

“A Documentary of Remembering” : Revolutionizing Documentary  
Filmmaking Through Patricio Guzmán Trilogy “Nostalgia de la  
Luz”(2010), “El Botón de Nácar”(2015) and “La Cordillera de los  
Sueños”(2019)

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December 13, 2024

**“A Documentary of Remembering” : Revolutionizing Documentary Filmmaking Through Patricio Guzmán Trilogy “Nostalgia de la Luz”(2010), “El Botón de Nácar”(2015) and “La Cordillera de los Sueños”(2019)**

**Abstract**

The Augusto Pinochet dictatorship of Chile that spanned from 1973 to 1990 was characterized for its political repression of those who opposed the reigning government. By examining Patricio Guzman’s, most recent trilogy of films *Nostalgia de la Luz* (2010), *El Botón de Nácar* (2015) and *La Cordillera de los Sueños* (2019), the viewer is engaged to participate in the reconstruction of Chilean history through the use of Guzmán’s subjective perspective. This paper examines the powerful use of testimony in the filmmaker’s trilogy against the preconceived “objective” role that documentary has occupied within the cinematic universe. With the evocation of emotion, Guzmán is able to create a collective memory of an era that many have tried to erase.

**The Pinochet Coup of 1973**

Often when thinking of revolution, the ones who die are immortalized forever in history. This is the case for Chile that succumbed as a result of the Augusto Pinochet coup d'etat of 1973. On the wake of September 11, 1973 , parts of the Chilean military began an assault against the already established presidency of Salvador Allende and his sympathizers, resulting in the burning of the presidential palace, Chilean artwork , mass arrests and killings amongst people in support

of Allende. Before the dictatorship, Chile had been one of the primary Latin American countries in which the United States used foreign aid to ensure the spread of democracy throughout South America. Under the guise of spreading democracy, the U.S. had numerous financial stakes in exportation trades specifically having to do with the mining of copper within Chile. When Salvador Allende was elected as president of Chile in 1970, his presidency threatened not only the control of foreign exports to the U.S. but the introduction of socialism to the country through his pro-worker policies and ownership of exports to keep the profits of Chile for its people . Although his run was not a perfect pitch for socialism, as Karl Marx once said, “Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it” which Allende sought to do as he worked hard to implement policies such as the nationalization of its copper industry. He was also in conversation with other third world countries to create the New International Economic Order (NIEO) which would essentially regulate the neocolonial financial control over South America. It is strongly assumed that the United States had a playing role in the execution of the coup because of its imperialistic ties with Chile which were at risk with the rise of the socialistic policies implemented by Salvador Allende. Even though this was a time of repression and fear amongst most of Chile that did not agree with the brutal persecution of its opposers, the creative and academic sectors fought back against the onslaught with protests and organized demonstrations. Out of these people , Patricio Guzmán, a film student at the time, dedicated his time to recording everything on black and white film stock. With this footage, he was able to make his notorious three part documentary “La Batalla de Chile”(1975-1979) which showed the brutality and oppression that took place during the coup and gained him international fame. Guzmán has become essential in reminding the world of the horrors of the Pinochet

dictatorship and its modern day effects with his emotive but striking approach to his documentaries.

To understand how Guzmán's approach to documentary has evolved over the years, it is necessary to negate the relationship between the widely accepted general mode of documentary filmmaking and its assumed manifestation of empirical reality. In her essay "Documentary Is/Not a Name" Trinh T. Minha states, "There is no such thing as *documentary*," denouncing this notion that a documentary occupies this omnipresent role devoid of subjectivity throughout its creation(76). Through this lens, Guzmán's later film works are freed from the *mise-en-place* of documentary filmmaking coined by John Grierson in the late 1920s. Although Guzmán does employ classic documentary mechanisms like the interview, the use of himself as a narrator, and archival footage, all of these tools are repurposed into a documentary of remembering rather than preserving. This concept of a 'documentary of remembering' refers to Guzmán's unique approach of using these filmic devices to not only record and preserve historical events but to engage the audience in remembering and understanding the past actively as it was strongly denied during the years Pinochet was in power and after. As Minha comments in her article, "To compose is not always synonymous with ordering-so-as-to-persuade, and to give the filmed document another sense, another meaning, is not necessarily to distort it. If life's paradoxes and complexities are not to be suppressed, the question of degree and nuance is incessantly crucial." allowing the filmmaker's subjective perspective to not be hidden but rather embraced as the images on screen are complex themselves as this was an era of Chile characterized by its volatile and unstable set of events(89). The audience has no escape from the pictures of trauma through Guzmán's camera lens detailing the military assault with tear gas, water hoses and even the death of a cameraman

shot by the Pinochet military, confronting them with the past and creating a personal and emotional connection with the subject matter. As a victim of exile by the fascist Pinochet Regime in Chile, Guzmán has made his trademark in the film community with his unique attitude to the documentary, which Maria del Pilar Melgarejo calls in her essay “A Poetic of Beauty: Nature, Memory and Resilience in El Boton de Nacar/The Pearl Button (2015)” a "poetic of beauty," referring to the films as works of art that evoke a feeling in the spectator through images of itself reconstructing an identity that was actively erased rather than the banality of the genre to be "instructional." This paper will analyze Guzmán's revolutionary approach to the accepted objectivity used widely in the documentary mode versus his use of subjectivity in his films to actively engage his audience through the act of remembering to produce a collective memory amongst the Chilean people by focusing on Guzmán's most recent trilogy of films, which include "Nostalgia de la Luz" (2010), "El Botón de Nácar" (2015), and "La Cordillera de los Sueños" (2019).

In order to correctly see how collective memory is constructed, this paper is divided into three parts: "Nostalgia de la Luz"(2010) which connects the question of existentialism derived from looking at the cosmos and the disappeared political prisoners in the Atacama desert, "El Boton de Nacar"(2015) as it presents the roots of violence in Chile starting with the removal of its Indigenous people who used water as a means of survival which would later become the graveyard of those disappeared by regime and lastly, "La Cordillera de los Sueños"(2019) detailing the effects of the Pinochet regime on contemporary Chile as foreign interference still is prevalent in the mining sector of the Andes Mountains that cover most of Chile and the promise

of a more open discussion of the oppression effaced from the country's general population since the coup of 1973.

Understanding the past through the present is the active role of the camera in Guzmán's three films. However, understanding the past means reliving its emotions, implications, and fear. Documentary films first emerged in 1922 with Robert Flaherty's, "Nanook of the North," which follows the life of an Inuit man named Nanook and his family in the Canadian Arctic. Often regarded as the cornerstone of non-fiction filmmaking, its distinctive qualities make this film an example of the widely classic mode of documentary construction. Its subjects are real people and authentic individuals with stories and experiences, not actors performing for a camera.

Introducing these genuine people on screen creates a sense of identification between the spectator and subject as in the narrative; from the start, the viewer is thrown into a world of escapism. The use of the long take and an objective camera which lingers are both devices used to convey this appearance of replicating reality in "Nanook of the North," where the viewer is passively observing as he fishes, interacts with his family, and deals with the struggles of the harsh environment. The hand-held and static movements of the camera emulate an observer watching from the sidelines. The camera's intentionality is meant to be neutral and interference from the filmmaker, aside from voiceovers, is regarded as a distortion of objectivity.

Additionally, the documentary's editing is minimal, often accompanied by an omniscient narrator, only cutting where necessary to preserve the film's continuity. These filmmaking tools create an impartial cinema that aims to remain factual. This is what Minha refers to in her paper as "anthropological filmmaking" in which the collection of empirical data is seen as the scholarly aim rather than a stylistic choice of film. Guzmán employs these pillars of non-fiction alongside

unconventional narratives of different groups in Chile and the poetic nature of his narration to create this 'documentary of remembering' among his films. By exposing the viewer to his subjectivity, Min-ha explains, "The documentary can easily thus become a 'style': it no longer constitutes a mode of production or an attitude of life, but proves to be only an element of aesthetics (or anti aesthetics) which at best, and without acknowledging it, it tends to be in any case when within its factual limits" in which by creating a cinema of affection, its active role is to cause an audience to confront part of its identity through interacting with trauma on screen(88). The audience is not a passive observer but an active participant, engaging with the troubling reality represented through Guzmán's experiences on the screen to remember and understand an identity stripped from the Chilean people.

To comprehend all the themes of trauma and allegorical implications between nature and people shown in this trilogy, it is essential to understand Guzmán as a ghost of the past, for he was a living participant during the coup of 1973. Patricio Guzmán was born in 1941 in Santiago de Chile and later studied at the Official School of Cinematographic Art of Madrid. He began directing "La Batalla de Chile" in 1971 as Salvador Allende ascended to the presidency. Through his efforts and film activism in recording this important part of Chilean history, He was already classified as an enemy of the state because of his images which showed the violence of the Chilean military during those years. After the coup d'etat, which ultimately brought Augusto Pinochet to power and overthrew the Allende administration elected through democratic practices, Guzman was arrested as a political prisoner in the national stadium for two weeks. The Pinochet regime, known for its brutal repression and human rights violations, lasted from the late 1970s to 1990, during which time Guzman was exiled. In 1973, he fled to Cuba, then to Spain

and France, as he received multiple threats to his life for his support of the Allende and Unidad Popular movement at the time. However, remaining very attached to his country and its history, he edited most of his earlier works abroad with film stock smuggled out of Chile with the help of his colleagues, some of whom disappeared or were killed during the Pinochet Regime. This history with the Pinochet regime is why this trilogy of films is vital to his filmic style; it serves as a reprieve from his guilt of being exiled and far away from his country. Guzman comments during an interview with Frederick Wiseman, "In Chile when I ask my friends if they remember the coup d'état, many of them tell me that it is already far away, that a long time has passed. On the other hand, no time has passed for me. It is as if it happened the year before, the month before, or the week before. " underlining the Pinochet era is an object of the past, it still plagues his daily life imbuing the present with ghosts of the past. This ugly truth is valid for the women in "Nostalgia for the Light" who still look for the bones of their disappeared family members in Chile's Atacama desert, constantly searching in the past to confirm a present they already know.

### **"Nostalgia de la Luz": A Testimony of the Past**

The answer, perhaps, lies not in the reaching but in the wondering — for it is the act of questioning that motivates Guzmán in his first film of the trilogy "Nostalgia for the Light"(2010). As the first film in the trilogy, it introduces the effects of the Pinochet Dictatorship on modern-day Chile by centering around different groups which include Chilean scientists, past political prisoners, and groups of women who still search the desert for bone fragments and remains of their disappeared loved ones and connects them with their own questions of the past. This documentary exemplifies the use of Guzmán's subjectivity to engage the audience in the act of remembering through the use of testimony which includes his voiceover narration of his



childhood, interviews with various frontrunners of these groups, and the use of natural locations in which the dictatorship has left in disarray.

The viewer is placed at the beginning of the film in the Atacama Desert of Chile, known as one of the most arid places on Earth. Due to this, it is home to different scientific laboratories that astronomers and scientists worldwide frequent because of the night sky's clarity in evaluating the cosmos. The film transports the audience through numerous close-up shots of a telescope in use in the Atacama Desert, accompanied by photographs of the moon presumably taken by the same telescope. This sequence is followed by a narration of Guzmán, whose voice captivates and immerses the audience in the film's narrative. His elegiac delivery mimics the images of specs of light and dust on screen that float through the camera flickering and lingering in the air while detailing his childhood in Chile where he says, "Nothing ever happened and the presidents of the republic walked through the streets without protection" complementing these tranquil spaces of time on screen. These details are parts of the film that Brad Epps comments on in his essay "The Unbearable Lightness of Bones: Memory, Emotion, and Pedagogy" in Patricio Guzmán's *Chile, La Memoria Obstinada and Nostalgia de la Luz*:

As if to illustrate or anchor Guzmán's voiceover narration, the camera, after showing the reactivation of a superannuated instrument of scientific inquiry, the creaking old German telescope of Santiago's planetarium, lingers, caressingly on various objects - a napkin folded on a plate, a lace pelmet, an old radio, a couple of armchairs, a singer sewing machine, a dreamed reproduction of the last supper, a covered mattress (489).

Guzmán's conviction is evident in these timeless shots, which provide the viewer with a glimpse of the nostalgia of growing up as a child before the Pinochet regime. This stolid opening of the film allows the filmmaker to mimic how life felt right before the chaos. This creates a paradox in which the viewer is confronted with the mystery of time and its existence as a lived reality, for trauma does not have an expiration date. The Chilean astronomer Gaspar Galaz, whom Guzmán interviews, poses a fundamental point to the film in which the human reception of light, since its conception in empirical reality to the human retina, is always in a state of delay. Further, Brad Epps describes this conceptually as, "philosophical in its import and starry-eyed in its enunciative style, this conception of time in which the present is imbricated in the past, the past in the present " emphasizing the reflexivity between what is a perceived reality and how it relates to the the the spatial time we occupy(486).

These ideas are abstract and personal to the filmmaker and the subjects of the film. It is only through the personal, that the film's objective to detail Pinochet's repressive effect on the population is achieved as only the ruins that stand in the desert can be brought back to life through testimony. By providing his own personal account, he inserts himself as a living time capsule subjecting the viewer to his perspective instead of recalling the historical event objectively which is common in the documentary formula so as to not taint the phenomenological aspect of the subject matter. A strong theme that is prevalent throughout the film is the use of the oracle to create resilience against the erasure of memory. In the article "Framing Ruins: Patricio Guzman's Postdictatorial Documentaries" written by Juan Carlos Rodriguez he states, "Guzmán evokes the poetic excess of testimony to reveal the challenges of social reconciliation" highlighting the disconnect amongst the Chilean people contextualized

through the use of first-person accounts to remind its people who seem prone to forget in efforts to cope with the violent past of its own image(140).

This is felt not only through people's oral attestation but through terrain which David Martin-Jones describes in his paper, "Archival Landscapes and a Non-Anthropocentric 'Universe Memory' in *Nostalgia de la Luz* (2010) stating, "the film's treatment of the landscape is key, because through the material landscape the theme of archiving and time emerges" as the historical remains of an old concentration camp called Chacabuco are recounted by two of Guzmán's acquaintances that spent time there during the Pinochet regime(710). The two prisoners recall their time in the camp and offer a poignant account of how each dealt with their time there. The first man mentions how there was a group formed within the political prison to observe the stars at night presumably looking at the sky to provide solace for the hope of freedom. He says "observing the sky and the stars, marveling at the constellations, we felt completely free" while juxtaposing shots of the decomposing camp succumbed to environmental conditions are in the background. Followed by this, the audience is confronted with a wall where inscribed are the names of past political prisoners which are partially scraped due to its deteriorating state. The only way to fill in the gaps of these names is through the testimony of the ex-political prisoner who remembers the names of all the prisoners carved into the wall. As allegorical to the history of Chile this sequence is, it strengthens this notion of remembering adding to Guzmán's aim to show that the oppression during this period was real despite time that has passed. Another political prisoner Miguel who is featured in the film was an architect, who through counting the steps that took to walk through the camp, was able to design and draw a map of the prison. This map as Guzmán says, "When the military saw the published drawings of

the camp, which they had dismantled, they were dumbstruck" emphasizing that the military had counted with the promise that no archival material as a national record of this happening would ever rise again. The Pinochet regime skillfully deposed and omitted recording these events in hopes of not portraying this narrative of the constant human rights violations it enacted. This is why Guzmán's obsession with creating documentaries around this time is so important, it is a national treasure that no one wanted to remember or look for. Guzmán shows a shot of Miguel and his wife sitting on a bench where he beautifully says, "Miguel and his wife are for me a metaphor of Chile, he is remembering whilst Anita is forgetting as she has Alzheimer's Disease" where he makes a comparison of the relationship of Chile and its people who are also diseased with the nations dissociative amnesia.

Although this is prevalent amongst most of the contemporary public of Chile, a group that constantly searches in the past is the group of women Guzmán encounters who feel the reality of this every day. This resistance to never forget is not only felt through Guzman but also through the women shown on screen who rummage through the desert looking for their loved ones. These missing people were victims of the totalitarian regime, incarcerated in concentration camps in the middle of the desert or disposed of in mass graves whose location was never disclosed or rumored to be thrown into the ocean. These women are deeply embedded as the heart of the emotional resonance of the film as these women are the wives, sisters, friends, and family of those whose voices have been silenced forever. As Brad Epps chronicles, "In acknowledging the narrative authority of these women, in treating their stories with the same care as the stories of the scientists, Guzmán also acknowledges their knowledge (here to, verbal archaeology, or etymology, reveal through the root 'gnarus', a deep connection between narrative

and knowledge), a knowledge that has been all but discounted by the powers that be, even as late as 2009-2010, when the film was made" drawing attention that although the women do not provide the classic anthropological aspect of a documentary film, their stories are still important in understanding how the trauma of the past affects the present(495). As the film is nearing its final stages, Guzmán provides us with the ultimate testimony of pain through memory with the introduction of these women. One of the women who is frequently shown on screen is Violeta Berrios, her appearance on screen is striking because as David Martin-Jones comments," through the location and framing, her form blends with the landscape to suggest the her story belongs to the desert, and speaks from the landscapes's historical archive" reflecting on how deeply immersed her sense of self is connected with the desert personifying the desert into a person(717).

Violeta Berrios' testimony throughout the film is very impactful because it connects the viewer with the values of family and perseverance. Her sequence in the film starts with close-up shots of her where Guzmán asks her if she will continue with the search for her loved ones and she responds with, "I ask myself questions which I can't answer, They say they unearthed them, put them in bags and threw them into the sea. Did they really throw them into the sea?" highlighting the doubt created from the erasure of bodies as a result of hiding evidence of the military's brutality against these disappeared people and questioning through her testimony her uncertainty of how much information is missing from this time period. As David Martin-Jones states, " In its simplest form, however, the close-up of the face, which is most likely to lead only to a subjective flashback, or what Deleuze dubs after bergson a "recollection-image, does not break the movement-image's sensory-motor continuum" adding that although the close-up is

meant to disrupt the objectivity of the documentary, it furthers Guzmán's resolve in his film to show how an individual can put meaning on a time period that likely many who watch today would not understand(718). At the age of 70, she lives in the past just like Guzmán. She can't let go of the past and it seems that her search does not only heal her but also condemns her to a life of not knowing. This is perhaps the biggest distinction made in the film about emotional vulnerability from its earlier scientific counterparts. Questions of the universe and the study of old civilizations in the desert carried out through the various astronomers and archaeologists mentioned in the film are a search for the anthropological, not the sentimental. They can go back home and resume their search without it affecting their lives every second. For them, they do it for love of science, for the women, it is a search against time as they are aging and still cannot find the answers to questions of their loved ones. They cannot forget and therefore they are a constant reminder of the effects of this time period, and they serve the same purpose as the film, to remind a country of its past. As Berrios says, " We are a problem for society, for justice, for everyone. We are Chile's leprosy" This sentiment is what resonates most with how modern-day Chile chooses to deal with its troubling past, it is easier to ignore and forget rather than treat.

Nearing the end of the film, the viewer is introduced to Valentina, a descendant of disappeared parents during the dictatorship, she is the ultimate consequence of what political repression looks like. She grew up with the absence of her parents very central to her identity. Raised by her grandparents, Valentina exemplifies the Chile of today which still lives in the past but tries to move forward from trauma to create a new future. Remarking that most people would not tell she is the daughter of parents killed by Pinochet, she responds by saying, "I realize my children do not have this defect, nor my husband has this defect and it makes me happy"

providing a sort of closure to the audience in realizing that where there is pain, there is also hopefulness for the future. Guzman embraces these themes of trauma in his films because through the showing of trauma on screen Chile can work through its questions of the past, filling in the gaps of what Pinochet wanted to conceal. With this in mind, Chile has always had a history of repression not only through the Pinochet Dictatorship but also in the erasure of its indigenous people which Guzman elaborates in his second film of the trilogy "El Boton de Nácar" 2015.

### **El Boton de Nácar: A look at Chile's Indigenous people**

Chile has had a long history with repression and trauma that dates back centuries. Even before the Pinochet coup, Chile has sought to forget its origins that would explain its relationship between the present and the Pinochet regime in connection with its indigenous people. Guzmán notes this in his second film within his trilogy "El Boton de Nácar"(2015) which introduces the history of Chile through the use of the natural landscape of water, the removal of its indigenous people and the use of the ocean as a massive gravesite for a number of Pinochet's political prisoners. This second part of his trilogy implicates the past as a complicit component of why it seems so easy to forget the after-effects of Pinochet.

In the first ten minutes of the film, Guzmán sets the viewer up with overhead shots of the bodies of water amongst its mountain range which contains numerous different islands created by the trickling rivers within the Andes mountain range. This scene starts with his classic narration of how the water is a mediator between land and its people and as always with his idyllic words constructed like a poem, the viewer is transported back into his subjective cinematic universe. Again, these slow and deliberate shots of water provide the calm before the storm.

Guzmán builds up the anticipation of a grandiose idea with the entrancing environment of water flowing, icebergs cracking, and hand-held shots of masses of land that rock back and forth mimicking a voyage on a boat. Following this, the film presents close-up shots of native people, ancient fishing tools, and the testimony of the last living descendants of Chile's indigenous tribes which included the Kawesqar, Selk'nam, Aoniken, Hausch, and the Yamana. As Antonio Perello states in his essay "Contingency, Memory and Language in Patricio Guzman's The Pearl Button" that by showing the audience, "photographs of Patagones and the design acquired by their bodies, Guzman is bringing this community to the "here and now" explaining that due to their obscurity, the filmmaker is making them visible to a public that has been exposed to little knowledge of them. This is what sets Guzmán's documentary style from the classic documentary form because there is no record of that reality; you cannot replicate a time that has no documentation but instead he reconstructs the narrative that has been silenced and gives the past a face. Maria del Pilar Malgarejo explains, " Guzmán creates a film that focuses in the exploration of the senses and the composition of the visual image that captures the viewer's attention through ' a poetic of beauty'" capturing the film's essence in subjecting us with the backdrop of beautiful landscapes while contrasting with the heavy themes of indigenous genocide(147). These different tribes of Patagonia survived mainly off of the different waterways etched by nature into the mountain range, with the use of canoes and fishing techniques, they were able to survive for hundreds of years.

To help navigate how these old civilizations lived, Guzmán employs the help of various living descendants of these clans which starts with the testimony of Martin G. Calderon, he describes life before the government controlled the waterways in which his ancestors freely



roamed. Often prohibited to float on water with his canoe by agencies on the water (we see shots of his canoe woven from wood and made by ancient practices of construction presumably passed down through generations) he alludes that they aim to protect but instead, it is meant to restrict, to make them invisible. These are people that canoed and swam through these waters before Chile was a name but yet, they have been allocated the same treatment as those imprisoned by Pinochet. Gabriela Paterito, a member of the Kawesqar tribe, remarks " I am not Chilean, I am Kawesqar" evoking the notion that she does not feel like she is Chilean because she grew up with the traditions of the Kawesqar negating the authority of Chile over her identity. She tells stories of her as a child living as one of the few Kawesqar alive and her intertwined relationship with the waters of Patagonia. Guzmán contrasts this with explaining his disconnect from the ocean Gabriela so fondly reveres. His lack of connection with the ocean while she still lives there resembles the disconnect of modern Chile with the Pinochet regime while Guzman constantly lives it. Guzman only knows the ocean as a cemetery as it is the location of the many disappeared revealing that as a child his friend drowned in the ocean and he regards him as the first disappeared victim in his life.

Just like in "Nostalgia de la Luz" 2015, Guzmán uses the scientific application of life to back the psychological influences of his film. He interviews Raul Zurita, A Chilean scholar, who compares the telescopes seen in the first film of the trilogy in the search for the past to Chile's ancestors. These indigenous people presented a problem for the formation of what is now Chile. Guzmán presents the history of the genocide of these native tribes by the colonists who deemed these people as he says "corrupt, cattle thieves and barbaric" who were either reformed into christianity by missionaries stripping them of their prior belief systems and culture or killed for

bounty as parts of their bodies were commodified as rewards for money. The rest of the population was either killed by diseases that the natives were not exposed to prior or assimilated into society as a Chilean, not part of any ancient civilizations that previously lived there. Perhaps an echo of the future, the erasure of these people is an explicit act of removing the trauma of the imperialistic endeavors of the past. Despite this, the descendants of these tribes have retained some gems of their culture which include language. In an interesting sequence, Guzmán invites both Martin and Gabriela shown earlier to talk in their native tongue, allowing the viewer to hear a language that without this visual record would have died without its sound dispersed into the universe of the present.

Near the middle of the film, Guzman tells the story of Jemmy button, a native of patagonia, who was taken aboard an english ship to be assimilated into english culture in exchange of a pearl button. He was taken abroad for many years until he became fully indoctrinated with western influences and then brought back to his old home in Chile. The filmmaker highlights that even though he was brought back, he was never what he once was. This story emphasizes how imperialistic forces who were set to the New world never sought to embrace the existing culture but rather alter it to its own selfish wants. Similar to the history of the coup and its relation to the United States, covert financial motivations by the west were often disguised as the promise of progress and positive change. Just as Allende intended for control back of its nation's industries, Guzmán explains in the second part of "El Boton de Nácar" that Allende returned many of the lands taken away from the natives during these earlier centuries in hopes to preserve an important part of Chilean history. This was destroyed by the coup of 1973, just like the supernova Guzmán mentions happened the same year, it produced a disruption for

these future plans of the preservation of these peoples. Instead, these lands were used for torture and repression, with the narration of Guzmán who details that many of them were hung, dismembered, women were raped in front of their husbands and many of these prisoners were victims of extermination for their beliefs just like the natives during colonial times.

By the end of the film, it provides one of the most striking sequences in the documentary about a female missing political prisoner named Marta Lidia Ugarte Roman whose body washed up ashore on the coast of Chile. The most impactful thing about the deceased woman, as detailed by the lawyer of the Roman's family, is that at the time of discovery, her eyes were open. A photograph of her corpse on screen, backing the lawyer's testimony from which he finds strange her eyes are intact due to her prolonged state in the water. Just like Guzmán's films, Marta refused for her face to be forgotten so that when they found her, she would confront Chile with the sad reality that the political persecution wasn't only immoral but an injustice. As Maria del Pilar Malgrejo said, "It appeared that the sea and the water were the best allies of the state but in the end the water betrayed the state" underlining that the same landscape used by the natives to survive, traveled by the west to discover the new world and made into burial ground by Pinochet, holds no secrets of its history and is only controlled by the cycle of life which takes but also gives. The question of her preservation lies in the process of preparing a prisoner for their certain death as shown in a sequence where a fake body is prepared like they were during the Pinochet Regime with heavy beams of steel and barbed wire to ensure it would not float. Then, the bodies were placed inside big plastic bags to suffocate the victims alive so that when they were launched into the ocean there would be no resistance. Unlike in Marta's case, she fought back against this until the very end, it is speculated in the film because she was awake, the military

had to take off the plastic bags and suffocate her while inside of the helicopters used to dispose of the bodies. This last effort made by her is what made possible for her body to be found and bring forth evidence of the horrors implemented on the sympathizers and opposers of the Pinochet regime.

Consequently, the audience is presented with Raul Veas, a professional diver tasked with the job of diving into the ocean to find traces of these victims thrown into the sea. While diving Raul has retrieved many of these beams of steels, in which Guzmán notably points that during these excursions, a beam was found with a button embedded presumably there because it contained the body of one of the deceased. Just like the pearl button given to Jimmy Button, this button comes back home after being taken and serves as a reminder that its physical body subjects the viewer to visualize the invisible, a person who has no name no story but ultimately existed at one point. As Antonio Perrello alludes to:

the mind has to acknowledge what is hiding there, has to make it present, has to ‘try and get very close to it’ to hear the voices, and this can be achieved as the director has decided to act, by continuing to be aware , here and now, of the visions of the world who lived those tumultuous experiences, those who history can easily forget, as it has done with the Patagones

Guzmán does not provide the audience with all of the answers concerning the exact history of every repressive period shown on screen, he instead provides a personal account from all the sectors of Chile and allows the audience to create their own conclusions.

Both “Nostalgia de la Luz”(2010) and “El Boton de Nácar” (2015) provide the cinematic community with histories and images of the different versions of a past that Chile neglects.

Guzmán understands this and therefore reconstructs Chile’s identity through the use of his pain

and trauma in remembering his homeland manifested through the use of his poetic narrations of personal lived experiences and subject matter that not only exists in the anthropological sense but also on the many layers of trauma that existed through history. By shedding light to its indigenous people and their removal, the audience is subject to what Patrick Blaine explains in his essay “Representing Absences in the Postdictatorial Documentary Cinema of Patricio Guzmán” as a narrative of recovery” instead of preserving. Guzmán interviews a past official of Pinochet’s regime who participated in the task of throwing the bodies of the political prisoner, in which he self reflects lamenting that he knew God would punish for their crimes against these people. Guzmán confronted with one of the people responsible for these atrocities he so vividly makes movies about does not punish him , he serves as another living testament of the confirmation of the horrors committed by the regime, a perspective that is necessary in order to balance out the films use of subjective in order to preserve some objectivity. This second film in his trilogy reminds Chile that its history since the beginning has been imbued with want to erase and forget, and Guzmán intends through his resilient stories of individuals to not only interpret the past , but also recover it from oblivion. This theme of resilience not only serves as a propellant of the different history of the natives in “El Boton de Nácar” 2010 but also in the search for answers to its in the Andes mountains described in “ La Cordillera de los Sueños” (2019)

### **La Cordillera de los Sueños**

In the last film of Guzman’s trilogy, “La Cordillera de los Sueños” culminates all of the narratives that have led to present day Chile by becoming Guzman’s most subjective film yet with the filming his hometown santiago which contains the cordillera. The main protagonist here

is the mountain range of the Andes that covers a major part of Chile. Guzmán explains in an interview with Elisabet Cabeza that, “It’s a good leitmotif to talk about what happens in Chile, because those rocks have witnessed everything” bringing attention to this massive landscape that been always in the background during the various periods of repression talked about in “Nostalgia de la Luz”(2010 and “El Boton de Nácar”(2015). The audience is presented with Guzman’s voice over while beautiful shots of the Archipelago are shown on screen, he details that he currently does not live in Chile but Chile is always with him. Despite this, everytime he comes back, he fails to recognize the country he once knew as it continues to go through change with the process of modernization. This is Guzman’s expression of guilt where despite being exiled during the Pinochet era , he still lives in a state of distance with his homeland as he has always remained in France years after the dictatorship was abolished. “La Cordillera de los Sueños” (2019) is not only another tool in Guzman’s film artillery to reconstruct a collective memory but also offers personal reprieve with the new Chile that seems to get farther away from him.

Despite being such a huge mass of land which separates Chile from the rest of the continent, it seems to be forgotten by the Chilean people as Francisco Gazitua, a Chilean Sculptor, remarks in the beginning of the film. His account of the relationship between the people of Chile and its mountain range details the disconnect of the two because of its expansiveness. Gazitua declares “The artist is the guardian of its country’s natural beauty” emphasizing that the artist has a responsibility to recognize his or her origin within their art . In his various sculptures, he uses rocks and parts of the mountain range to create his artwork, inserting literal history into his art. This is also seen with Vicenter Gajardo, another Chilean

sculptor, who talks about collecting samples of the cordillera to reveal what's inside. His testimony is intercut with shots of men extracting with drills huge pieces of rocks to be transported for its ethological use. Both sculptors use the cordillera as a source of inspiration but also as a mirror of self-reflection for embedded in them are memories of their childhood. As the authors of the essay, "El sueño a la distancia. Lugares de memoria en los documentales *El edificio de los chilenos*(Macarena Aguiló, 2010)y *La cordillera de los sueños*(Patricio Guzmán, 2019)" Ilse Mayté Murillo Tenorio and Samuel Lagunas Cerda describe that the cordillera "Deja de ser un paisaje con resonancias individuales para convertirse en un lugar de memoria en colectivo en el que se acumulan los significados de múltiples personas y de distintas generaciones" (stops being a landscape with individual resonances in order to become a place of collective memory which brings significance to multiple people across different generations) enforcing that a space can empirically exist but only through people can a cultural conversation between tradition and land co exist with each other(2). What distinguishes this film from the rest of the films in Guzman's trilogy is its ability to be self-reflexive within itself with the use of locations such as Guzman's childhood home, Chile's olympic stadium while Guzman narrates his beginning as a filmmaker during the Allende period. In his essay, "Patrcio Guzman's La Cordillera de los Suenos and the Power of First Person Nonfiction Filmmaking in Latin America" Manuel Betancourt comments, that "These childhood memories, paired with the aerial shots of his abandoned home, move the film away from geographical and metaphorical musings on a mountain range and pivot the documentary toward the violence that disrupted Guzman's life during and after the coup." enforcing the use of the first person to create a documentary of autobiographical data(62).

Guzman's distance between him and the Chile of today is most clearly seen in the distinction he makes between himself and Pablo Salas, a Chilean filmmaker. As opposed to Guzman who fled the country to save his film reels, Salas continued to operate within Chile to record the resistance against Pinochet. His film stock contains hundreds of hours of the horrors faced by the protestors and prisoners of the oppressive regime. Not only does the personal account of Guzman's lived experience provide self-reflexivity, but the documentary films a scene where Salas explains the various tapes he used for stock and their film life detailing that some can record for twenty minutes, four hours versus more modern technologies that can have recording length of 1200 hours. Salas emphasizes that with the pro-filmic resources that are used today, he would have been able to do more to preserve these important visual archives. This sequence is intercut with the same archival footage filmed by Salas which shows the brutality of the Pinochet soldiers against the Chilean left. On screen, the audience is presented with soldiers beating various protestors with batons, various citizens arrested and tanks with pressurized water guns disrupting the many demonstrations during the Pinochet regime. The evidence of a past that for years was denied makes the trauma an undeniable reality. This negation of events comes from an elite that seeks to reinterpret these histories of trauma to suppress their crimes. Sala's life work and dedication to filming these spaces of horror are comparable to Guzman's aim to provide visibility to the world through his films about an event that was obscured not only by political persecution but also by the isolation created by the mountain range.

By the end of the film, history repeats onto itself. Guzman mentions the trains that move through the mountains collecting copper from the mines. As mentioned earlier in this paper, copper was Chile's main export to the world and has today become privatized once again. Salas



mentions in the film " the triumph of the dictatorship is that they sold the country", announcing that despite many of the Chilean elite that celebrates this time period and negates its apparent use of torture and human rights violations because of the financial wealth accumulated for the upper classes. The coup of 1973 was always about promoting a neoliberal agenda, which Allende fought so hard against. He is able to enunciate a statement that most Chileans would resonate and recognize but never admit in fear of validating this repressive narrative. The cordillera not only represents an area of immense wealth but also loss as it does not really belong to Chile anymore, just as Guzman does not reside there anymore as well.

As the last shots of the film return to old houses that have been abandoned since the Pinochet era and the present-day military parading through the streets, it is interlaid with archival footage women and men parading down the street during the dictatorship, to provide a juxtaposition between the past and the present. As Manuel Betancourt notes " The film has reset the clock and delivered viewers into a dreamlike present that's both haunted by its past and resilient in the face of it" Providing these contradicting shots represent the sentiments of forget and recovery dichotomized by the Chilean public. "La Cordillera de los Sueños" 2019 is the ultimate use of Guzman's subjective perspective to present how a country moves on from trauma while consistently denying it. Guzman's idea of moving on while loving Chile from a distance was to make movies about a subject matter he cared about. The truth is, he could have chosen to forget like the majority and lived in obscure bliss. By reiterating these narratives of trauma, not only does he link history with the personal but he treats his affliction of exile that has torn him apart from his homeland.

### **Compare and Contrast**

This essay has explored the various themes of oppression and denial characterized by the Pinochet Dictatorship during the later years of the 20th century shown in Guzman's most recent trilogy. *Nostalgia de la Luz* (2010) , *El Botón de Nácar* (2015), and *La Cordillera de los Sueños* (2019) all work in conversation with each other as they all serve as a living testament of a history that has been actively tried to be erased through years of repression from the Chilean right wing. A common aspect employed in all three films is the use of natural landscape to anchor the viewer spatially while exploring these themes of collective memory. In *Nostalgia de la Luz* (2010) , Guzman centers around the Atacama desert with its harsh dry environment becoming the commonplace of astronomers and the group of women searching for their deceased loved ones who disappeared by Pinochet. In *El Boton de Nacar* (2016), water and its different bodies amongst the Chilean terrain carry the history of a past of violence with its native indigenous people foreshadowing the oppression seen in later years by the Pinochet military. The trilogy ends with *La Cordillera de los Sueños* (2019) bringing importance to the Andes mountains which isolated the country geographically hence enabling the human rights violations perpetrated by Pinochet to go unseen for decades. As Patrick Blaine points out in "Representing Absences in the Postdictatorial Documentary Cinema of Patricio Guzman" , the use of these natural locations "is a mediation of the nature of the past, on memory, on human origins, and on future generations" emphasizing that by using landscape thematically throughout his films can they work off of each other like a map of Chile(115). When introduced at the beginning of each of its respective films, the landscape is presented through a series of aerial or hand-held shoots which provide a slow but tranquil atmosphere. Although presented beautifully cinematically, these places hold violence and death within them as they are all cemeteries of the past. The Atacama desert was used as a

massive burial site for political prisoners with bone fragments permeating the rocky landscape, the ocean becomes a graveyard as made evident by the body Marta Ugarte, a disappeared person during the Pinochet regime, which washes ashore to expose the ocean's complicit role with trauma (and betrayal to the Pinochet regime by returning bodies back to Chile's coast) and finally, the mountain range which has presumably in pockets of land used to torture and kill and made to disappear within the rocks.

Although Guzman has used anthropological spaces to connect his films, his use of different narratives of distinct groups is what sets each film apart from itself. These varying narratives work together to create a collective memory of Chile which were all victims of erasure. By looking at the relationship between the astronomers who search for answers to the universe in Atacama's night and the women who search for bone fragments on its floor, Guzman highlights a story that would otherwise not have been made visible to the world. Their plight echoes across humans of different countries and generations who can sympathize with the loss of a loved one and how that can deeply affect someone's life. These women wake up every day in the past, searching for the past, and at the end, are left with more doubts than answers due to their limited information about the whereabouts of their loved one. As Brad Epps mentions "For in *Nostalgia de la Luz*, no less than in the world that it showcases in all its pettiness and grandeur, failure lurks everywhere: in the projects of economic and social justice violently undone by militaristic capitalism; in the sombre dream of finding the remains of a loved one destroyed by the dictatorial regime" exposing that although the documentary attempts to alleviate these doomed realities, it can never fully experience relief of these emotions that will constantly live on. This is also apparent in the narratives of the indigenous people presented in *El Boton de*

Nácar (2015) which differ from the stories of the women of the desert for their rich anthropological significance. The erasure of these people by the discovery of the new world was implicit in the notion of creating a new nation free of recognizing them as part of a collective history. Survived by various descendants, these ancient civilizations are immortalized on film resilient against a culture of denial. Guzman wanted to make them important because they serve as a rich cultural sector of Chile. Finally, the reels archived by Pablo Salas and Guzman's own personal testimony of his lived experience during the coup in "La Cordillera de los Suenos"2019 Encourage the viewer to engage in the act of remembering with him through the film reels of police brutality recorded by Salas. This first-person evocation of self in the film allows the personal to intertwine with history. It also serves as Guzman's connection to Chile as he has never returned to live there since being exiled.

By ensuring all of these different narratives are made visible, Guzman reconstructs Chile's identity of its parts in history which are often looked down upon. Not only does it make them visible, but in the court of moral justice, it provides visual evidence of a past filled with violence, terrorism, and inhumane treatment of its citizens. There is no denying bodies were thrown to the sea, Marta Ugarte confirms that. We cannot ignore that the women searching in the desert have found the bones of their loved ones. Guzman's sorrow about the Chile he recognized as a child cannot be negated for remnants of his childhood home lay in ruins in front of the camera.

## Conclusion

In the start of this essay, The classic mode of documentary that aims to remain objective is constantly challenged by the subjective themes of human emotion brought forth by Guzman.

As Bradd epp explains "Emotion, in all its shrill and subtle variety, is thus in force in all of Guzmán's documentaries and engages the audience in ways that merit reflection, perhaps especially for those of us who teach the humanities and who often contend that our 'real' work takes the form of research and publications, or public service and political activism, beyond the classroom." emphasizing that emotion, although biased in nature, is a major propellent for social change as it drives people to demand better treatment from governments that seek to control rather than grow its citizens(490). It is only through the subjective that Guzman can effectively produce a film that not only engages in the act or remembering but as a mechanism of political activism for those whose voices can no longer be heard.

People are unified by social constructs of culture and they create societies rich in tradition, language, and community. Guzman's aim is to intertwine his subjective perspective with that of the different histories of Chile, which affect the brutal application of this idea onto its citizens. Pinochet regards Guzman as a revolutionary documentary filmmaker. The film director has had a significant impact on the international community. As an activist filmmaker, Guzmán used cinema as a weapon to raise awareness about the brutal realities of life under dictatorship, particularly to audiences outside of Chile who may not have had access to information about the political repression. His work helped galvanize international condemnation of the Pinochet regime. This trilogy of films is essential for understanding the political, social, and emotional dimensions of the period, and they have played a central role in preserving the memory of the atrocities committed during that time. Through his work, Guzmán helped ensure that the voices of the victims were not silenced, but immortalized on film forever.

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