

THE LANDSCAPE AND THE CITY IN CHILEAN POETRY: A CARTOGRAPHY OF POETIC TRADITION. TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC OF POST-DICTATORSHIP¹

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Abstract || This article will present a panorama of recent Chilean poetry, ranging from the 1970s to post-dictatorship. The poems are mainly focused on landscape and the city as a way of preserving both individual and collective memory.

Keywords || Chilean | Poetry | Post-dictatorship | Memory | Landscape | City

El país es un ancho paraguas mojado, son turbios e insalubres los crepúsculos, la melancolía lloriquea en los tejados, lloriquea en los tejados y las ciudades están llenas de hojas, llenas de hojas, llenas de hojas

(Pablo de Rokha, *Los Gemidos*).

When discussing the poetry of post-dictatorship Chile, references to the city space where the relationship between the national poetic tradition and more recent poetry can be seen remain fundamental. A poetic trajectory through the national territory becomes visible, making it possible to read the land itself and poems about its landscape through to the social history, politics and culture of Chile. In order to avoid a grandiloquent discussion on this topic, a term coined by the poet Enrique Lihn, 'escritura móvil' or 'mobile writing', which appears in his text 'La escritura móvil', can be employed. This way of seeing writing concerns the relation between space and the poem:

La escritura continua que brota de sus propios desplazamientos sin reconocer en ese espacio lugares de preferencia, sitios privilegiados [...] palabras que se desplazan continuamente incurriendo en todas las discontinuidades, subiendo o bajando de un nivel a otro, abarcando varios espacios a la vez con las consiguientes dificultades para avanzar, razonablemente, en alguna dirección (Lihn, 1977: 104).

This type of writing emerges from the grand narrative of books like Neruda's *El canto general* (1950), and continues into the intimist and ironic work of Enrique Lihn, in his various poems about the city in collections such as *A partir de Manhattan* (1979), *Paris, situación irregular* (1977) or *El Paseo Ahumada* (1983). This also applies to Pablo de Rokha's poetry in a more avant-garde text like *Los gemidos* (1922), or the language of marginal voices that populate the collection *La Tirana* (1983), by Diego Maquieira².

Another particularly violent vision of the city space of Santiago is found in the text *La Manoseada* (1987) by Sergio Parra, where this violence becomes personified in a woman's body. Other antecedents or seminal works in relation to the city in this type of mobile writing appear in the collection *Santiago Waria* (2000) by Elvira Hernández, or the poem 'Santiago Punk' by Carmen Berenguer, included in her book *Huellas de siglo* (1987). The range of texts cited in this article confirms that it is possible to discuss the establishment of poetic and literary space within the context of Chilean poetry, a shift in the lyric written by these poets.

This slippage continued into the nineties; however, it was tinged with grievance, a non-conformity with the past and the place it was declared. These literary references, sources or readings are apparent in the poetic group of the nineties, the first generation published after

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1 | This article was published within the research plan of Fondecyt Postdoctoral Project N° 3130371: RUINAS EN EL PAISAJE DE LA MEMORIA. RECORRIDO POR LA PRODUCCION LITERARIA Y CINEMATOGRAFICA CHILENA DE LA ULTIMA DECADA. Universidad de Chile

2 | According to Matías Ayala (2009), this collection presents a de-centering of the subject, demonstrated in the feminine voice of the speaker, and the protagonists of *La tirana* appear incomplete in two ways. On the one hand, their depiction is not finished, and on the other, they are presented as 'imbalanced' ('desequilibrados'), like a ghostly, disembodied voice where they establish themselves as something *other* that speaks from *within* the subject and *through* him. In fact, in Maquieira's books it is never possible to really determine which of the speakers take on a body in the text, nor to determine features that clearly differentiate one from the other. In a similar way, it is difficult to establish limits between pain and pleasure, torture and lust, past and present, reality and fantasy (Ayala, 2009: 13).

democracy was reestablished. For these poets, the hurried works undertaken in the eighties formed an important part of the reading sources they could access. These works were not in book form, but in many cases were photocopies passed ‘from hand to hand,’ or through the magazines that were regularly published during the dictatorship, like *Apsi* or *La Bicicleta*, which inspired them to begin writing poetry in the nineties.

Towards the end of the seventies, and during the mid-eighties, emblematic books by the previous generation of seventies alumni were published, for example, *La ciudad* (1979) by Gonzalo Millán, *Anteparaíso* (1982) by Raúl Zurita, and later *La bandera de Chile* by Elvira Hernández (1987), although the last two belong to the eighties generation.³ These texts allude to national images and symbols that were rarely represented in previous poetic texts, like the national flag:

Nadie ha dicho una palabra sobre la Bandera de Chile
en el porte en la tela
en todo su desierto cuadrilongo
no la han nombrado
La Bandera de Chile
Ausente
(Hernández, 1991:1-6).

In *La bandera de Chile*, the image of the flag represents an absence in the text, which remains unsaid. This meaning given to the flag can be seen in the very structure of the poem, printed on the page with a large blank space in the second verse, reinforcing the idea of absence. *La bandera de Chile* was written towards the end of the dictatorship and was first circulated as photocopies; the collection has since been reedited and refers to this piece of the nation that, although it is a constant presence, it remains absent from discourse and from this space, it extends into ‘all of its rectangular desert’ (*en todo su desierto cuadrilongo*). This image of the desert as a lifeless, infertile, dry place intensifies the idea of absence and the lack of vitality that surrounds the poem. Hernández’s text undoubtedly positions itself as an important reference for current Chilean poetry, and by including the flag in poetic discourse, she names something that has been seen so often that it has been forgotten. Throughout the book, this national symbol will embody what has happened to the country, its feminized corporeality displaying its wounds and the significance of the flag in recent history. Additionally, it marks the place that these signs of the national occupy in the collective imaginary.⁴

Although it hails from a different poetic tradition, a book like *Anteparaíso* (1982) by Raúl Zurita also names an alternative space for the nation. This great collection possesses a more messianic tone, with the lyrical speaker rebuking an almighty creator, who could be

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3 | The periodization of generations of poets is in accordance with Tomás Harris’ contribution to the anthology of Chilean poetry, written in conjunction with Teresa Calderón (Calderón, VV. AA, 1996).

4 | Undoubtedly the text by Hernández can be read in conjunction with Benedict Anderson’s suggestion in *Imagined Communities* (1983) regarding the function of national symbols in creating a national community.

described as panoptic. The poetic voice questions this divine being about the horrors experienced in the territory by describing the new landscape. This can be seen in the poem 'Las playas de Chile I' where the poetic voice announces:

No eran esas playas que encontraron sino más bien el clarear
del cielo frente a sus ojos albo como si no fuera de ellos
en todo Chile espejeando las abiertas llagas que lavaban [...]

Porque no eran esas las playas que encontraron sino el volcarse
de todas las llagas sobre ellos blancas dolidas sobre sí
cayéndoles como una bendición que les fijara en sus pupilas [...]

Porque no eran esas las costas que encontraron sino sus propias
llagas extendiéndose hasta ser la playa donde todo Chile comenzó
a arrojar sus vestimentas al agua radiantes esplendorosos
lavando frente a otros los bastardos destinos que lloraron
(Zurita, 1982: 4-6, 14-16, 23-26).

The poem tells of the wounds that extend across the national territory, in this case the beaches, where 'all of Chile began / to hurl their clothes into the radiant splendid water' ('...*todo Chile comenzó / a arrojar sus vestimentas al agua radiantes esplendorosos*') (Zurita, 1982: 24-25). This image refers not only to a country or a national territory, but speaks to those who inhabit it and have been stripped of their being and identity, hurling their clothes into the water. This, however, is tinged with irony as the verse concludes with the adjectives 'radiant' and 'splendid.' This poem speaks of a specific place, the beach, as a never-ending space that extends this pain, and where the fates, plural, are 'bastard'. Zurita's poem shows that as a national territory, Chile has become an injured body, which can be read as both text and discourse about the difficulty of the eighties. In this way, it discusses the historic moment of the dictatorship, where pain could be signalled and situated in a location like the beaches, which have been fractured by the disappearance of bodies.

The texts by Hernández and Zurita are emblematic of different historical moments and have undoubtedly influenced the poetry of the generation formed towards the end of the dictatorship. Although there was a distance from these events, a certain degree of understanding was felt for these poets, and for the post-dictatorship problems.

Carmen Berenguer represents another important figure in national literature, and published one of her most emblematic texts during the dictatorship. *Huellas de siglo* (1987) includes an interesting and symptomatic text that not only sketches the space but also the sounds of a place like Santiago in the poem 'Santiago Punk'. Berenguer ascribes to the sensation of destruction and disillusion that coincides with the affirmation put forth in Cynthia Rimsky's article 'Una evocación de los ochenta. La década del Delirio', which

appeared in the newspaper *La Nación* in 2000. It reads:

Se llora lo que murió, la violencia de afuera que se pega a la piel.
Leíamos los posanálisis de la gran caída, de todas las caídas, todos los pedazos se iban cayendo, había una radicalidad conceptual. Adquirimos conciencia de dónde estaba el poder, dónde estaba uno ante el poder, Le vimos las patas, las pantalones, los ojos, lo desnudamos (Rimsky, 2000: 13).

Berenguer's affirmation alludes to this loss and disenchantment, a feeling shared by the younger generation. The allusive poem also discusses the advent of economic change and the new commercial brands that materialized, contrasting to the old:

1.
Punk, Punk
War, war. Der Krieg, Der Krieg
Bailecito color Obispo
La libertad pechitos al aire
Jeans, sweaters de cachemira
Punk artesanal made in Chile
Punk de paz
La democracia de pelito corto
Punk, Punk, Der Krieg, Der Krieg
Beau monde. Jet-set rightists
Jet-set leftists (1-11).

In 'Santiago Punk' Carmen Berenguer announces and anticipates the city that Santiago is becoming with its new regime. The poem expresses an obvious mistrust of the joys of consumption and change, and can be read as a depiction of the new urban environment and the eventuality of the eighties during the military dictatorship. The speaker sees the irony in this new space and new discourse on the modernity of consumption, just like the promises of progress made by the dictatorship:

...La alameda Bernardo O'Higgins en el exilio
Alameda las delicias, caramelos candy
Nylon, nylon made in Hong-Kong
Parque Arauco
Lonconao... (35-39).

The rhythms of the poem resemble punk music and aesthetics; it lists things, commercial brands, streets and proclamations, which are intermingled with ideological discourse. Similarly, it documents new lexicon, sonorities and foreign languages that begin to appear in the trajectory around this new city at the end of the eighties. The 'Santiago Punk' of the eighties complains about a decadent place in a constant process of deconstruction.

Therefore, the young people of the nineties are the same people who lived through pain, but a public pain, as a generation that lived

through the deception and also saw hopes for a new Chile dashed by the advent of democracy and the installation of a neoliberal regime. This discontentment translates into assertions by the poet Germán Carrasco, who began publishing his work at the end of the nineties, saying that Chile was not a 'land of poets,' but a 'land of thugs,' where cronyism and connections were the way to land certain jobs or favours, and formed a fundamental part of this regime and of the general national existence.⁵

Once this defeat was accepted, the pain was created from the only possible form of writing, displacing these discontinuities, or to paraphrase Lihn in 'La escritura móvil', writing on top of the ruins, but without trying to reconstruct what is no longer there. That was not the task of poetry or the poet, nor was there any desire for a reconstructive nostalgia, but rather to build something upon the ruins as a counter-discourse.

In the nineties, the poet was transformed into a transient who travelled through this space and read it with these texts in his head. In his writing he described the space from different perspectives, including them as protagonists in this wandering. The language itself became a character, along with repeated images that allude to the city and the particular route of the poet. Moving from the general to the specific, a glance over the titles of various collections serves to demonstrate how the urban space acts as protagonist: *Santiago de memoria* by Roberto Merino (1997), *Santiago Waria* by Elvira Hernández (1992), *Bello Barrio* by Mauricio Redolés (1987), *Multicancha* by Germán Carrasco (2005), *Zen para peatones* by David Bustos (2004), *Mudanzas* by Alejandro Zambra (2004), to name but a few. Others travelled through this space, but with a more accelerated rhythm, like the recently published *Banda Sonora* by Andrés Anwandter (2006). This collection works as an example of residual, fragmented memory, characteristic of the poetic aesthetic of the nineties. Moreover, this book of poems shows the trajectory of the poet's eye through the urban space, as the author-transient collects a discourse about the inhabited space among the ruins.

Banda Sonora is structured as a compendium of images and sounds that accompany certain routes: both mental and physical, as visual as they are auditory. Yet, if an analogy is made to the reading of *Banda Sonora*, this could be music heard in the metro as part of a daily routine, the movement of people, or something that reminds us of other *bandas sonoras* or soundtracks. This memory is clearly composed of fragments. The word 'remains' is repeated various times throughout the text, in order to indicate the miniscule images and snippets which constitute the text: 'rayas / de tiza / fugaz / un esbozo / del día / que asoma / detrás de / los ceros' (Anwandter, 2006: 44-51). The sound-collection, or compendium of memories

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5 | The idea of calling Chile a 'land of thugs' appears in the poem 'Un panorama' by Germán Carrasco, which is included in his book *Calas* (2003): '*En el país de las patotas / el guacho se muere de hambre*' (2003: 65-66).

and drawings is composed with difficulty, not of verses, but rather of faltering voices that are almost syllabic, resembling the final credits of a film, like something that must be read in a hurry, as one reader may have said to the author. This work necessitates a rhythm that does not allow for stops, just like a hidden route through the city. This way of reading makes the reader think pictures, like the game where images pass quickly in front of the eyes, in a type of slide show of a city or a space, or a scene that needs this soundtrack.

This results in a paradoxical, minimalist portrait, and the apparent cleansing of language and almost monosyllabic pronunciation causes images to become saturated, with each word leaving no space for the next. These poems also discuss a possible objectivist memory, a word which can be interchanged with look or even memory echoes that note down and record these silent sounds and intervals. As such, this 'soundtrack' works with the scenery consisting of memories of boats, of beaches, or of the remains and sounds that approach our ears and then retreat while we turn the pages of the book. As a text, *Banda Sonora* partly consists of remains of memory, described in the following lines from the collection: 'el / patio / trasero / del ojo / termina / repleto / de trastos / que vez / en la tele / visión / la bodega / del cráneo / conserva / recuerdos / en frascos / de vidrio' (Anwandter, 2006: 1-16). When reading the text, questions arise about how an author's memory is constructed in the post-dictatorship period. The response is found in the text itself and according to the poet, the transparent images are like glass jars: 'que a veces / la escoba / destroza al / barrer / se escurren / por entre / las tablas / al suelo / minucias / que atroces / criaturas / codician' (Anwandter, 2006: 17-28).

The book explores visual writing, with obvious nods to an objectivist aesthetic, opening with a quote by the English poet Tom Raworth, who describes how 'a door in the TV opened'. The open door in this epigraph functions as a synthesis of the text, suggesting that everything is open and fits between the edges of this door, just like the frame around this soundtrack. Undoubtedly, *Banda Sonora* represents a hugely inspirational poem that attempts to record all the images that populate the minds of those who wander, listen, watch, draw and touch on a daily basis, all contributing to the formation of a memory in the following way: 'que el banco / subsidia / la mala / memoria / a puñados / de pasas / construye / su propio / penal / con un trozo de pizza / recién / calentado' (Anwandter, 2006: 63-74). Thus memory sometimes appears in the pages peppered with silences and absences. In this way, memory also opens and closes the book, similar to the image of night. These silences are filled by us, the readers, and therefore we understand the significance of 'roedores / merodean / la memoria / reunida / en el sótano / bajo / las tablas / crepitan / y orquestan / monótona / mente' (Anwandter,

2006: 1-11).

Themes such as memory, the trajectory through it and the places or spaces where the speaker wanders appear in the text and have given rise to poetic works that seem to question and respond to a time in the same text. In this way, the book functions as a residue of memory, which responds to Nelly Richard's argument about post-dictatorship literature, claiming it is equally obsessed with remains and residues, maintaining: 'son a menudo el arte y la literatura los que recogen el desafío de convertir lo desunificado, lo inconexo y lo vagabundo de los restos en una "poética de la memoria"' (Richard, 2001: 79). In this case we see the opposite, since this is a memory of fragments and traces that are more personal and do not attempt to unify anything, nor are they explicit in their discourse regarding memory or any particular poetics. This memory stores recollections which are activated upon reading and rereading these 'little letters' that form a band and make a background music for the reading.

For Andrés Anwandter, the creative process functions like a dream, in that it unifies different aspects of writing: sound, image, and word. He describes it as such in an interview with the newspaper *Las Últimas Noticias*, later saying that he identified with the idea put forth by Frederic Jameson, who discusses 'surrealism without the unconscious', an idea that the poet takes on, calling it 'recycling': 'because I think that contemporary daily life leaves us with pure remains, visual and auditive trash that is easily broken down' (Cortínez, 2006).⁶ In this sense, for Anwandter the material of memory derives from structure of the book itself as much as the recycling that creates it. This route is riddled with visuality and takes the reader through spaces that are as urban as they are mental, crossed with sounds, smells and images. These features of Anwandter's writing do not permit one sole discourse which would give a univocal meaning to this trajectory and writing, and one would be insufficient, since they infer and unite various meanings.

The city of Santiago is also sought and recreated in the particular poetic geography of Alejandra del Río, one of the few women who were part of the group that emerged in the nineties. Del Río invokes a feminine subjectivity, using 'I', along with the experience of being a woman in the nineties. The poet constructs or questions her own gender identity with words, starting with the title of the collection, *El yo cactus* (1994). The first poem begins as follows: 'Yo no soy moderna / o tal vez lo soy. Vivo con mi sangre puesta / goteando encima de las cosas' (Del Río, 1994: 1-3). In this book the speaker, from the very title, defines and declares their individuality by saying 'I cactus.' In the same volume, the poem 'Santiago (visiones)' shows a route around the city that the 'I' wanders, simultaneously questioning what it sees. In this text the 'I,' transient, wanderer and poet, splits

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6 | 'Poeta se echa el pollo con los ojos cerrados,' interview with Andrés Anwandter in *Las Últimas Noticias*, online edition from 24 November 2006.

itself in two and stops in front of these visions:

Vengo llegando cada día a esta ciudad.
Ser extranjero no causa penas
cuando uno mismo junta sus cosas
marca boletos de un solo destino
apea las ansias en toda estación y de cada plaza jamás se marcha.
Ser el extranjero, por la tarde, del arraigo
cuando el resto se va entero a su casa absorbido
entonces la ciudad se refugia y se perdona,
hace tiempo cesaron los quejidos:
las gentes de Santiago tienen presa el alma
y fuera de ella sólo espejos que reflejan monumentos
(Del Río, 1994: 1-13).

In these lines we can observe the poetic voice as a stranger in this place, a feeling reinforced by being foreign: 'Vengo llegando cada día a esta ciudad. / Ser extranjero no causa penas' (Del Río, 1994: 1-2). The speaker does not talk about Santiago as a city, but notes the distancing caused by being an alien, giving preference to a non-possessive demonstrative adjective, calling it 'this city' (*esta ciudad*), and reinforcing the feeling of estrangement. This takes on another meaning with the word 'people' (*gente*) in place of 'country' (*país*). 'People' is the expression generally used to talk about the inhabitants of the national territory. On the other hand, the use of the term 'village' or 'people' (*pueblo*) insinuates the widely slated term from the seventies and the socialist government of Salvador Allende. In this text the poetic voice identifies with a different individuality and with this unpleasant aftertaste of the dictatorship: 'las gentes de Santiago tienen presa el alma.' Later in the poem the vision of the city implied in the title appears, populated with mirrors which reflect only empty monuments. However, the text calls for this previous memory not to be forgotten, since the people have imprisoned its soul, in spite of the fact that 'the moaning stopped a while back' (*'hace tiempo cesaron los quejidos'*). The feeling of estrangement is another recurring theme in this text and in Del Río's work in general, as seen in the epigraph by Greek poet Constantino Kavafis which precedes the poem: 'La ciudad te seguirá'.

The poem 'Simultánea y remota (Santiago de Chile, año 1980)' from the collection *Material mente diario* (2009) is situated in a specific moment, and narrates the view of an eight-year-old girl, who writes letters to her friend in exile:

Tengo ocho años
mis ocho años no tienen inocencia
en casa pregunto
por qué afuera es así
nada se me oculta
lo perdido hace llorar a mi madre
mi padre promete el futuro

mi niñera se llama muerte
mi nodriza me atrae a su corvo
debo proteger a mi hermana
no quiero que vea
(Del Río, 2009: 32-42).

In the text the speaker describes a personal memory, set in a time that many people lived through as children, growing up during the eighties. In the poem, the 'I' again refers to a little girl, and allows for a reconstruction of identity by revisiting her life at eight years old. However, this 'I' splits in two and becomes the friend who is both other and self. The poem utilizes a retrospective look, and its vision of past, present and future remain tinged with fear and defeat:

nada se me oculta
lo perdido hace llorar a mi madre
mi padre promete el futuro
mi niñera se llama muerte
(Del Río, 2009: 36-39).

The poetic voice of the eight-year-old girl is composed as an *imposto*, naïve only in tone, since the speaker has signalled that her eight years were not of innocence: 'mis ocho años no tienen inocencia' (Del Río, 1994: 33). However, this voice that sometimes speaks in the plural gets confused with an equal 'us', or rather a division of the self:

Quiero que sigamos coleccionando estampillas
que limpiemos con té los ojos de las palomas ciegas
habrá atardeceres más adelante
la sobrevida se nos ha prometido
padre sabe camuflar muy bien el color de las fieras
y largar su ponzoñoso latido de inteligencia
madre posee la firmeza requerida
mientras trenza nuestros cabellos
explica El Capital
separa malvados de bienhechores
.....
Tengo ocho años y una amiga en el exilio
le dirijo esquelas y páginas de mi diario
ese país
es el único destino de mi cariño
soy fiel guardo en un sitio seguro
el castillo que escudriñamos entre la montaña y el río
nombramos a todo habitante del misterio
súbdito y posesión de nuestro amor
soy fiel
hacia allá me dirijo todo el tiempo
patria remota y simultánea.

Tengo ocho años y si cumplo cien
Seguiré teniendo ocho años
(Del Río, 2009: 43-52, 75-89).

The poetic voice chooses to be eight years old and live in this 'distant and simultaneous homeland' (*'patria remota y simultánea'*), where hope and the utopia of childhood still exist. The text gives us the girl's viewpoint of this idealised homeland seen from exile, where her friend also lives, 'the sole destination of my affection': '*el único destino de mi cariño*' (Del Río, 2009: 78). The hope that they will write letters and the affectionate tone inferred by the reader is visible in the following lines: '*habrá atardecere más adelante / la sobrevida se nos ha prometido*'. This promise is kept as well as maintaining the same age in the poem, eight, and the constant offering to write letters to this friend in exile. These letters are and will be a testimony of the passage between writing from inside and outside, from exile and from the destination of the speaker's affection, where the here and there are unknown. In this way, writing letters is the only way of maintaining contact between the two countries, the two spaces and the two moments, the present and the future.

Another body of poetic work that emerged in the nineties concerning ideas of memory and the city in the post-dictatorship years belongs to Julio Carrasco, specifically some of the texts included in *Sumatra* (2005). Carrasco is the son of a member of the folkloric leftist group Quilapayún, and as a child he lived in exile in Cuba, amongst other countries. His poetry returns to certain personal experiences of the dictatorship, such as those of his father during military rule. These memories are evoked in his poetry, starting with a personal experience of a visit to FIDAE (the International Air Fair) with a viewpoint that is not merely nostalgic, but rather a demand or inquiry. Questions about the event and ethics arise in the poem, concerning the situation that the speaker faces:

POR RAZONES AZAROSAS ESTUVE en la inauguración de la Feria
Internacional del Aire, FIDAE 2002. Alguna suerte de rutina
incluía un breve discurso del capellán de la Fuerza Aérea con
el remate de «...que la bendición de dios descienda sobre los
presentes y permanezca por siempre. Así sea».
En el pasado mi padre había sufrido prisión y tortura en las mazmorras
de la Fuerza Aérea de Chile, y pensé «los asistentes, personas
de bien, y yo secretamente odioso» (Carrasco, 2005: 1-8).

Through its arrangement on the page, the poem seems to contain distinct voices and registers, which are framed by signs like commas, capital letters and different inflections of speech which appear: religious, military and personal. All three are interspersed in the text and allow for different voices that move in the language of the speaker and the poem to be read, allowing the vestiges of powers that the poetic voice cannot escape to be seen for what they are. In this text the speaker gives the poem a tone of religious prayer, which requires the response of the believers in a ceremony or ritual. In this case, the prayer and the response are both declared by the same poetic voice. The tone of the poem continues with this interior and

explicit reflection, which revolves around the change experienced in the city space, an idea that resurges in the following lines:

Cada época trae un modo diferente en las costumbres. Así, puesto en una situación similar veinte años atrás, alzar la voz habría sido elegante. Tal conclusión me hizo detenerme a pensar sobre la ética de la ciudad moderna:
morir como tigre o vivir como zorro (Carrasco, 2005: 9-13).

The text ends with a sort of calm and the only possible solution for all the voices. Finally, the speaker identifies with the figure of the citizen who, on this occasion, has decided to change his name:

De cualquier manera, la Fuerza Aérea de Chile no es mi enemigo, sino lo que está sobre ella. Y tampoco eso tiene poder sobre mi destino. Más sereno dije para mis adentros, «soy Abdul Jamal y no necesito de tu bendición» (Carrasco, 2005: 14-18).

The speaker alludes to a particular ethics in order to face what the poem describes: 'to die like a tiger or live like a fox' (*'morir como tigre o vivir como zorro'*), which could represent the only way of facing certain feelings in relation to Chile and its armed forces and allow him to live in the city, and moreover, permit him to inhabit it. Carrasco's text provides us with a viewpoint dealing with the return to democracy from a seemingly personal experience. The poem proposes to critically revise the past and suggests a particular method of looking towards the present. In the text, the speaker faces up to their role as a citizen and opts for calm and serenity, as we see in the final verses of the poem, since he knows raising his voice to express his ideas or non-conformity is not customary. The poetic voice finishes by giving itself a proper name from outside the Chilean national context, where one of Spanish origin would be expected; instead he uses a name that does not belong to the Christian tradition. However, this naming becomes a gesture that allows the speaker to separate himself from the scene, the past and the ethical question, ending the poem as follows: '...Más sereno dije para mis adentros, "soy Abdul / Jamal y no necesito de tu bendición"' (Carrasco, 2005:17-18).

If art and literature play a role in reuniting small parts to form a 'poetics of memory' (*'poética de la memoria'*), as Richard (2001) describes, a diversity of supports and discourses within post-dictatorship artistic production in general and contemporary poetry will therefore reside in breaks and cracks. The common strand of these poetic works is reflected in the return to childhood, not only from a nostalgic standpoint, but often from a harsh critical view of modernity and transition. In this obsession with remains and fragments, the privileged dimension of the city makes the image of a decomposing landscape visible, 'reduced to a rubbish dump of memories' (*'reducido a un basural de recuerdos'*) (Richard, 2001: 80). A text like Julio Carrasco's (2005)

from his book *Sumatra*, escapes being part of so-called testimonial literature. However, it allows readers and criticism to deal with an ethics that constantly contradicts past and present, just as it recalls certain lost ideals. The texts by Carrasco, Anwandter (2006) and the other poems discussed in this article show distinct ways of living in and writing or rewriting the city. They constantly question and scrutinize themselves to explore the possibility of inhabiting or observing the city, at an almost frenetic rhythm like *Banda Sonora* by Anwandter (2006), or if the effect is feeling like a stranger who always returns as a foreigner, as in the text by Alejandra del Río (2009).

If on the one hand the poetry of the eighties separates itself from that of the nineties in regard to its themes, the purely conditional politics, on the other hand, it has faced criticism for the near absence of temporal political framing. In this way, we can move towards nostalgia and then consider if these poetic works are truly dispossessed. The neighbourhood, the trajectory of the eye through the city, the memory of a little girl and the Air Fair are not spaces where memory is commemorated, but they elaborate a new discourse between a more personal memory of the dictatorship (for example, exile) and the accelerated modernisation of neoliberal Chile's economic success with humour, melancholy and pain for the loss of certain physical and mental spaces.

In his 1997 article, 'Bares desiertos y calles sin nombres: literatura y experiencia en tiempos sombríos,' Idelber Avelar refers to post-dictatorship literature and questions the mode of transmission of personal experience from after this period, wondering about the role of literature after its break with collective memory. According to Avelar (1997), a large portion of post-dictatorship literature has turned to experience, in the sense of how to relate, remember and contribute to the commercialization of memory, a typical phenomenon of the period. His idea of post-dictatorship literature remains debatable in the case of poetry, a genre he does not refer to due to the difficulty in commercializing poetic work, yet it operates in a particular way when relating memory.

It is interesting to note how these poetic discourses circulate and the extent of their reach. Memory is for sale and moves as a product in a supportive market, where the poet figure is rendered almost irrelevant in relating this experience. However, in this case, discourses like the returning exile and those who have seen changes in the space where they grew up, which are framed by their post-dictatorship experience and the commercialization of the city and of memory, gain validity in describing a Santiago which is not only modernised and crushed by progress, but also overshadowed by these registers.

Avelar (1997) affirms that places chosen in post-dictatorship

literature generally coincide in their depiction of the city, using places like demolished bars and houses, and spaces that are empty, abandoned and in ruins. That is to say, an urban space in 'zero degrees of historicity' ('*su grado cero de historicidad*') (Avelar, 1997: 39). In this sense they present themselves as dispossessed of meaning, or ahistorical, like a sampler of residues or the obsolete and as signifier of the obsession of post-dictatorship literature. These texts are characterised by their use of obsolete narrations, rubbish dumps of memory, decomposing landscapes in the process of extinction. According to Nelly Richard, the images captured by this literature often constitute particular visions of the city where much of the aesthetic is centered specifically on post-dictatorship production:

Si es cierto que las estéticas postdictatoriales suelen obsesionarse con «fragmentos geográfico-históricos y ruinas urbanas»,⁷ el mundo de la ciudad abre una dimensión privilegiada para imprimir visualmente la imagen de un paisaje en descomposición, reducido a un basural de recuerdos, cadáveres, escombros, vestigios de experiencia, a los que se suma una serie de desechos culturales compuestos por ilusiones perdidas, narraciones obsoletas, estilos pretéritos, tradiciones caducas (Richard, 2001: 79-80).

Germán Carrasco expresses Richard's idea regarding the obsession with the space-residues of modernity of the post-dictatorship city in his description of disappearing sports fields, as a vacant terrain dispossessed of meaning. The poem is titled 'Plazas cerradas y playas privadas':

Como monos
los niños trepan la reja de la multicancha
(no se sabe si es privada o fue cerrada por la municipalidad:
da lo mismo, no se puede ingresar),
monos-araña
cuyas siluetas elongan y patalean en un crepúsculo de yodo:
si se cae alguno,
se mata
(porque las rejas son altas para que las pelotas
no salgan del recinto cuando juegan tenis o fútbol)
(Carrasco, 2005: 1-10).

The speaker creates a critical portrait of the public spaces that have been closed or privatised; rejecting these disappearances that have taken place in the name of progress and the spectacular modernity of Santiago. In this way, the poems cited show that desire for these advances and progress is not shared by any of the transient-poets. Carrasco's vision belongs to someone who does not walk around this place nor remember it, but bids it farewell, at the same time noticing the forward drive of modernity which moves at the rhythm of the closure of sports fields and public squares. Therefore, these texts (to paraphrase Richard) utilise 'residues and metaphors' ('*residuos y metáforas*') to represent what is no longer there: the

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7 | Avelar (1997: 23) cited in Richard, *Residuos y Metáforas* (2001).

beautiful neighbourhood and the hip-hop neighbourhood. Both texts recount the experiences of the modern subject, the post-dictatorship poet who goes out or used to go out to walk around the city, whose discourse is tinged in some way with nostalgia as well as complaint. A huge part of the memory of Santiago and the dictatorship has been appropriated by the state and its discourses of consensus, where it is better to speak of transition than post-dictatorship, since this word seems charged with other, stronger, and more violent connotations.

The reading of these two poems, or text-palimpsests, permits a route around the city and its spaces through the text itself, and therefore allows movement through the spaces that have been reconstructed. These are transformed into experiences of memory similar to walking around the neighbourhoods or living there. The custom of wandering around the streets or the public spaces of the city is becoming more and more infrequent. Today, these trajectories exist only in texts and the nostalgia for those who lived in utopia or like a farewell for someone who has seen their surroundings change rapidly and the arrival of democracy or '*demosgracias*' in the words of reporter Pedro Lemebel.

In an interview published not long after the appearance of *Multicancha*, Germán Carrasco states: 'I have no interest in nostalgia, I am interested in mobilising other feelings, accuracy, happiness, resentment. Or rather analysis, where there is no place for nostalgia'. ('*No me interesa la nostalgia, me interesa movilizar otros sentimientos, de precisión, de alegría, de rencor. O bien el análisis, en el que la nostalgia no tendría lugar*'). (Laguna, 2006). He also poses questions about the disappearance of public spaces, saying that the public tends to disappear, that Vega will disappear, which in his opinion is the best thing about Santiago and represents an important literary theme. For him it is possible to mobilize alternative reflections and propose other frames 'without Herculean effort' ('*sin afán épico*'), as he suggests in the collection *Multicancha*. In the sense of mobilising and proposing alternative frames or readings of this disappearance, we can insert the concept of reflective nostalgia, a term coined by Svetlana Boym in her study of nostalgia in contemporary societies, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001). For Boym, reflective nostalgia constitutes a feeling that is characterised by someone who loves detail, ruins and fragments. These space-residues that are threatened with disappearance generate a feeling that can present midnight melancholy, as opposed to restorative nostalgia. This nostalgia always tries to regress and in some way reconstruct the homeland and home; in contrast, reflective nostalgia fears returning with the same vigour. Boym synthesises it as follows:

Reflective nostalgia has elements of both mourning and melancholia. While its loss is never completely recalled, it has some connection to the

loss of collective frameworks of memory. Reflective nostalgia is a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future (Boym, 2001: 55).

The reflective nostalgia described by Boym and the form in which it expresses pain is analogous to the poetry of Carrasco, Del Río and Anwandter, in that this pain is expressed through the loss of the space that is disappearing. There is also a connotation of grief in seeing a moment of life disappear. However, this nostalgia in the poetry of the nineties is not just defined as a loss, but also looks to a future; there is total disillusionment because no solution is possible. These texts are a portrait of the post-dictatorship city, of nostalgia, of memories and thus make up a geography and a palimpsest of old Santiago, which has been threatened with disappearance as much by nature with its earthquakes, as by political and economic events, the dictatorship and the current neoliberal victory. It is not the role of poetry or poets to change this new order; however, their voices represent or open the debate, with a backdrop of spaces, sports fields or multi-use sports fields that are closing before their eyes and the patience of the transients, who say goodbye to the neighbourhood, to the city or to the 'beautiful neighbourhood' (*'bello barrio'*), as Redolés writes, longing for this non-existent place.⁸

Similarly, the city represents a fragmented landscape constructed upon ruins, and becomes the place where all the changes experienced during bygone years can be seen, or in Boym's words: 'the modern city is the poet's imperfect home' (2001: 21). The street has been converted into the poet's imperfect home, making them citizens of the space within as much as the space outside. However, at the beginnings of modernity, what constitutes the street and the purely public aspects of a city will become ruins in later modernity, specifically with the advent of the neoliberal city.⁹

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8 | The poem 'Bello Barrio' is found in the collected works of Redolés' poetry, *Estar o el estilo de mis matemáticas* (2000). Originally, Redolés himself recited the poem on a cassette that also contained his musical compositions, called *Bello Barrio* (1987).

9 | The sense of inhabiting the city as a poetic space from the route the poet follows points to a re-reading of Baudelaire, who in some way represents the first modern poet to portray wandering through the city, and of whom Walter Benjamin claims '[t]he street becomes a dwelling for the flâneur; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls' (1997: 37).

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