories, 2005), 298.
12 Although these two countries are more than three thousand miles apart, there was a Chilean presence in El Salvador’s leftist insurgency. Rodrigo Cifuentes Carmona is one of the Chileans who fought with the guerilla in El Salvador. He died in combat and is now buried in the Salvadoran Revolutionary Museum in Perquín, Morazán, El Salvador, founded in 1992 by guerrilla soldiers.
imposed in their society and in doing so ended many years of State-sponsored suppression. As Priscilla Hayner posits in her book *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, the Chilean Truth Commission served as the point of reference and the origin of idea for the peace negotiation in El Salvador.\textsuperscript{13} In the aftermath of Chilean and Salvadoran “transitions to democracy,” groups in both countries have paid close attention and dedication to monument structures like museums that are considered by Nora sites of memory.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, memorial museums throughout Latin America have worked together to exchange ideas on how to enhance the work they are doing in their respective countries and on how to build a stronger presence of the past in the present. These hemispheric relationships offer complex and theoretically diverse frameworks that will assist us in analyzing commemoration processes in a context that transcends the national.

The Cold War for the United States and the Soviet Union was an ideological and geopolitical struggle that did not result in armed conflict. However, as part of the so-called “Third World,” both Chile and El Salvador suffered what Brand calls a “long war,” as opposed to the U.S. and Soviet Union’s view of the Cold War as a “long peace.”\textsuperscript{15} Latin America was caught in the middle of a Capitalist-Communist struggle. As both the United States and the Soviet Union competed for “Third World” influence, stopping the spread of communism in the western hemisphere was especially important for the United States. While industrialized states sold armaments to gain influence in both Chile and El Salvador, the United States strived to win

\textsuperscript{15} Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 1.
political influence over right wing governments or dictatorships. At the same time, groups like the Salvadoran Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), a Marxist-Leninists revolutionary group composed of five main guerrilla groups, were greatly influenced by events in the Soviet Union, though they did not receive direct aid such as in Cuba and Nicaragua.

A major dynamic of the Cold War in Latin America was U.S. political and economic intervention; Chile and El Salvador were no exceptions. Before Chile elected a Socialist president in 1970, the U.S. was already involved in opposing Allende’s possible presidential victory. Once Salvador Allende was elected, the U.S. feared having what historian Lubna Qureshi calls a “red sandwich,” or multiple communist countries, in Latin America, and deployed the CIA to support the military junta, the leaders of every special force in the Chilean army, in a coup d'état. The Chilean military received financial support from the U.S. government for weapons. Chilean debt to the United States was also pardoned because the White House argued that it was important to meet the needs of the Chilean military for the 1973 coup.

Similarly, the U.S. was also afraid of a so-called “domino effect” in the case of El Salvador and other Central American countries. Since 1981, the White House increased the support of military assistance to the military-led Salvadoran government, especially with President Reagan’s goal of avoiding another Nicaragua

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19 Ibid., 125.
so close to home. According to President Reagan’s first Secretary of State, El Salvador was not merely a “local problem” but a regional problem that could affect all of Central America. The U.S. army supplied military aid and sent U.S. soldiers to train the Salvadoran army. It was not until the murder of the six Jesuit priest in the Central American University (UCA) in 1989 that the U.S. decided to halt direct military aid and support peace negotiations. Likewise, in Chile, the election of the first Marxist president in the Americas produced fear of the spread of communism in the United States. These reasons allowed the United States to intervene in those countries with support of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which allowed the United States to enter countries whose affairs might affect the security or interests of the U.S. As such, the United States wanted to ‘save’ Chile and El Salvador. The Cold War, which placed these two countries as players in the geopolitical conflict between Russia and the United States, allows us to discuss both Chile and El Salvador’s practices of resistance and remembrance together. It permits us to think of the

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20 The 1936-1979 Somoza dynasty was ousted by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group. In 1979 and established a revolutionary government in its place. From 1979 until 1990, the FSLN worked to reform the society and economy of the country along socialist lines. Brands, *Latin America’s Cold War*, 164-188.

21 Alexander Haig, Reagan’s first secretary of State, wrote in his memoirs, “Salvador was not merely a local problem. It was also a regional problem that threatened the stability of all of Central America, including the Panama Canal and Mexico… And it was a global issue because it represented the interjection of the war of national liberation into the Western Hemisphere.” Tommie Sue Montgomery. *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 147.


24 The United States would be ‘saving’ Latin America from injustices and human rights violation. President Carter did not want to ignore Latin America’s trend to achieve social justice because that would mean losing influence and moral authority in the world. Therefore, as Brands states, “The United States must forego traditional expedients like military intervention and counterinsurgency and focus on cultivating the genuine sympathies of the region’s people. In this sense, advocating human rights and democracy were central to protecting American power.” Brands, *Latin America’s Cold War*, 175.
relationship between Chilean and Salvadoran histories beyond their distinct national frameworks.

Besides the direct political and military actions of these countries, we can also see the rise of these revolutionary movements and ideologies in the framework of those produced by the Cold War. Both Chile and El Salvador had armed Marxist-Leninist leftist revolutionary movements during the 1980s and 1990s. Although no direct relationship between each country’s leftist groups has been documented, both groups played an essential role in opposing oppressive regimes with a strong military component. Both countries had sparse resources available to them. However, the FMLN in El Salvador was able to obtain minimal weaponry as well as popular support. This support for the uprising was so large that many have argued that, without aid from the United States, “the army would have reached the point of collapse and the FMLN would have taken power.”25 By the late 80s, the FMLN was so powerful in the number of guerrilla soldiers and support that the army decided to negotiate a peace treaty with the guerrillas instead of trying to win the war.

In contrast to El Salvador, the leftist groups in Chile such as the Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR), The Communist Party (PC), and the Socialist Party (PS) did not have as much popular support due to political suppression, but they worked underground to oppose the dictatorship.26 Attention to the roles of leftist revolutionary groups in Chile and El Salvador and their histories in the late twentieth century.

26 Deaths and disappearances were selective. In 1974 the majority of disappeared were from the MIR, 1975 the PS, and 1976 the PC. Informe de la Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación (Santiago: Gobierno de Chile, 1991).
century provide a particular lens to analyze the outcome of the ‘transition’ era after conflicts influenced by the Cold War’s geopolitics and ideologies in both countries. Through this lens we can grasp the process of “memorialization” that ensued.

The Cold War in Latin America, which began with the Guatemalan coup d’état in 1954 and the Cuban Revolution in the 1959, produced a series of cultural changes in addition to acts of violence perpetrated by the military of the Southern Cone and Central America. No longer were writers, poets, or playwrights able to imagine being an agent of ‘salvation and redemption’ from the neoliberal state. As long as the military governments held power in their State, it was they who decided what would be written and what would be said. As Jean Franco states, “military governments left older structures, both cultural and political, in fragments. Terms such as ‘identity,’ ‘responsibility,’ ‘nation,’ ‘the future,’ ‘history’—even ‘Latin American’—had to be rethought.”

Rethinking these concepts for the most part entailed suppressing any communist action or thought from the public arena for intellectuals. The United States’ interest and involvement in Central America and the Southern Cone, especially during the Cold War, transformed the regions’ political, social, and cultural life.

During the Cold War, Chile experienced seventeen years of Augusto Pinochet’s repressive dictatorship, which caused many deaths, disappearances, forced exile, as well as constant fear in Chilean society. Pinochet’s regime was established through the 1973 coup d’état that overthrew elected Socialist President Salvador Allende.

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29 More than three thousand people were reported disappeared or assassinated. *Rettig Report*
Allende. Julie Shayne, a sociologist who focuses on Chilean and Salvadoran feminist revolution, has documented how “under the guise of a ‘State war’ and an around-the-clock curfew, the military launched a reign of terror against leftist activists, government officials, intellectuals, union leaders, and the poor, with mass arrests, beatings, torture, summary executions, and military sweeps in the poblaciones (shantytowns).” In the face of these systematic suppressions, left-wing organizations fought feverishly to resist the State. In 1980, the military junta wrote a new constitution naming General Pinochet as President of Chile for the following eight years and transforming the military government into a civilian one. Protest and hunger strikes were common forms of opposition among civilians. Eight years later, in 1988, with Pinochet no longer serving as President of Chile, the country began its so-called ‘transition’ back to democracy, or what is known in Chile as la transición.

El Salvador also experienced a transition back to democracy in the early 1990s, after a decade of a Civil War in this small, densely populated Central American country. Throughout its history, El Salvador has been affected by violence and poverty due to overpopulation, economic polarization, and class struggles. The ruling class’s grip on the economic and political life of the country in the late 1970s sustained the unequal distribution of land and the fraudulent elections that were major causes leading to the war. Labor groups, unions, local communities and ordinary citizens resisted and formed rebel/reactionary groups in opposition to these injustices. For example, the FMLN was created in 1980 to combat a tradition of right-wing military governments that practiced diverse forms of political and

31 Byrne, El Salvador’s Civil War, 18-48.
economic oppression.\textsuperscript{32} The historian Walter La Feber has argued that, under these political and economic circumstances in El Salvador there would inevitably be a revolution as a result of historical oppression and marginalization.\textsuperscript{33} Twelve years of fighting from 1980 to 1992 between the Salvadoran army and the guerrillas led to more than 75,000 deaths.\textsuperscript{34} During that time, as Santiago and Binford argue, El Salvador’s resolution thereof led the nation away from “authoritarian, military rule” to an “electoral democracy.”\textsuperscript{35}

Truth Commissions were established as central steps to enable the transitions to democracy. These Truth Commissions, as David Gairdner argues, were expected to “act to dismantle enclaves of authoritarian power in the transitional policy and must simultaneously contribute to the creation of alternatives to authoritarian governance on which a democratic policy can be built and reproduced over time.”\textsuperscript{36} Because the Chilean Truth Commission became a model for that of El Salvador, there is a rich relationship between these two initiatives. The 1991 Chilean Truth Commission, known as the Rettig Report, was instituted by the Chilean government, which called for the investigation of possible human rights violations during Pinochet’s dictatorship. More than a decade later, a second commission known as the Valech

\textsuperscript{32} Then president of the Revolutionary Government Junta, Jose Napoleón Duarte, was asked by New York Times foreign correspondent, Raymond Bonner, why were the guerrillas fighting? Duarte answered: “Fifty years of lies, fifty years of injustice, fifty years of frustration. This is a history of people starving to death, living in misery. For fifty years the same people had all the power, all the money, all the jobs, all the education, all the opportunities.” Raymond Bonner, \textit{Weakness and Deceit: U.S. Policy and El Salvador} (New York: Times Books, 1984), 24.


\textsuperscript{36} David Gairdner. \textit{Truth in Transition: The Role of Truth Commissions in Political Transition in Chile and El Salvador}. (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1999), 3.
Report was published to investigate the numerous torture cases that the first commission did not cover. In El Salvador, the Truth Commission was established by the United Nations in 1993. The immediate results of this commission were the consolidation of the FMLN as a political party, the regulation of the Armed forces, the creation of a civilian police force, and, finally, the promotion of an amnesty law that expressly provided for the extinction of civil as well as criminal responsibility.37

Truth Commissions preserve some memories of violent pasts in official documents that name the victims and/or perpetrators. Individuals and communities, however, preserve memory through a multiplicity of public markers and performances, beyond official and government documents and practices. It is those individuals and communities, which act beyond State and institutional practices, that bring into question the importance of memory and remembrance. In one of his famous books of poems, Pablo Neruda, the communist, diplomat, and Chilean poet, illustrates a salient example of a type of political reflexivity in remembering that transcends the State. Neruda, at a Chilean and continental level seeks to reflect on the political meaning of remembering outside of the State and other institutions in “La arena traicionada” found in his 1950 seminal work, *Canto General*:

Por eso te hablaré de estos dolores que quisiera apartar, 
te obligaré a vivir una vez más entre sus quemaduras, 
no para detenernos como una estación, al partir, 
ni tampoco para golpear con la frente la tierra, 
ni para llenarnos el corazón con agua salada, 
sino para caminar conociendo, para tocar la rectitud con decisiones infinitamente cargadas de sentido, 
para que la severidad sea una condición de la alegría, para

37 Byrne, *El Salvador’s Civil War*, 191-194.; Some people believed the amnesty law was “the achievement of the peace process” while others believe that the amnesty law prevents reconciliation and it “owes a debt to the past.” Margaret Popkin. *Peace Without Justice: Obstacles to Building the Rule of Law in El Salvador*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 151-158.
That’s why I’ll tell you these sorrows I’d like to put aside,
I’ll oblige you to live among their burns again,
not to mark time in a terminal, before departing
or to beat the earth with our brows,
or to fill our hearts with salt water,
but to set forth knowing, to touch rectitude
with decisions infinitely charged with meanings
that severity may be a condition of happiness,
that we may thus become invincible.38

In this stanza Neruda speaks to his fellow Latin American citizens and ‘obliges’ them
to actively remember the burning sorrows of their experiences. In the following
stanzas Neruda denounces those who have tried, in his judgment, to corrupt Latin
America. These corrupters include dictators, diplomats, commercial companies like
the United Fruit Company, and even poets. Here, Neruda situates himself as one of
the many people who experienced abuses by these actors; he demonstrates his interest
in collective life using the plural form in this poem. He also expresses the
significance of remembering experiences caused by a violent nation’s past through a
collective perspective via the plural form. According to Neruda, remembrance is
necessary not only so that the past may not be forgotten but also so that the actions
taken in the future are productive for a region.

Articulating memories, it seems, is essential for societies to continue living.
That is why it is no surprise that the late twentieth and early twenty-first century have
been times of what cultural historian Andreas Huyssen calls a ‘memory boom.’

Beyond the erection of memorials and museums, immediate access to the Internet,
television, and printed work has made memories of the past readily available to us on

38 For Spanish please see Neruda, Pablo, and Enrico Mario Santí. Canto General. Madrid, España:
Cátedra, 1990.; for English please see Neruda, Pablo, and Jack Schmitt. Canto General. Berkeley, CA:
University of California, 1991.
a daily basis. This has created an enormous interest in the ways in which memory has been recorded and transmitted around the study of its accompanying practices and rituals, an interest that this thesis shares.  

In “History as Social Memory,” Peter Burke posits that collective memories are transmitted by various modes such as oral traditions, written records, remembrances, images, actions, and spaces. These various modes, shown by Maurice Halbwachs, produce a memory by a specific group of people. For example, images of Monseñor Romero, a priest who was assassinated in 1980 for speaking against the war in El Salvador, can be found in schools, in parks, and in churches throughout the country. For many lower income Salvadorans, he is remembered through these artifacts and memorials as “la voz de los sin voz,” a priest who lived for the poor and represents victimhood of a violent period in El Salvador’s history. In a similar fashion, La Moneda, the presidential palace in Chile is a place where memories of the coup are partly localized. The bombing of La Moneda in the early morning of September 11, 1973 is deeply rooted in the memory of Chileans. This event serves as a marker of the terrible event, which was actively transmitted through the radio, television, and newspapers to those who did not witness the event.  

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42 For more information about how the presidential palace has influenced the production of present memory see Piper’s first chapter in Piper, Isabel. “Obstinaciones de la memoria: la dictadura militar chilena en las tramas del recuerdo” PhD. Diss., Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2005.
event has also been absorbed by recent generations through social institutions like the church, family, social class, and the nation as Jelín states.43

These institutions, though composed by individuals, can be considered a central component of specific social groups. Halbwachs argues that it is impossible for individuals to remember outside of a group context: “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories”.44 Halbwachs adds “While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember.”45 Since many Salvadorans did not know Monseñor Romero personally, and since many Chileans were not near the presidential palace when it was bombed, their knowledge of Monseñor Romero and the bombing of La Moneda exists as a previously constructed memory. This conceptualization of memory is useful for our present analysis because it articulates personal memory in reference to a plurality of memories. It points us to the heterogeneity of collective memories and resists the notion of a singular ‘official’ memory produced by the State or a hegemonic group. This is a useful foundation to analyze memory production and the configuration of sites of memory in the Latin American context.

At the same time, other conceptualizations of memory provide useful frameworks to analyze the diverse memories established by various social groups. Michael Pollak introduces the concept of “underground memory,” a type of memory that emerges from marginalized and minority groups that specifically oppose “official

43 Elizabeth Jelín, los trabajos de la memoria (Madrid: Siglo XXI De España Editores, 2002), 124.
In El Salvador, for instance, many Salvadoran soldiers were recruited and forced to participate in military combat. Most of these recruits were boys and young men who were taken from their homes, neighborhoods, and schools and thrown into combat. Although experiences such as these are quite common during the conflict, they are seldom spoken about today as such, and so the memories of these particular soldiers are considered to be underground memories. In the ‘official’ narrative of the Salvadoran army, these soldiers voluntarily fought in the army in order to stop the guerrilla fighters from spreading communism. Those soldiers who were forced to fight for the Salvadoran army presently hold memories that are not articulated in either victims’ or victimizers’ narratives per this ‘official’ narrative.

Because of the fundamental intention of some sites of memory to acknowledge specific groups or particular historical narratives or events, underground memories like the ones above are often thrust aside. Chilean monuments and memorials, for instance, honor militants from Marxist-Leninist revolutionary groups. However, they do not necessarily acknowledge non-combatants who fell victim during the dictatorship such as militant’s family members, neighbors who were tortured because they hid a victim’s baby, or even ‘delinquents’ who were murdered solely for being in the street during curfew hours. Where are these victims commemorated and where are their memories and their families’ memories placed? These individuals tend not to have a space in monuments and memorials that are dedicated to militant actors who died fighting against the Chilean dictatorship. Will

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47 In several of the interviews I conducted in El Salvador, many Salvadoran soldiers mention that guerrillas wanted to spread communism and so it was their duty as Salvadorans to save El Salvador from communist.
these individuals ever be accepted as part of the community of victims and will they ever be represented outside of the official documents produced by the Truth Commission? Analyzing these national situations in both Chile and El Salvador will allow us to complicate the concepts of an ‘underground’ and ‘official’ memory. By engaging with nations that transitioned out of and away from oppressive regimes and into democracy, we are forced to note the limits of situating underground memories and extending the concepts further to suit both cases.

In the Latin American context, many monuments, memorials, and museums are dedicated to the heroes and victims of national crises of the twentieth century. These sites of memory or lieux de mémoire, as Pierre Nora calls them, play an important role in the construction of collective memory in the context of this study. Most sites of memory or territorial markers, which are directly related to each other in spatial configuration, have been built during periods of transition and have emerged through the efforts of States, human rights organizations, and citizen initiatives (most notably for our purposes). These territorial markers can only be created through the actions of what Jelín terms “memory entrepreneurs,” people who work within the political arena to pay homage to the victims of the past and to transmit a message of “Never Again” for posterity. As Jelín and Langland argue, these sites are also processes that develop over time, that involve the social struggles that surround them,

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48 We will come to understand that underground memories are also forms of collective memory, but that collective memories may or may not reflect memories of oppressed groups or the memories of the oppressors.

and that produce or fail to produce a significance of material spaces.\textsuperscript{50} In other words, though physically static, the layers of memory at sites of memory may be considered to be in flux in relation to time and groups of people. Territorial markers produced by memory entrepreneurs infuse different levels of value to different people.\textsuperscript{51}

Monuments, memorials, and museums are all bound to an urgent past; in other words, the past being remembered in these sites are still important in present societies that consider a need for daily reminders of that past. However, as Nora stated, the past cannot be resurrected in its totality. Instead, “we experience the past as fractured, fragmented, distant, remote, and complex.”\textsuperscript{52} Since it is impossible to recreate a past in its entirety in sites of memories, what is produced in these sites is a construction of both past and present history. Sites of memories use that past in different ways to honor the dead, to remember the reasons why an event occurred in the first place, or to educate people about the consequences of that event. Museums, as well as monuments and memorials, as Williams states, “are all communication mediums that exist alongside other modes of historical narration.”\textsuperscript{53}

All these sites of memory are, as Crane suggests, sites where subjectivities and objectivities collide. Biased and unbiased notions of what a site should display become part of the construction of these sites. In these sites public information about an event and personal experiences of victims and their families are fused together. These collisions produce a stronger relationship between places and memory due to

\textsuperscript{50} Elizabeth Jelín and Victoria Langland. Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales. (Madrid: Siglo XXI De España, 2003), 4.
\textsuperscript{51} See Jelín and Langland’s Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales for information on territorial markers and their relationship with memory struggles.
\textsuperscript{52} Michael J. Lazzara, Chile in Transition: The Poetics and Politics of Memory (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2006), 34.
\textsuperscript{53} Paul Harvey Williams, Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities, (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 90.
the process of selecting which memories need to be preserved. Most importantly, these sites serve as learning aids for visitors to witness the past and identify the event’s importance in a national or regional context.

As public spaces that seek to contain specific memories, monuments and memorials tend to have distinct intentions. Sturken argues that monuments are “a means to honor the past” while memorials “focus specifically on paying tribute to the dead.” Memorials, therefore, tend to focus on loss and sacrifice, as is the case of the Vietnam War Memorial Wall in Washington D.C. which honors and names those who fought and died in the Vietnam War. Memorials are also created to remember events in order to prevent a crisis from befalling a nation again. Monuments, on the other hand, focus on celebrating political or historical figures or specific themes related to national imaginaries. For instance, the Washington Monument was built to commemorate the first president of the United States, George Washington. For the purposes of this investigation, monuments and memorials will be grouped together as one.

As previously explained, there are differences in the roles of monuments and memorials, but these differences are subtle in the context of Latin America. Linguistically in Spanish, memoriales and monumentos differ. According to the Real Academia Española memoriales are books or written documents that are used to annotate something while monumentos are public buildings that commemorate a

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55 Erika Lee Doss, Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 38.
56 For example, the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama reminds us of those who died during the civil rights movement fighting against inequality, but also reminds us that as citizens we should prevent another era of inequality.
heroic event. Therefore, monumentos will be used to define both monuments and memorials that honor and remember events and people in order to relate this concept to the Latin American context. These sites allow visitors to remember victim’s names, their stories and also to honor their death whether they were militants or innocent bystanders.

While monuments and memorials are both created to commemorate someone or something, memory museums are pedagogical institutions whose mission it is to educate their visitors about a specific topic. Museums, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach argue, share the characteristics of temples, churches, shrines, and certain types of palaces, and they embody and make visible the ideas of the State. However, that is not always the case. Some museums, as we will see with the museum in El Salvador, complicate the idea of representing a nation. Yet, museums can still serve the function of a memorial in a nation, as the case of MMDH in Santiago, serving as sites that are morally and pedagogically guided. According to Paul Williams, memorial museums “invariably cherish public education as [they are] geared towards the future avoidance of comparable tragedies.” Therefore, the mission of memorial museums is to educate their visitors about atrocities that occurred in their nation or community so that an event of that sort will never happen again.

An examination of the monumentos and museums commemorating late twentieth century events in Chile and El Salvador requires us to entertain such questions as those Huyssen poses in his study on memory practices: “Why this

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57 Real Academia Española is the official online dictionary of the Spanish language. http://lema.rae.es/drae/
59 Williams Memorial Museums, 97.
obsession with memory and the past and why this fear of forgetting? Why are we building museums as if there were no tomorrow?"  

If we analyze the recent phenomenon of *monumentos* and museums, in Chile and El Salvador in relation to the nature of their conflicts, we can survey the various productions of memories emanating from the sites. Because the violence Chilean and Salvadoran citizens experienced originated at a local level at the hand of their fellow citizens, sites of memory usually represent a particular history. Thus, an important question to ask is how the sites’ legitimacy shapes the victims’ perspective of their experiences during a national crisis. Why do Chile and El Salvador continue to find it necessary to build constant spatial reminders of their dictatorship and Civil War respectively and, consequently, how do they articulate specific notions of victimhood? What are the processes of collecting testimonies from these victims, which are then used to represent them? How do these sites of memory locate and portray victims of systematic oppression? These are the questions with which this investigation seeks to engage in order to complicate the idea that many public projects cultivate a shared sense of nation-state commitment and belonging in sites of memory.

The question of victimhood and representation requires grappling with the word ‘victim’, a central term in discussions about internal conflicts. Defining ‘victim’ is a complicated assignment because of the diverse definitions found in judicial and scholarly work. Scholars of victimhood have theorized the concept of victimhood in

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61 The United Nation defines a victim as someone who has suffered physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights A victim can also include the immediate family or dependents of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization. However, I will not use this definition of a victim when talking about representation of victims. *Declaration of Basic Principles of*
complex ways. Some scholars construct victims as passive beings with no agency; those who receive blows but do not respond.\textsuperscript{62} Others argue victims are blameless and are in a persistent state of vulnerability.\textsuperscript{63} However, social scientists have recently argued that it is people’s culture and perspective of whether or not they are victims that defines them as such.\textsuperscript{64} Victims can purposefully exclude themselves from being considered a victim in any social context. People’s choice of whether or not they want to consider themselves victims plays an important role in defining that term because, ultimately, it is the individual who chooses whether to be labeled as a victim or not and who the aggressor is, be it the State, an institution, or a specific community.

Victimhood depends on the conditions of address, that is, on who interpolates, invites, or requires these individuals to identify or come forward as such. Individuals can be called upon by judicial institutions to call themselves victims through Truth Commissions to have their testimony archived in an official State document; they can also be called upon by human rights groups to accept their victimhood in order to extend support in fighting for social justice. In Chile’s case, after the second Truth Commission was established, the judicial courts redefined victims to include persons who were tortured and survived. Some individuals did not want to testify and relive an event that occurred thirty years ago; other families pushed individuals to testify and call themselves victims in order to receive any government benefit available to them. Although these individuals no longer considered themselves victims because of


\textsuperscript{62} Jelín, \textit{Los trabajos de la memoria}, 72.


the time lapse, they took on the label of victim for this reason. Thus, defining oneself as a victim is greatly influenced by who is calling upon one to do so and the benefits or costs of doing so.

In oppressive regimes’ social and historical circumstances, it is difficult for individuals to identify as victims if their victimization is still silenced or considered taboo. For instance, the victims of sexual violence during the dictatorship in Chile could not identify as such because judicial institutions had not categorized sexual violence as torture, nor was it talked about in society. Therefore, there was no room for an individual who was victimized sexually to identify one’s self as a victim. Individuals’ approaches in defining themselves as victims are also culturally informed. For example, an individual whose culture negatively defines vulnerability will try to avoid being part of a group that is labeled vulnerable. Shaped by these discussions, victims are persons who, individually or collectively suffer physical and emotional harm that led to death, disappearances, torture, exile, displacement, or forced military labor imposed by dominant institutions.

Along these lines, witnesses, although not exclusively victims, are as important in the discussion of internal conflicts as victims. Witnesses take part in the process of commemoration and remembrance as much as the victims and perpetrators do because they were present watching the events unfold. Witnesses can be considered ‘secondary’ victims, that is, victims who were not directly attacked but who either had family members who were or witnessed acts of violence caused by

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65 In many informal conversations I had in Chile, many people expressed that after the second Truth Commission (Valech Report) was published people who did not want to label themselves victims before are doing so now in order to receive benefits for them and their families.

dominant institutions. Witnesses too are thus forced to experience, if only secondary, actions of dominant institutions. As Veena Das states, witnesses form their position by expressing the harm done to the whole social fabric. That is, by witnessing the harm done to others in society, witnesses are marked by the experience and eventually become part of it. Witnesses play a significant role in creating sites, in articulating the memory struggles, and in promoting the preservation of past memories. They were present in the construction and articulation of *monumentos* and they contribute to the production of memory of witnessed events by constructing victim’s narratives.

Traumatic events, such as dictatorships and civil wars, impact how victims and witnesses remember and express their experiences during and after that time period. Cathy Caruth, a scholar on trauma, defines trauma as “the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.” Sometimes it is impossible to narrate a traumatic event because it has not been fully understood and individuals cannot express what they are feeling. However, it is possible to speak about these experiences if there are people willing to listen as psychoanalyst, Dori Laub, has stated. The victims and their listeners have greatly influenced the creations of sites of memories. Through many of these sites, the possibility of delivering the victim’s testimony is enabled. But questions remain:

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to whom are these testimonies directed? Can these experiences of the past be understood in present-day *monumentos* and museums?

Because the natures of Chile and El Salvador’s armed conflicts were different, so too are the natures of each country’s sites of memory. I will argue in this investigation that although sites of memory in Chile and El Salvador take distinct forms, they all allow for various conflicting memories to be constructed, challenging simplistic narratives of reconciliation. According to Huyssen, the public debates that stem from the vast array of constructed memories are a necessary component of success for memorial projects that takes effect in the public sphere and eventually becomes part of a “social and political imaginary.”70 In other words, in both Chile and El Salvador, these sites of memory and the memory debates that originate from them contribute to public discourses that become internalized in a social group. Most of the Chilean sites of memory are dedicated to Marxist revolutionary groups such as the MIR, articulating a leftist, anti-Pinochet narrative. In El Salvador, most sites of memory are dedicated to men, women, and children who did not participate in any faction of the war but were killed during the conflict.71 Groups and individuals who were against these individuals or groups do not acknowledge their narrative as part of their own. Analyzing these differences will allow us to understand the multiple commemoration processes of victims, in relation to civil society, States, and local communities, and to examine what is at stake in the efforts of State and local communities to create a dominant narrative. This will also enable us to question the stability of national identity in countries transitioning to democracy.

70 Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 109

71 In addition to sites of memory dedicated to people who did not participate earlier in the war, there are many sites that are dedicated to leftist guerrilla soldiers.
The existence of diverse monumentos and museums that produce such conflicting memories and questions on what and whom to represent allows us to examine the instability of notions of national identity. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson proposes that nations are products of history and human acts. He explores how citizens understand their membership in a nation that includes countless others.72 According to Argentinian historian Patricia Funes, in the Latin American context, memory, identity, and history are embedded in close relation to political cultures and social imaginaries.73 Yet how can citizens agree on what their nation is if they cannot agree on how to remember their recent past history? What are the contours of the relationship between memory and social imaginaries?

These questions beg us to challenge the idea of reconciliation purported by States that have transitioned into democracy after violent conflicts. Reconciliation can be defined in two levels, in a national and individual level. According to Hayner, national reconciliation can consist of “speaking openly and publicly about the past silenced or highly conflictive events.” She argues that once the State admits to these events can “opposing parties debate and govern without latent conflicts and of bitterness over past lies.”74 However, as political and cultural historian Lessie Jo Frazier has pointed out, even if opposing parties can work together, reconciliation cannot be achieved until these parties acknowledge their role in the violent events that

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74 Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 183.
Reconciliation on an individual level consists of forgiving those responsible for the violence inflicted on individuals or at least on avoiding vengeance and healing although not necessarily forgetting those experiences. Individuals may not find reconciliation with their perpetrators, and, more generally, with the State who supported violent acts against their citizens, because the perpetrators may not hold themselves accountable and/or there is very little information made public about victims. With this in mind, how can a nation reconcile with their past when some of its citizens have not found reconciliation? How do these problems influence the narratives of sites of memories?

For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on three main sites of memory in both Chile and El Salvador and concentrate on three forms of “materialist modes of privileging particular histories and values”—museums and monumentos, and literary and artistic practices. In analyzing these sites and artifacts of memory and discussing their complexities in the process of commemorating victims, I will examine these sites’ contradictions inherent in their claims to represent victims in general and their relationship to official State narratives, while examining what groups of victims they do represent and how. The memory debates surrounding these spaces are topics I will also discuss.

I will first examine monumentos as efforts towards the symbolic reparation of victims of Chile and El Salvador’s crises, in the context of the specific recommendations on reparation that Truth Commissions made in each country during

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73 Lessie Joe Frazier, “‘Subverted Memories’” Countermourning as Political Action in Chile, in Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1999), 107
76 Doss, Memorial Mania, 38.
their periods of “transition.” In the case of El Salvador, the Monument to Memory and Truth, located in San Salvador, can be viewed as a type of symbolic reparation, although it is not a State-sponsored monument but rather an initiative of human rights and civilian organizations. By examining this monument I will discuss the debates that arise in creating a non-governmental monument to honor and remember certain victims. In addition to the Monument to Memory and Truth, I will also consider Monseñor Oscar Romero’s crypt located at the cathedral in the capital as a monument. Monseñor Romero, as a national figure, brings up the problematic relationship between his lived experience and the various representations of him by different groups in society. In Chile’s case, I will consider how the best-known former detention centers, which are found in the capital, serve as monumentos, paying particular attention to Villa Grimaldi, the most popular site of the three. Turning a torture center into a memorial complicates the ways society remembers the events that happened in that place. In addition to those complexities, turning a former torture center into a park raises certain questions: can this park be too aesthetically pleasing to represent the experiences victims faced in that place? Does it trivialize the experiences of the victims?

Chapter Two analyzes museums as pedagogical representations of specific groups of victims. Chile and El Salvador’s museums greatly differ in the representation of past history; however, they both accomplish the pedagogical mission of educating visitors about their specific nation’s history and, in the case of Chile, international histories of Truth Commissions. In this thesis, MMDH will be the

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77 Because of the vast array of monumentos found all over Chile (more than 170), I have decided to concentrate on the most prominent sites of memory located in the capital.
central memorial museum in Chile that I will use to analyze how specific groups of victims identify or fail to do so with this site of memory. Part of the mission of MMDH is to dignify the victims and their families; however, the museum does not have any link with human rights groups or organizations of families of victims. The debates elicited by the construction of this museum complicate the kinds of memory the museum is trying to produce.

In the case of El Salvador, I will analyze the Museum of Word and Image (MUPI) as the most recent museum to be created that seeks to represent the histories of certain victims of the Civil War. MUPI is a museum created by civic initiative and with a Marxist revolutionary impulse not to forget the atrocities of the Civil War. The government does not provide financial assistance to the museum, but it does aid in providing student visitors. This relationship between a non-governmental museum that focuses on the guerillas and the State that fought against them, forces us to ask whether the State is accepting the position they held during the Civil War and, thus, allowing the museum to teach the future Salvadoran generations the Civil War narrative that the government once opposed. Both of these museums are heavily influenced by the State. Therefore the museums’ pedagogical missions, whether directly or indirectly are guided by State narratives. These complicated relationships between museums and States, that sometimes oppose each other, will be at the center of this chapter.

Lastly, I will discuss how cultural artifacts and performances have showcased various traumatic responses from communities that were either directly or indirectly

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78 <www.museodelamemoria.cl>.
affected by their conflict. In El Salvador, I will analyze the School of Art and Open Studio in Perquín, a school created by artists more than a decade after the exhumation of genocide victims in El Mozote, a neighboring town. The school has transformed a small town, once known unofficially as the guerrilla capital during the conflict, into a place full of murals that remind people of local and international heroes and life before the war. By examining two murals created by the school, we will illuminate how traumatic responses and reactions can be represented in various forms and the affect that has on the present and on the community. The play Villa, written by Guillermo Calderón (2010), examines the difficulties of creating a site of memory where people were tortured in Chile. Analyzing this present-day debate in terms of theater and performance allows us to understand how cultural spaces and performances represent the trauma of their country’s past. The School of Arts and Open Studio in Perquín and Villa are two completely different works of art that are compelling to analyze together because they showcase how traumatic events can be remembered differently and how these varying ways influences the collective memory of a community.

Even after the erection of all these sites of memories, there is still an urgent call by Chilean and Salvadoran communities to remember and achieve justice. Guadalupe Mejía, director of CODEFAM (Committee of the Families of Victims of Human Rights Violation) in El Salvador recounts, “[La Justicia] no se logra de la noche a la mañana… uno dice, tantos años han pasado y no hay respuesta, pero en Chile, a los treinta años empezaron a ver la justicia; entonces ‘ustedes empiezan’ ellas
[grupos de derechos humanos en Chile] nos dicen."\textsuperscript{79} As the words of Mejía indicate, it is worth looking at the historical crisis that both countries experienced together because of the commonalities they possess. Both in Chile and El Salvador, it took a significant amount of time to create symbolic reparations for victims. Reparations and the memory debates instilled in them required negotiations and cooperation from different actors both at the local and State level. These reparations unfolded over time and as Mejía points out, some reparations are still in the process of being recognized as such by the State. Chilean and Salvadoran victims’ families and human rights groups have been working on creating sites of memory to inform their fellow citizens of their respective nation’s past in order to remember those who died and those who are still missing due to government oppression. They continue their work: one that, as Mejía’s words imply, seems never-ending. Recalling Carlos Henríquez Consalvi’s words at the beginning of this introduction, the purpose of this thesis is to trace and map these conflicting memories.

\textsuperscript{79} "[Justice] cannot be attained from the morning to night… one says, so many years have passed and there is no response, but in Chile, after thirty years they began to see justice, then, they [Chilean human rights groups] tell us, you’re only beginning". Guadalupe Mejía. Interview by author. San Salvador, El Salvador. August 9, 2012.
¿A quién recordaremos?: Appropriating Truths and the Politics of Monumentos

On a humid day in a small town in Chalatenango, El Salvador a woman, who lost four out of nine sons during the Civil War, explained to me the suffering she and her family experienced throughout that period. She shared the memory of hearing about the death of her eldest son who was a guerrilla soldier and fought in the hills close to home. A young boy from her community was the one who brought the news to her. She recounted,

Viene un cipote y me dice: ‘¿y usted sabe que su hijo está muerto arriba?’ No, le dije ‘no sé nada’ ‘¿Cómo no?’ me dijo. ‘Allá está arriba, allá arriba está muerto’...Él dice que lo conoció por las manos, como era bien grande, era bien manudo. Me dice ‘yo lo conozco por las manos; lo conocí y es su hijo.’ Otra persona fue a ver si era verdad y me dijo que sí era mi hijo y me puse a llorar y me dijo los muchachos [sus hijos] ‘no llores mamá, mire que allí están los soldados y van a decir que por qué está llorando.’...Fue el primero que cayó y dolió más porque murió tan cerca y no lo pude ver.1

When I asked if she ever buried the bodies of her four fallen sons, she said she only found two of them. The other two were left or thrown somewhere unknown to her. In Chile, I heard similar stories about the inability to retrieve family members’ bodies who died in combat or to gather any information about the whereabouts of deceased loved ones. When I asked my interviewees what they thought of their government’s response to these atrocities once a Truth Commission was established, I received different responses from individuals in both Chile and El Salvador. After sharing his

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1 “A boy comes and tells me ‘do you know that your son is dead up there?’ No I said. ‘How come?’ said, ‘He’s up there, he’s dead up there’...He said that he recognized him by his hands since he was really big and tall he had big hands. The boy says, ‘I recognized him by his hands; I recognized him and he is your son.’ Another person went up the hill to check if it really was him and she told me that it was my son and I started crying and my children told me ‘don’t cry mom, look, soldiers are over there and they are going to start questioning why you are crying.’...He was the first of my sons that died and it hurt me more because he died so close to me and I could not see him.” Interview by author. August 13, 2012. The name of my interviewee will not be disclosed as requested.
grim torture experience, Pedro Alejandro Matta, a survivor of the former Chilean torture center, Villa Grimaldi, expressed that the Rettig Report, Chile’s first Truth Commission, was an example of a symbolic reparation. Meanwhile, a former guerrilla soldier of El Salvador expressed that the government needs to do more, especially for the civilian population:

… falta mucho que hacer para que [la sociedad] tenga una conversación [de pacificación]. No es cierto que la gente desea que le den algo económico porque la vida de alguien no es vendible, no es reparable, pero sí se necesita algo, especialmente para la población civil que aguantó tanto de un [bando] como del otro…

That ‘something’ that the guerrilla soldier alludes to could be seen as symbolic reparations. Victims of the dictatorship in Chile and the Civil War in El Salvador are not only seeking practical reparations like financial support, they also have deemed it necessary to have symbolic reparations such as formal apologies and commemorations via public monumentos in order to obtain justice.

In considering these testimonies, one wonders how a nation can move past years of oppression, violence, and genocide caused by the State while adopting a State-sponsored reconciliation promoted by the State itself. How does the Truth Commission provide justice beyond the legal system for the nation? Reconciliation is not a concept that can be easily defined. Some groups in society view reconciliation as moving forward and leaving the past behind, but for others reconciliation is about accountability, justice, and remembering what occurred so that it may never be repeated. However, as Priscilla Hayner, an expert on Truth Commissions around the world states, “reconciliation, as hazy a concept as that can be, may be more affected

2 “… more needs to be done for society to have a conversation about peace. It is not true that people desire to receive financial help because someone’s life is not for sale, it is not repairable but something should be done especially for civilians who endured violence from both sides of the conflict.” Interview by author. August 13, 2012. The name of my interviewee will not be disclosed as requested.
by other factors quite apart from knowing or acknowledging the truth about past
wrongs.”

Nevertheless, she also acknowledges that Truth Commissions can have
important contributions, such as material reparations and judicial reforms. Still, as the
former guerrilla soldier cited above expresses, the civilian population needs symbols
through which they can remember what they lost during the war. This chapter will
examine how *monumentos* begin to remember these victims, and to a greater extent,
the history of the war beyond the judicial arena. Those who created these sites of
memory dictate this representation, so by thoroughly looking at the present state of
*monumentos* we can gain an understanding about the tensions at play between the
State’s specific institutions, and human rights and civilian groups’ way of
remembering.

The State’s passage of Amnesty laws either directly before the Truth
Commission was established in Chile, or immediately after in El Salvador, made
obtaining justice through presenting the truth or through other forms complex. Collins
explains that both countries similarly “adopted or preserved broad transitional
amnesties,” but have had “very different experiences of post-transitional
accountability claim-making.”

For example, the Salvadoran Truth Commission
mentions the names of those responsible for committing human rights violations but
only those named (of which were very few) have been held accountable for their
actions by the justice system.

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3 Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*,

4 Cath Collins, *Post-transitional Justice: Human Rights Trials in Chile and El Salvador*, (University

5 Decreto Legislativo N° 147, Ley de reconciliación nacional [El Salvador], 23 January 1992,
reconciliation defined by accountability is achieved. Five days after the Truth Commission was presented to the society of El Salvador in 1993, President Cristiani declared an amnesty law. His aim was to erase, eliminate and forget in totality the past so as to find a comprehensive resolution for all in El Salvador. Those who were not named in the Truth Commission, due to lack of evidence, enjoyed the luxury of the amnesty law and, unlike the perpetrators who were named, were not held accountable for their crimes.

On the other hand, Chile’s amnesty law was passed in 1978 while the Junta was still in power. This law covered acts committed during the first five years of the dictatorship. The amnesty law was kept throughout the dictatorship, and according to Collins, there was very little change in accountability in Chile throughout the period after the transition to democracy. Very few people were held accountable because both of the Chilean Truth Commissions did not name the perpetrators. The Chilean commissioners believed they had a lack of sufficient evidence in each case to name the perpetrators. The Rettig Report stated that it would not “assume jurisdictional functions proper to the courts… Hence it will not have the power to take a position on whether particular individuals are legally responsible for the events it is considering.” The list of names compiled by the Chilean Truth Commissions has not appeared in public although some commissioners made a case to name the perpetrators they knew to at least obtain a social sanction if there was not going to be

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7 Supreme Decree no. 355 of the Executive Branch of Chile, April 25, 1990, Article 2.  
8 According to Hayner, it is speculated that the list of perpetrators is used by the President in his or her review of senior officers proposed for promotion. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 127.
a judicial one. However, since 1998, some judges in the judicial system have prosecuted a few perpetrators due to international and local pressures such as a small core group of lawyers who has continually asked for perpetrators to be held accountable. Collins argues that this judicial change has “proved key to translating legally framed actor pressure into positive accountability outcomes.”

The amnesty law and the naming or withholding of perpetrators’ names influenced each government’s response to the recommendations for symbolic reparations made by each Truth Commission. The Salvadoran government did not find the recommendations important to implement, yet, in the case of Chile, even though they responded to the recommendations, it took the government several years. Although these symbolic reparations may play an important role in providing some form of reconciliation for society, there are, as we will see, many debates and unmet demands involved in creating them. Examining the conflicting social processes surrounding the monumentos and their symbolic meaning will reveal what kind of memories are being produced and what kind of reconciliation these sites promote.

Chile and El Salvador had similar recommendations for symbolic reparations, one being the construction of a national monument that names all the victims of human rights abuses from both sides of the dictatorship and Civil War respectively. The Valech Report (2004), which was the second Truth Commission of Chile, recommended that State institutions, as well as anyone who was responsible, had to publicly recognize what the Commission reported and pledge that violent acts they

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committed would not occur again. As discussed in the introduction, it is through these recommendations that the governments and civilian groups, as well as former armed actors, began to negotiate, devise and erect sites of memory. In the Chilean case, the government supported the creation of some monumentos. On the other hand, symbolic reparations were not instituted by the Salvadoran government despite the report’s recommendations and therefore, monumentos now in place are the products of community initiatives. Some still lack official recognition. For the purposes of this chapter, I will first examine a prominent site of memory in El Salvador that was constructed by human rights and civilian groups to analyze how focusing on a certain group of victims disregards others and how it affects the construction of an ‘official’ history of the Civil War. I will then examine a former torture center that turned into a park – Villa Grimaldi Parque por la Paz (Park for Peace) – in Chile which complements the analysis of El Salvador’s monumento and also questions if the park can fully account for the experiences of their victims through the various commemorations present there. Lastly, I will examine the monumento dedicated to Monseñor Romero in El Salvador’s Cathedral and demonstrate how different political and social actors appropriate the image of a war victim to justify past and current political projects and the implication that that has on remembering his and others’ role during the Civil War.

The Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad (Monument to Memory and Truth) located at the Cuscatlán Park in San Salvador was inaugurated on December 6, 2003 through the efforts of various non-governmental organizations that composed the

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11 Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura (Santiago: Gobierno de Chile, 2004), 627.
group, *Comité Pro Monumento de las Víctimas Civiles de Violaciones de Derechos Humanos.*\(^{12}\) It is an 85-meter long granite wall engraved with approximately thirty thousand names of people who died or went missing during the Civil War. The wall is the only *monumento* out of the few that are found in El Salvador that displays thousands of names of the victims of the Civil War and honors them and their families.\(^{13}\) The government did not financially support the construction of the *monumento*, so it was up to various organizations to find funds in El Salvador and through international support. In 1998, the government, through the Municipality of San Salvador, did, however, support the initiative by approving the construction of the wall in a public park but it still has not recognized the wall as national heritage site as the *Comité* has asked.

As Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz note, “memorial devices are not self-created; they are conceived and built by those who wish to bring to consciousness the events and people that others are more inclined to forget.”\(^{14}\) The *Comité*, through the creation of the wall, refused to allow the civilian population to be

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\(^{12}\) The organizations that composed the *Comité Pro Monumento* included the *Asociación de mujeres por la dignidad y la vida* (DIGNAS), *Asociación probúsqueda, centro para la promoción y defensa de los derechos humanos “Madeleine Lagadec”* (CDPH), *Comisión de derechos humanos de El Salvador* (CDHES), *Comité de madres de desaparecidos y asesinados políticos “Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero”* (COMADRES), *Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen, Oficina de tutela legal del arzobispado de San Salvador*, San Salvador’s town hall, *Comité de familiares de víctimas de violaciones a los derechos humanos “Marinela García Villas”* (CODEFAM), *Comité de madres y familiares cristianos “P. Octavio Ortiz-Hna. Silva”* (COMAFAC), and *Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas* (UCA).

\(^{13}\) Another *monumento* that did not receive government support is the one at El Mozote created in the early 1990s. On December 1981, the Atlácatl Battalion, a sector of the Salvadoran Army entered El Mozote, a town in Morazán, and brutally massacred almost one thousand men, women, and children. Years after the massacre, community members created a memorial in the village of El Mozote, consisting of black metal silhouette figures of a family. Behind this silhouette are wooden plaques engraved with the names of over eight hundred people that pay homage to those massacred in 1981. For more information about El Mozote see Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War.* New York: Vintage, 1994.

forgotten in the context of the Civil War. Collecting names of the civilian victims of massacres, homicides, and disappearances and etching them on a wall accessible to the public provided a place for remembrance, something that the Salvadoran government was not doing. In gathering the names of the victims, the Comité created a national campaign, that lasted around two years, where people could fill out a document with the name of a missing person or executed loved one and hand it over to associations of families of victims. This group also had to obtain information on what year they disappeared or were executed since the wall would be divided chronologically. When they inaugurated the monumento many people were happy but complained that numerous victims were missing from the wall. Due to victims’ families’ pressure the Comité decided to start another campaign to collect more names that seemed never-ending. In 2008, more than three thousand recently acquired names of victims were incorporated in the monumento totaling the names of victims to almost thirty thousand. The Comité also added two plaques at the end of the wall: one is dedicated to the anonymous civilians that they call “patria” (motherland) to honor their lives; the other plaque is blank and it also represents those victims who are not known so that they will never be forgotten. Presently, people have plastered posters and names of other victims on this last plaque. Since it is citizens who have plastered information on victims not listed in the wall, it reveals that even though more than three decades have passed, information about the disappeared continually uncovered while the State still fails to examine it.

15 Director of CODEFAM (Committee of the Families of Victims of Human Rights Violation), Mejía, Guadalupe. Interview by author. August 9, 2012.
Placing the names in alphabetical order in this *monumento* allows victims’ families to find their loved one easily without going through the search process again.

In his discussion of the Memorial Park in Argentina that commemorates the victims of the ‘Dirty War’ (1976-1983), Huyssen asserts that,

Naming names is an age-old and venerable strategy of memorialization, but the naming in this monument is not of the traditional heroic and martyrological kind. We are not remembering heroes of war or martyrs for the fatherland. We are remembering students and workers, women and men, ordinary people who had a social vision at odds with that of the ruling elites, the church and the military…. that led to imprisonment, torture, rape, and death…”

As Huyssen states, the names in the wall in El Salvador are not the traditional heroic names that are etched in war memorials but students and workers, women, men, and children, ordinary people who did not necessarily oppose a social vision at odds with any political institution but were still massacred, murdered, assassinated, and forcefully disappeared. The names of these victims not only represent a large number of individuals murdered during the conflict, they also individualize the person while at the same time creating a collectivity of innocent victims.

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Before they inaugurated the newly obtained section of names, the group decided to integrate a special section of the *monumento* that would include the history of El Salvador. In 2005, the *Comité* inaugurated an artistic mural created by Julio Reyes that represents the history of El Salvador (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). The mural represents Salvadorans as victims – of the Spanish conquest, of natural disasters, of poverty, and of the Civil War. Since this mural is part of a *monumento* to *memory* and *truth* what is important, from the perspective of memory, is not the event itself, but how history is represented through the lens of remembrance and oblivion. The historical memory that is exhibited here provides somewhat of a chronological view of events leading up to the Civil War. The mural is also demonstrating that these events paved the way for the war. Through the images of blood and death, the mural implies that someone or something is responsible for such occurrences. Due to the impunity that reigns in El Salvador no one is explicitly held accountable, yet depicting only images of civilians suggest otherwise. The absence of many State institutions is perhaps intentional to indicate that the State does not belong in a mural.
that represents victimhood because the State is the one responsible for the wars and injustices that the country has experienced. In addition, since the wall directly implicates Salvadoran soldiers as responsible actors, the mural and the wall work together to address the subject of impunity in the history of El Salvador. This interpretation of Salvadoran history is not fixed and may represent different narratives depending on the viewer. Yet, one interpretation that prevails in this mural, since it is located right before the wall of names, is that the Civil War cannot be understood without El Salvador’s past history.

The plaque that immediately follows the artistic mural explains why this monumento has been erected. The inscription states that this site is one of memory and its intention is to immortalize the names of men and women, boys and girls, in the Salvadoran consciousness. In including civilian boys and girls as victims, the Comité directly demonstrates these victims’ innocence. The war was an ideological one where Salvadoran and guerrilla soldiers were conscious of what they were fighting for. However, civilian children did not die because they chose to but because either their parents or they themselves were targeted or because they lived in a community that was presumably influenced by one side of the war. Since the children are grouped together with men and women, by association, all the victims are considered innocent.

18 I specifically describe these children as civilians because there were hundreds of children who were forcefully recruited to the Salvadoran army or who joined the guerrillas without fully understanding the reasons for the war. For information about the role of child soldiers during the Civil War see Courtney, J. “The Civil War that was fought by Children: Understanding the role of child combatants in El Salvador’s Civil War, 1980-1992.” Journal of Military History. 74. (2010): 523-556. For general information about child soldiers in the world see Wessells, Michael. Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection. London: Harvard University Press, 2006.
19 Such was the case in the massacre at El Mozote, where most of the victims of that massacre were children younger than twelve years old.
One of the most difficult tasks for the Comité was which victims to represent in the wall. Victims of the Civil War range from civilians to guerrilla and Salvadoran soldiers to foreigners such as U.S. nuns and American soldiers. The members of the Comité repeatedly asked themselves if the wall should represent all these victims or just a specific group. The Truth Commission recommended a wall with the names of all the victims of the Civil War and yet, according to the information presented to the Salvadoran Commission, the majority of the violence reported was targeted against the civilian population. The Comité thus decided to allude to the civilian population of El Salvador and any international victims who were not part of armed forces such
as the three U.S. nuns and lay missionary. This decision implies an acknowledgement that although much of the casualties were part of the civilian population, ‘official’ historical narratives would present a war between the Salvadoran army and the leftist insurgency and tend to overlook the civilian lives that were lost during the conflict.

Once the Peace Accords was signed, the Salvadoran army and the FMLN were the main focus in the narratives of the Civil War in El Salvador and internationally. Moodie, an anthropologist who has done extensive work on El Salvador after the war, states that the story of the “successful arrival of peace and democracy after a violent Civil War has been the standard representation of El Salvador.” Immediately after the war, the FMLN became a political party (but only reached the presidency in 2009 with current President Mauricio Funes) and there were many changes in military, judicial, and electoral institutions. It seemed that democracy prevailed yet there was no mention in the public arena of the civilian victims until the establishment of the Truth Commission two years later. For this reason, the groups of civilians in charge of creating the monumento found it necessary to represent only the civilian victims. The Comité purposefully did not include all of the victims of the Civil War, going against the recommendations of the Truth

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20 On December 2, 1980, four churchwomen, Jean Donovan, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, and Dorothy Kazel, were brutally raped and murdered by the death squads of El Salvador for believing to be aiding the FMLN. See Brackley, Dean, et al. Cinco Testigas Solidarias: Dorothy, Jean, Carla, Ita Y Maura. San Salvador, El Salvador: Centro Monseñor Romero, 2010 for a brief history of the lives of each of the churchwomen. Four U.S. marines, who died during an attack at a nightclub in Zona Rosa, are also named in the monumento because they died as civilians


22 Mauricio Funes was a journalist for the FMLN during the Civil War. During his term as president, he has asked for forgiveness for the Civil War and particularly for the massacre at El Mozote that took place on December 11, 1981.
Commission, and in doing so they resisted a type of reconciliation proposed by the State. Knowing that El Salvador has a strong tradition of impunity, they wanted the wall to contribute in constructing a future that does not neglect to hold people accountable. They opposed President Crisianti’s statement that people should forget the war and blame no one in order to move forward as a nation.\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{Comité} declared in their project proposal that the families of victims do not want vengeance but want justice and a dignified place to remember their dead.\textsuperscript{24} These family members refuse to move on, as the State would want, and forget their loved ones. Instead they find it necessary to ask for justice and remember their dead through a wall that dignifies the victims’ memories and honors them collectively.\textsuperscript{25}

At the same time, a plaque located towards the end of the wall that mentions the massacres perpetrated during the war committed by the Armed Forces and Paramilitaries, accuses the State of being responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians. Not only does the wall publicly blame the military apparatus but it also criticizes its reasoning for murder. The \textit{monumento} also accuses the State of trying to hide these injustices by not responding to the recommendation of the Truth Commission as illustrated in the first plaque that states that the wall was only made possible through civilian’s initiative. If the State were to erect a \textit{monumento} that honored the victims it murdered like the wall that would mean the State would hold itself accountable for victims’ death.

\textsuperscript{23} Comité pro-monumento a las víctimas civiles de violaciones a los derechos humanos. \textit{Proyecto Monumento a La Memoria Y La Verdad}. San Salvador: Comisión De Derechos Humanos De El Salvador, 1998. 8.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 8-9.
In addition to ignoring victims of the civilian population, the State also does not pay tribute to the Salvadoran soldiers in *monumentos* that died during the twelve years of the war. However, former guerrilla soldiers have recognized the importance of remembering their dead.\(^{26}\) When the *Comité* was deciding what names should be part of the wall, some guerrilla members asked to place fallen guerrilla soldiers’ names in the wall too. However, as stated earlier, the *Comité* could not add the names of guerrilla soldiers because these soldiers were conscious that their actions involved killing or dying but civilians did not possess the ideology of fighting for justice or dying trying to obtain it.\(^{27}\) Refusing to add the names of these guerrilla soldiers suggest that although they are not accused in the wall as perpetrators, they too should be held accountable and until these two sides acknowledge their accountability, reconciliation cannot be obtained. Although the Salvadoran or guerrilla soldiers have not publicly acknowledged their role as perpetrators the *Comité* has by leaving their names out. Jelín posits that official acknowledgement and wide dissemination of information are important for a country transitioning into democracy. Alongside Neir, she states that by identifying those responsible of violating human rights and showing what they did publicly acknowledges victims’ worth and dignity.\(^{28}\) By not listing the names of these soldiers in the wall the *monumento* implies that they should be socially sanctioned, as they presumably were when they were named in the Truth

\(^{26}\) There were a couple of *monumentos* that I visited during my research trip to El Salvador that were dedicated to guerrilla soldiers. One *monumento* in particular, located in the outskirts of a small town called Las Flores, a town where most former guerrilla soldiers and their families reside, depicted fifteen fallen combatants. Their faces were painted in the *monumento* with their names and the FMLN sign. The inscription says, “The dreams of our martyrs are becoming reality” (my translation).

\(^{27}\) Mejía, Guadalupe. Interview by author. August 9, 2012.

Commission. Victims’ families have taken the initiative to acquire a certain degree of justice in this wall through this social sanction even if it is a non-institutional one.

The Comité’s choice of style for the monumento is key in understanding what kind of memory is being produced there. The wall starts with a general group of victims from 1970-1979. Although the Civil War did not officially begin until 1980, these victims died due to the suppression of peasant movements that led up to the war and therefore are added into the pool of victims of that conflict. Including the ten years before the war began indicates that the event cannot be constricted to the twelve years that the ‘official’ history states it took; instead this category demonstrates that injustices have been present in Salvadoran history for a long time and that it is because of the State’s inadequacy to correct these injustices that the Civil War began. After the names of victims from 1970-1979, the wall is divided into years beginning with victims who fall under the category ‘homicide’ and then those that fall under the category ‘disappeared’. In using these legal terms the Comité exposes the inaction of the State to prosecute these crimes.

Nonetheless, this wall serves as a type of cemetery dedicated to all the civilian men, women, and children who were murdered during more than a decade of terror. Envisioning this site as a cemetery implies recognizing its political function. Frazier explains in her research on funerary practices in Chile after the dictatorship that these practices and rituals can create a space for political protest. People visiting this monumento in El Salvador also create a space for political protest because their presence signals that they have not forgotten the dead, and in doing so they criticize the State’s desire to move forward without justice. For the State, moving forward
would imply leaving memories behind but the absence of a loved one is a constant reminder of the horrors these families experienced during the war. When victims’ families visit this *monumento* to place a flower on their loved ones ‘grave,’ a funerary ritual traditional to many Latin American countries, they are conveying that their nation cannot move forward without taking into account their past. These family members are what Frazier classifies as, “political subjects … defined by loss but not subjugated to it.”

Family members are not controlled by their loss because of their strong desire to find justice for their loved one. The wounds of the absence of their loved ones are still fresh but through this wall victims’ families become active in denouncing the role of the State and other armed sectors.

By choosing to end the *monumento* with a blank wall, signifying that there are many more people unknown to them that are still missing, the *Comité* reminds society that there is still more information that needs to be made public. The inscription in the plaque before the blank one dedicates this space to those civilian victims whose names are unknown. It is a constant reminder that the State oppressed its citizens as specifically declared in the *monumento* itself. The wall denies any type of forgiveness to the State by publicly accusing it of terrorizing its victims during the Civil War and of not providing any type of reparation. Without the complete revelation of information, reconciliation defined by accountability cannot be achieved.

In speaking about the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington D.C., Sturken acknowledges the significance of the distinction of the name and unnamed for the intersection of memory and history. She explains that the politics behind the names,

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that is, who is and who is not named in the memorial wall, will affect the way future generations view the Vietnam Memorial because it only represents one side of the narrative of the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{30} The same can be said about the \textit{Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad} in El Salvador. Once the victims’ immediate families die, there will not be any individual living that personally experienced the loss of a loved one due to the Civil War. However, this does not mean the \textit{monumento} will lose its meaning, instead it may serve as a more pedagogical site and less of a burial site. Future generations will observe the names engraved in the wall as victims of their country’s violent past. They will be able to understand what occurred during those years and why there are thousands of names etched in this monumental wall due to the information held there. Nonetheless, as Jelín states, the experience of a historical event is completely different depending on the person’s age even if they are part of the same collective group.\textsuperscript{31} So, with time, the purpose of this \textit{monumento}, and possibly the park where it is located in, will change. Yet, the \textit{monumento} was erected to preserve the memory of the victims of the Civil War, so it becomes a symbolic inheritance for future generations of Salvadorans. While there may not be immediate victims’ families present to resist State’s reconciliation, the wall in itself can educate others to continue their work.

Unlike El Salvador, that has very few \textit{monumentos} of the Civil War, Chile has more than 190 \textit{monumentos} dedicated to the victims of the dictatorship. Many of these sites in place in Chile today have been erected by civilian initiatives, but some

\textsuperscript{31} Elizabeth Jelín, \textit{Los trabajos de la memoria}, (Madrid: Siglo XXI De España Editores, 2002), 117.
of them have received financial and other support from the government. There is one monumento that was specifically built by the State in 1994 as a response to the recommendation of the Rettig Report – a wall with the names of the victims located in the Cementerio General (the State’s General Cemetery).\textsuperscript{32} In addition to this initiative the State also built a Museum of Memory, which will be discussed further in more detail. Along with monumentos scattered all over Chile, in Santiago there are three former torture centers that were turned into sites of memories – Villa Grimaldi is the most well known site of the three.\textsuperscript{33}

Villa was once a mansion owned by a wealthy family in the outskirts of the city used as a meeting place for Chilean artists and intellectuals that in 1974 was turned into a clandestine torture center by the DINA, the Chilean secret police. Now it is called a Parque por la Paz (Park for Peace) and it is a compilation of many monumentos. Since Villa Grimaldi is a park (that no longer contains the house), the act of remembering that is present here is very different than of the wall in El Salvador. While the monumento in El Salvador is one long architectural project that remembers victims by having their names etched in a wall, Villa Grimaldi unites different forms of commemoration in one park. Collins sees Villa as “a ‘container,’ or

\textsuperscript{32}The work of the Rettig Report allowed the construction of this wall that contains the names of the detained disappeared on the left and the names of the politically executed to the right. Salvador Allende’s name is found in the middle of the wall. To the right of the wall there are niches of the politically executed and to the left there are niches of the detained disappeared

\textsuperscript{33}Londres 38 and Casa Memoria José Domingo Cañas are the other two former torture centers that were converted into sites of memory. Londres 38 was used by the DINA in 1973-1974 to torture and exterminate around two thousand people. Ninety-six people were executed, disappeared, or died because of torture. After the DINA stopped using Londres 38, the building was left abandoned until 2005 when the Londres 38 Corporation began restoring the house and transforming it into an empty site of memory. (Corporación Londres 38. Londres 38: Espacio De Memorias En Construcción. Santiago: Corporación Londres 38. [pamphlets]). Casa Memoria José Domingo Cañas was a torture center beginning in 1974. Hundreds of people were tortured in that house and around fifty-three people disappeared and one female was executed. It was not until 2010 that the Casa Memoria José Domingo Cañas was inaugurated to remember the victims that were tortured in that house during the dictatorship. (<http://josedomingocanas.org/historia/recuperacion-del-sitio>).
physical location, for layer upon layer of discrete commemorative events, rather than a single design that transmits a single story.’’\textsuperscript{34} The park comprises various forms of remembrance represented by a rose garden for women who were victims, a wall naming the victims who were murdered or disappeared there and the year it occurred, several \textit{monumentos} that pay tribute to leftist revolutionary groups, and representations of torture cells, some of which were not demolished by the DINA/CNI to name a few.\textsuperscript{35}

![Figure 1.4: Photo taken of Parque por la Paz: Villa Grimaldi on a winter day. Santiago. Image taken by author.](image)

On a cold winter day a group of students from a prominent university in Chile visited Villa Grimaldi’s park as a requirement for a class on memory and Chile’s dictatorship. For some students, it was the first time they ever visited this site, others


\textsuperscript{35} After 1997 the DINA was renamed the Central Nacional de Informaciones (CNI, National Information Center).
had visited many times, either as children accompanying their parents who visited a *monumento* that held the name of their missing loved one, or later as adults, when they would visit that missing family member themselves. And then there was me, who recently learned about Villa because of studying abroad in Chile for a semester and deciding to take a class on the dictatorship. Along with our professor, our group was paradigmatic of the majority of people that visit Villa Grimaldi—those who visit to pay their respects to a loved one, students of all academic levels, and foreigners. This group of students was very diverse with different levels of understanding of what happened in Villa but there was one thing for certain—we understood the complexities of remembering a traumatic event and the politics behind establishing a narrative that is based on survivor’s memory and the memory of dead victims.\(^3^6\)

Before becoming what it is now, there were many debates surrounding the design of the park. Once the property of Villa Grimaldi was preserved, after the military and later developers who tried to turn this location into modern condominiums and bulldozed most of the existing material proofs that people were tortured in Villa, it was up to almost one hundred former political prisoners who were convened by a human rights group (*distrito 24*) to decide what would be Villa’s fate. Proposals varied but their purpose was one – to remember the victims who were executed or forcefully disappeared. According to Matta, one of the former political prisoners convened, one group wanted to reconstruct it exactly how it was when it was a torture center; every single detail was important to expose. Another group wanted to remove everything in the site and create an aesthetically pleasing park.

\(^3^6\) The following account is from my personal experience and field notes on July 3, 2012.
Through its beauty, the park would represent a kind of poesía (poetry) for those who died there. The last group, whose idea was eventually used, located themselves in between the other two. They wanted to preserve what the dictatorship did not destroy and around those ruins create a beautiful park. These conflicting positions reveal the complexities in turning a former torture center into a site of memory. What is the right way to remember a space that was once private and now made public? Private memories that were only shared amongst the people that were held prisoners and the torturers as well in Villa Grimaldi are now also part of the nation’s collective history in the process of transforming it into a public site. Unfortunately, the question of how to remember the victims of this torture center was overshadowed by what the State would allow to be showcased.

In order to continue with the project of turning Villa into a site of memory, the community that fought for the preservation of the site, the Corporación Parque por la Paz (Peace Park Committee), had to find a balance between representing what Villa Grimaldi once was and what the State would allow to be represented there. This tension between the State and the local community reflects a society that is divided about what it wants to do with the site. Some do not want to let go of the past while others do not want to remember it. The State would rather forget and promote Chile’s image as one that has returned to democracy abroad even though many citizens want to remember what occurred during the dictatorship. Since the Housing and Urban Planning Ministry of Chile was financing Villa Grimaldi’s project, the Corporación had no other choice but to listen and comply, at least superficially with what the State

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38 Ibid.
39 Frazier, Subverted Memories, 105.
wanted. However, as we will see, after many long debates, the Corporación found ways to accuse the State of committing acts of violence against its citizens inside the park without affecting the State’s support in their project.

The first symbolic way of blaming the State is through the park’s ‘introductory’ plaque. It announces that the park in which visitors stand was a place where tortures and disappearances were practiced as part of the State’s policies. It also mentions that “every flower watered by yesterday’s tears was planted with the purpose that what happened in Villa will never happen again in Chile.” The plaque implicates a way of viewing the rest of the park. The message is one of ‘Never Again’; the words torture, disappearances, tears, and State are highlighted here to demonstrate not only the pain of the victims but also the accusatory gesture the park seeks to present. The plaque vividly blames the State for the executions and forced disappearances of the victims while declaring that the pain survivors and victims’ families felt will never be experienced again. With this in mind, one starts their journey into the Villa Grimaldi park.

While we walked through the park, there were remarks on how aesthetically pleasing it was. Some students even asked if it was possible to realistically represent the horrors that occurred in Villa Grimaldi though this park. Lazzara would respond that the park cannot represent the horrors of the victims since it removes any proof that this site was used for torture. Cultural theorist Nelly Richard believes the site is

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40 My translation.
41 For an article on three distinct analyses of Villa Grimaldi see The Poetics and Politics of Memory by Michael J. Lazzara.
too free, obstructed, and silent to recreate the history of the torture center.\textsuperscript{42} Matta, however, believes that the park in itself represents what victims experienced. One survivor recounts that while she was kept in a small claustrophobic cell she experienced a double sensation of horror and beauty. She smelled the urine of other victims, who were kept in small cells surrounding hers, but at the same time was able to smell the roses from a garden nearby.\textsuperscript{43} At first glance, Villa Grimaldi may seem to be a place of oblivion, a place where the atrocities of the dictatorship are hidden inside the beauty of the park. Yet, when visitors immerse themselves completely inside Villa, they will find various commemorative forms that showcase who the victims were and how they suffered. Visitors also understand that the Park for Peace was constructed not only to preserve the memory of the victims of Villa Grimaldi but also to allow a peaceful reflection of their lives and hopefully of a more just Chile. Therefore, as Viola asks, “can the park for peace be seen as a place of ‘reconciled’ memory, or does it fatally become a place of oblivion?”\textsuperscript{44} In other words, can the park be both a place of direct and symbolic representations of victims’ experiences or does it contradict its purpose and cause oblivion instead? Answering this question begs us to look at some of the various commemorative projects located inside Villa Grimaldi.

Past the entrance of the park a number of mosaic tiles that indicate where visitors are standing. For example, walking through what seems like a normal pathway, visitors come across a plaque that states, “Old parking lot. A sector where


\textsuperscript{43} Matta, Pedro Alejandro. Interview by author. June 26, 2012.

prisoners were tortured with vehicles.” This information helps visitors along the way understand the importance of the park’s former spatial history. Once they begin to walk deep into the park’s trail and reach almost the end of the space, they encounter the ‘Wall of Names,’ by far the most representative monumento of the politically executed and detained-disappeared individuals that passed through Villa Grimaldi from 1973-1978. This is the only place in the entire park where the names of all the victims known are present. They are recorded in alphabetical order under the year they were executed or disappeared, just as in the monumento in El Salvador. The wall is a symbolic cemetry for disappeared individuals that have yet to be found. Those who stay a while and examine the wall realize that there is a possibility for a private and contemplative interaction with it. Since the wall is located at the far end of the park, it is positioned in a more isolated location and therefore visitors are mostly surrounded by nature and the names of the disappeared and politically executed (which work as symbolic tombs). Unlike the State-sponsored wall in the General Cemetery in Santiago, where there is a barrier between the wall and visitors, here visitors can walk down the steps and get closer in order to touch the wall and possibly the etched names. The wall is complemented by Villa Grimaldi’s website where there is information available about the victims that are named there including their age, marital status, date of their death or disappearance, militancy, and occupation. Some names include a brief note that states any other information that is known such as who they were with when they were disappeared.45 An important aspect of the wall that historian Mario Aguilar points out to is that it is open which implies that more

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names will continually be added as more information becomes known. The names, however, will not be added to the wall itself, instead they will be added to the website and perhaps other future sites and spaces since the wall is already old and becoming discolored. Although the names will not be added to the original wall in Villa, the possibility of adding more names inside the park is a constant reminder that the State has not fully investigated information about individuals who are still missing nor is it interested in doing so. Gómez-Barris, a sociologist who has done extensive work in post-dictatorship Chile, understands the material absence of the missing as an emphasis to the “legal and emotional incompleteness of political democracy and the democratic transition.” Information on all the disappeared may never be unearthed due to the impunity that still exists in Chile and due to the time that has passed since the dictatorship. Therefore, by erecting a monumento and building a museum that ‘promotes’ reconciliation, which could only be achieved through the revelation of information related to victims, the State falsely proves that it is not hiding anything. The wall in Villa demonstrates otherwise; many of these etched names are proof that the dictatorship has not told the victims’ families where their loved one’s bodies are located.

The wall in Villa is not the only place that challenges the State’s notion of reconciliation – a simple rose garden located in the park does too. This rose garden is dedicated to the thirty-four women detained, six of whom were pregnant, that either were executed or forcefully disappeared. The rose garden is a symbol of their lives

46 Ibid, 84.
47 Presently, there are huge panels exhibited on the midwest corner of the park that illustrate the names of forcefully disappeared politically-executed people in order to clearly see every victims’ name.
48 Macarena Gómez-Barris, Where Memory Dwells, (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), 63.
and their fight. Next to each rose there is a plaque with the name of the women who passed through Villa Grimaldi. Later, more roses were planted and more plaques were laid to represent all of the women who fell victims to the dictatorship in other detention centers. One plaque is left blank standing next to a rose; under the rose there is another plaque with the inscription “homenaje a la compañera desconocida” [tribute to the unknown comrade]. Again, here is where the park reinforces the idea of missing information and criticizes the State from holding back information.

The garden depicts these victims as roses, similar to the case of the thirteen anti-Franco women (las trece rosas) who were executed by a Francoist firing squad just after the end of the Spanish Civil War for being leftist militants. In speaking about the thirteen roses of Spain, Virginia Guarinos, a literary scholar, states that red roses can symbolize love, romance, and passion which would imply a particular representation of women as wives, mothers, and daughters but red roses can also represent spilled blood, and at another level, communism.49 While one interpretation of this rose garden portrays women as innocent victims who were murdered, other interpretations (that may fit in more adequately given the ‘unknown comrade’ plaque) depict women as leftist militants who shed their blood in fighting for the overthrow of the dictatorship. Precisely because these multiple interpretations are possible, Villa Grimaldi explicitly places women as militants and not merely only as victims.

In the beginning of the park, visitors are not made aware that most of the victims and survivors of Villa Grimaldi were militants of various groups that opposed the dictatorship. It is through the language of the unknown comrade plaque and the

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symbolism of the red roses that visitors understand that these women were part of leftist groups. Besides inferring that these women were militants, there is not much more information about them, let alone about any person named in the park. Yet, these women are highlighted from the general group of victims possibly to emphasize a different kind of torture they experienced. Other than being tortured physically and emotionally like men, women also suffered sexual violence. According to many testimonies located in the Valech Report, women constituted approximately thirteen percent of the detained in torture centers and nearly every woman stated that they were sexually violated.\footnote{One of the testimonies found in the Valech Report describes the torture of a twenty-five year old woman. She states: “Por violación de los torturadores quedé embarazada y aborté en la cárcel… Me obligaron a tomar drogas, sufrí violación y acoso sexual con perros, la introducción de ratas vivas por la vagina y todo el cuerpo. Me obligaron a tener relaciones sexuales con mi padre y hermano que estaban detenidos.” [I was raped by my torturers and became pregnant but aborted it… They forced me to take drugs, I suffered sexual harassment and violence by dogs, live rats were introduced inside my vagina and throughout my body. I was forced to have sexual relations with my father and my brother who were also detained.] Valech Report, 293.} Therefore, the rose garden is possibly trying to stress the importance of remembering these women for their fight to overthrow the government and as tribute to women who were sexually tortured.\footnote{Fieldwork observation. July 4, 2012}

Women are not the only victims that are portrayed as militants as opposed to simply victims in Villa. The small monumentos located near the rose garden pay tribute to four leftist groups support that notion too. These monumentos were recently designed and erected, by members of the Popular Unitary Action Movement, Leftist Revolutionary Movement, Socialist, and Communist party and they vary in design but are similar in size. Two of them have the names of their dead or missing members etched either in glass or in a copper plaque while the other two represent collectively what the political group stands for. The Communist party’s monumento, for example,
is an artistic stone that includes the symbol of communism in red. On the other hand, the Socialist party’s monumento consist of multiple glass plaques with the names of their victims listed one behind the other. These monumentos, while preserving the memories of the militants who gave their lives for a cause they believed was just, also are representative of the kinds of victims that passed through Villa Grimaldi. In their absence, it was unclear why the victims were tortured, executed, or disappeared, so once these monumentos were added, it classified victims as politically active individuals that opposed the dictatorship. Visitors understand that the victims of Villa Grimaldi were persecuted because they were militants and they stood up against the dictatorship. The Socialist and Communist monumentos that were built by living members of those groups also affirm the presence of these parties in Chile. It announces that these dead militants did not die in vain, their legacy continues living because although Pinochet tried to eliminate these parties, they are still active in Chilean society. The monumentos label victims as militants and recall the problem that many Chileans believed when someone was executed or disappeared – “por algo será” (there was a reason). However, by doing so, the monumentos are proposing a specific type of victim – a politically active militant that opposed a fascist dictatorship. The State systematically persecuted these militants to suppress their fight and silence their voices because those people had a social vision that disagreed with the State’s. Therefore, these monumentos proves that these militants were targeted because of their political affiliation.

Although victims are present through different forms of representation in Villa, their torturers are absent from the park but their names, in spite of not being in
the Truth Commissions, are present in the park’s website. The webpage states the torturers’ name, their rank, and some even state what they are doing in present day, which may allude to the reality of torture in Villa, which is not prominent in the park. It seems that because of the lack of representation of torture in the site, Villa Grimaldi wants to step away from showcasing the horrors of the site and focus more on the concept conveyed by the name of the park – park for peace. The open space of the park and the points of reflection, such as the wall and the rose garden, allow visitors to contemplate what occurred in Villa without being haunted by images of torture. Visitors can quietly imagine or remember the victims’ average life. Did these individuals have children? Did they like to eat empanadas while singing the national anthem during the festivities of Chile’s independence day? By being in touch with nature visitors can possibly behold the victim as a human and not just a victim.

In her research on Villa Grimaldi, Gómez-Barris states that the narrative of peace is present in Villa through close interaction with the wall, the plants, and flowers that surround Villa, among other things, but it is a peace defined in terms of solace rather than of national beginning.\textsuperscript{52} This peace reminds visitors of the dead and of the violence that Chilean society experienced while providing comfort by reminding them that the fight for justice continues. As seen in the different forms of commemoration in Villa, the park does not explicitly promote national belonging or State-sponsored reconciliation for that matter. Its purpose is to “work as a gathering place to remember individual and collective loss…”\textsuperscript{53} Through the Wall of Names, the rose garden, and the mosaic plaques located in all parts of the park, Villa

\textsuperscript{52} Gómez-Barris, \textit{Where Memory Dwells}, 67.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 68.
acknowledges that the State committed acts of violence against the militants while, as stated earlier, denying the State’s desire to find closure. It is through nature, the absence of explicit representation of torture, and the roses “watered with yesterday’s tears” that peace is conveyed in Villa; visitors are free from violence of the dictatorship in this park and are allowed to mourn what they lost during that period. The various memories surrounding Villa reveal themselves through the quiet and peaceful park where victims’ families can possibly find comfort through mourning their loss. The park can be used more to reflect on the lives of the victims and find peace in knowing that these victims fought for a just Chile.

Yet, this peace is complicated by the presence of two physical markers of torture in Villa – the tower and the ‘Monumento Rieles’. Although most of Villa Grimaldi has been remodeled into a park, the tower, that supplied water to the original property for irrigation before it was a torture center, is still in place. It was reconstructed to preserve a ruin that was not completely demolished by the DINA where victims underwent torture. Very few people survived torture that took place in the tower but those who did visibly remember what they faced, like the women who experienced a double sensation of suffering and beauty while detained. Today, visitors can enter the tower and find drawings in the first floor drawn by survivors of torture depicting the abuse they experienced. Since the only representations of torture in the tower are those drawings, they are useful in allowing visitors to imagine what victims experienced. There are three levels in the tower but visitors are only allowed

54 Recently, Villa Grimaldi inaugurated their Archivo Oral that holds hundreds of hours of interviews of victims speaking about their torture in Villa Grimaldi. For information on the process of collecting testimonies for Villa see Fernández H., Claudia, et al. Archivo y memoria. La experiencia del archivo oral de Villa Grimaldi. Santiago, Chile: Corporación Parque Por La Paz Villa Grimaldi, 2012.
to visit two levels due to safety issues. Visitors are able to enter a tiny claustrophobic receptacle on the second floor where victims were held. Although it is small, up to four prisoners were held there either sitting or standing. Permitting visitors to enter this cell allows them to minimally experience the claustrophobic feeling the victims felt. Peace is absent in the tower because it reminds visitors of the horrors these victims underwent. This space complicates a possibility to mourn and accept the death of hundreds of people because it causes one to remember the torture victims experienced, and in doing so, possibly produces resentment towards the State rather than comfort.

Figure 1.5. The tower. Santiago. Image taken by author
In addition to the tower, a massive cube located at the beginning of the park called “Monumento Rieles” also complicates the narrative of peace in Villa. Inside, there are remains of railroad tracks that were used to tie prisoners up so that when they were thrown into the sea their drowned bodies would not float up to the surface. It was a way to eliminate any evidence that the dictatorship forcefully made people disappear.\footnote{This information was known thanks to the investigation of Judge Juan Guzmán Tapia who later handed over the rails to Villa and in 2007 the monumento was inaugurated. <villagrimaldi.cl>} Displaying this evidence in Villa again accuses the State of abusing its citizens. The State cannot deny, as many government officials and supporters of Pinochet tried to for many years, that people were not forcefully disappeared or executed; there is concrete evidence that people were murdered by the hands of secret police enforced by Pinochet.\footnote{This information however, can only be accessed in the park by a tourist guide.} By examining the rails, visitors may picture victims tied to them and being thrown into the sea. The rails, along with allowing visitors to directly interact with spaces where victims experienced suffering in the tower, complicate the narrative of peace in terms of solace in that it enables visitors to imagine bodies being tortured and overlook, as the State has, the fact that these individuals were detained because they were fighting for a just Chile. There is no comfort in imagining people being tortured and although these sites only compose a fraction of Villa Grimaldi, they are powerful reminders that torture and death enacted by the State were part of a victim’s everyday life.

Earlier I asked Viola’s question of whether Villa can be seen as a place of ‘reconciled’ memory or whether it becomes a place of oblivion. Visitors including survivors, victims’ families, and common people visit Villa Grimaldi for different reasons. The park may not directly represent the horrors of torture and may be too
‘beautiful,’ as Lazzara calls it, but it represents the victims as militants who fought for justice. The peace found in this park may be that of obtaining what these militants fought for—the end of the dictatorship. However, the park refuses to fall into the type of reconciliation the State has asked for because it shows that perpetrators are still left untouched and information about the disappeared is still unknown. Nonetheless, since this park represents both direct and symbolic representation of victims’ experiences, both remembrance and oblivion are present. As Mario Benedetti, an Uruguayan poet that has been quoted in Villa Grimaldi says, “Oblivion is full of memories.” What is forgotten in Villa, like many material proofs of torture that were demolished by the DINA/CNI, is not forgotten in the memories of the survivors. Through these memories, represented in other forms of commemoration in the park and through Benedetti’s phrase located in the park, the Parque Por la Paz actively promotes remembering the history of the former torture center, Villa Grimaldi.

As it is impossible to construct a single memory about a violent event or experience in a monumento that seeks to represent the lives of thousands of people that were murdered or forcefully disappeared, as in the Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad and Villa Grimaldi Parque por la Paz, it is also implausible to formulate a sole memory when people seek to represent the legacy of one person or a smaller group of people. Such is the case with Monseñor Romero’s crypt, located in the Salvadoran Cathedral, and the hall dedicated to the four assassinated U.S. churchwomen, six murdered Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter located at the Central American University (UCA) in the capital. While we will only

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57 My translation.
focus on Monseñor Romero’s crypt for the purposes of this thesis, it is nonetheless significant to note that these people are also important post-mortem figures during and after the Civil War because they have been remembered not as victims of the Civil War but as martyrs. By looking at Monseñor Romero’s crypt, and more importantly the image constructed by political and social sectors, we will examine how memories of him have been used to support competing narratives of what he represents.

Monseñor Romero was the archbishop of San Salvador from 1977-1980 that publicly spoke up against the war in his homilies and even begged soldiers to end the violence. In what is known as the most important homily that Monseñor Romero gave, he proclaimed the following to Salvadoran soldiers from the pulpit: “I implore you, I beg you, in God’s name I order you: Stop the repression!” A week later, on March 24, 1980, he was assassinated by the death squads while he was preaching in a hospital chapel where he lived. He spoke up against the injustices in El Salvador and preached liberation theology, the doctrine that his friend, Priest Rutilio Grande, was

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58 On November 16, 1989 six Jesuit priest from the UCA—Ignacio Ellacúria, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Juan Ramón Moreno, Joaquín López y López, and Amando López – their housekeeper, Elba Ramos, and her daughter, Celina Ramos, were brutally murdered by Atlacatl Battalion. The memories of these priests and churchwomen, as we will see in Monseñor Romero’s image, have been altered to fit in a specific classification of victims—one that was active in fighting injustices. The churchwomen who were murdered had no such ties to any political side and were just in El Salvador to help the poor and people in need. However, once they were murdered the lives of these women represented much more than charity work. They are now martyrs for helping the poor in El Salvador even though their lives were in constant danger just for being part of the Catholic Church. The Jesuit priests were also portrayed as political actors that fought for change in the government although the only priest doing such a thing was Father Ignacio Ellacúria. For information about the Jesuit priests read Whitfield, Teresa. Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacúria and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

assassinated for teaching, and for that reason was also assassinated in front of his people.\textsuperscript{60}

After his death, hundreds of thousands of people went to his funeral, where at least forty people died and hundreds more were injured when bombs were thrown and shootings took place in front of the Cathedral. It is unclear who was shooting but some people claim that the extreme right government’s security forces began the mayhem.\textsuperscript{61} While the massacre was occurring, Church officials and some people who were devoted followers of Monseñor Romero placed his grave inside the Salvadoran Cathedral. At first, he was buried inside a simple tomb there but in the twenty-fifth anniversary of his assassination, a bronze crypt depicting Monseñor Romero as a man who “sleeps the sleep of the just” was unveiled.\textsuperscript{62} It is an elaborate work of art made by the Italian sculptor and engineer Paolo Borghi that portrays Monseñor Romero’s body covered in a garment that the four evangelists hold on each corner. A red circular object found over his heart pinpoints exactly where he was shot. His body is positioned as if he was sleeping and being surrounded by the four evangelists who surprisingly are depicted as females. Choosing to represent the evangelists as women and not as the men of the Bible depicts his role as the priest who defended both the poor and marginalized women and children of El Salvador. Visitors always surround Monseñor Romero’s crypt, whether it is one devoted Catholic praying to him or

\textsuperscript{60} Liberation theology explains Jesus’ teachings in terms of liberation from political, economic and social conditions. According to Daniel Levine, liberation theology writers are concerned with historical change and they insist on the necessity to promote justice. For more information about liberation theology’s impact in Latin America see Levine’s article "Assessing the Impacts of Liberation Theology in Latin America." \textit{The Review of Politics} 50.02 (1988): 241-63.


hundreds of people paying their respects during the anniversary of his death or on his birthday.\textsuperscript{63} They either come to ask him for an intercession, to thank him for a fulfilled miracle, or simply to visit the crypt of an important figure in El Salvador. Usually there are flowers and gifts that visitors leave on or next to his crypt that brighten up the area.

Unlike the \textit{Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad} and Villa Grimaldi, Monseñor Romero’s crypt does not have an introductory plaque or any indication as to who is responsible for implementing this \textit{monumento} in the Cathedral, or one that describes his death. This absence of information may confuse some visitors but many people who visit the crypt have previous information about who Monseñor Romero was. What complicates this crypt is the lack of information found about its origination. Information about Monseñor Romero’s grave is usually found on

\textsuperscript{63} During the anniversary of his assassination or his birthday, visitors have the choice to join in a pilgrimage from the Cathedral to his hometown as a way to commemorate his life.
personal blogs or told orally, so its legitimacy as an official representation of
Monseñor Romero is uncertain. Even in the Catholic Church, the crypt’s relationship
to the Cathedral’s space, the ‘official’ and most symbolic space of the Church, is
complex. The crypt was moved multiple times from the main floor of the Cathedral to
the basement. Some Catholic officials objected placing it in an open space like the
main entrance of the Cathedral due to oppositions within the hierarchy of the Church.
Since Monseñor Romero preached about liberation theology, which many higher
Church officials disagreed with, it caused conflicts within the Church. However, there
were many people who fought within the Catholic Church in El Salvador for the crypt
to be placed in a central location, which eventually meant being placed in the far right
corner of the basement in front of the graves of the other archbishops of El
Salvador. The State is absent in the short history of what we know of the crypt.
Nonetheless, as seen with President Obama’s visit in 2011, the State has accepted this
crypt as a national symbol of a priest who was murdered fighting for human rights.

In his visit to Latin America, which included stopping by Brazil, Chile, and El
Salvador, President Obama made an unscheduled visit to Monseñor Romero’s crypt.
Guided by the present archbishop of San Salvador to an open dim basement where
archbishops and priests are buried, President Obama lit a candle in honor of
Monseñor Romero. Salvadoran President, Mauricio Funes, then presented President

64 In the interviews I conducted during my visits to Monseñor Romero’s crypt and in personal blogs
from devoted followers of Monseñor Romero, various people mention that the crypt has been moved
three times. At first it was in the first floor of the Cathedral but was later moved to the Cathedral’s
basement. In the basement the crypt was moved twice until it was finally situated where it is now. The
politics within the Church of situting his crypt in a central location in the Cathedral is a long-standing
battle with who Monseñor Romero stood for during his life. During my fieldwork, I was told that some
Catholic officials were against Romero’s position in the Church as a priest who openly spoke up
against the war. These high-ranking Catholic officials sided with the military government and though
they did not participate in explicitly collaborating with the State, they did ignore the violence their
priests experienced.
Obama with a replica of a mural of Monseñor Romero that is located in El Salvador’s international airport. President Obama’s visit to Monseñor Romero’s crypt caused clashing reactions from the Salvadoran society. Some Salvadorans, especially State representatives, were pleased that Obama visited Romero’s crypt. For many, his visit was a symbolic apology for U.S. intervention during the Civil War, something that he refused to do in Chile. Other Salvadorans, those who were protesting against his visit outside of the Cathedral, were appalled. What attributed more to the dismay were the military men that surrounded the Church to protect President Obama from them, a vivid reminder of the massacre that occurred during Monseñor Romero’s funeral when military men shot at the civilian population. These protestors believed it was a dishonor to have the man representing the ‘empire’ that sponsored the Civil War and trained Monseñor Romero’s assassin, Roberto D’Aubuisson, in the School of the Americas, step foot next to Romero’s crypt. For President Obama, visiting the crypt was a way to “pay [his] respects to Archbishop Romero, who remains an inspiration to people all around the world.” His remark supported the State’s vision of a nation that is enjoying the ‘fruits of democracy’ after decades of war that caused casualties such as this archbishop’s death. However, as Salvadoran citizens

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65 When a reporter asked President Obama to comment on U.S. involvement during the dictatorship in Chile, he stated that it is important to know one’s history but not be trapped by it. Laura Meckler, and Matt Moffett. "Obama Praises Chilean Democracy." *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2011. (accessed January 19, 2013).


67 During President Obama’s visit, Salvadoran President Funes stated that El Salvador, as well as the rest of Latin America, are living in peace and are enjoying the fruits of the struggle for human rights and the strengthening of their democracies.

protesting President Obama’s visit have shown, his visit was an insult to Monseñor Romero’s memory since he fought for human rights and President Obama represents the country that supported human rights violations during the war. These different opinions are representative of the contested identity different sectors of society have placed on Monseñor Romero and have revealed the memory struggles in place through his image.

Jo-Marie Burt states that memory can be deployed by different social and political actors’ specific political ends. Societies that have endured years of internal conflict and State oppression compete for an interpretation of the past. Monseñor Romero is one of those figures that move within the political spectrum to represent different social and political projects related to the past. He has been appropriated as a symbol of popular Catholic devotion but, most importantly, he has simultaneously embodied a martyr and a revolutionary leader. Each monumento, mural, and discourse about Monseñor Romero expresses the vastly different memories of the same person. Through these different symbolic representations, the political significance of the memories of Monseñor Romero has been unveiled.

The different construction of Monseñor Romero’s persona becomes complex when the Salvadoran State and the FMLN appropriate his memory to support present-day political projects and ideas. While most Catholics in El Salvador directly remember or have heard stories of him as a hero and a martyr, the State has recently seized this image to promote tourism. In October of 2012, President Mauricio Funes

\[\text{accessed January 19, 2013.}\]

inaugurated the new tourist route called ‘Monsignor Romero City Tour’ that takes tourists to the UCA, where they visit the Romero Center and Museum of Martyrs, where some of his personal belongings are showcased, the Cathedral of San Salvador, where his crypt is located, the Museum of Word and Image (MUPI), where there is an exhibition on photographs taken by Monseñor Romero, and finally to the Romero Historical Center located at the Divine Providence Hospital, where he was assassinated. President Funes expressed that with this new tour route El Salvador would be honoring the memory of Monseñor Romero, his legacy, and even his martyrdom. The tour route would also be expanding religious tourism that has become popular in El Salvador. The official tourism website of El Salvador encourages tourists to take the Monseñor Romero City Tour with the following statement: “The City Tour will allow you to feel and experience the life and work of Mgr. Romero, a man of faith who broadcast to the world a message of hope, which lives on in the hearts of the Salvadoran people and thousands of followers of his word in the world.”

According to Duarte, the minister of tourism, Monseñor Romero deserves a space in El Salvador’s tourism industry because he represents a Latin American icon that has left footprints all over the world. As a symbolic figure, Monseñor Romero can expand international tourism and by doing so, the State, through tourism, would also be expanding El Salvador’s economy. As Britton states and Fletcher agrees,
tourism is a “major internationalized component of Western capitalist economies.” With the rise of tourism in Latin America, especially noting that a decade ago, El Salvador was among the five Latin American countries that had the highest international tourist receipts per capita expanding the industry and creating tourist routes that would attract people are considered central to the development of El Salvador’s economy. By this token, it seems that Monseñor Romero is being used as a symbol to promote a capitalist endeavor but the State covers it up by claiming a narrative of just honoring his martyrdom. Not only does the government ‘praise’ his martyrdom, it also represents Monseñor Romero as a man of faith, thus raising his status as an international spiritual leader for many who choose to take the tour. His memory here has been extended for the value of a capitalistic goal, which Monseñor Romero opposed because he believed in social equality for all Salvadoran citizens.

Probably the most controversial representation of Monseñor Romero would be as a revolutionary leader. The FMLN and its sympathizers, many of whom are now working in the State, have elevated the memory of this priest to symbolize nonconformity and social justice. He is placed in many artistic representations and FMLN discourses next to historical figures such as Feliciano Ama, Farabundo Martí.

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75 In the joint conference with President Obama, Funes referred to Monseñor Romero as an international leader whose message became validated through President Obama’s visit. "Remarks by President Obama and President Funes of El Salvador in Joint Press Conference."
and even Che Guevara. However, he never called upon the Salvadoran people to fight nor was he a part of any plan of attack; what Monseñor Romero asked was for the violence to cease. Yet, he is compared to these communist figures involved in armed confrontation for defending the poor and representing the people of El Salvador. In 2012, the government renamed a boulevard after Monseñor Romero and the FMLN took this act as a sign to commemorate him for his fight for justice during the Civil War. The government’s intentions were similar, but since Monseñor Romero publicly asked the Salvadoran Army, and not the FMLN, to stop killing its brothers, the FMLN sees Monseñor Romero as an FMLN sympathizer and thus a revolutionary leader.

President Funes’ complicated relationship in representing both the FMLN and the State offers an important revelation of how the image of Monseñor Romero changes depending on the circumstances. When Funes was elected president, he was asked where the effects of the transition in power would be felt most immediately in the government. He responded that policy making would be the most affected since he wants a government “like the one envisioned by Mons. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who in his prophetic message said that the church should have a preferential option


for the poor.” In other words, the government would not only serve the elite but also the poor Salvadoran people. As an FMLN representative, Funes represents Monseñor Romero as a man of the poor, similar to how other communist figures like Fidel Castro and Farabundo Martí are represented. However, with more years in power, Funes has appropriated, at least in the public sphere, the image of Monseñor Romero to further promote his market-driven political agenda. Nonetheless, the FMLN continues to use Monseñor Romero as a spokesperson for the people. They argue that the FMLN fought to ‘save’ the people from injustices and, because Monseñor Romero spoke for the people, he became one of them. In this context, the FMLN remembers Monseñor Romero as a ‘revolutionary savior’ to further the FMLN’s fight against injustices and possibly obtain a seat in the government as Funes has done.

Nevertheless, an obsession with the figure of Monseñor Romero surpasses political actors. In a heavily Catholic country, the most popular representation of Monseñor Romero in El Salvador would be that of a priest who stood up for the poor. His memory has been preserved by his devoted followers to represent a man of faith. Romero has been represented in various songs, and poetry that have all idealized his image as a humble priest who brought hope to his people. Although he is not a saint, Catholics all around the world ask Monseñor Romero to intercede for them and

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79 In an interview three weeks before he was assassinated Monseñor Romero stated, “If I am killed, I will rise in the Salvadoran people.” Phrases like these allowed the FMLN to view him as a revolutionary leader. Óscar A Romero, and Jon Sobrino. Monseñor Romero. (Madrid: Iepala, 1989). 211.
believe that he has made miracles happen.\textsuperscript{80} Just like the individuals who visit the *Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad*, the visitors of Monseñor Romero’s crypt remind the Salvadoran society that many innocent people died during the Civil War.

In portraying Monseñor Romero as an innocent priest, his devoted followers are dismissing the FMLN’s claim that he was a revolutionary leader. They also oppose the State’s appropriation of Monseñor Romero’s image to further their capitalistic projects. Instead, his devoted followers define him as a man of God who defended the poor. They use his crypt as a space to have conferences that speak about the works of this priest in the Church. Before Monseñor Romero was assassinated he stated that if he died he would resurrect in the Salvadoran people; that is why he is sanctified and is believed to still live amongst his people. His followers have also fought to canonize Monseñor Romero as a saint. Yet, he is already considered a saint for them and through their constant visitation to the crypt, they pay tribute to his life as the ‘voice of the voiceless.’ Although the canonization has to be approved by the institution of the Church and they have to comply with the policies of canonization, by referring to Monseñor Romero as a saint in their discussion of him, these devoted followers are not allowing anyone but themselves to define how Monseñor Romero is represented.

The efforts to remember Monseñor Romero as a man of faith who lived among the poor challenge the memories of him narrated by the FMLN as a revolutionary leader and by the State as a national symbolic figure to further capitalistic development. Jelín states that multiple social and political actors craft

\textsuperscript{80} Beside the crypt of Monseñor Romero visitors can pray the prayer of Romero’s intercession. On certain days, Salvadoreans who personally knew Monseñor Romero hand out small cards that promote sending testimonies people might have about fulfilled miracles through the intercessions of Monseñor Romero to the Archbishop of San Salvador. This is used in order to push for the canonization of Monseñor Romero.
narratives of the past that confront each other to convey their projects and political expectations for the future. The FMLN and the State are doing exactly that: both sectors have devised narratives of Monseñor Romero that fit their cause to create an image of the international spiritual leader who is a martyr, a revolutionary leader, and a priest who brings hope, that would support their objectives.

Jelín also hypothesizes that without an official recognition of past State violence by the State conflicting ‘truths’ will emerge from all parts of society. She posits that without a translation or transfer of memory to institutional justice, there will be continuing disputes about who can promote or demand something and about who can speak and in whose name. In other words, without the State’s intervention there will never be a consensus of the truth. But is it possible to agree on a single ‘truth’ when different sectors of society interpret the ‘truth’ differently from others? It is more productive to have these different ‘truths’ represented in various manners, from discourses to monumentos, in order for various memories to arise and not be suppressed. These different ‘truths’ also will not allow for a quick reconciliation that the State desires because that would imply agreeing with one version of the ‘truth’ and moving on. Instead, it allows for various sectors of society to dispute whose ‘truth’ is legitimate and, in doing so, acknowledges the presence of other ‘truths.’

As seen with the three monumentos examined in this chapter, memory is subjective and inherently distorted. Many factors influence the way people remember, so representations of these memories are also affected by social factors. The State may or may not have had a crucial role in the creation of the monumentos in Chile.

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82 Ibid., 61-62.
and El Salvador but nevertheless, the State has contributed and perhaps will continue contributing to the manner in which these monumentos take form. El Salvador’s Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad purposefully left out Salvadoran and guerrilla victims in order to explicitly insert civilian victims into the Civil War history, where they are usually overlooked in the State’s ‘official’ history. Villa Grimaldi in Chile had to compromise its vision for the site in order to receive recognition from the State. Although Villa produces its own narratives, it is nonetheless influenced by the State. However, the park discovered different ways to resist the State’s narrative and actively remember the victims of Villa Grimaldi. And lastly, Monseñor Romero’s crypt exemplifies how different sectors of society can appropriate a memory of someone in order to promote its political project. This all reveals the tension between an ‘official’ memory and ‘truths’ defined by the State and the production of local memories and ‘truth.’ Yet, as seen in these three sites of memory analyzed, citizen narratives and memories have prevailed over the State’s in the production of collective memory.
¿A quién le pertenece este museo?: Tensions Between State and Citizen Narratives in the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Chile and the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen in El Salvador

The end of the dictatorship in Chile and the Civil War in El Salvador allowed their citizens to examine the state of their country and of themselves after decades of violence and injustices. In examining their condition, questions arose about what would become of the future of their nation. What can be done for a nation to heal from violence committed against its citizens? How would the victims of the dictatorship and the Civil War be remembered in the public arena? Who would be in charge of promoting this remembrance? Through the erection of the monumentos that was discussed previously, local communities immediately began to address the necessity to remember victims of the aforementioned conflicts. However, the State did not address the question of remembrance until a decade or two later in Chile and El Salvador. In addition to the wall in the General Cemetery in Santiago, the Chilean State also decided to construct a museum that would contain information about the dictatorship in order to promote a remembrance of that period and come to terms with the past. In El Salvador, it was not until President Funes’ speech at the eighteenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords in 2010 that the State addressed the importance of remembering the victims of the Civil War. However, citizens immediately sought to remember that period by contextualizing El Salvador’s broader history in a museum that was constructed after the end of the war. In examining both
of these museums, this chapter analyzes the different pedagogical processes of remembering a violent period in Chile and El Salvador.

In 2010, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights (MMDH) opened its doors to the public in Santiago welcoming visitors with the words of President Michelle Bachelet at the entrance: “We cannot change our past, we can only learn from the lived. This is our responsibility and our challenge.” Bachelet, who inaugurated the museum, acknowledged that seventeen years of dictatorship in her country should not be forgotten and that nations can only move forward when the present negotiates with that past. This theme of remembrance is alluded to by various other museums in Latin America that seek to commemorate the victims of that period.

MMDH can be considered a memorial museum for its mission to “commemorate the victims of the dictatorship and their families and stimulate thinking and discussion on the importance of democracy and tolerance so these acts would never again be repeated.” In his study of memorial museums, Paul Williams states that grouping memorial and museum together “suggests that there is an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanation to commemorative acts.” Yet because memorial museums all over the world are politicized by attempting to be objective in a subjective setting, Williams argues that it is difficult to conceptualize a coexistence of a critical interpretation and a “reverent,” or worthy remembrance for the victims. If memorial museums strive to narrate an event both historically and

1 <www.museodelamemoria.cl>.
3 Casa de la Memoria is a functioning organization composed of four human rights groups: Fundación
morally like MMDH does, and in the process commemorate the event or its victims, then what is important is how they undertake representing it. In other words, since the museum is both a pedagogical institution and a memorial, it has to justify why it is representing a specific historical narrative. This complex relationship of commemorating and justifying that commemoration becomes even more complicated when the State participates in the creation of such museums. The role of the State in museums like the one in Chile and the Museum of Word and Image (MUPI) in El Salvador, which are both directly or indirectly guided by a narrative defined by the State, are precise examples of the uneasy coexistences of historical narration, commemorative acts, and the justification of both.

In Chile’s case, MMDH was a bicentennial project (2010), commemorating the two hundred years of independence. The museum meant to serve two purposes: to invite visitors to reflect pedagogically on human rights violations during the dictatorship and to further develop the public image of this site as a cultural center of western Santiago, an area of the city that promotes arts and science and technology through various institutions. From the onset, the State had a strong presence in the museum. The very fact that President Bachelet’s words are found in the entrance reflects that presence, and thus complicates the way groups of victims identify or fail to identify with in this site of memory.

MMDH was an idea conceived in 2006, but before President Bachelet gave her approval for the museum, Casa de la Memoria (House of Memory), a consortium of human right groups founded in 2003, wanted to create a museum of memory where
the consortium would run the project with the support of the government.\(^3\) This project aspired to “secure the future of Chile’s valuable and extensive civil society human rights archives, at risk from [not receiving financial funding from the government] and uncertain future of at least some of the country’s historic human rights NGOs.”\(^4\) As Hite and Collins have shown, these human rights groups were astounded when Bachelet announced the creation of a museum with similar objectives.\(^5\) The State made it clear to them that their role would be limited to handing over their records for the museum’s collection and excluded them from being its directory.\(^6\) The human rights groups were left out of the dialogue about what the objectives of MMDH would be. Thus, what was once a civil society project suddenly became an official State project.

Since the State actively participates in the museum, the State, in part, then controls what is and what is not to be shown in MMDH. Thus MMDH’s narrative is perceived by victims’ families as representing what the State wants to show and causes tension between ‘official’ history and collective memories. Furthermore, MMDH does not have any direct link with human rights organizations that demand

\(^3\) Casa de la Memoria is a functioning organization composed of four human rights groups: Fundación de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas, la Fundación de Protección de la Infancia Dañada por los Estados de Emergencia, Teleanálisis, y la Corporación de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo. Casa de la Memoria wishes to create an open space where people can share their own records in order to contribute to truth and justice. <casadelamemoria.org>.


\(^5\) Ibid, 399-400.

\(^6\) The directory, the department that is in charge of defining the objectives of the museum, is composed of fifteen people, six representing institutions such as Villa Grimaldi and the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, that was an organization created by Santiago’s Archbishop, whose mission was to lend legal and social assistance to victims of human rights violations during the dictatorship. Now the Vicaría de la Solidaridad is an archival resource. "Fundacion Vicaría De La Solidaridad." Fundacion Vicaría De La Solidaridad. 25 Nov. 2012. <http://www.vicariadelasolidaridad.cl/index1.html>.
justice and reparation for the victims of the dictatorship which limits the involvement of victims and their families in defining the purpose of the museum.

To this day, human rights groups and associations of victims’ families have very little involvement in the museum’s policies. Part of the mission of MMDH, as stated in their website, is to offer moral reparation to the victims and their families as seen in many activities that the museum participates in. The question that arises out of this tension between State and citizens’ participation in the museum is how can MMDH perform such reparations when human rights groups and associations of victims’ families have only a minimal role in its construction and present work?

While representatives of NGOs or associations of victims’ families are part of MMDH’s alliance that works together to promote respect for human rights and collaborate with other State agencies, universities, and other communication mediums, none of these institutions are represented in the museum’s directory.

Ricardo Brodsky, director of MMDH declared that associations of victims’ families are not part of the directory of the museum because it does not want to appear to be a museum just for victims, but rather for all of Chilean society. Yet families of victims are part of society. The State should not have an active role in the museum’s directory if the associations of victims’ families cannot have one. By restricting the direct participation of these associations in the creation and function of the museum that showcases the suffering of their loved ones, the museum denies them exactly what

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7 There are three prominent association of victims’ families in Chile, they are: Agrupaciones de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Agrupaciones de Familiares de Presos Politicos, and Agrupaciones de Familiares de Ejecutados Politicos.

8 During one of my visits I came across a pamphlet that encouraged people who have been sexually violated during the dictatorship to give their testimony to the Valech Report that has reemerged in 2012 to collect testimonies of sexual violence. By providing this information in the museum, MMDH tries to help facilitate reparations for those who were sexually tortured during the dictatorship.

they were denied during the dictatorship years—a space to report their side of the story. However, the decision of the museum’s founders can also offer a path of least resistance, as Hite and Collins suggest. In other words, by excluding the direct role of the victims’ families associations, the museum is also excluding perpetrators. If victims’ families have the right to state what should and should not be in the museum what stops perpetrators from telling their side of the story? This tense and complicated relationship between the State and civil society problematizes further the memories being produced in MMDH.

According to Nelly Richard, after the museum was founded, human rights organizations expressed that they were against the museum’s universal version of an official memory, one that promotes a political-institutional script of reconciliation. Promoting reconciliation, Richard argues, can debilitate the demand for truth and justice in the historical commemoration of September 11, 1973. Human rights organizations and associations of victims’ families have made clear that they do not want to forgive and forget; they want to remember. As Frazier argues, those who actively fought the military government do not want Chilean society to move on and find reconciliation in monumentos, but rather they want society to remember the past and continue working for justice. These actors are afraid that those victims who were murdered and disappeared will be forgotten once ‘official’ monumentos (or museums) are built without any connection to finding justice and accountability. For

10 Hite and Collins, 399.
11 Nelly Richard, Crítica de la memoria (1990-2010), (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2010), 238.
these associations and human rights groups, MMDH promotes reconciliation without holding anyone accountable and thus devalues human rights groups and victims’ families associations’ continuous demand for justice and accountability.\textsuperscript{13}

Before the museum opened it doors to the public many people were skeptical about what it would exhibit, since it was a State initiative. Margarita Iglesias, a professor at the University of Chile, questioned what version of history would be shown in this museum: "[Will] the official [State] version of victims as anarchists and terrorists [be shown] or that of the people who were crushed for simply exercising their political rights?"\textsuperscript{14} Will the museum identify the military and police as tormentors? Iglesias worried that MMDH would leave these questions out for fear of the conflicts that their inclusion could cause with the military. She was right.

It is inherently troubling to know that a State that committed crimes against its citizens is now instrumental in showcasing that history in MMDH. Although President Bachelet, who was detained and tortured in the center Villa Grimaldi with her mother, inaugurated the museum, this does not excuse the fact that she represented the government that tortured and murdered thousands of people.\textsuperscript{15} Her contested role as a representative of the State that four decades ago repressed her complicates this museum even more. During the inauguration of MMDH, while President Bachelet was giving her speech, two female activists interrupted her. One of

\textsuperscript{13} According to the 2012 the Diego Portales University Report on Human Rights in Chile, 799 military agents have been charged with human rights violations during the dictatorship, seventy-two of those that are or have once been incarcerated. \textit{Informe Anual Sobre Derechos Humanos En Chile}. Santiago, Chile: Universidad Diego Portales, Facultad de Derecho, 2012.


them denounced Bachelet’s role in promoting justice when her brother, who was a Mapuche activist, was murdered under her government. President Bachelet asked the women to step down and show respect for the families of the victims of the dictatorship. The women continued protesting yelling that Chile violates human rights until they were taken away from the ceremony and later detained by police officers. This manifestation reveals a ‘double discourse’ that exists in the Chilean government because while the government is inaugurating a museum that implements social justice in Chile by educating people to respect human rights it is also repressing and punishing people who are defending their rights for their ancestral lands.\(^{16}\) However, what does this intervention really demonstrate about the State’s role in social justice in Chile and what does that imply for the objectives of this State-sponsored museum? Political acts such as the one above reactivate memories that are hidden in the past to remind society that a violent past cannot be archived inside a museum’s walls but rather it is constantly present in society’s day-to-day struggles. The dictatorship may have ended and Chileans may now be living in democracy but many people are still silenced for standing up for their rights, like the Mapuche activist.

As the museum’s name emphasizes, *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos*, focuses on memory and human rights. The discourse of human rights presents itself as soon as visitors enter the gates of this three-story, five thousand square meter shimmering green block structure, located across from and connected with a subway station. Right before entering the museum, visitors pass through the six thousand square meters *Plaza de la Memoria* or ‘Memory Plaza,’ a space where

\(^{16}\) Richard, Crítica de la memoria, 269-271
concerts, theater plays, and important public gatherings are sometimes held. As the
visitors descend from the street level to the entrance level, they encounter the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights in bronze lettering mounted on a sloped wall;
sections of the text descend with visitors as they walk deeper into the museum’s
ground floor. The theme of respect for human rights continues in the luminous
interior of the museum. Once inside MMDH, visitors encounter students and families,
Chileans and foreigners, who daily visit this space to learn about the Chilean
dictatorship. A big map of the world composed of photographs of human rights
violations catches visitors’ eyes immediately upon entering the museum (Figure 2.1).
Right under this photographic map, informational texts on the thirty-two countries
that have developed Truth Commissions after civil wars and State terrorism are
individually displayed on black frames resting on the wall. This area seeks to
establish relationships between Chile and other countries that have suffered human
rights violations in the twentieth century. It also seeks to present Chile as a nation that
has sought justice for crimes against humanity, a nation that is now abiding by its
laws after almost two decades of violating them, and a nation that no longer violates
human rights. Diagonal to the photographic world map a transparent glass display
contains bound copies of the Rettig Report (1991) and President Lagos’ copy of the
Both commissions are bound and the Valech Report is opened at a page where President Lagos (2000-2006) dedicates the report to the museum with the following words: “For the Museum of Memory, [I donate] this report, the only one in the world that accounts for a country that dares to look at the past in all its severity to construct a future upon solid foundations. ‘To never again live it, never again deny it.’” A copy of these reports is also found at the front of the museum and is accessible to anyone who wants to view it. Along with the words of President Bachelet, President Lagos’s words also reiterate the presence of the State in the museum. Both Presidents acknowledge that it is necessary to learn from the past to construct a better future, but neither President confesses that the State had any part in the severity of the past. It is as though the representatives of the State recognize that Chile experienced difficult times in the past but refuse to blame its institutions or anyone else for that matter for those events.
Even though both Presidents emphasize a notion of the future, interestingly enough, MMDH does not move past the seventeen-year span of the dictatorship: it rarely exhibits anything after 1990, the year Chile’s transition to democracy began. As stated in the prologue that accompanies these reports, these two Truth Commissions are what serve as the “script” for the museum and provides criteria of what can and cannot be shown. In other words, the Truth Commissions defines the museum’s objectives and exhibitions. According to Lazzara, it is not surprising that the principal documents that shape the narrative of the museum are from the Chilean State because of MMDH’s official character. Since the museum was a State project, the State had to agree with the narrative the museum reports to its visitors, which is the reason why MMDH follows the information on the Truth Commissions and why there is no blame placed on anyone in the museum with the exception of a few cases. The commissions could not legally name the perpetrators of human rights violations during the dictatorship because it was the court’s responsibility to hold them accountable. They also investigated human rights violations under Pinochet’s regime. Although Pinochet was indicted for assassination, torture, and kidnapping, he died before being officially declared innocent or guilty, therefore he cannot be officially blamed for the dictatorship. In fact, very few people have been held accountable for violating other people’s rights. That is why the museum rarely names

18 This is the case of a section of the museum called “el dolor de los niños” (Children’s suffering) where an article in *La Tercera* (August 12, 2000) shows that the remains of a thirteen-year-old missing child, Carlos Fariña Oyarce, was found. Right next to this article another piece of a newspaper article is found stating that the judicial courts found three DINA (National Intelligence Directorate) agents guilty for the murders of three young children including Fariña. Ibid., 71.
19 David Gairdner, *Truth in Transition: The Role of Truth Commissions in Political Transition in Chile and El Salvador*, (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1999), 40-41.
anyone or directly blames anyone for the violations of human rights. The victims’
families are again left without holding anyone accountable institutionally.\textsuperscript{20}

We will examine only certain exhibitions in the museum due to time
constraints. Nevertheless, these exhibitions clearly demonstrate the State’s role in
MMDH and its affect on the production of its narrative. After crossing its entrance,
the State’s presence is visible in the rest of the museum. Once visitors leave the
entrance level which establishes the discourse of respect for human rights and ascend
to the first floor, they are presented with a date all Chileans are familiar with:
September 11, 1973, the date of a bloody coup and the beginning of seventeen years
under an authoritarian regime. Walls containing magnified excerpts of black-and-
white newspaper articles about that day confront the visitors as they follow a timeline
that starts at six in the morning and ends at six in the evening of that day. These very
detailed expositions are what contribute to the museum’s construction of a
determined temporality. In this specific exhibition, the museum strays away from
showcasing the collective memory of Chileans for that day, one that would show the
presidential palace (\textit{La Moneda}) in flames and hundreds of people detained, and
seems to only represent a textbook history lesson of September 11, 1973. This
temporality of minutes, hours, and dates is closely related to a judicial or State
structure where everything is categorized and timed accordingly. However, social and
personal memory is less structured according to chronological time, especially
memories that are marked by suffering and trauma as those produced during a
dictatorship. Nora argues that there is a significant difference between history and

\textsuperscript{20} As we saw in the previous chapter, unlike the museum, Villa Grimaldi publicly names the
perpetrators on their website. In doing so it is holding those individuals responsible of inflicting torture
on the prisoners of Villa.
memory. He defines memory as “a bond tying us to the eternal present” and history as “a representation of the past.” Simply put, it seems that the difference between history and memory is a specific conception of time. History is produced while memory constructs identity. According to Halbwachs, there is only one history (usually a State-approved history), but there are as many collective memories as there are human communities. In this context, MMDH becomes a battleground between local memories that are left out of ‘official’ narratives, such as the creation of leftist oppositional groups, and State history. By paying close attention to detail in time, as does the exhibition of September 11, 1973, the museum does not permit visitors to interact freely with what they individually or collectively remember. Instead, visitors are given a history lesson on one specific event of that day, the bombing of La Moneda, without contextualizing it.

Locating a “beginning” in that day of the coup, the museum uses this exhibit to begin to take visitors on a seventeen-year chronological journey through human rights violations of targeted Chileans who stood against the dictatorship. Within this exhibition visitors are also invited to sit on a bench in front of a large projection screen to watch La Moneda in flames while they listen to a radio’s broadcast explaining the events that are occurring. The broadcast loudly fills up the whole space while the black-and-white video continuously plays dividing itself into three clips on

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22 Although Nora argues that memory and history are in fundamental opposition, other scholars like Burke have challenged this argument; they suggest that memory and history are intertwined. For more on the parallels of history and memory see Peter Burke’s “History as Social Memory” in *Memory: History, Culture, and the Mind*. By Thomas Butler. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. 97-113.
a loop. Again, the way time is used in this video as well as the other exhibition puts into question how the museum wants visitors to remember September 11, 1973. The three screens that make up the exhibition plays side by side images of the presidential palace and periodically plays on the screen different sections of the image. The museum’s decision to allow the video to play in a loop goes far beyond practicality; its repetition proves how important the act of bombing *La Moneda* has become for Chilean history. Visitors come at different times to this exhibition and so either make it on time to watch the video from the beginning or are forced to see only part of the video until it is repeated once again. Visitors are temporarily paralyzed in that section in order to capture the whole video just as Chile was paralyzed that day. This video also situates visitors in the past through colorless images. The fading of the videos causes visitors to pause and pay closer attention to what is being shown before it disappears.

The video found within the expanse of the September 11, 1973 section is attached to built-in sound speakers that allow the noise of the event to violently spread throughout the whole hall. The museum tries to elicit an emotional response from the visitors through sensory stimuli. Pollak states that in remembering a personal recollection, the points of reference are generally presented in sensory orders such as a noise, a smell, or a color.\(^2\)\(^4\) The coup was a very audible event – planes flying over *La Moneda*, people complaining about being detained, the sound of Salvador Allende’s voice over the radio, and the sound of the Military Junta’s voice proclaiming Pinochet as Commander in Chief. So too is the video of the bombing of

La Moneda. The sound of the radio broadcast of September 11, 1973 situates visitors back in the past. These sensory stimuli allow visitors who lived through the coup to remember where they were and what they were doing on that day in relation to that event. Visitors who did not experience the coup, either because they were too young to remember, they were not born yet, or they are foreigners, may imagine what it was like to be present during the coup.

To the right of the big projection screen newscast, images of the past reappear in white cube-shaped modern audiovisual stations. Visitors can watch and listen with headphones to events immediately following the coup. In one station visitors can listen to Salvador Allende’s last speech while in other stations visitors can watch images of people being detained during the dictatorship throughout the whole seventeen years. However, all of these videos, with the exception of Salvador Allende’s last speech, exclude voices. Surprisingly, visitors only hear classical ambience music instead of a voiceover narrating the events or the sounds of the actual event. This is another instance in which MMDH dictates what can and cannot be heard as the voices of people being detained are silenced. Visitors can easily hear the events caused by the military branch of the State (the bombing of La Moneda) but not oppositional voices like those of leftist revolutionary leaders explaining why they are fighting against the government. However, when classical music is sometimes drowned by the sound of the radio broadcast in the other exhibit that is also situated in the same hall, there is a moment of productive confusion. By drowning out the classical music that removed the violence and chaos of the video, the sound of planes
bom
La Moneda allows visitors to reinsert the mayhem of these events depicted in the videos back into the violent moment of September 11, 1973.

It is clear in this hall that the museum tends to favor the conventional discourse of the coup: that the violent coup ended the power of the Popular Unity. Yet, it would be productive for the museum to be a bit more nuanced in their discourse to allow more dialogue on accountability. If the museum only states that the coup and an authoritarian regime was succeeded by violations of human rights for seventeen years, then transitioning to democracy can easily remedy the acts that took place during the dictatorship. Frazier argues that finding reconciliation through the pragmatic model of transition may be problematic because it “entailed a demand for forgiveness without a complete revelation of the past and acknowledgement of wrongdoing, and without broad access to justice.” If the museum showcased the reasons for the dictatorship and, especially, the steps taken to repair what the dictatorship has caused, it would create a more productive interaction between human rights organizations, associations of victims’ families, and the State. This interaction would imply that the State wants to be involved in working with these groups to find justice. Since the museum is a State initiative, by presenting a permanent yet constantly updated exhibition on the steps to repair the atrocities the dictatorship committed would allow the State to acknowledge its role in those events and demonstrate a more genuine desire to seek justice.

After walking through many other halls that can elicit feelings from visitors of sadness and impotence for not having been able to prevent the atrocities from

occurring, visitors conclude their tour of the permanent exhibition with two videos showcased in two large screens, one of which shows an eight-minute clip of a greater celebratory event in the National Stadium the day after Patricio Aylwin became president. On March 12, 1990 more than seventy thousand people filled up the seats of the National Stadium to witness the “first act of reparation that occurred in [re]democracy.” Celebrating transitioning from dictatorship back to democracy in the National Stadium was symbolically important as well since the stadium became a prison camp in 1973 for numerous people. In using this location, and through the dance of the cueca sola, the names of all victims known were publicly shown for the first time in a big screen. One of the most memorable acts was that of filling the entire stadium with the Chilean flag while singing their national anthem. This act suggests a possibility of representing Chile as a whole nation once again. The Chilean flag, that represents patriotism, is being carried by hundreds of Chileans to cover a space that was once used for torture and thus tries to demonstrate the prospectus of uniting Chile through democracy. President Aylwin finishes the video affirming that truth and justice will be found. It is no surprise that the museum concludes their narrative of human rights violation during the dictatorship with a video-clip reiterating the presence of official discourses of the State and demanding justice and truth at the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of redemocratization.


<http://www.bibliotecamuseodelamemoria.cl>.

Cueca sola is a political dance where women danced a traditional Chilean dance to spread awareness of their disappeared loved ones. For more information about this political dance see Marjorie Agosín’s second chapter in *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love: The Arpillera Movement in Chile, 1974-1994*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996.
Even though the video ends with demanding justice and truth, there is no proof of any action taken by the State to guarantee these aspirations in the museum. In fact, MMDH does not mention any events that are consequences of the policies of the dictatorship after 1990 like social inequality and the student movement that arose in 2011. Students in Chile are now fighting to nationalize once again the educational system so that education may become a right and not a privilege once more.\textsuperscript{29} The museum’s narrative seems to dictate that once Aylwin became president of Chile the dictatorship just disappeared and Chile started with a clean slate. Lechner and Güell caution that the desire to hastily forget prevents society from putting the past into perspective. By solely concentrating on reconciliation as a form of moving forward, society forgets its unfulfilled promise of happiness and justice.\textsuperscript{30} Lechner and Güel argue that although democracy has created extraordinary changes in the Chilean economy, for example, it did not renovate personal relationships and therefore many Chileans are unsatisfied with where their society stands. Through a preliminary study about future aspirations, they examined how Chileans were uncertain about their dreams, due in part to the ways memory has been displayed—a memory linked to the past (dictatorship) and the future of yesterday (the advent of democracy). Due to the uncertainty of the future caused by this memory, the unfulfilled promise of happiness and justice for Chileans during the democracy years tends to be overlooked in public

\textsuperscript{29} Fox-Hodes and Nuñez Capriles argue that the student movement can be seen as “a second wave of pro-democracy protests, calling attention to the problems of marketization and the need to reduce Chile’s high levels of inequality and make government more responsive to the public.” Katy Fox-Hodes, and Francisco Nuñez Capriles. “The Chilean Student Movement and the Crisis of Neoliberal Democracy.” *Universities in Crisis: The Chilean Student Movement and the Crisis of Neoliberal Democracy Comments*. Blog of the International Sociological Association (ISA), September 16, 2012, <http://www.isa-sociology.org/universities-in-crisis/?p=914>.

\textsuperscript{30} The message of the NO campaign for the 1988 plebiscite was “La alegria ya viene” (happiness is coming). Once the NO campaign won, Chileans believed that happiness was coming in many forms.
discourses.\textsuperscript{31} Therefore, by not mentioning present-day problems like the student protests, MMDH seems to ignore the present situation in which Chile finds itself today.

However, memorial museums, as any type of museum cannot contain everything; these museums cannot reconstruct the past entirely and so MMDH decides to concentrate solely on the seventeen years of the dictatorship and nothing before or after those years. This decision allows the museum to become a “public forum of discussion” of human rights violations in Chile outside of judicial discussions on amnesty, prosecution, or compensation because it allows people to understand how these violations have affected individuals rather than emphasizing on the legal aspect of human rights violations. MMDH tries to focus on experiences of everyday people, or the quality of emotional hurt through their exhibitions on display.\textsuperscript{32} In focusing on these experiences, it may be possible for visitors who were once victims or a victim’s family member to remember their experiences through images or testimonies on display in the museum.\textsuperscript{33} This is the case in many halls in the museum that push for a more personal remembrance for visitors whether they were victims or not. In the hall ‘Repression and Torture,’ visitors enter small dark rooms and encounter a screen where they can choose which victim’s testimony they want to hear. The testimonies are recent videos that were recorded as MMDH’s project to archive testimonies of victims during 1973-

\textsuperscript{32} Williams, Memorial Museums, 130.
\textsuperscript{33} Many halls in the museum although open to all seems to be a special place for victims for their role as individuals who directly experienced that history, therefore for the purposes of this section, I will address the visitor as a victim’s response.
1990 and other videos have been taken from documentaries and recent Chilean television reports. The museum induces an emotional response from visitors to these videos because visitors are witnessing people reliving their horrific experience. Visitors are isolated from everything else with no distractions and so are forced to concentrate solely on the victim’s testimony. This act of transmitting victims’ experiences during the dictatorship is intended to be educational because it conveys a “Never Again” message to the visitors. No longer are the visitors informed just by what books, newspaper clippings, and broadcasts state about the dictatorship, they also hear real stories about torture. In listening to these testimonies, visitors may believe more profoundly the narrative of torture during the dictatorship because they have witnessed a ‘truth.’

As seen in many of the exhibits in the museum, photography is a means to complement written histories; it also tells a story of its own. When visitors enter the second floor and walk down a narrow hall they are confronted by a glass room, considered the heart of MMDH, called the hall of ‘Absence and Memory’. Pictures of victims who were murdered or forcefully disappeared during the dictatorship are hung at the very top of a wall. The photographs presented are copies of family pictures donated by victims’ families and are usually the only photograph of the person. These grey-colored pictures are contrasted by the black-and-white frames next to them that represent either victims who had no photographs of them or of the disappeared that are still unknown.

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34 Bibliotecamuseodelamemoria.cl
Visitors can view these pictures in its totality inside a glass cube that recreates a candlelight memorial, or as Chileans would call it a velatón, a tribute made to lost ones through lit candles (Figure 2.2). Inside the velatón, visitors can find names of those victims and their stories, on a touch screen computer.

This section is the only one where photographs convey their own story without the support of written documents. The photographs exhibited throughout the museum are either photos taken from newspaper articles or donated by photojournalist. These photos are considered ‘action photographs’; they were taken to capture the moment of violence and terror the victims experienced. These images are magnified to serve either as visual accompaniment to written information or to serve as the background of a wall. However, the photographs displayed at the heart of

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the museum are not ‘action photographs’ but ‘identification photographs,’ headshot photos of people. For this section of the museum, the identification photographs symbolize visual testimony to the victims’ former existence.\footnote{Ibid., 63-64.} Similar to the names engraved in the *monumentos* described in Chapter One, these photographs are also used to commemorate the victims. Yet, unlike the *monumentos*, these photographs have no specific order; they are not placed alphabetically or in a horizontal or vertical fashion, they are scattered throughout their designated wall perhaps to reinsert their bodies throughout this social space. Although these victims are still missing, these personal photographs affirm that they existed. The photographs demonstrate that these individuals were alive before they were forcefully disappeared by the State although no photographs of the act of disappearance itself exist. By having these photographs as part of the permanent exhibition of the museum, MMDH keeps these individuals alive, reminding visitors that the ‘disappeared’ had faces and names and were once active citizens of Chile. The blank frames remind visitors of how these victims were removed from society.

Although MMDH is heavily influenced by the State that sometimes conflicts with what the museum showcases, many people have defended the museum for what it is. This comes by no surprise since MMDH is one of the few pedagogical institutions that expose what occurred during the dictatorship and it is also an important milestone for recognizing human rights violations in Chile. According to an interview conducted by Tamara Lagos, the museum cannot solve what the political
class, social movements, or citizens have yet to resolve. These groups can investigate, can reflect about human rights violations, and can hold public forums about those violations and so too can the museum, but MMDH in itself and its permanent exhibition cannot resolve the consequences of the dictatorship.

MMDH is one of hundreds of sites around the world that is dedicated to remembering past struggles and addressing a country’s contemporary legacies. These sites are grouped together in a worldwide network called the International Coalition of Sites of Memory. MMDH, along with the Museum of Word and Image in El Salvador (MUPI), belongs to the Latin American regional network where sites “remember periods of violent internal conflicts and State terrorism in Latin America, preserve the memory of what happened during these dictatorships and the consequences of these dictatorships on their societies; use that memory to influence political culture; and work with young people to prevent all forms of authoritarianism in future generations.” These sites not only work so that the atrocities committed in their country may not be repeated but also, as we will see in MUPI’s case, to promote cultural awareness of the country’s history outside of its experience of armed conflict. Together with twenty-nine other Latin American sites, MUPI works with its community to engage in meaningful dialogue about history, memory, and culture. As explained in the introduction, it is important to examine both of these countries together because, as countries that experienced violence by the hands of their fellow citizens, they offer theoretically diverse frameworks to analyze the complicated relationship between citizen and human rights groups, and State narratives.

39 <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>
Unlike MMDH, the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (MUPI) was created as a citizen’s initiative to preserve the cultural history and memory of El Salvador. The Civil War, although an important part of the history of El Salvador, is not the only event represented in this museum. Yet, the museum’s conception during the war began with the idea that it would protect documents, images, and videos related to the social struggle of the war. It was the idea of some members of the most famous guerrilla radio station in El Salvador, Radio Venceremos, to carry the transmission tapes of the radio with them because it would serve a greater purpose after the war. Once the Civil War ended in 1992 these members were left with their transmission tapes and a desire to share them with a broader community. Immediately after the war ended, Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, better known by his alias Santiago, along with other members of Radio Venceremos, founded MUPI, a grassroots nongovernmental organization. Its mission was to preserve a vast array of documents of the Civil War such as manuscripts, posters, diaries of guerrilla fighters, photography, and video documentaries.

Mario Sánchez, the former director of Pro-Busqueda, an organization which looks for disappeared children of El Salvador during the Civil War, stated that because victims and survivors never received any kind of acknowledgement by the Salvadoran State the recuperation of historical memory has been completely local. By this, Sánchez explains how commemorations of people such as Monseñor Romero and the construction of the Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad have been initiated

40 Carlos Henríquez Consalvi is one of the founders and voice of Radio Venceremos and the director of MUPI.
by groups of survivors and victims’ families due to the fact that the State has not initiated any type of symbolic reparation. The same can be said for MUPI. From the onset, citizens were involved in creating a site where the Civil War can be remembered without any intervention from the State. This allowed the former members of Radio Venceremos, as well as other citizens, to choose what to represent without being subjugated by an ‘official’ discourse. In order to expand their archive, Consalvi and others decided to start a campaign called “contra el caos de la desmemoria” (against the chaos of memory loss) and asked Salvadoran citizens to become protagonists in rescuing important cultural and historical memories. Citizens responded enthusiastically to the call. Consalvi and his team thought that they would receive donations of photographs and documents pertaining to the Civil War, but to their surprise they received much more. Along with documents about the war, the museum also received pre-Columbian paintings, nineteenth century manuscripts about Christians and Moors, photography and documents of the infamous 1932 massacre of peasants, interviews of Salvadoran intellectuals, and even documents on natural phenomenon and their social impact on El Salvador. After receiving these materials, Consalvi and his team understood that Salvadorans wanted to preserve the memory of the history of El Salvador and not just of one event. Those citizens who

43 The museum’s website explains that their campaign against desmemoria is a permanent campaign to restore any historical, cultural or artistic material. The museum ask their viewers that if they want to donate anything to contact the museum. Ibid., 5.
44 The 1932 massacre or better known as La Matanza (the Slaughter) was a peasant-led uprising suppressed by the government of Dictator Maximiliano Hernández Martínez that led to the death of more than 10,000 people. See, for example, Jeffrey Gould and Aldo Lauria-Santiago’s To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008 for their close examination of the massacre’s causes and long-term consequences.
participated in the campaign decided to give the war historical context in order to analyze, through a cultural framework, the effects of that conflict in society. They decided to take control over the preservation of their own memory and in doing so completely changed the museum’s initial project.

As seen in MMDH, a museum that has been created by the State juggles with various narratives—that of the State, that of victims, and that of perpetrators. A museum like that would have to decide whether to focus on one narrative or combine them however, as MMDH has shown us, it is highly unlikely to accurately represent all narratives. The museum had to choose what narrative to showcase. If MUPI chose to exhibit a State-sponsored narrative then the museum’s mission of spreading awareness of the atrocious events of their past would be complicated because those events were initiated by the State and committed crimes against its citizens. Yet, even though the State still has a limited presence in the museum, MUPI, because of its status as a non-governmental museum, does not struggle with most of these issues.

Although MUPI is a nongovernmental institution, due to the recent election of the first FMLN president, Mauricio Funes, the Ministry of Education has helped the museum in promoting student visits from schools in the capital. This newly formed agreement leads us to question the State’s role in the museum. Besides providing visitation from students, the State has no participation in the museum. However, the little that the State does is very important because they are promoting future generations to learn about a particular history in El Salvador that is still a sensitive topic. While the State does not control the narratives set forth in MUPI, its current

antropológico Centroamericano. (San Salvador: Asociación Salvadoreña De Antropología, 2001), 158.

relationship with MUPI leads to questions about the State’s future role in the museum. Will its relationship with the museum change once the leading right wing ARENA party is back in power? Support for the museum may cease once the ARENA party takes back control of the country. Yet, since the State has already shown support for the museum, it is possible that in the future the State, led by the ARENA party, overlooks that support but nevertheless without providing any additional support. The State’s relationship with the museum depends on who is in power just as support for any project relating to moral reparation for victims depends on the party ruling a specific municipality.47

MUPI is not a typical memorial museum; in fact it is a museum that focuses on cultural and historical memory of various eras of El Salvador instead of focusing exclusively on a specific period of the country. As stated in its mission, MUPI is a museum that serves to restore the historical memory of Salvadoran society and to reconstruct its cultural identity.48 Although the museum has a permanent location in the capital in which to showcase its exhibits, it travels around El Salvador to share its exhibitions with rural communities.49 According to Georgina Hernández Rivas, co-founder of MUPI and director of its historical archives, communities do not want to

47 An UCA professor, knowledgeable on the country’s politics mentioned that the politics of naming streets and building monuments all depended on whether the mayor was part of the ARENA or the FMLN party. Once one of the parties leaves office and the other one takes power, the mayor and his office may implement changes that favor their political party. For example, a plaza constructed by the FMLN mayor and dedicated to Monseñor Rivera y Damas, a priest who defended human rights during and after the Civil War, was altered once an ARENA candidate became mayor. The ARENA mayor left the name of the plaza but added a monument of the national bird of El Salvador, los torogoces. He stated that adding a monument of los torogoces recovers the municipality’s nationalism. "Develan Monumento En Honor a Los Símbolos Nacionales." Diario Digital De Noticias De El Salvador. Lapagina.com.sv, December 19, 2009. <http://www.lapagina.com.sv/ampliar.php?id=24058> (accessed February 4, 2013).

48 Ibid.

49 In the beginning years, MUPI became known as el museo sin paredes (a museum without walls). Cañada, Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen, 10.
learn about what the ‘official’ memory states ‘national heroes’ are. Instead, they want to learn about the history that was constructed by their own communities. Communities, for example, asked for exhibitions of Prudencia Ayala, a Salvadoran author and social activist of women’s rights officially considered a “poeta loca,” although to her community she was a hero. This request and many others like it made it clear to Consalvi, Rivas, and their team the type of history that Salvadorans want to remember—one that includes local heroes and overlooked events in the ‘official’ history such as the indigenous people’s view of the 1932 massacre. By allowing communities to decide what they wanted to learn, the museum acknowledged that it was Salvadoran citizens who would determine MUPI’s mission and part of its content.

Many museums narrate an ‘official’ history because they are public sites used by nations to foster national belonging approved by the State, but MUPI is one such postwar museum in El Salvador that seeks to oppose that ‘official’ history. Robin DeLugan states that MUPI “reflects a strong liberal political point of view…celebrates human rights and liberation, and disclaims State violence and repression.” She argues that museums such as MUPI contribute to national belonging but also acknowledges that it draws attention to what the State silences. That is, the museum engages with the issues the government overlooks or tries to silence such as indigenous struggles for land in a dialogue with regard to indigenous and migration problems. MUPI inevitably calls attention to difficult topics such as the 1932 massacre and the Civil War in order to reflect on topics that are not publicly spoken

about. Jelín and Kaufman posit that spaces consecrated to memory “attempt to make statements and affirmations; they are facts and gestures, a materiality with a political, collective, public meaning.” MUPI publicly affirms the importance of remembering events that are often overlooked in Salvadoran history.

For example, after the 2001 earthquake in El Salvador, MUPI decided to start an investigation of natural disasters and society and State’s response to those disasters. In working on this investigation Rivas argued that, although the country has survived catastrophic earthquakes, there seems to be a forgetful ‘garment’ that covers each event and does not allow for the country to draw any lessons to prepare for another natural disaster in the future. That investigation may not be a political statement against State violence or repression but it does affirm something that the State ignores: learning from past natural disasters and preparing for any upcoming one to protect its citizens. Ignoring the signs and preparing for natural disasters points out the failures of the State and its inadequacy to resolve an important situation in the country which is partly why the war began. The State ignored its citizens’ plea for a country where everyone was treated equally and, just as the earthquake killed many people and destroyed many places, so too did the Civil War. However, the Salvadoran State continues to promote ‘forgiving and forgetting’ as many other countries living through transition or so called post-conflict have. MUPI, on the

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53 Rivas and Mejía De Gutiérrez, Memoria, 161.
55 In the eighteenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords, President Funes, in the name of the State, asked for forgiveness for human rights violations during the Civil War. While this act was
other hand, challenges this and works against “desmemoria,” a concept which opposes or negates memory at broader levels of history.

Salvadoran citizens, students and teachers, former guerrillas, and foreigners who visit MUPI explore many themes pertaining to the history of El Salvador in this two-floor building. Even before entering the museum, visitors can assume that part of the museum is dedicated to the Civil War due to entrance prices. While locals and foreigners pay a fee, former combatants enter free. With this difference in mind, visitors enter the museum with a previous conception of what it will showcase. However, visitors digress from this conception once they enter the exhibition area.

The museum concentrates most of its exhibition on images and historical information as its name emphasizes (Museum of Word and Image). All the exhibitions are located on the first floor as the second floor is used to hold all of the archives and has a space for the public to research topics of Salvadoran history. Presently, when visitors walk into the museum and pass the information desk, they first encounter a huge handmade globe of the world sticking out of a wall. This detail is part of an exhibition about the life and the works of Salvador Efraín Salazar Arrué (Salarrué), a famous Salvadoran writer. Many scholars have agreed that Salarrué’s works are considered representative of Salvadoran culture. In an interview about the the first time a representative of the State acknowledged the State’s role in the war and asked for forgiveness, he did not mention anything about the Amnesty Law still in place in El Salvador. According to a reporter of El Faro, an independent newspaper of El Salvador, Funes, as a candidate for the presidency, declared in an interview that he would not participate in revoking the Amnesty Law of 1993. Daniel Valencia Caravantes, “Funes pide perdón por abusos durante la guerra,” El Faro (El Salvador), January 16, 2010, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201001/noticias/932/> (accessed February 3, 2013).

56 The museum’s website does not specify if former combatants are Salvadoran or guerrilla soldiers or both.
57 The first exhibition found at the museum is always a temporary exhibition but can last for more than a year at a time.
life of Salarrué, Edgardo Quijano, a private researcher and Salvadoran writer states, “To speak of Salarrué is to speak of the story of El Salvador. Salarrué is the key to the identity of our culture.”58 Salarrué wrote about the lives of campesinos and reflected on the rural life of El Salvador. With this in mind, MUPI encourages its visitors to view this space through a cultural lens. Instead of having a representative of the State welcome them, visitors are welcomed by a writer whose works Salvadorans can relate to. Other exhibitions present in the museum are about famous authors such as Roque Dalton and famous historical figures such as Miguel Mármol. In another hall visitors can see photos of El Salvador and other countries taken by Monseñor Romero, the priest who was assassinated for speaking against the war. There are also many photos of people, especially children taken by him. Under each photograph visitors can read one of Romero’s quotes that refers to the people and landscape of El Salvador. In this exhibition, he is presented as a man of God who was thankful to be part of El Salvador and work with his people.59 The most important exhibition found in the museum is about the Civil War, which we will analyze further along in the chapter.

The emphasis in the beginning of this museum exhibiting artifacts of the culture of El Salvador explicitly tells visitors that the museum will showcase materials about Salvadoran culture related to memory practices. Once visitors delve deeper into the other exhibitions of the museum they realize that the history of El Salvador is also displayed and is as important as its culture. The museum’s entrance does not convey a specific message as MMDH does with human rights; instead MUPI

59 This image of Monseñor Romero is similar to the image defined by his devoted followers in the previous chapter.
leaves the possibility of showcasing different aspects of Salvadoran culture open. The State in MUPI is not mentioned in the entrance as it is in MMDH. The only time the State is represented in the museum is through the war between the FMLN and the Salvadoran army, which is showcased in the section dedicated to the Civil War.

The section “De guerra a la paz” (from war to peace) found towards the middle of the museum holds a tiny fraction of the historical archives that the museum possesses on the Civil War. The small room carries images, posters, and photographs of the war, and even a decorative helmet, gun, and shield belonging to an FMLN and Salvadoran soldier. From the beginning, the name of the room implies the possibility of transition because of the idea that the country has moved from war to peace. However, the materials present in the room do not infer any substantial transition. Although the signing of Peace Accords showcased in the room might imply a transition, the room does not demonstrate anything after that event. What it actually showcases are materials of the war itself. This is evident in the five glass cases displaying materials ranging from folded uniforms of FMLN soldiers to a video camera used to document events during the Civil War. Most of the materials related to war are images and objects and there is also a description about the Civil War available for visitors to read. The description of that exhibit is a small, printed document taped to the wall. The description states that the official start of the Civil War was January 10, 1981 and the official end of the war was January 16, 1992 with the signing of the Peace Accords. According to the Salvadoran Truth Commission, the Civil War officially began in 1980 even though the FMLN’s first and presumably
‘final offensive’ was on January 10, 1981. The museum declares 1981 as the official start of the war, hence converting its narrative into a heavily influenced leftist pro-FMLN narrative. The ‘official’ history of the Civil War states that the war began in 1980 because the five oppositional groups that composed the FMLN rose up against the State. It seems that the State is implying that it had to defend its country from these groups and so declared war on them. However, by stating that the war officially began in 1981, the museum is stating that the war did not begin until the FMLN first attacked.

Under the description of the exhibit of the Civil War, a sentence in bold announces that the images and objects shown are from both the FMLN and the Salvadoran army. Although the museum states that the materials found in the room represent both the Salvadoran army and the FMLN, its description alone centers on the FMLN. Even the images showcased in this room for the most part are photographs of guerrilla fighters. The few civilians that are present in that hall are seen as vulnerable people who need the help of the guerrillas. One of the photographs depicts a frantic woman in the street trying to collect identification information her dead family member may have so as not to endanger the rest of her family. The guerrilla soldiers believed they were needed to protect people like women and they used that reasoning to justify the murders they committed.

60 The FMLN believed that their power and popular support would suppress the Salvadoran army. However, as we see now, it took twelve years after 1980 for the fighting to cease. From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. (New York: United Nations Security Council, 1993).
61 “Estas imágenes muestran objetos, personajes y sucesos protagonizados por ambos bandos.” (These images show objects, people, and events featuring both sides, my translation).
62 Many former guerrilla soldiers who spoke to me about the war conveyed that they were fighting to defend the women and children of El Salvador.
Photographs such as this particular one can make horror palpable in museums; the woman’s emotional pain and anxiety that is captured in the photograph invites visitors to respond with empathy towards the victims. Yet, the empathy felt by visitors is an “empty” empathy as Kaplan calls it. Since these photos are accompanied by a very generic caption about the image with the location and year the photograph was taken, there is very little context or background knowledge for spectators to understand the image fully and thus cannot produce a sincere empathy.63 Visitors are only presented with fragmented images of individual pain. Still, “by showing individuals” Kaplan argues in her study of the New York Times reports on the war on Iraq, “people are encouraged to identify with specific people, to enter into their experiences rather than to think about what we are looking at…”64 That is, according to Kaplan, visitors usually pay attention to the individual the photographs depict and not the image itself. However, displaying the pain of victims and dead bodies to people who have no personal relation to them everyday in museums simplifies the victims’ suffering. No longer is a victim a human being who experienced violence but a representation of a social issue. In other words, because the nature of these photographs was to capture the cruelty and violence of the period, victims figure as just another detail in that story. Again, visitors can only experience an “empty” empathy even if visitors had previous information of the Civil War. What visitors do not have is information about the individual, in MUPI’s case, the woman and why one of her family members was targeted.

64 Ibid., 99.
MUPI uses these photographs to showcase visual representation of the violations of human rights committed. Although human rights groups actively denounce human rights violations caused by the State in society, State institutions have tried to ignore the situation. In the 2012 human rights report, the attorney for the defense of human rights (PDDH) in El Salvador stated that most of the violations of human rights were committed by the police but only a small number of the denunciations made against them were taken seriously. Therefore, by displaying photographs of human rights violations, MUPI denounces the State’s refusal to acknowledge their responsibility. However, by displaying very few photographs of dead bodies and victims’ suffering, although there are many photographs available in their archives, the museum seems to be aware that displaying more graphic photographs of violence inflicted on victims can trivialize the actual suffering of victims. Feeling an “empty” empathy also trivializes the suffering of victims because that empathy is not authentic. Although visitors may experience an emotional response to the photographs, whether authentic or not, as stated before, MUPI uses these images to further the narrative of the FMLN.

Another section of the room is solely dedicated to the FMLN. There are photographs of guerrilla soldiers in training, in line with their weapons, and the museum even displays photos of specific female guerrilla soldiers. These photographs of female soldiers allow the museum to prove that the fight against the State’s injustices was not only fought by men but also by women who wanted to provide a better future for generations to come. Right under the photographs a glass display

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shows diaries of fallen combatants. What is at stake in displaying the diaries of guerrilla soldiers in the museum? Visitors cannot read what is inside these diaries, they are just there as a mere artifact. However, it seems that what is important for the museum is not the content of the diaries but the fact that they exist. Guerrilla soldiers were able to write down their experiences of the Civil War before they died, something that has been used to oppose the ‘official’ narrative of the Civil War but also praise the FMLN’s fight. The very fact that this section is dedicated to guerrilla soldiers when there is no section dedicated solely to the Salvadoran army demonstrates that MUPI favors the FMLN’s narrative. In a museum that prides itself for being a citizen initiative project, it seems that by favoring the FMLN’s narrative MUPI is trying to relate its struggle to the struggle of civilians. That is, just as Salarrué’s works represents twentieth century Salvadoran culture through his stories about the indigenous and rural populations, the FMLN is seeking to speak for Salvadoran citizens through their fight for a just country. Photographs, like the one examined above support this notion. However, by celebrating the fate of soldiers and not of civilians, the museum prioritizes a war narrative rather than local narratives of civilian experiences and can possibly overlook these experiences.

The description of the room states that all materials found in there are both products of the Salvadoran Army and the FMLN, and yet there is a total emphasis on the experience of guerrilla soldiers. Being that FMLN participants and supporters founded the museum, there is no surprise that the Civil War room would be heavily weighed against the Salvadoran army. Having the FMLN at the center of the narrative in this room indicates a resistance in complying with an ‘official’ narrative of the
Civil War dictated by the State where guerrilla soldiers were the enemy and the Salvadoran army fought to save the country from communism. This narrative was the main reason why the United States intervened in the Civil War by providing financial and military aid to the Salvadoran army. Since the FMLN was composed of Marxist-Leninist groups, the Salvadoran as well as the U.S. government sought to suppress these groups before communism spread.⁶⁶ Although this narrative is not as prominent in El Salvador today as before, some political officials attack FMLN politicians for presumably being socialist.⁶⁷ The museum, however, is not concerned with the narratives constructed by the ARENA party but rather it focuses on praising the FMLN for fighting for the people of El Salvador. Again, the Salvadoran army is seen as the ‘enemy’ here by omitting the soldiers’ experiences. As a result, the museum is far from representing any type of possible reconciliation in the country.

As Frazier has argued in her research on Chile’s dictatorship, reconciliation can only be obtained through the complete revelation of the past and acknowledgement of wrongdoing by both sides of the war in El Salvador’s case. In MUPI, there is no such revelation. The Civil War is presented as a chapter in Salvadoran history without acknowledging any wrongdoing from the State and especially from the FMLN. Even though the room wraps up the violent chapter of Salvadoran history with the Peace Accords that ended the war in 1992, it only acknowledges that the war has come to an end. In the far left section of the room

⁶⁶ Hal Brands, Latin America’s Cold War. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 175.
across from the section dedicated to guerrilla soldiers, there is a special glass display containing a replica of the open Peace Accords. This replica may represent a message of hope and confidence that both sides of the conflict will peacefully work together to repair damages of the war. Yet this ending plays into what the State insists on: reconciliation. With the signing of the Peace Accords both sides of the conflict declare the country should move forward. However, many civilians have disagreed with this kind of discourse. As the director of CODEFAM (Committee of the Families of Victims of Human Rights Violation) says, although it is difficult, reconciliation can only be achieved when one forgives. Yet first victims’ families want the truth and justice because in order to forgive one needs to know who to forgive.\textsuperscript{68} By not revealing who is responsible for the atrocities of the war, the museum is resisting reconciliation. MUPI’s display of the Peace Accords is probably representing the only step that both sides of the conflict took to stop the damages of the Civil War. MUPI also calls into question the role of the State in providing reparations by ending the Civil War section with the Peace Accords; it is illustrating that the State has not worked on improving the welfare of the country after the war.

Although it seemed that the history of the Civil War concluded in the museum with the replica of the Peace Accords, MUPI adds another room dedicated to \textit{Radio Venceremos}. Visitors enter a dark interior room called the ‘cave of passions’ that recreates the \textit{Radio Venceremos} stage inside. The room gives visitors the impression that they are somewhere in between a cave and a mountainous arena. The green walls and brown foam found in the room allude to that feeling. Visitors can listen to radio

\textsuperscript{68} Mejía, Guadalupe. Interview by author. August 9, 2012.
transmissions by pressing a button on a simulated forty-year old transmitter. There, they hear Consalvi’s voice telling his audience that they are tuning into Radio Venceremos. The transmission tapes found in that room informs its audience where there is combat; visitors can also hear a political soap opera. One special transmission that visitors can listen to is of a group of rural children who have decided to take over the radio station to let all those who are listening know that they will fight for a better future. While listening to those transmissions visitors can also view photographs of the Radio Venceremos team displayed on the walls. The sound of the transmission tapes in this room is highly important for this exhibition. Radio Venceremos was an important part of the FMLN because through the transmissions many people joined the guerrilla forces and fought against the Salvadoran Army. Those who did not join but were faithful listeners of the radio station received information on the war, something that they would not have received anywhere else.

Figure 2.3: Simulation of the Radio Venceremos station. San Salvador. Image taken by author.
Allowing visitors to listen to these transmissions pays homage to the station’s workers and the FMLN as a whole. This room reaffirms MUPI’s intent to represent a different history, one that its members claim Salvadoran society wants to hear.\(^{69}\) Just as MMDH tries to produce an emotional response through sensory stimuli in their exhibit on September 11, 1973 so too does the room on \textit{Radio Venceremos}. Presently, there are two transmissions recordings available for visitors to listen to. For those visitors who were involved with the FMLN or who simply lived through the Civil War, listening to these transmission recordings may take them back thirty years to the time where they secretly listened to the station. Their memories of fear are awakened by the songs they hear that were once censored during the war.\(^{70}\) FMLN members listening to these transmission recordings remember the reason why they fought in the first place—to liberate El Salvador from “oppression and imperialism.”\(^{71}\) Now that there is no longer a war, former FMLN members may feel nostalgic in listening to these transmissions because they long for a time when people organized themselves to fight against the injustices in El Salvador.\(^{72}\) Visitors who have never heard \textit{Radio Venceremos} due to the fact that they are foreigners or because they were born after the end of the war, understand what message this station transmitted through the songs heard and the words spoken there. They also understand how important the FMLN fight was for ordinary citizens like them in listening to the children’s

\(^{69}\) According to Cañada, Consalvi stated that the museum’s exhibits were completely influenced by the Salvadoran community therefore, what is exhibited in MUPI should have been asked for by society. Cañada, \textit{Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen}, 14.

\(^{70}\) Many of my Salvadoran interviewees expressed how they hid under the bed or somewhere private to listen to \textit{Radio Venceremos} for fear of being caught and imprisoned or even worse tortured and killed.

\(^{71}\) Consalvi, the voice of \textit{Radio Venceremos}, began most of his transmission recordings saying that \textit{Radio Venceremos} is reporting from a territory fighting oppression and imperialism. In addition to listening to these transmission recordings in the \textit{Radio Venceremos} exhibition, they are also found in the museum’s archives.

\(^{72}\) Observations during one of my visits to the museum. August 7, 2012.
transmission. This transmission may also cause feelings of sadness and shame. Due to the history of child soldiers (of both sides of the war) in El Salvador, when visitors hear children state that they will fight for a better future they know that these children are speaking about taking up arms and fighting as opposed to figuratively fighting. This may cause sadness because of the innocent lives that were lost. Maybe the child speaking in the transmission did not survive to experience a so-called better future. In asking themselves questions like the one mentioned above, visitors may begin to feel ashamed of the Salvadoran State. For visitors who are Salvadoran born or have connections to the country, this shame may be more pertinent than for foreigners. They may ask themselves, how is it that their country allowed children to fight in an ideological war that was fought between conscious adults. Foreign visitors might be more attracted to the transmission of a song against U.S. intervention that state that if the U.S does not leave El Salvador another Vietnam will occur. These visitors become aware of the strong and important presence the FMLN had on the Salvadoran people and on the effect that U.S intervention had on El Salvador during the war. After listening to these transmissions and understanding the role Radio Venceremos played in Salvadoran society, some visitors might question what happened to the revolution. If the FMLN and its radio station received popular support from the civilian population, why did the Civil War end with an agreement between the FMLN and the Salvadoran State? Why did the FMLN not win?

Unlike MMDH, where visitors listen to the mayhem of the coup, MUPI visitors are only allowed to listen to the revolutionary voices of Radio Venceremos. As seen, visitors only have the opportunity to understand the importance of the
FMLN in the Salvadoran community but the museum does not allow visitors to interact with other sides of the story. What is at stake in having such a strong presence of the leftist guerrilla group is posing a biased narrative of the Civil War, thereby excluding other narratives of the war from the museum. However, allowing the civilian population to send materials about the war and other factions of the history of El Salvador permits them to also decide what should be showcased in the museum. If MUPI expanded its exhibitions to display materials of the Salvadoran army, one of two things could happen—the room would strictly display historical information or the room would convert itself into promoting a State-sponsored reconciliation like MMDH does. If either of these were to happen then debates on the consequences of the Civil War would not be held. The museum would try to limit the Civil War to just that room and overlook problems such as migration because a reconciliation narrative would want to highlight only the positive effects of ending the war.

Rooms such as the Civil War space bring into doubt whether Salvadoran citizens did not send any material on the Civil War that had nothing to do with FMLN. If they did then are those materials mostly available for archival research? Why are they not being used in exhibitions such as the FMLN exhibit? The only materials available for visitors to see on the Salvadoran Army are those found in the Civil War room but, as stated before, these materials are overshadowed by the amount of material dedicated to the FMLN. Yet, not all victims and their families were FMLN sympathizers, some victims were just caught in the middle between two opposing forces—the FMLN or the Salvadoran army could have been responsible for
their suffering. Where are the narratives of the victims who were murdered, either intentionally or unintentionally, by the FMLN? Are their materials ignored or do these people not participate in the museums’ campaign? In comparison to the museum in Chile, MUPI does not focus explicitly on civilian victims. While MMDH showcases images of disappeared people and testimonies of survivors, MUPI focuses its exhibitions on guerrilla soldiers and the Radio Venceremos team. The rest of the exhibitions are on Salvadoran culture and history outside of the Civil War. Some materials that represent civilian victims are kept in the archives because of how graphic the materials are. Whereas MMDH vividly represent its victims individually through photos and information about each one of them, through the strong presence of the guerrillas, MUPI represents its victims collectively as the people the guerrillas fought for. However, as shown in the exhibitions of Monseñor Romero and the migration stories, citizens are not only interested in reliving their violent past but also remembering important people and speaking about important issues present today.

Consalvi says that the museum asked and is continuously asking the community the following: what is it that they want to remember and forget? How do they want to remember? These questions are not only posed on their website and advertising pages but also in their activities which implies that the campaign against ‘desmemoria’ is still active.

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73 Although the Salvadoran army committed the majority of murders and tortures, the Truth Commission states that five percent of those atrocities were committed by the FMLN. From Madness to Hope, 36.
74 In the archives there are hundreds of photos of the massacre at El Mozote but are too graphic to permanently display especially because children of all ages visit the museum everyday.
75 The poem by Oswaldo Escobar Velado that was interpreted as a song by Yolomba Ita “Regalo para un niño” explicitly illustrates that the guerrillas fought for the Salvadoran people, especially the children who died or were left orphaned by the Salvadoran army.
76 Cañada, Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen, p. 12.
In addition to material about the war, citizens have also responded to the museum’s project on the reality of emigration. With this exhibition, as well as the exhibition on indigenous culture, MUPI challenges the ‘official’ narrative. The museum displays the dangers of illegal emigration, one of the consequences of the war that increasingly sparked after the Civil War.77 With the exhibition ‘Cartas del Norte,’ MUPI not only displays the danger of crossing the border in order to encourage Salvadorans to stay in their country but also showcases letters of parents that have recently migrated to the United States to their children. These letters demonstrate the difficulties of living outside of the country and also express the ‘Salvadoran dream’ of making enough money so that Salvadoran living outside of El Salvador may return to their family. If the museum was controlled by the State, this exhibition would focus on how their Salvadoran brothers living in other parts of the world have strengthened the Salvadoran economy.78

Exhibitions or projects on indigenous culture and their current and past issues would also be nonexistent if the State’s narrative had control over MUPI’s. The State would not consider it an important issue to address since the indigenous people of El Salvador have been neglected and their culture has only been used to promote tourism.79 However, since it is MUPI as a museum that is consistently receiving

79 DeLugan, Reimagining National Belonging, 15.
materials from citizens that are in charge of the narrative of the museum, past indigenous issues, such as the 1932 massacre, and present issues, such as their isolation in society, are addressed through permanent and itinerary exhibitions. Unlike MMDH, through these expositions, MUPI works on showcasing the consequences of the Civil War and problems that are still pertinent in society to create a cultural and educational space where individuals can reflect over these important topics.

While many people rejoice in the new government and the position President Funes has taken in processes of reconciliation (at most a verbal repentance), Consalvi continues to have confidence in the Salvadoran people and civil society as the motor of the movement for reparations. As seen in Chapter One, in many cases civil society has more power and desire to seek reparations than the State and although in El Salvador support might be offered according to the political party in power, it is up to civil society to take the initial step to remember, provide symbolic reparations for themselves, and seek justice.

The museum in Chile and El Salvador discussed above work to revisit past atrocities within the political and cultural frameworks of each conflict. In the case of Chile, MMDH focuses more on the historical narrative of the dictatorship in order to promote reparation for the victims of that time period. In order to present an “unbiased” historical narrative of the dictatorship, MMDH excludes displays on the

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80 “Al haber un nuevo Gobierno que pide perdón que empieza a tener algunos signos de reconocimiento a las víctimas, a los lisiados,… eso da una perspectiva diferente de la que tuvimos los últimos veinte años. Pero yo sigo confiando más en la gente y en la sociedad civil como motor e impulsor de este movimient.” (Having a new government that asks for forgiveness, that begins to show some signs of recognizing the victims, the injured… gives a different perspective from the one we had for the last twenty years. But I continue believing more in the people and in civil society as the engine and drive for this movement) Cañada, Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen, 15.
present state of the political actors of that conflict and focused only on the seventeen-year span of the dictatorship. In El Salvador, MUPI focuses on preserving the historical and cultural memory of the country in order to discuss problems in society that are still pertinent. Both museums have been influenced by State practices even if the State does not participate in the museum’s narrative, as is the case in MUPI. The State’s desire to move forward to improve international relationships and build a stronger economy after their conflicts is evident in both museums. While MMDH promotes a State-sponsored reconciliation, one that declares that Chile has moved past the seventeen years of violence and the only remains of it have been archived in the museum, MUPI challenges reconciliation. Through the various exhibitions on the culture and history of El Salvador and its focus on the FMLN’s narrative of the Civil War, MUPI questions whether reconciliation supported by the State can be achieved when there are various ‘truths’ by the FMLN and the civilian population present in the museum. Although these museums differ in supporting reconciliation, both of these museums try to become, as Andermann argues, “an educational apparatus” and a “space of negotiated representations.” In working to create a space where various memories are accepted, these museums have taken an important initial step for tackling historical issues of repression, violence, and injustices so that their country will never again experience State violence—“nunca más.”

A year after Salvadoran bishop, Monseñor Romero was assassinated in 1980, more than seven hundred men, women, and children were massacred in El Mozote, a small town in Northern El Salvador. A unit of the Salvadoran Army, the Batallón Atlácatl sought to eliminate the rebel presence in the region. Men were tortured, women were raped, and children were shot. After killing the entire population of El Mozote, the soldiers set the buildings on fire to erase any evidence of a massacre.¹

One woman, however, survived. Rufina Amaya hid behind a bush while she heard the cries of her community, including those of her four children.² After she escaped, she testified about the events that occurred during that massacre. She has repeated her testimony countless times, even though as she said, “No es fácil. Para mi no es fácil pues pero como no hay más quien cuente.”³

Rufina’s testimony about the massacre—and by extension the testimonies of countless other victims of the Civil War—recall the pain and trauma caused by the war for many Salvadoran citizens.⁴ As discussed in the introduction, Caruth states that trauma is a response to overwhelming and unexpected violent events that cannot

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³ “It is not easy. For me it is not easy. But there is no one else to tell this story” “I am not afraid”: Rufina Amaya’s testimony, directed by Wendy Wallas (Sherman: Alfalfa Grafics, 2007), DVD.
⁴ In her article, “Projections of Homeland: Remembering the Civil War in El Salvador,” Ana Patricia Rodríguez, a cultural historian, uses Alexander Wilde’s term “irruption of memory” to explain how Rufina Amaya’s testimony has been used to create an imaginary recuperation of the Salvadoran homeland for people who have little or no memory of the Salvadoran Civil War.
be understood at the moment but return later in repetitive phenomena.\textsuperscript{5} Susan Brison adds that the memories of these traumatic events can be “uncontrollable, intrusive, and frequently somatic.”\textsuperscript{6} However, a violent historical event cannot automatically be deemed traumatic. What determines if a community undergoes traumatic responses are not the structures of the events but the \textit{social experiences} of those events. The perception of moral responsibility is a salient factor that in general terms defines social trauma, as Francisco Ortega, a cultural historian states.\textsuperscript{7} An important question that defines this chapter is how communities respond to traumatic histories through cultural artifacts, and how these function as “irruption of memories” or symbolic acts that might recall and even trigger traumatic memories. In examining the works stemming from the School of Arts in Perquín in El Salvador, and a play by Chilean playwright Guillermo Calderón, this chapter seeks to understand how cultural spaces and artifacts represent the traumas of their country’s past.

In 1992, approximately eleven years after the massacre of El Mozote, the Forensic Anthropological team of Argentina, a group officially in charge of exhuming corpses from wars, was invited by the United Nations Commission of the Truth to investigate the events of El Mozote. In that same year, the Peace Accords, ending the war between the FMLN and the Salvadoran army, was signed. For more than a month, the anthropological forensic team began to unearth the bodies of the victims. Claudia Bernardi, an artist and a member of the team, realized the importance of

\textsuperscript{5} Cathy Caruth, \textit{Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History}. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 91.


speaking about the massacre as a way for communities to mourn; she believed this could be achieved through art. She herself experienced similar events in her country, Argentina, where thousands of people were murdered and disappeared during the “Dirty War” that took place between 1976-1983. Sociologist Kai Erikson suggests that in many conflicts, trauma creates community. He states that in nations such as Argentina and El Salvador many communities are bonded by collective trauma since many people lost their family members either through murder, forcible disappearances, torture, or rape. In El Salvador, Bernardi found it necessary to unite this community of people who suffered repression and violence through art. In 2005, she established the School of Arts and Open Studio with the participation of the Mayor’s office in Perquín, a town near El Mozote that was also exposed to violent events fought between the Salvadoran Army and FMLN.

Perquín, which was formally known as the unofficial capital of the guerrillas during the war, and is in the same region as El Mozote, has been transformed in the past years from a rural town marked by violence into a place where art unites the community. Unlike the monumentos and museums that we have previously analyzed, this school focuses on a way of commemorating victims of the Civil War outside of a traditional archival methods, which Diana Taylor has designated “the archive.” In other words, all the murals in the town represent an embodied culture of visual expression—a way in which citizens express memory while avoiding the written form, or the product of textual artifacts held in archival form. According to Taylor, archival memory such as documents, maps, letters, literary texts, etc., are all items

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8 Bernardi, Claudia. Interview with author, August 29, 2012.
that are resistant to change. These items can all be archived and used later in the same form. However, what Taylor calls the repertoire, a collection of performances, enacts embodied memories and cannot be easily transmitted through archives. Performances, dances, spoken word, collective mural painting, and daily gestures like handshakes that are all ephemeral require the presence of people. In this sense, people’s participation permits these performances to “both keep and transform choreographies of meaning,” that is, even if some things stay the same such as a choreographed dance, the act of dancing is never the same. This change allows scholars to understand the influences behind the performance.

Just like trauma, the murals that are painted in the street walls of Perquín and neighboring towns like El Mozote, cannot be archived. Instead, these murals transmit “communal memories, histories, and values from group/generation to the next” without writing down its history. They seem to be able to convey local memories more than written history—particularly in a context where the written history of the Civil War values a narrative based on the political discourse and actions of the Salvadoran army and the FMLN, and tends to ignore the experiences of civilians. What is remembered in these written histories is the wars between two factions: victims may be spoken about but usually only in reference to statistics. However, through these murals that transmit testimonies and oral histories of the communities that are not necessarily so dependent on the archive for their acts of recall, what is

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10 Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 21

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remembered is not the military narrative of the war, but instead, the social and cultural implications derived from the war.

One striking element of these murals at Perquín is that the community has decided not to explicitly represent the violence of the Civil War. In this context, it is important to ask what does this reveal about the collective memory of Perquín? In a space that was plagued by traumatic events, how is loss and trauma being coped with in the community? To answer these questions, I will examine two murals that find a productive way of remembering the past while also subtly highlighting different responses to loss. With the murals that are located in open public spaces around town, and more generally, through this school, we can begin to understand how these spaces produce symbolic allusions to a past that is not confined to the twelve years of the war. As a community member of Perquín expressed, people are more interested in representing life before the Civil War because the war created traumatic histories. In other words, it is not necessary to have a constant reminder of violent events; instead, this community seeks to remember the time before the war as a way to recall what the war damaged. However, as can be seen in the murals, there are subtle references to the war that allow us to locate the way in which losses are being accounted for today.

In a very similar way, Villa (2010), a Chilean play where three characters evaluate different options about what to do with the torture center, Villa Grimaldi, in Santiago, grapples with the way traumas of the past play out and resurface in the present and the future. Villa exposes the abuses that are inherent in transforming a torture center into a site of memory. While Perquín’s school does not explicitly

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12 Vaquerano, América. Interview by author, August 17, 2012.
represent specific events during the Civil War, Villa purposefully remembers particular debates that occurred during the design of Villa Grimaldi’s *Parque por la paz* in 1997. Since these debates are still present in the park, the performance of this play forces the audience to bear witness to a traumatic event that occurred in the past but that has affected the present.

The three women represented here experience the trauma of a past history that was transmitted to them by their mothers. Through the repetition of words and actions in this play, Villa vividly problematizes the possibility of representing trauma and of speaking about violence. It questions whether it is productive, or even necessary, to narrate violent events if Villa Grimaldi’s physical space can never truly reconstruct the experiences of the victims. In this chapter, through these two very different artistic representations, I would like to show how cultural artifacts, such as murals and a theater performance, illustrate varying manners of remembering traumatic events of the past and its effects in the present.

The murals, directed by Claudia Bernardi, and created by teachers and participants of the School of Perquín, who range from young children to the elderly, have privileged a way of remembering the traumatic past. The school focuses on topics that do not explicitly highlight the violence of the Civil War. Since 2005, twenty murals have been painted in Perquín, all of which aspire to the school’s vision of “add[ing] efforts towards education, diplomacy, community development and the recovery of historic memory in [their] community.” With this vision, the school's

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*13 In addition to these murals located in Perquín, the School of Arts has traveled to Guatemala, Colombia, the United States, Northern Ireland, and Switzerland through the project Walls of Hope to paint murals with communities that seek social healing through art. For more information visit*
members have painted murals about religious practices, musical performances, the environment, rural landscapes, and youth. In addition to these themes, there are some murals that reference the Civil War, albeit there is no representation of military violence. Instead, they represent marginalized people of El Salvador such as peasants, laborers, students, and women to allow a form of representation for these neglected voices.

Ana Patricia Rodríguez, a cultural scholar that examines contemporary culture in Central America, studies how Manlio Argueta, a well-known Salvadoran poet and novelist of the twenty-first century, “has elaborated an unofficial, testimonial history of El Salvador,” by illustrating the stories of people who tend to be overlooked in the official written history of the country. In an interview, Argueta also claims that his works transform oral history into writing since his methodology relies heavily on primary sources such as newspapers, oral texts, and interviews. What this author has done in the literary world with these interviews is analogous to the works that the school is doing with its murals. Through paintings, the murals articulate the oral history of Perquín. It is because of these oral histories that the murals do not follow a chronological order of representation and instead focus on establishing a present past—where experiences of the past have been incorporated and remembered in the present—in the community.


Ana Patricia Rodríguez, Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures, (Austin: University of Texas, 2009), 80.


This concept has been examined by Elizabeth Jelín in Los trabajos de la memoria. (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2002), 12.
La última cena de Morazán (2006) and Las memorias de los niños del ayer (2008), murals located in a public religious meeting center and in the entrance of the town respectively, demonstrate two distinct ways of remembering the past that avoid specifically detailing the events of the Civil War. The Catholic Base Community of Perquín (CEBES) were one of the first groups to ask the school’s participants for a mural for their meeting place. These members wanted the mural to include beloved heroes of their community. As implied by its title, La última cena de Morazán (The Last Supper of Morazán), this mural makes reference to the last supper, an event in the Christian theology, but does not include Jesus and his apostles. Instead, Perquín’s “last supper” gathers people from El Salvador and elsewhere. On the right side of the mural, sitting next to each other, are Monseñor Romero, Rufina Amaya, Monseñor Gerardi (the martyred bishop killed in Guatemala’s Civil War), and Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition to these people, the 1833 indigenous insurrection leader Anastasio Aquino, the murdered priest Father Octavio Ortiz, and selected people from Morazán are also depicted in this mural. They are surrounded by a rural landscape similar to Morazán’s. Birds, bees, butterflies and domestic animals such as sheep and cows are also depicted roaming the countryside. On the left side of the mural, a crowd of people surrounded by a cornfield wait to participate in the supper as well. Unlike Da Vinci’s famous painting, where there is not much food present on

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17 Anastasio Aquino was an indigenous leader who led an insurrection of other indigenous people against feudal landowners in 1833 (the time in which El Salvador was part of the Central American federal republic that lasted until 1840). Priest Octavio Ortiz was assassinated on January 20, 1979 for believing to be training young men to become guerrillas during his Catholic retreat. More information on Aquino see Dominguez, Sosa J. A. Anastasio Aquino: Caudillo De Las Tribus Nonualcas. San Salvador: Editorial Universidad Francisco Gavidia, 2006. For information on Father Ortiz see Goldston, James, and Jemera Rone. A Year of Reckoning: El Salvador a Decade after the Assassination of Archbishop Romero. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1990.
the table, food abounds in Perquín’s “last supper.” Bread, chicken, tortillas, eggs, coffee, and regional dishes and fruits all sit in front of the guests. The mural vividly depicts the rural landscape of the region and the common food eaten by Salvadorans creating a sense of cohesion.

Figure 3.1: Mural “The Last Supper of Morazán” Perquín, El Salvador. Image taken by author.

Similar to MUPI’s mission of highlighting the cultural history of El Salvador, this mural represents different events of Salvadoran history that transcend the specific years of the war. In contrast, MUPI depicts a chronological narrative that La última cena does not. The mural congregates people of different historical eras, from different parts of the world, who have defended the marginalized people. In the Christian tradition, Jesus also defended marginalized people, such as the blind, the lepers, and the poor. It was the State in the form of the Roman Empire that persecuted him because of his dedication to these people. The Romans also believed that Jesus was neglecting to pay taxes to Caesar and claimed that he called himself Christ, the
king, the Son of God. Many of the people depicted in the Salvadoran mural went against what the State stood for and, in one way or another, were persecuted by it. Monseñor Romero spoke against the war perpetrated by the State, Rufina Amaya testified that a massacre at El Mozote did occur when the Salvadoran State continuously denied it, and Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke up against segregation, a policy that was upheld by some southern states in the U.S in the 1960s. In representing these figures in a public mural, the members of CEBES denounce the State’s role in persecuting human rights. They refuse to showcase a historical narrative, promulgated by the State, that does not recognize the historical importance of these figures. By situating people from both El Salvador, as well as local people from Morazán, the mural prioritizes citizens’ actions in violent historical events.

La última cena also challenges the State’s desire to move forward by referring to this mural as the “last supper.” In Christian teachings, the last supper was Jesus’ last ritual with his apostles before he was sacrificed in order to provide forgiveness for human sin. According to Catholic tradition, it was in this supper when Jesus introduced the sacrament of the Eucharist that involved figuratively eating and drinking his body and blood so that individuals may receive salvation. The last supper, as depicted by many artists, portrays the eleven or twelve apostles (in some versions Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is not present) and Jesus. This story is constantly repeated in Christian rituals as a way of remembering Jesus’ sacrifice and eventual return to the world. The last supper, as told by the Christian faith, represents sacrifice that is directly related to la última cena in Morazán. This mural denounces the State’s

18 For more information about the accusations against Jesus during his trial and his crucifixion and death see Luke 23.
desire for reconciliation by representing the painted figures as martyrs. Almost all the apostles that were present during the last supper were persecuted and became martyrs after Jesus’ resurrection. Just as the apostles were martyrs of the Christian faith, so too are Monseñor Romero, Monseñor Gerardi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. (to name a few), since they were killed for demanding justice for their people. Although the mural does not illustrate any type of literal martyrdom, the association of these local and international heroes of El Salvador and elsewhere with the apostles and their sacrifice for human rights is displayed. These apostles are remembered for following Jesus, even if that meant they were opposing ‘official’ Hebrew and Roman laws. According to the New Testament, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Romans threatened the apostles while some diasporic Jews rejected their message. Despite the continuous threat and rejection, the apostles continued to promote Jesus’ teachings and became prophets of his word. The men and women in the mural also followed a belief that opposed the State’s narrative of fighting communism and, even though they were threatened like Monseñor Romero, or what they said was rejected by the State, like Rufina Amaya’s testimony, they continued to defend what they believed—revealing the truth and speaking up against injustices. These people advocated for these truths to be told and became prophets of human rights.

Even though Rufina Amaya was not assassinated as many other individuals were, she is considered a symbolic martyr of the war. She is seated in between two bishops that were assassinated either during or immediately after their country’s civil war, allowing her status as a martyr to possibly hold a religious connotation. Rufina alone embodies the memory of El Mozote of 1981 and represents the thousands of
people who died there. By situating her in between Monseñor Romero and Monseñor Gerardi, she also symbolizes the people these religious men defended. Rufina was the living testimony that a massacre occurred in El Mozote, hence becoming a constant reminder of the violence the State committed against its citizens. Her survival also manifests a possibility to remember. She was the only one who could remember the massacre and it is through her remembrance that she and other victims, along with human rights groups, can denounce the State.

The massacre at El Mozote and the last supper are events that can never be reenacted. The time, space, and actors cannot be reproduced, but they can be remembered through rituals and artistic representation such as the mural. The process of negotiating what la última cena would consist of and the act of painting it cannot be fully reenacted either. However, by analyzing how collective memories are produced in this mural, one can understand how it represents certain events in Salvadoran history. Memories are fragments of the past that are pieced together to create events that encapsulate social and individual experiences. Sometimes details are forgotten, intentionally or not, and other times they are altered. Although members of Perquín and neighboring towns can remember the massacre of El Mozote through Rufina Amaya’s testimony, they themselves did not experience the traumatic event of the massacre. How they remember this event depends on how they are “willing to identify with what is relevant to her or him and to build new interpretations out of that memorial material.” It is through this mural that the

community of Perquín decided to work through collective loss and in doing so can
distinguish past, present, and future events. The act of eating in this mural
demonstrates the possibility of working through trauma within a community. Eating
symbolizes sharing the pain of the past. Just as the food is being digested in an
individual’s body so too is that pain. The events of the past are being broken down
and understood in order to cope with the community’s loss in the present. Through
this mural and the act of eating as a community, these events can become a narrative
that is integrated into the community.20

In a completely different way, a mural named “Las Memorias de los Niños del
Ayer” also represents a community that copes with collective loss. This mural was
painted in 2008 in consultation with the elderly community of Perquín. They were
asked to share their memories of their youth to represent Perquín in the 1940s. The
elders narrated and drew the town of Perquín of their childhood. The school used this
project to enhance oral traditions so that younger generations may know their
ancestral history. The colorful mural depicts older men and women working in the
field or practicing their daily chores in the town while others work outside their
houses. These people are surrounded by the green mountainous landscape typical of
Morazán. Part of the school’s mission is the understanding that the communities they
are working with have been suffering trauma, violence, and prejudice.21 With this in
mind, the project of collecting oral histories from the elders of Perquín can be a way
in which the school tries to have the community work through their collective loss.

20 Brison, Trauma Narratives, 39.
21 <www.wallsofhope.org> Within the school there is a program called the “Perquín model” that travels to different parts of the world with the mission to help communities that have been inflicted by trauma and violence.
Brison argues that “in order to construct self-narratives, we need not only the words with which to tell our stories, but also an audience able and willing to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them.” Traumatic memories usually cannot be narrated because of the severity of the experience. However, when there are people who are willing to listen, like the teachers of the School of Arts in Perquín, and an outlet to speak about trauma, like the mural, people or communities may be able to work through their trauma.

However, in narrating what these elders described, I propose that the murals showcase responses to loss as opposed to working through the community’s loss. The School of Perquín wanted the elders to speak about their childhood and, in doing so, the elders would have to remember the injustices they experienced as a poor marginalized community which were, in a way, conducive to the war. However, the elders did not focus on their marginalization but rather a community that they formed part of. In doing so, the elders represented a form of nostalgia for a supposedly perfect past. Even though the mural focuses on a different time period of El Salvador from the Civil War, it represents a utopic past – it recognizes what it has lost in the past and tries to recuperate it in this space.

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In negotiating what the mural would consist of, many older individuals described a perfect past where everyone in the community shared everything with each other. Although these communities were poor, it was said that everyone lived in harmony. While the previous mural depicts national and international activist of human rights, this mural encourages the everyday citizens of Morazán to speak firmly about the inequalities that led to the war. Here, everything seems peaceful. People are interacting with each other, working, or in route to school in the mural. These actions, and the endless amounts of trees located in the background of this mural, represent not only a town but also a community that works with each other. As historian Dominick LaCapra expresses in his study of the difference between absence and loss in trauma narratives, “When absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully

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23 Various interviews conducted in August 2012.
unified community.”\textsuperscript{24} The Civil War was a traumatic event for most Salvadoran citizens, especially for a region like Morazán that was known as the epicenter of oppositional activities in the country. Therefore, it is possible that the elderly population has expressed their anger and trauma of the event by remembering and narrating their past as a utopia. At the same time, however, one could argue that they are resisting what El Salvador has become—a country that claims to live in peace and democracy when, as Moodie suggests, the aftermath of the Civil War seems worse than the war itself due to the escalation of crime and other problems.\textsuperscript{25}

The elders of the community of Perquín not only expose their traumatic reactions through a utopic past but also through the subtle markers in the mural itself. The mural is called \textit{Las memorias de los niños del ayer}, (Memories of Yesterday’s Children) yet the main figures of the mural are not children but older adults. Many interpretations can be given in choosing to use adults and not children, but it is possible that, since these individuals experienced the Civil War during their late adulthood, they cannot see themselves outside of that time period. Brison remarks that survivors of trauma frequently feel that they are not the same person they were before the trauma.\textsuperscript{26} Therefore, these elderly people decided to depict themselves as older adults, a projection of themselves during the war, instead of depicting their childhood through a child’s point of view. With this decision, the elders reveal that the past was not necessarily a perfect utopia but a painful past that cannot be forgotten or ignored.

\textsuperscript{26} Brison, \textit{Traumatic Narratives}, 39.
In her study on cultural production after the war in El Salvador, Rodríguez asks an important question that the School of Perquín tries to answer through artistic practices: “How will El Salvador and the rest of Central America deal with the enduring effects of violence and trauma under State imperatives of national reconciliation, forgetting, and impunity?” Both murals, although in different ways, remember the events of the Civil War. As opposed to using the ‘official’ form of written history, these murals decided to represent collective oral histories in public spaces focusing on civilian life. Although the murals are not performances in and of themselves, through the community’s negotiation of what the murals would consist of and the act of communal painting, the murals enable a remembrance of the past while also representing traumatic reactions. The murals create a space where knowledge of the past and its presence in the present is produced. They also provide different lenses to understand how traumatic events are represented. Along the same lines, Villa, a Chilean play about Villa Grimaldi’s transformation into an ideal space for remembering, also portrays various perspectives of handling past traumatic events in the present.

First performed in 2010 in Santiago, Calderon’s play Villa poses many important questions about remodeling a former torture center that has been transformed into a park and how the site should be remembered. Should victims of the Chilean dictatorship be honored by portraying the horrors they experienced? Is it possible to represent the horrors of the past without trivializing them? Or should the memories of horrors experienced by victims be erased? These are the questions that

27 Rodríguez, Dividing the Isthmus, 103.
three female characters, who go by the name of Alejandra, have to grapple with in the play. Set in Londres 38, the opening act revolves around a simple voting session in which the three characters are trying to decide how to change Villa Grimaldi. This eventually turns into a highly charged debate, one that former prisoners of the detention center actually experienced over a decade ago. Two options for adapting this center into a place of remembrance are under consideration – either turning Villa Grimaldi into a sinister house that vividly represents the horrors of torture or transforming it into a contemporary art museum that does not mention the past.

During the course of seventy minutes, the audience witnesses how these women are burdened by their own personal traumas and by the responsibility of deciding how to interpret and showcase a part of Chile’s history.

In the opening act, the three Alejandras sit around a table in an impersonal space where they vote anonymously for option A or B. Initially, it is unknown to the audience what the options are. It is soon discovered that, once the votes are in and counted, one vote has gone for option A, the other for option B, while the third is deemed null because one of the Alejandras has written *Marichiweu*, which Alejandra #1 defines as “*diez veces venceremos*” (we shall overcome ten times) in the Mapudungun language of some Chilean indigenous communities. While no one admits to writing this word, for the duration of the play, the characters become suspicious of each other and place the blame on one another. Throughout the play,

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28 It is worth noting that the name Alejandra was used by the playwright to portray the common practice, by leftist insurgency groups, of changing one’s name during the dictatorship as a way to protect their identity. The name Alejandra was specifically chosen to reference an infamous former member of the MIR, widely known in Chile as *la flaca Alejandra*. She is known for being a collaborator for the DINA when she was detained and until now, *la flaca Alejandra* is regarded as a traitor because she gave up the names of many of her partners. For the purposes of this chapter I will not delve more into the name Alejandra and will address the characters of this play as Alejandra #1, Alejandra #2, and Alejandra #3.
two of the women defend a specific position regarding the fate of Villa Grimaldi with
great detail. However, as the play progresses they still cannot agree on one option and
tensions begin to arise. What is even more frustrating for these women is the reason
they hold the future of Villa Grimaldi in their hands—a reason that gradually
becomes evident to the audience.

Throughout the play, the women are troubled in choosing whether to turn
Villa into a sinister house that fully represents the torture the victims of Villa
experienced. Alejandra #1 even suggests dividing the male and female visitors into
separate groups just as the victims were once divided, and having the tour be given by
former prisoners to illustrate the trauma Villa Grimaldi has caused. Alejandra #3
believes that turning Villa Grimaldi into an art museum that explicitly states in the
beginning that those who died in Villa were Marxist is more productive than
showcasing a false representation of horror. She focuses on what would have become
of the victims if they did not die or disappear and proposes to use modern technology
to illustrate these untaken roads. Each case they defend is exaggerated through
dialogue to demonstrate the absurdity of fully narrating the violence victims
experienced, whether explicitly or not. In the end, the characters come to a partial
consensus to turn Villa into a field of grass with nothing else in it because they claim
people react differently to trauma. At the end of the play, however, it is never clear
exactly what will happen to Villa Grimaldi after we witness this long and tense
discussion.

Because this play was presented in 2010 and 2011 in Chile—several years
after the actual Villa was turned into a park—and continues to be shown in Chile and
abroad, it reflects how the uses of spaces linked to State violence are still central to how human rights organizations pay tribute to victims of those spaces. This play was presented in Santiago, Chile at four important locations – Villa Grimaldi Parque por la Paz, the park that had already been transformed at that point, Londres 38 and Casa de Memoria José Domingo Cañas, both former torture centers that are now sites of memory and the Museo de la Memoria y Derechos Humanos – all of which store and transmit memories of the dictatorship. Performing this play in these locations highlights the differences between what Diana Taylor calls archival and embodied memories. While these sites of memory contain records of violence in documents, photographs, and even ruins, such as the tower in Villa Grimaldi that we discussed previously, the play Villa is a performance and embodies what cannot be archived – trauma and emotional responses to negotiations and the act of negotiating the past. The very fact that this play is performed in former torture centers creates a sense of connection between the performance and the space that can only be understood in watching the performance itself in that space. As such, these experiences cannot be archived. Performing in these spaces allows for a more realistic reflection about turning former torture centers into sites of memory.

Traumatic responses to torture are present throughout the play in the characters’ movements, their dialogue, and even in their silences. The question of what to do with Villa Grimaldi directly correlates with how to deal with a traumatic event. Why is it necessary to change Villa Grimaldi’s park in the play? In historical terms, survivors of this torture center had already made the decision to turn Villa’s ruins into a park for peace when the play was written. Why then, is it necessary to
recreate the process of transforming Villa Grimaldi again? In choosing to do so, Calderón forces the audience to remember what Villa Grimaldi symbolized for victims before it turned into a park. Important questions on how to engage people in a reflection of this violent period of Chilean history without trivializing the sufferings of the victims and on how to choose from two very distinct ways of remembering are posed when the Alejandras defend options A and B.

After arguing about who wrote *Marichiweu* as opposed to choosing option A or B, the women decide to arrive at a consensus on one option or find a way to combine the two. In order for that to happen, a debate is staged: Alejandra #1 defends the sinister house while Alejandra #3 defends the contemporary art museum. Alejandra #2 decides to serve as the moderator. Option A focuses on recreating the sufferings victims experienced for the visitors. Alejandra proposes to recreate the silences, the smell, and every irrelevant detail of Villa Grimaldi as a torture center in order to create a false past:

Compraría una cama metálica, compraría cables y enchufes, compraría uniformes, compraría ropa con solapa, compraría olor a caca. Para crear una especie de disneylandia de realidad realista. Para que la gente se sintiera como sintiendo esto tiene que haber sentido la gente que sentía.29

The materials Alejandra #1 would buy in order to recreate the experiences of victims represents a system of repression and torture. However, she mentions buying the smell of excrement that would allow people to remember through their sensory stimuli or at least imagine the intangible experiences of victims. The manner in which she speaks about these materials demonstrates the move from rational to irrational.

29 “I’d buy a metallic bed, I’d buy cables and plugs, I’d buy uniforms, I’d buy stray jackets, I’d buy the smell of excrement. To create a sort of Disneyland of realistic reality. So that the people could feel that feeling this way was probably the way those people felt. (my translation). Guillermo Calderón, *Villa*. (Santiago: Fundación Teatro a Mil, 2010), 16.
She wants to buy an intangible effect—the smell of excrement—and claims that the experience may become realistic with that smell but the odor cannot stimulate a memory of torture for visitors who did not experience such horrors. Yet, Alejandra #1 acknowledges this likelihood and states the word ‘sentir,’ to feel, repeatedly. The possibility of feeling the way people felt in Villa bridges the characters to the audience, and more generally, the victim to the free person. In other words, by recreating the detention center in a way that visitors can ‘feel’ what visitors felt, they would understand what victims experienced. Survivors would be tour guides acting as themselves; they would possibly be reliving their traumas in front of visitors. This idea resonates with Taylor’s analysis of a tour of Villa Grimaldi given by Pedro Alejandro Matta, a survivor of this center. She analyzes how Matta moves around the space where he was once tortured and concludes that his performance animates the space and keeps it alive.\(^{30}\) In this sense, if survivors were to give tours of Villa Grimaldi, their tours would allow visitors to reinsert their tortured bodies into that space. Taylor expresses that Matta’s body connects her with what Pinochet wanted to disappear; walking with a survivor allows her to understand the past, a past that is not hers but one that she can imagine just by viewing Matta’s performance. Through survivors’ performances trauma becomes understandable to others and themselves. Yet, this is complicated when Alejandra #1 states that this space will become a disneylandia, which implicates an artificial place created for an audience. Not only is this place a simulation but also a place where visitors are happy and have fun. She wants visitors to feel victims’ past experiences but then juxtaposes it with the idea of

creating an imaginative place where happiness reigns. Her explanation of what Villa should become is unclear and contradictory, which represents an impossibility of returning this former torture center to its original state during the dictatorship.

The unclear and irrational ideas that Alejandra #1 invents to defend creating Villa into a sinister house and her actions during this time depict a reaction to loss and, to a certain extent, trauma. After defending the first option, Alejandra #1 herself expresses symptoms of trauma on stage. After she simulates a conversation someone would be having with their mother, explaining how great it was to visit the reconstructed Villa, Alejandra puts her head down and stays silent for a very long time. After a while, she leaves the room in a sort of trance. She seems to be fully impacted by what she described and had to defend for the sake of choosing an option. Through this scene, Villa makes visible a history of collective trauma transmitted throughout generations. Calderón chooses three women, whom, we as spectators discover at the end are daughters of survivors of Villa Grimaldi. He does so in order to illustrate the intergenerational trauma that exists in the communities of victims’ families. Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of trauma to what LaCapra calls secondary witnesses, people who were not directly affected by violence but who have witnessed how trauma has affected their loved ones.31

Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch states that the concept of “postmemory,” the relationship of the second generation to traumatic experiences of their parents, helps to understand the transmission of traumatic memories from survivors to their children. She argues that these children can “constitute memories [of their parents’

31 LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," 699.
experiences] in their own right” because they inherit their parents’ experiences through the “stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up.”³² Through the dramatic revelation of their indirect rape, we come to understand that although these women were not directly tortured, their experiences correlate with the trauma their mothers, victims of rape at the detention center, still experience. Just as trauma was transmitted to these women through observing and possibly listening to their mothers’ reaction to trauma, these women also transmit their reactions of trauma to the audience.

When the women’s relationship to Villa Grimaldi as secondary witnesses is revealed, the audience suddenly bears witnesses to past trauma as listeners. According to Dori Laub, the audiences as listeners can “partake in the struggle of the victims with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past.”³³ Although the traumatic reactions of the Alejandras are being transmitted to the audience, as Laub suggests, the listener’s experience may overlap with the victim but he does not become a victim himself. In order to be an active listener and allow for a testimony to be spoken, he has to be aware of what is being transmitted to him.³⁴ In National Trauma in Postdictatorship Latin American Literature, Wirshing analyzes Ariel Dorfman’s Death and a Maiden, a play about a woman reliving her trauma after interacting with her torturer. Wirshing concludes that “national trauma is beyond representation […] but with an audience to witness, the untranslatable and

³⁴ Ibid.
nonrepresentational is transformed into communication, respect, and understanding.”35 Through this exposure to the reactions of the characters, the audience can listen and observe various traumatic reactions as part of the testimonial process. Not only is the audience listening to Alejandra #1, they also have to listen to her silences that suggest a sort of protection and retreat from hearing herself speak about that traumatic experience. Alejandra #1 wanted to protect herself from what Laub states is “the fear of being listened to—and of listening to themselves.”36 Her moment of silence represents one form of undergoing a traumatic response; she retreated back to an emotional exile to not speak of that moment again.

The response of Alejandra #3 to intergenerational trauma is completely different. In defending option B, she proposes to create an aesthetically pleasing white museum. It has to be a beautiful place because, unlike what Alejandra #1 believes, and for the purposes of this debate, she has to act as if she believes that people cannot live in constant suffering. People should not be traumatized their whole lives. Instead, she defends a museum that stores the details of every victim – from photos of their childhood, to when they were captured and with whom they interacted in Villa, to the ‘road not taken’. Alejandra #3 defends her option in a confusing way. She proposes the use of modern technology such as MACs throughout the museum in order to showcase every victim’s experience and possible alternative life if those victims were not detained in Villa Grimaldi. She states,

Si uno hace clic, menú, bajar, doble clic: clic clic, en un ícono que dice: EL CAMINO NO TOMADO, aparece lo que su familia y sus amigos piensan que habría pasado con ella si no hubiera pasado nada. Si nunca hubiera estado en

Alejandra #3’s is jumbled. In addition, she contradicts her purpose of moving on from pain and loss because the multimedia presentation that she proposes causes visitors to become depressed. It seems that she is more concerned with the modern technology’s use than the actual purpose of the museum. When she finishes defending it, the other two Alejandras congratulate her and Alejandra #3 is surprised because she does not believe what she just defended. Toward the end of the play, after the women realize that coming to a consensus is impossible for them, they decide to vote again. Once the votes are in, it is revealed that one of the Alejandras voted for Marichiweu again. After this revelation, Alejandra #3 expresses her desire for Villa to become a painful experience for visitors but then changes her mind and decides that it is best if Villa became an empty space, so that people can react however they want to this center. Alejandra #3 then states that she was raped and sometimes she is traumatized and other days she wants to laugh. Alejandra #1 begins to console her while Alejandra #3 begins to talk about her experience. While she talks, she places her head in her palms and displays confusion and resignation. She cannot cope with the pressures of choosing what to do with Villa Grimaldi until the other women agree with her proposal. Her body movements describe a form of grief, one which she cannot handle.

37 “If one does click, menu, scroll down, double click: click click, in an icon that says: THE ROAD NOT TAKEN, appears what the victim’s family and friends believe would have occurred in her life if nothing happened. If she would have not been in Villa. Then one sees, of course, with multimedia, that this man would have become a cyclist. Or run marathons. Click, click… So the idea is that people see this and understand that this cannot be. It is an imagination. This did not and cannot happen. Then they become depressed and close the MAC. Clac.” (my translation) Calderón, Villa, 21.
without the support of others.

Later in the play, the same woman, Alejandra #3, reveals that she was the one who voted *Marichiweu*. She declares that she wants people to suffer just like she did as a way to pay tribute to the victims: “Quiero espantar. Quiero denunciarlos a todos. Quiero estar furiosa. Y eso es como un homenaje para los que no vivieron.”

Alejandra #3’s true intentions are unveiled here and she demonstrates her anger and rage for what occurred in Villa. She does not want to create a *disneylandia* where visitors are aware that what they experience is false. Alejandra #3 wants to condemn people to the same horrors the victims experience in order to pay homage to those victims. However, she acknowledges that she should not try to impose her suffering unto anyone because people respond differently to it. When the characters reveal that they are products of rape, they express that their mothers have also responded differently to trauma. Through the characters’ conversation, it is revealed to the audience that their mothers were all raped by DINA officers in the Villa. All of the women resemble their mothers’ torturer and this is a constant reminder of the rape and torture for two of the mothers. For that reason, Alejandra #1 and Alejandra #2 claim that their mothers cannot interact with them, as a response to their traumatic experience. Alejandra #3’s mother, however, does not react that way and is always expressing her love to her daughter. Though she did not inherit her mother’s Mapuche

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38The use of the word *Marichiweu* in this play and in this time reflects the Mapuche struggle of that time. After the return of democracy in Chile, the Mapuche’s struggles for land have intensified and have held numerous protests and hunger strikes. In 2010, more than thirty Mapuche political prisoners were on hunger strikes for eighty-two days to protest the Antiterrorist legislation that has been used in Mapuche cases that have no link to terrorism. “President Piñera Shroud’s the Seige of a Nation,” Mapuche International Link, September 29, 2010, <http://www.mapuche-nation.org/english/html/news/pr-98.htm> (accessed March 10, 2013).

39“I want to scare. I want to denounce everyone. I wan to be furious. And that is like paying tribute to those who are no longer alive” (my translation) Calderón, *Villa*, 55.
characteristics since she resembles her mother’s torturer, Alejandra #3 is able to connect with her mother and her experience. Through this revelation, the women conclude that everyone reacts differently to trauma and that it may be better to create Villa into a grass field. This field would be empty and will not influence anyone’s way of remembering because, as the characters state, some people have not recovered from their experiences while others have been able to cope with their loss. Therefore, a grass field is seen as the best option for Villa but nothing is settled. This open field may also imply a lack of resolution. Throughout the play, the characters could not come to a consensus on what to do with Villa therefore, this empty field is a way of demonstrating the difficulties of deciding what to do with a past that has not been left unsettled by the State.

Since there are so many ways of dealing with trauma, it is difficult to find the ‘right’ way to commemorate the victims of Villa Grimaldi. Calderón illustrates through his characters that memory is subjective and sometimes there cannot be an agreement on how to pay tribute to the victims of Villa Grimaldi in a public place. However, what is certain is that both of these options establish a narrative of what happened in Villa, albeit in generally different ways. As seen in these debates, it is survivors and victims’ families who are in charge of narrating a past that has yet to heal the open wounds of the dictatorship. In El Mercurio, Chile’s national newspaper, Guillermo Calderón states that his play may allow people to investigate the past that has still been left unresolved. In other words, for those seventy minutes that the audience is together witnessing the performance, they understand that the dictatorship

is still an important topic to discuss because Chile is still living the consequences of it.

Villa’s relationship to the present-day Chile of la transición is revealed more powerfully in the short play that always follows Villa, almost like an epilogue. Discurso is a monologue by President Bachelet interpreted by the three Alejandras who performs a fictional exit speech. Here Bachelet speaks about her achievements and failures in office. This monologue is related to Villa Grimaldi and the ongoing debates on what to do with spaces of torture because Bachelet herself passed through Villa as a detainee though she rarely speaks about it. She, as many other victims, has reacted to her detainment at Villa Grimaldi differently than others. Bachelet usually does not speak about her experiences in Villa and when she does she mentions it in general terms.\textsuperscript{41} Her experience and her public life complicates her decision to speak about her torture or not but whether or not she does her past history has greatly influenced her decisions as President. As we saw in the previous chapter, Bachelet pushed for a museum of memory that would showcase the history of the dictatorship and refused to give Pinochet military honors upon his death, among other things. These acts were bold moves for Bachelet since they acknowledge that many people did die and disappear during the dictatorship.

By following Villa with Discurso, the play is challenging whether or not victims of the dictatorship can identify themselves with Bachelet, a woman who was

\textsuperscript{41} For the first time during her presidency, President Bachelet visited Villa Grimaldi during the inauguration of a theater in that place. In her speech at Villa she states that she was held prisoner at Villa. She does not mention whether or not she was tortured but announces that she considers herself lucky to be alive. Archeology of Memory, directed by Quique Cruz and Marilyn Mulford (Berkley: Interfaze Educational Production, 2008), DVD.
tortured and became the first female President of Chile and is emblematic of the transition to democracy. When the three women interpret Bachelet one of them states that she feels out of character, like if someone where to put words in her mouth and have a voice that is not hers. With this new voice, Bachelet speaks about her past—her exile, her torture, and her role as a socialist leader that has to administer a neoliberal model of government. In using three different women who are secondary witnesses to trauma and have no resemblance to Bachelet, Calderón leaves the audience questioning whether the President can truly speak for the tortured voices. When she talks about her torture through these women, she is hesitant and corrects herself. For example, when one of the women speaking for her says she would forgive her torturers, the other two correct her and say “si es que me hubieran torturado.” When Bachelet detaches herself from torture, she detaches herself from the community of victims that express they have experienced torture. Therefore, we are left wondering whether she can legitimately speak for the voices of the victims of the dictatorship. Through this complex representation of President Bachelet, the play demonstrates her own difficulties of coping with her torture as a public figure and whether she can ever represent the collective experiences of survivors of Villa Grimaldi to the greater society of Chile.

Both the murals in Perquín, El Salvador and Calderón’s play about Villa Grimaldi analyze and complicate how the past and its traumatic events are presented through cultural artifacts. In very distinct ways, these artifacts and performance demonstrate a lack of resolution of the traumatic past. The murals and performances

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42 “If I was ever tortured” (my translation). Guillermo Calderón, *Discurso* (Santiago: Fundación Teatro a Mil, 2010), 2
have resisted the discourse of peace and resolution that the States have promoted after the dictatorship in Chile and the Civil War in El Salvador. They are uneasy reminders that there has not been a solution to the problems that derived from these conflicts. *La última cena de Morazán* reminds people that individuals such as Monseñor Romero died at the hands of State violence and are remembered in the mural as prophets of human rights. The other mural *Las memorias de los niños del ayer* complicates how one remembers the past by juxtaposing the representation of a utopic past and the portrayal of a painful past in where individuals cannot remember themselves outside of that past. *Villa* and *Discurso* questions the possibility of showcasing the torture experiences of victims in sites of memory and whether those who survived torture can identify with the President of Chile who is also a survivor. In light of the States’ policies, these cultural artifacts and performances work to resist a discourse of reconciliation and instead complicate the possibility of achieving such objective.
EPILOGUE

La Flor del Izote: A Stubborn Desire to Remember and Commemorate

“¿Por qué seguir hurgando la herida [de la memoria]? Porque un país que no tiene memoria difícilmente puede tener un futuro sólido.” – Guillermo Nuñez

In 2010, the United Nations declared March 24th as International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims. This day recognizes the importance of promoting the memory of victims of violent conflicts and of discovering, even unsightly, truths. In addition, this day acknowledges people who have devoted their lives to promoting and protecting human rights. In particular this commemoration recognizes the life and work of Monseñor Romero who died previously on that day in 1980 for defending human rights in El Salvador during the Civil War. Many human rights organizations and sites of memory in Chile and El Salvador have recognized the significance of this day including the National Institute of Human Rights in Chile that announced the necessity of revealing the truth about its period of dictatorship and especially the truth about the fate of those who disappeared under it. In El Salvador, the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen traveled all around the country to commemorate the life of Monseñor Romero through photographic exhibitions of his life this year.

1 “Why continue digging at the memory wounds? Because a country that does not have memory cannot have a sold future” (my translation). Guillermo Nuñez is a Chilean artist. This quote is found in Archeology of Memory, directed by Quique Cruz and Marilyn Mulford (Berkley: Interfaze Educational Production, 2008), DVD.

It has been thirty three years since Monseñor Romero was assassinated, yet his memory is still alive through monumentos, murals, and commemorative acts like the International Day to Truth. His legacy as a priest who defended the poor has reappeared in discourses on human rights, and his important work and values have been recognized internationally. This resurrection of his life and work demonstrates the continuous struggles for the right to truth and justice by the civilian population. Human rights is still a pertinent topic for many societies that have transitioned into democracy. Memories of Monseñor Romero are being used to continue fighting for the right to the truth and justice.

In anticipation of Chile’s fortieth anniversary of the coup d’état on September 11, 2013, some institutions, like MMDH, began commemorating this day in early January with an exhibition called “Fragmentos/Memorias/Imágenes: a 40 años del golpe.” The exhibition consists of a series of photographs that demonstrate the events of that day. In addition, the museum has hosted and will continue to host activities such as a showing of various documentaries on the years of the dictatorship, holding seminars and debates, and traveling around Chile to showcase their audiovisual archives.3 On March 23rd of this year, President Funes reminded Salvadoran society that three years ago he asked for forgiveness in the name of the State for the murder of Monseñor Romero. He also mentioned that he promoted the International Day for the Right to Truth in the United Nations. Funes stated that as President he did everything he could to achieve justice for Monseñor Romero’s death by enforcing the judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights that recommended a judicial

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3 María Luisa Ortiz, e-mail message to author, March 27, 2013.
investigation to identify the perpetrators of his death. However, he declares it is now up to the legislative and judicial bodies to provide justice.\

Even though the UN recommends that governments expose human rights violations in order to foster accountability for violations, the Chilean and Salvadoran State have not completely responded to that recommendation. Instead, they have both promoted what we could call an easy reconciliation and resolution to the violent conflicts that occurred more than three decades ago. As a number of historians and critics have shown, these States have favored a discourse of moving forward that seeks to portray their countries as democratic, free market advocates where investment and tourism are welcome. The Chilean and Salvadoran States have encouraged nation building through discourses of reconciliation and are more focused on selling themselves as capitalist, democratic nations instead of prioritizing the historical problems found within the State.

Ana Patricia Rodríguez argues that after the war, the Salvadoran State promoted a narrative of peace. After the signing of the Peace Accords, which ended the war, the State claimed that Salvadorans were living in a peaceful country. This narrative allowed a neoliberal economy to thrive in this region and has prioritized capitalistic growth as opposed to the social needs of society.\(^5\) Many Salvadorans are aware that peace was not present in the country due to higher increase of violence and


\(^5\) Ana Patricia Rodríguez, \textit{Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures}, (Austin: University of Texas, 2009), 201.
the continuous economic disparity in the region and have resisted this narrative with the erections of monumentos created by the civilian population.

Frazier demonstrates through her fieldwork on funerary practices in Chile, that some individuals also refuse the Chilean State’s narrative concerning reconciliation and find various ways to continue commemorating victims of the dictatorship to remind society that impunity still reigns and it is necessary to remember in order to denounce the State and achieve justice. In this context, as a response to the International Day for the Right to the Truth, the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Santiago held various activities under the name “Dialogue with History” that gave an opportunity to high school students to talk to individuals who were active during the dictatorship and during Chile’s transition into democracy. With this dialogue, students were able to read sections of the Rettig Report in order to understand the importance of revealing the truth. The museum acknowledges that Chilean society, especially generations that did not experience the dictatorship, need to be informed about the truth of the State’s role during that period. This is of contemporary importance since the State, under the right-wing government of Sebastian Piñera (2010-2014), has purposefully ignored any issue related to the dictatorship.

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7 Museo de la memoria y los derechos humanos, Con “Diálogos con la historia” Museo conmemora el Día de la Verdad, <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/con-%E2%80%9Cdialogos-con-la-historia%E2%80%9D-museo-conmemora-el-dia-de-la-verdad/> (accessed April 1, 2013).

8 During an interview in Brazil in 2012, a reporter asked Piñera about the debates that rose against the recent presentation of a documentary commemorating Augusto Pinochet in Chile. Piñera avoided the question until his administration abruptly ended the recorded interview.
In El Salvador, the State has not completely ignored the issues related to the Civil War, especially under a President who belongs to the FMLN (now in power), but has prioritized becoming a democratic nation over responding to the pleas of its citizens for justice. As seen with President Obama’s visit to El Salvador in 2011, President Funes declared that El Salvador is enjoying the fruits of democracy and has learned from its past in order to have a solid future for the nation. This kind of rhetoric is at play in the State’s recent recognition of the *Monumento a la memoria y la verdad* as a national cultural site. After many years of asking the State to recognize this site as part of national patrimony, the State finally responded. To declare this *monumento* a cultural site, the State placed a blue emblem, which theoretically protects the site from being destroyed at any time in history in the last blank plaque representing the hundreds of unidentified people who disappeared during the Civil War.⁹ Now that this *monumento* is recognized by the State as a legitimate memory marker, does it affect its narrative in any way? Does the State’s approval of this site complicate the *monumento*’s mission of demanding truth and accountability?

Throughout this project, I have analyzed sites of memory that have not been completely supported or financed by the State. I have proposed that these sites have questioned and impeded easy resolutions to conflicts in their respective countries by utilizing a number of strategies. These sites of memory have criticized the concept of transition and post-war narratives by denouncing the State for not holding itself accountable and for not working with human rights and civilian groups in their

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struggle for justice. Now that the *Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad* is officially recognized by the State, does it then lose its ability to challenge the reconciliation narrative the State promotes?

Some people believe this act by the State is a step forward in bringing an end to impunity for perpetrators during the conflict. This can be true but there is also a possibility that the *monumento* loses the significance it once had as a burial site and as a space to denounce the injustices of the State. Although it is too early to confirm, the act of declaring this space as a cultural site might lead to arguments that the civilians’ demands for truth and accountability have been met. The State pleases the desire of the *Comité Pro Monumento de las Víctimas Civiles de Violaciones de Derechos Humanos* to declare this site as national patrimony, but the question remains whether this involves any type of revelation of any information in the judicial and political realms. In order to place the blue emblem on the blank plaque, the posters of people who have disappeared that were plastered by individuals throughout the years to denounce the lack of information given by the State about the disappeared had to be removed. This not only signifies a moment of erasure of proof that victims were disappeared but also of denying people individual ways of remembering and asking for justice in their own manner. It also implies an insistence on forgetting that there is a gapping hole of information in Salvadoran society—what happened to the victims etched in the wall? By naming the *monumento* a cultural site, the State may not deem it necessary to respond to the demands for truth and justice since they have already responded to civilian and human rights groups’ request to consider the *Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad* as national patrimony.
Acknowledging the names of the victims of the Civil War that are already carved out in the *monumento* may be the State’s approach to a quick but not full reconciliation.

Yet, civilian and human rights groups have continued to prod at the wounds of their country’s conflict still in recent memory by continuing to demand accountability and justice. Although a State might proclaim that the nation is living in peace, civilian and human rights groups continue to resist reconciliation through commemorative acts. For instance, Guillermo Calderon’s play *Villa* is being shown once again in MMDH this year. In El Salvador, the *Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen* has worked consistently to collect oral histories of the various conflicts such as the 1932 massacre and the Civil War. In the past decade, Consalvi and historian Jeffrey Gould have worked together to produce documentary films on such conflicts. Last year, the museum published a book that collects the oral memories of community members in Chalatenango. With projects like these, the museum and individuals have resisted the formula of forgiving and forgetting the past and, instead, insist on remembering the struggles of individuals in order to inform future generations about Salvadoran conflicts and the way people have risen up against forgetting. Through performances and artifacts, such as the Salvadoran documentary films, there seems to be an important drive to continue remembering and challenging silences and oblivion today.

Throughout my thesis, I have looked at spaces and artifacts dedicated to memory and commemorations that have been created more than a decade ago, but that still question who to remember, how to commemorate, and what to forget. Although these sites are active reminders of Chile’s dictatorship and El Salvador’s
Civil War, issues of remembrance and tensions between State and citizen narratives have not concluded with their installations. These tensions and issues are still played out in monumentos, museums, artifacts and performances, popular culture such as movies and songs, and in political discourse. An important Chilean filmmaker, Pablo Larraín recently released a movie called “NO” about the 1988 Chilean plebiscite that allowed Chilean to decide that Pinochet would not continue in power. This movie has stirred up questions on how to remember a specific event that led to the end of the dictatorship, on who was in charge of ending the dictatorship and on whether there were truly significant changes after it ended. This film has also brought up tensions by raising the question of who can narrate this painful past. Is the film a simplistic way of remembering the work of a complex coalition of individuals who fought to overthrow the dictatorship? Is it problematic that Larraín, coming from a family that supported Pinochet, has the authority to represent this part of history? Even more recently, questions on who has the right to promote and articulate memory have been raised in El Salvador. During the twentieth anniversary of the first presentation of the Truth Commission in El Salvador, Vice President Salvador Sánchez Cerén published a new version of the Salvadoran Truth Commission with a prologue he wrote himself. In his prologue, Cerén declares that the government is committed to the truth, justice, and reparation. Although Cerén is part of the FMLN, he still represents the State that committed violence against its citizens, just like Chilean President Bachelet did during her term. Should the State have control in adding a new section to the Truth

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Commission even if this new section declares its commitment to truth and justice? All these questions are left up for discussion, but in analyzing the political landscape behind the creation of monumentos, museums, artifacts and performances one may understand why events related to the dictatorship in Chile and the Civil War in El Salvador are still left unresolved and how they are still open wounds.

The constant rise of issues of these past conflicts in the present are proof that although States continuously try to move forward without acknowledging their role in these issues, there cannot be an easy solution to these violent conflicts. Civilian and human rights groups persistently insist on remembering and commemorating victims. Their demands for their government’s accountability have not been silenced. Although their demands may have been ignored and trampled over, their struggle to remember victims continues to blossom. They are like the Izote flower, the national flower of El Salvador, reborn out of its own injured trunk. The memories of Chilean and Salvadoran victims, as this stubborn flower, never dies.

Figure 4.1: The Izote flower located in the Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad. San Salvador. Image taken by author.
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