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Collective trauma, feminism and the threads of popular power: A personal and political account of Chile's 2019 social awakening

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Abstract

Chile's 2019 uprising marked a moment of social awakening for many Chileans, recasting historical memory tropes and shattering the fear of collective action internalised during the years of dictatorial rule (1973–90). This article explores the political legacies of the Popular Unity period (1970–3) made apparent during the 2019 uprising and the popular movement that emerged in its wake. It also centres on the Chilean feminist movement, its historic role as a political force in Chilean politics and how a new feminist discourse became the necessary preamble to Chile's 2019 social awakening. Lastly, this study describes the sprouting of a neighbourhood assembly movement within days after the 18 October 2019 uprising, its role in rearticulating politics from below and its alignment with the feminist movement, culminating in mass participation in the 8 March 2020 feminist strike. This article places personal and familial accounts in conversation with scholarly works, utilising the 2019 uprising as a lens to revisit the historical past within the onward moving historical present.

Keywords: Chile; Popular Unity; feminism; popular power; neighbourhood assemblies; collective memory; oral history; social movements; transversal politics; feminist strike

‘A type of acceleration of history had begun. The country *despertó* (woke up); it moved. To participate one had to only go to the street. Everything was nearby and happened everywhere.’¹ These are the words of the Chilean documentary filmmaker Patricio Guzmán describing his arrival in Santiago in the summer of 1971. Dr Salvador Allende, a long-time Socialist Party militant, had won the presidency as part of the Popular Unity (UP) coalition a few months earlier. As Guzmán stepped off the plane, he immediately noticed that Chile had changed during his two years of absence. ‘From the first moment, Chile appeared to be moving, a country filled with excitement, as though the people were living through an ongoing party that lasted many months. It was a state of joy, of satisfaction, especially in the poor neighborhoods, in the encampments, in the shantytowns.’²

Guzmán’s wide-eyed account of a radically new Chile in early 1971 has new meaning in the current moment. For many Chileans and scholars of Chilean history, the possibilities of a new world brought about by Allende’s election has been overshadowed by the events of the military dictatorship (1973–90). I have often thought about the despair and hopelessness that my uncle Raul Rioja – a member of the Chilean Communist Party (PCCh) and a Siam Di Tella factory worker who participated in *cordón industrial* (industrial belt) Vicuña Mackenna – felt following 11 September 1973.³ I think about the terror of living in hiding, hearing about the disappearances of his close comrades and friends and the crumbling of his dreams for a new society. I have often wondered how much of that trauma contributed to his suicide in the mid-1980s, which still looms over our family. However, until October 2019, I have never considered what he and other family members felt when the UP won. I had not contemplated how the excitement over Allende’s victory influenced my grandmother to join the PCCh and my aunt to participate in the Price and Supply Control Committee (JAP). I had not fully understood how the political moment can open the horizon of possibilities and motivate ordinary people to see themselves as active participants in making history.⁴

Reading Guzmán’s recollection, I was shocked by how much resonated with what it felt like to witness and participate in the October 2019 uprising in Santiago: the feeling of joy, the acceleration of history and the sense that politics was happening everywhere. It began on Friday 18 October, when city officials moved to shut down the Santiago metro system in response to the student-led fare-evasion protests. Late in the afternoon, a neighbour and I grabbed our pots and wooden spoons and followed the faint sounds of a *cacerolazo* – a Chilean form of protest consisting of banging pots and pans – to the nearby metro station.⁵ The entrance was blocked by metal gates and guarded by a line of riot police, but the small crowd of a few dozen was completely undeterred. The crowd was simultaneously angry and joyous. Our collective anger was visible in our readiness to confront the police. It was a shared anger born from the government’s violent repression of the student protesters and its inability to acknowledge popular support for the students’ demand that the fare increase be reversed.

Yet we were also joyous because both our outrage at the government’s actions and our solidarity with the students was no longer an invisible, individualised experience. We had come to realise that our neighbours were feeling the same way. As I looked around at the crowd, I was taken aback by the cross-section of society present at our neighbourhood *cacerolazo*. This struggle was no longer confined to the students. There was a middle-aged woman who used her crutches to bang against a street sign, a 20-something football fan decked out in a Universidad de Chile tracksuit, a handful of secondary school students, a man in a business suit and a few families whose children played tag as their parents banged their kitchenware and chanted in protest. It was during that moment that we finally began to see each other – not only as neighbours, but also as political allies in the as yet undefined battle to come. As we banged our improvised instruments, we could feel our societal estrangement dissipate. As a scholar and political activist, I had read and discussed Karl Marx’s theory of social alienation and assumed that it was an engrained part of life under capitalism.⁶ Nevertheless, confronting one’s personal experience with social alienation compounded by the shared realisation that we had been swallowed by neoliberalism’s factory wheels, like Charlie Chaplin in the 1936 silent film *Modern Times*, fuelled collective anger. Over the course of the following days, as the protests grew, work stopped and neighbourhood assemblies formed, we knew that our lives had changed forever.

This article traces my political journey between October 2019 and March 2020 in conversation with the historical past – the UP period and the military dictatorship. As a Chilean American who has remained active in political circles in Chile, I can offer insight from my familial history and activism, as well as my training as a historian. To that end, the first section begins with background on the Chilean student movement and its role in triggering the 18 October uprising, while the second section discusses the impact of intergenerational trauma on Chilean society to describe the socio-political significance of the October 2019 uprising and how it opened a conversation with our collective past, in particular the UP period (1970–3).

The third and fourth sections examine the impact of organised feminism that forced Chilean society to publicly discuss collective trauma. As I suggest, such engagement demonstrated that pain can produce a political language of resistance. The trauma caused by the 17-year dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet was not only a source of painful memories, but it also functioned as a hindrance to political activism. But on 18 October 2019, the veil of fear and political inadequacy was lifted, allowing ordinary Chileans to imagine new social possibilities.

The fifth section compares the politics of popular power, or *poder popular*, to use the language of the early 1970s, a concept that links the awakening that followed the UP's 1970 victory with the October 2019 moment when Chile *despertó*. It discusses the politics and cultural representation of popular power as a lasting legacy of the Chilean left that lives on in the current moment. The final section shows how collective trauma, popular power and feminism coalesce in the neighbourhood assemblies. By focusing on the Huemul Neighbourhood Assembly (see Figure 1) from its formation to its participation in the 8 March 2020 Feminist General Strike, I offer a localised example of the challenges facing those who seek to transform the 2019 revolt into lasting change.



Figure 1 3 November 2019 – Plaza Huemul – The Huemul Neighbourhood Assembly promoting the planned community cabildo at an outdoors community musical event. The community question board asks: What type of country do you dream of? (Source: Author, 2021).

Background

The 2019 uprising was the awakening from deep-seated societal trauma, an awakening that was both a process and a specific event. The process began with the 2006 secondary school student movement against the privatisation of education, a movement nicknamed the Penguin Revolution after the black-and-white uniforms worn by secondary students in Chile. That same generation continued their struggle as university students, mobilising for free higher education from 2011 to 2013.⁷ These students, many born after the end of military rule, were the first to shake Chile from its neoliberal haze. They demonstrated fearlessness by making demands that directly opposed Pinochet's economic and political legacies, in particular, the neoliberal programme imposed during that era and consolidated in the country's 1980 constitution.

Because of their tactical ability to disrupt society, the students have become the target of political repression by left and right governments alike. In early 2019, the government sought to break the student movement and place it on the defensive. City officials dispatched riot police to attack students in their classrooms at the emblematic all-boys public school, the *Instituto Nacional*.⁸ After months of police repression, the students at the Instituto Nacional organised a mass fare evasion on 11 October 2019 in response to the government's decision one week earlier to increase the subway fare by 30 pesos – a decision that made peak hour rides the most expensive anywhere Latin America.⁹ Other secondary school and college students joined the actions in subsequent days as videos spread across social media showing passengers grinning and chanting with students as they, too, evaded payment. By Thursday 17 October, police violence intensified as city officials shut down metro lines, leaving many commuters and students stranded inside stations chanting: 'Evadir, no pagar, otra forma de luchar' ('Evade, don't pay, another way to fight'). The following day, Friday 18 October, government officials repeated their tactics leading to social unrest across the city. What had started as a student protest escalated into a city-wide revolt grounded in popular discontent over the 30-plus years of neoliberal policies that made debt, long work hours, minimal labour protections and the privatisation of social services an accepted part of life.

While the student movement played a noteworthy role in provoking the social unrest on 18 October, the awakening – or the shattering of fear – was also substantially influenced by feminist activism. As the feminist struggle to legalise abortion and end femicides spread across Latin America in the preceding decade, Chilean feminists began to develop a political language for trauma caused by gender violence that became the basis for an organised feminist movement. In turn, they also forced Chilean society – a society with deep societal and intergenerational trauma rooted in the military dictatorship experiences – to participate in a public debate about ending patriarchal violence. Even though Chilean society has debated aspects of collective trauma, usually in the realm of memory battles, ceremonies, and commemorative events, few avenues existed to discuss and acknowledge the memories and pain of historical trauma.¹⁰ Chilean feminism, as the next section will explore, functioned as another central pillar alongside the student movement and human rights organisations that 'awoke' Chilean society, transforming feelings of helplessness into uncompromising demands for change.

Collective trauma before the awakening

The 1973 coup d'état marked a political break with the social movements of the past.¹¹ The rise of the pro-socialist Chilean left resulted from accumulated experiences by the Chilean labour movement since the beginning of the twentieth century. Their political momentum increased following the 1959 Cuban Revolution and in reaction to global Cold War politics, radicalising a new class-conscious generation whose struggles culminated in 1970 with Allende's presidential election.¹² Peter Winn described the political journey as 'a long march through the political wilderness', emphasising the dangerous and challenging terrain that the working class had to travel throughout the long twentieth century.¹³ The political culture that defined the short three years of the UP government was the product of decades of experiences in which seasoned labour activists and party militants took advantage of the political acceleration that the Allende win sparked. The 11 September 1973 military overthrow of the UP government and the detention and execution of thousands of labour and political militants marked an end to an era and the end of a political culture. In his 2013 reflection about the UP years, Patricio Guzmán also lamented that 'Today, there is no trace of that brand of proletarian culture.'¹⁴

A new political conjuncture opened in the 1980s marked by the rise of shantytown protests and the reprise of organised feminism in the struggle against the military dictatorship.¹⁵ The protests also became the framework for an emblematic memory of ‘persecution and awakening’ and a novel political legacy that transcended the democratic era, shaping the next 30 years of social movements.¹⁶ The revival in 1983 of the women’s suffrage organisation, the Pro-Emancipation Movement of Chilean Women (MEMCH), played an important role in connecting the politics of an authoritarian dictatorship with patriarchal oppression. They demanded ‘Democracy in [Chile] and Democracy at Home’.¹⁷ Their feminist politics challenged *machismo* experienced in women’s daily lives and the strongman authoritarianism of the military regime.¹⁸ MEMCH 83 organised feminist presence at street protests and spoke out against the military government at public events. Their political legacy has remained influential even though the generational gap between MEMCH 83 and the reappearance of feminism in the early 2000s has meant that present-day Chilean feminists had to actively develop theoretical and interpersonal connections with the previous feminist movement.

The 1990s – the return to democracy – brought about new challenges. Many social movement organisers, including feminists, disbanded to focus on institutional politics.¹⁹ Furthermore, the 1980 constitution continued to govern Chilean institutions dictating the state’s commitment to neoliberal policies, the stratification of unions, the illegality of labour strikes and the criminalisation of abortion.²⁰ The political transition also meant a societal coming to terms with the trauma inflicted during dictatorial rule. The 1990 National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as the Rettig Report, gathered documents and collected testimonies to investigate human rights abuses during the dictatorship.²¹ In the public sphere, memory battles emerged between the most polarised sectors of society about how and what to remember.²² For conservative figures, reconciliation meant moving forward from ‘the past regime’. For the families of the disappeared, victims of torture and political exiles, reconciliation has been impossible without truth and justice.²³

According to Steve Stern, critical memory knots took form during the ‘great collective trauma’ of military rule and contracted further under democracy, remaking Chilean politics and culture in the process.²⁴ While those who were victims of torture or family members of the disappeared engaged with historical trauma by visibilising memory sites (meaning spaces of human rights abuses and through commemorative dates), most people did not have an avenue to share their trauma. In my own family’s case, memories of trauma were either rarely discussed or shared in intimate settings with a few friends or family members. Having not directly experienced the dictatorship’s violence, I questioned the right to discuss feelings of pain and loss in the same way. Nevertheless, many Chileans carry vivid memories of intergenerational trauma.²⁵ I carry the feelings my grandmother shared with me, like the sadness she felt as she watched the planes fly overhead the morning of 11 September toward Chile’s presidential palace, La Moneda. I can sense the fear she experienced when throwing her youngest son, then six years old, over the wall to the neighbour’s house when the military raided our home or the terror she felt when the city bus made a detour and she saw La Moneda bombed for the first time. Those memories are so vivid that I sometimes believe them to be my own.

In 1990, when I was around 11 or 12, my grandmother decided that I should hear a friend’s testimonial. The woman was a former schoolteacher and member of the PCCh. ‘She is starting to lose her mind’, my grandmother warned me, ‘because her husband gave her syphilis, and this might be the last opportunity you have to hear her story’. As we sat in her kitchen drinking tea, her friend told me about how she was kidnapped from her home one evening by a group of men. She described how they placed a bag over her head and threw her in the back of a van where the men kicked her around ‘like a soccer ball’. She said they did things to her, which I did not fully understand at the time but later understood as code for rape. She knew that someone had given her name to the military, but she refused to provide them with names no matter what they did to her. It was her only lucid conversation topic that afternoon. She died less than a year after our meeting. I sometimes wonder if I am the only living person who remembers her story.

Chileans carry memories of trauma and loss but mostly in silence. Loss, a critical memory knot, has defined collective trauma: the loss of human life, the loss of a brand of proletarian political culture and

the loss of what could have been. The memories of loss, a product of societal trauma, have been tightly interwoven and have framed, at least until the 2019 uprising, how Chileans do politics. For example, in the early 2000s, as new political spaces developed, Chilean activists continued to emphasise that their new political culture was born from loss. It was not uncommon to hear individuals profess at political or community assembly meetings that the popular classes are not political enough or that they themselves lack the know-how to debate politics more deeply in contrast *to the past*. The past that people alluded to was the pre-1973 culture. Like Patricio Guzmán, they mourned the disappearance of ‘that brand of proletarian culture’. The images of a politically conscious and articulate working class enacting popular power depicted in the three-part documentary *The Battle of Chile* (1975–9) looms large over the political imagination of activists, becoming an objective to reach.

Societal fear from reliving the collective trauma and the shared understanding of loss that replicates the feeling of political incompetence has hindered political action in Chile since the return of democracy. As Nia Parson explains, ‘Pain destroys language, but sometimes language to describe forms of pain simply does not exist, and the failure to speak pain can have dire consequences.’²⁶ Chilean feminists, through a politics of sorority, began to articulate their own painful experiences with patriarchal violence. As feminists promulgated their trauma-inflicted pain, they also began to transform trauma into political action.

Transversal feminism

The new feminist movement that took form in the early 2000s in Chile and Argentina was tightly interwoven with the politics and activism of human rights organisations. The two movements – feminism and human rights – were drawn together by the pivotal role of women leading human rights organisations and the shared invisibility of the crimes committed.²⁷ State terrorism and patriarchal violence were rarely public, and both justified the use of force and murder to correct deviating behaviour.²⁸ For the feminist movement, the struggle to legalise abortion was the movement’s initial rallying cry but the fight to end sexual violence and femicide has taken centre stage in recent years. Feminists have utilised human rights organisations’ tactics such as *funas* – meaning rotten in Mapudungun – to shame rapists and sexual abusers publicly.²⁹ Also, through social media posts, graffiti, murals and public demonstrations, feminists similarly commemorate femicide victims as human rights organisations publicly remember victims of the dictatorship.

Even though *funas* are actions directed at perpetrators of violence and state officials who fail to respond to feminist demands, the feminist movement has framed the process of violence a step beyond the analysis made by human rights organisations. In 2019, Alondra Carrillo, a spokesperson for the 8 March Feminist Coordinator (CF8M), noted in a podcast interview that, ‘This feminist movement has emphasised the process [of gender violence]’.³⁰ She explained that the feminist movement in Chile previously reacted primarily to the act of violence – rape and femicide – but they, in contrast, view those acts as the representation of a systemic process. If feminists want to end acts of patriarchal and state violence, Carrillo underscored, then they must change the processes that allowed it to recur. For Carrillo, the cycle of patriarchal violence is well merged with the neoliberal economy, which is why the movement centred on the demand ‘Against the Precarity of Life’ to highlight the economic insecurity and precarious existence of life under capitalism and patriarchy. She further noted that Chilean feminists’ employment of *transversal politics* has allowed them to bridge feminist politics in every area of society: work, school, politics and familial life.³¹ If patriarchy is everywhere, then feminist politics must be infused everywhere.

The political debates that informed the Chilean feminist movement’s political framework that Carrillo expressed are too many to review in this article. However, there are key historical and recent developments that must be highlighted. First, the Chilean suffrage and women’s emancipation movements from the earlier part of the twentieth century had a strong socialist current that placed gender politics in conversation with class politics. Some of the founders of MEMCH (1935) and re-founders of MEMCH 83, such as Julieta Kirkwood, Elena Caffarena and Olga Poblete, were socialists to varying degrees.³² Second, the rebirth of the Chilean feminist movement in the early 2000s was a response to the legalisation of divorce in 2004 and the morning-after pill in 2010, alongside the growing struggle to decriminalise abortion within that same period. The third significant event was the rise of a feminist current within the university

student movement between 2012 and 2013. In 2013, the libertarian feminist Melissa Sepulveda won the presidency of the University Student Federation (FECH) using a campaign slogan ‘Democratize the University, De-Masculate Politics’ (‘A democratizar la universidad, a demasculinizar la política’), which was the overture of the feminist explosion to come.

As feminist collectives and activities grew post-2013, Chilean feminists began to place patriarchy and society at large on public trial. It became clear to organised feminists that to confront patriarchy, they would also have to challenge the legacies of military rule that institutionalised economic and political authority through two means: violence and power. The first was through the strong hand of the state and the other through the power of consent.³³ The dictatorship gained consent for its new economic policies through the conservative family structure, an imposed *marianismo* ideal of womanhood, and an enforced acceptance of social and class hierarchies.³⁴ Trumper and Tomic underscore a ‘reciprocal connection’ between ‘models of family and the state’ that emerged during the dictatorship and the appearance of consensual acceptance of neoliberalism into the democratic era.³⁵ The conservative family structure is rooted in maintaining tradition, obedience and opposition to change. Hence by challenging familial expectations and male dominance in society, feminism has become a vehicle to oppose neoliberalism openly. Feminists in the 1980s did challenge patriarchy and authoritarian rule as previously mentioned in the MEMCH 83 slogan ‘Democracy in [Chile] and Democracy at Home’. Yet the disbanding of feminist organisations following the return to democracy meant that the new generation of organised feminists would have to reconstitute themselves.

CF8M – a coalition of feminist organisations and activists founded in 2016 – opened a new phase of feminist praxis in Chile. Inspired by Lise Vogel’s unitary theory that argued the need to synthesise Marxism and feminism, they initiated political campaigns that would not only merge feminism and labour politics theoretically but in joint action.³⁶ In preparation for the 2018 International Women’s Day march, the CF8M demand ‘Against the Precarity of Life’ highlighted their political orientation. While some members of CF8M found the term ‘precarity’ too academic and difficult for ordinary working-class women to understand, the majority favoured using the word as an opportunity to politicise its meaning in the public sphere. A few months later, in May 2018, the feminist pressure cooker erupted, as anger over femicides, public allegations about sexual assaults on university campuses and the sidelining of feminist issues took form in university *tomas* (occupations) and street protests.³⁷ Chile’s Feminist May, or *mayo feminista*, pushed feminist discourse into the public domain, provoking conversations that remained ongoing until the October 2019 uprising. The *marea verde* (green sea) of Argentine feminists, referring to the visual ocean of feminists wearing green kerchiefs to show their support for the legalisation of abortion, finally arrived in Santiago.³⁸ Young feminists proudly donned their green kerchiefs for all to see during the month’s acceleration of activities. Feminist May gave organised feminism a political platform to be viewed as a legitimate social movement, prompting new feminist collectives and building momentum for a larger and better-organised 8 March. The following year, CF8M organised the first Feminist General Strike in Chile on 8 March 2019 in solidarity with the feminist strikes in Spain, Iceland and Switzerland. Members debated whether to use the term *feminist strike*, meaning only women, or a *general feminist strike*, meaning a labour and feminist strike with the latter winning. In all, more than 200,000 people, mostly women with support from some labour unions, marched that day, making feminism an ascending social movement in Chile. The confidence gained from all these aforementioned actions empowered women to denounce their perpetrators and demand state and institutional resources. It occasioned dinner-table conversations about the prevalence of sexual violence and ways to end it. The 2018 Feminist May and the 2019 Feminist General Strike made feminism and its demands a social issue. It also showed Chilean society that trauma could instigate political action and be the starting point to create a new society.

A brief sketch of a feminist intervention on 11 September 2019

A month before the October revolt, the typical 11 September commemorative events took place. My comradewife and I were part of a crowd that placed flowers in front of Allende’s statue near the presidential house.³⁹ We took photos of the memorial wreaths from leftist political parties displayed

prominently outside Morandé 80, the building from where Allende's body was removed. The highlight that afternoon was a political intervention organised by the Cueca Sola collective for the fourth year in a row.⁴⁰ The *cueca* is a folk dance typically performed by a couple, but during the dictatorship, dancing it *sola* (alone) became a form of protest and a public display of loss. Participants danced 46 *cuecas* signifying the 46 years since the 1973 coup (see Figure 2). Before dancing, each performer announced the name of the person they were honouring. The majority remembered victims of the dictatorship, but some named recent victims of patriarchal and state violence. One woman honoured the Mapuche activist Macarena Valdés, murdered for her environmental activism.⁴¹ Another danced for Nicole Saavedra, a young lesbian victim of a homophobic murder.⁴² Another woman danced to remember Joane Florvil, a 28-year-old Haitian immigrant woman killed while in police custody in 2017.⁴³ The performance showed that the commemoration was more than a way of remembering the dictatorship: it had become a political framework to organise against the many social injustices that continue under democratic society.



Figure 2 11 September 2019 – La Moneda – Cueca Sola collective performance (Source: Author, 2021).

Between the performances, the dancers made calls to action that were met enthusiastically by the crowd. Yet the performers were not just dancers but representatives of social organisations: feminist, environmental, queer and human rights organisations. Visibly present were also members of Rebellious Feminist Memories – a feminist collective of victims of torture and sexual violence who were held at the ‘Venda Sexy’ (Sexy Blindfold) detention centre, which is the macabre nickname given by its perpetrators – who proudly displayed their banner: ‘Women Survivors, Always Resisting’. I realised then that I was in a coalition-building space united through dance, trauma, remembrance and resistance. Unbeknown to all of us observing, participating and agitating, we were the prelude to the 18 October uprising.

Political continuity between two awakenings

History does not repeat itself, but as historians, we often seek its rhymes. Guzmán's description of the joyous euphoria in early 1971 as a *despertar* became relatable only after 18 October 2019. Lived experiences influence our thoughts about history and the stories we tell. For example, in 1988, at the end of the dictatorship, Eduardo Devés published *Los que van a morir te saludan* (*Those Who Will Die*

Salute You), a history about the 1907 massacre of miners and their families in the northern city of Iquique. He explained in his prologue that he attempted to answer the question: Why were they killed? It was as much a question about the past as it was about making sense of his present.⁴⁴ Prior to October 2019, I had scripted the UP period as a story with a beautiful beginning and a tragic ending. But the uprising opened new understandings about the past. It generated optimism that change *from below* is possible. It also made me reconsider the extent of the Chilean left's political rupture.⁴⁵

In the days after 18 October 2019, I witnessed something similar to Guzmán's reflection about 1971 that politics was happening everywhere. In the days (even hours) after the start of the October uprising, doing politics felt natural as neighbours coalesced in the streets to protest and spend time together. As the social unrest transformed into a popular movement, political and cultural connections from the UP era became visible. Undoubtedly, differences exist. Popular culture has changed. Global politics has changed. The nature of state violence has changed. Feminism has changed Chile. But what Guzmán described as politics happening everywhere meant that popular expressions of political activity went beyond the confines of partisan politics. As already noted, in Chile, popular power has remained an objective for political activists. And while there are differences in the way popular power was enacted in the 1970–3 period compared with the present, those distinctions speak to the lessons and reflections made by ordinary people about the UP period. In other words, political awakenings rhyme for a reason.

Popular power had emerged as a political slogan in Chile in the late 1960s. The Basic Programme of the UP government had included a dual approach that embraced electoralism for institutional change and supported grassroots base-building to meet the people's demands.⁴⁶ The Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR), which gave the UP critical support, focused on the latter, developing independent working-class and rural organising efforts that accelerated the socialisation of the economy, among other projects.⁴⁷ At the same time, many workers experienced popular power in their union *asambleas* (meetings), where they debated tactics and politics and made their views known to UP officials.⁴⁸ Popular power was the belief and confidence that *el pueblo* – working people – have the strength and ability to organise and run society.⁴⁹ Strength was the labouring class's representation as a majoritarian bloc in institutional politics. It was also rooted in the left's long-standing political influence over unions representing Chilean workers, particularly those in the vital export economy.⁵⁰ Ability meant working-class competence to plan production and manufacture those goods that society needed.⁵¹

In the aftermath of the 2019 uprising, popular power reappeared as a slogan with substance and possibility but manifested new meanings and practices. Popular power is no longer centred on unions and the export economy but instead grounded in the inclusion of new political actors and identities previously excluded like Afro-Chileans, feminists and queers, thus making popular power more representative. In practice, however, popular power has also come to mean *autogestión* (self-management) and horizontalism, reinforcing the desire to remain ideologically pluralistic.⁵² In contrast to the UP period when socialist and Marxist political parties' internal and external structures operated via democratic centralism, which dominated the political culture of the time, the post-October 2019 popular culture embodied the distrust expressed by the student and feminist movements of political parties with politburos. But that scepticism was rooted in an attempt to rectify past mistakes, specifically how Allende's murder-suicide on 11 September 1973 broke the chain of command of the UP's top-down political structure that ultimately paralysed popular responses to the coup.⁵³ Therefore, it is unsurprising that within a few days after 18 October, *autogestión* and horizontalism characterised the newly formed neighbourhood assemblies' political culture. It confirmed a slow-moving shift in the Chilean left's organisational focal point from the export economy unions and political parties to centering on *where we live* rather than where we work.

A Chilean expression of popular power that functioned as a thread of continuity with the UP period, the dictatorship and the present day is music. The New Song movement of the 1960s was a musical genre that converted old folkloric rhythms into modern compositions that spoke to ordinary people; it quickly became the soundtrack for the post-Cuban Revolution generation.⁵⁴ The cultural legacy of New Song performers has been centring *el pueblo* as their audience. Spearheaded by Violeta Parra, the movement influenced young singer-songwriters who captured contemporary political sentiment.⁵⁵ Its music and singers became forever linked with the UP government, making them targets of the military regime.

New Song music was branded illegal, and its artists either executed or exiled. During that period, its lyrics shifted in meaning from songs of resistance to songs of loss.⁵⁶ Even in the democratic era, it has been difficult to separate New Song's link with memories of trauma. The student movement generation born under democracy embraced New Song music. However, they were confronted with self-imposed censorship by their parents or grandparents, who hid knowledge of New Song music to protect them.⁵⁷

In the first days of the October uprising, the song 'The Right to Live in Peace' by the late New Song composer Victor Jara resurfaced in popularity, was sung at marches and blasted over neighbours' loudspeakers. The song captured popular sentiment of lament and resistance; lament because Victor Jara was the victim of state violence and resistance because we could finally comprehend the lyrics' original meaning. I once understood the song's chorus 'the right to live in peace' as a request, but when sung in unison with fellow protesters at the renamed Plaza de la Dignidad or Dignity Plaza (formerly known as Plaza Italy), I realised that the chorus was a demand.

Inspired by the protests and the popularity of Jara's song, the group One Thousand Guitars for Victor announced a special public performance on the one-week anniversary of the 18 October uprising. A month earlier, the group held their seventh yearly performance in Santiago's Recoleta neighbourhood, where a few hundred people commemorated Jara's assassination. However, their 25 October performance on the National Library's front steps facing the main thoroughfare that leads to Dignity Plaza drew a large crowd of singing protesters; a moment that coalesced old feelings of lament with the new meaning of struggle.⁵⁸ The One Thousand Guitars for Victor became one thousand guitars for *el pueblo*. It was reminiscent of the emblematic 1973 Quilapayún concert at a packed National Stadium singing 'La Batea' and supporting the UP government.⁵⁹ As Victor Jara professed in 'I, Manifest', 'I do not sing just to sing, I sing because the guitar has meaning and reason.'⁶⁰

Like music, muralism has become integral to memory battles and an essential undercurrent that allowed the continued flow of popular power, aiding the rebuilding of social movements under democracy. Muralism is a form of street art and political propaganda that ties the former Chilean left with modern-day movements in the country. Chilean muralism was inspired by post-Mexican Revolution muralism that depicted the histories, religions and faces of the common people and developed inclusive mural-painting methods.⁶¹ In Chile, the most well-known mural brigade is the Ramona Parra Brigade (BPR), which began as a group of PCCh artists who painted murals for Allende's presidential campaign, continued to do so until the 1973 coup and re-founded in the 1980s.⁶² While the murals produced in the UP era were painted over by the military regime, memories of that work lived through photographs and testimonials.⁶³ Mural brigades, including the BPR, reappeared after the return of democratic rule. A Chilean friend once told me that an organisation is not legitimate until they have a mural brigade that explains its growth and popularity in recent years. While many brigades are directly associated with political parties, artistic brigades have also formed to disseminate specific social movements' ideas and demands, thus maintaining looser or mixed ideological currents. In November 2019, a month after the uprising, Mono González, a muralist in the original BRP, called on muralists and artists representing different social and political organisations to collaborate on a mural on the banks of the Mapocho River to capture the political moment.⁶⁴ Individual artists and mural brigades joined in on the effort. Bree Busk, a member of the CF8M artistic brigade Brigada Laura Rodig and active in the Huemul Neighbourhood Assembly, reflected joyfully on her participation in a Facebook post. Busk described working on a 'rickety ladder' alongside another feminist artist in retouching 'the face of a woman with a large spoon in one hand (to *cacerolear*) and the other covering one eye'.⁶⁵ At the centre of the mural, the popular demand for a 'Constituent Assembly' was featured prominently, surrounded by drawings depicting various social movements ranging from the Mapuche struggle to the feminist movement, as well as newer images of Dignity Plaza. Trumper explains that during the Allende period, street walls became 'arenas where political languages and identities were forged, and the shape of the Chilean nation and the limits of Chilean citizenship reimagined'.⁶⁶ Similarly, the street murals and popular music in the context of the post-October uprising reflected the new political language in construction. The collective mural project on the Mapocho River and the One Thousand Guitars for Victor performance in front of the National Library exemplify the popular power politics of the

October 2019 uprising that brought together social movements under the common banner for a constituent assembly. As Busk reflected at the end of her post: ‘This is the beautiful world we are building.’

Where it comes together: neighbourhood assemblies

On 18 October 2019 *cacerolazos* erupted in front of Santiago’s metro stations and in defiance of the government-imposed curfew. In my small working-class neighbourhood of Huemul, by Sunday 20 October, residents moved their *cacerolazo* from the Franklin metro station to Huemul Plaza, located at the heart of the neighbourhood. We attempted to talk politics over the banging noise of our kitchenware, which proved difficult. The following day, on 21 October, we organised communal tea-time before the anti-curfew protest to get to know each other. We carried food, chairs and tables from our homes, creating a comfy atmosphere in the middle of a public plaza. We exchanged stories and soon realised that we shared views about politics and society. We decided to describe our gatherings as an assembly through the course of conversation and made handmade signs to post around the neighbourhood to urge others to join us.

The Huemul Neighbourhood Assembly’s first meetings focused on what motivated our participation in the protests. Rather than discuss topics about the cost of living and anger about being overworked, our starting point was collective trauma. One neighbour after another pivoted Chile’s social ills on the dictatorship, neoliberalism and the 1980 constitution. But the conversation also turned to personal experiences with trauma. A former member of the Manuel Rodríguez Popular Front (FPMR) described Huemul’s political climate during the dictatorship and the forgotten memories of those disappeared from the neighbourhood. He described his arrest, torture and 10-year political imprisonment. He talked about his feelings of abandonment when he remained in prison several years after the return of democracy. His emotive testimonial made many of us cry, encouraging others to speak. One neighbour, a family friend who was present at the assembly, later told me about his experiences when he was arrested and tortured for his political activities in the FPMR. Sharing, listening and discussing such painful memories was difficult, but we were all aware that this was the necessary first step. We needed to share. It was reminiscent of support meetings for survivors of gender violence, where survivors share painful memories in a supportive atmosphere for acknowledgement and community. The testimonials were a sign of trust formed over the few days when we stood together with our pots and pans while facing the military and the police. But it also highlighted the need to have a place to share our collective trauma.

Every community assembly shared a similar origin story that began with their neighbourhood *cacerolazo*, where people found each other and shared personal testimonials. The assemblies were spontaneous and organic but rooted in historical understandings of popular power as a space for collective discussion and decision-making. The Huemul Assembly, like others, attempted to balance local needs with national demands. The sprouting of neighbourhood assemblies led to creating small geographic networks to share resources and coordinate actions that eventually evolved into the founding of the city-wide assembly network called the Territorial Assemblies Coordinator (CAT).⁶⁷ In both local and CAT assemblies, participants initially avoided ideological labels to maintain political pluralism, forcing communists, centrists, social democrats and anarchists to work together.

Within a week after the explosion of social unrest, Social Unity – a coalition of social movement organisations formed only a few months before the October uprising – called for organised *cabildos* (open town halls) across the country.⁶⁸ They published a series of questions to be used by *cabildos* and asked local assemblies to send their results to Social Unity, who planned to synthesise all the responses (see Figure 3).⁶⁹ Neighbourhood assemblies organised the majority of the *cabildos*. Yet *cabildos* were also convened by Mapuche, Afro-Chileans, immigrants and feminists, and by specific professions like historians, teachers, musicians and scientists.⁷⁰ Leading up to the Huemul *cabildo*, assembly members tabled at Huemul Plaza with sign-up sheets and flyers to motivate neighbours to participate. We also asked neighbours to write their thoughts on Post-it Notes that we later included in our *cabildo*’s assessment. The Huemul Assembly organised its neighbourhood *cabildo* on 10 November 2019, guided by the question: What type of country do we dream of? Two *cabildo* groups were formed: the adult *cabildo* and the children’s *cabildo*. The children drew pictures of the country they wished for that reflected the breadth

of Chile’s social movements from the fight for water rights, to Matapacos, student protesters and Baila Pikachú dancing at Dignity Plaza.⁷¹ A group of female muralists helped the children convert their drawings into small murals that participants painted together on cement benches in Huemul Plaza. Much like the children’s activity, the adult-centred political discussion, as it was referred to, represented an array of visions and opinions but unified by shared support for a new constitution (see Figures 4 and 5).⁷² The Huemul Assembly presented the *cabildo*’s results at the neighbourhood’s yearly anniversary celebrations on 24 November. The anniversary activities included northern carnival dancers followed by a series of musical performances. The event closed with a special concert from the New Song ensemble Inti-Ilumani, at which the crowd of hundreds sang along to Victor Jara’s ‘The Right to Live in Peace’, among other songs. The Huemul Assembly later reflected on the *cabildo* and anniversary event as a success, especially its ability to engage and build trust with neighbours, creating the basis for a lasting organisation.

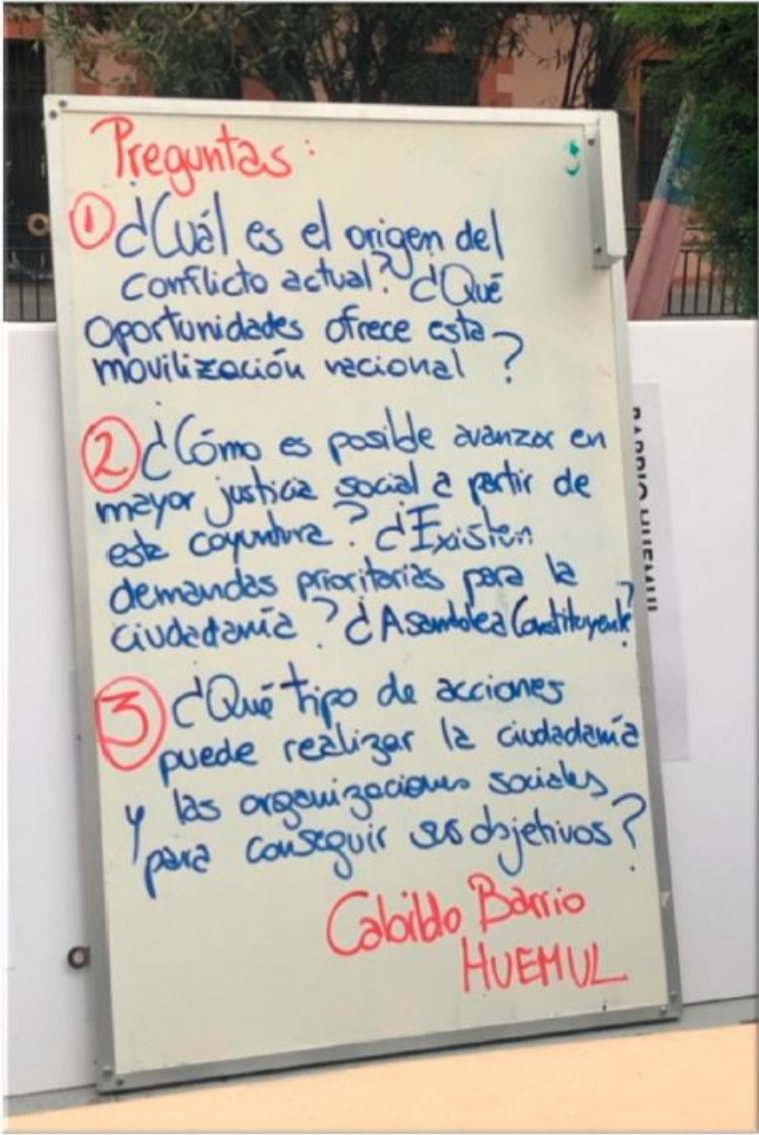


Figure 3 27 October 2019 – Plaza Huemul – community white board with written questions developed by Social Unity that guided *cabildo* discussions (Source: Author, 2021).



Figure 4 23 November 2019 – Plaza Huemul – Workshop organised by the Huemul Assembly on ‘The Constitution We Have, The Constitution We Want’ (Source: Asamblea Huemul).



Figure 5 23 November 2019 – Plaza Huemul – workshop organised by the Huemul Assembly on ‘The Constitution We Have, The Constitution We Want’ (Source: Author, 2021).

Leading up to Huemul’s anniversary event, assembly members discussed their concern that the movement was losing steam as fewer protesters gathered at Dignity Plaza and more people returned to work. Furthermore, the signing of the 15 November Accord for Social Peace and a New Constitution by a group of politicians, including members of the Broad Front leftist coalition, fomented anger due to the lack of transparency and sparked *funas* against leftist politicians who signed the accord, fracturing

the Broad Front.⁷³ Even though the agreement for a new constitution remains the current process that guides the plebiscite scheduled for 25 October 2020, at the time the process remained unclear.⁷⁴ On the morning of Monday 25 November, the International Day Against Gender Violence and the day after Huemul's anniversary event, Mariana – a neighbour and fellow assembly member – messaged me about attending an intervention organised by the Valparaiso-based feminist collective Las Tesis, which she knew from drama circles. The flyer asked feminists and sexual dissidents to wear club clothes plus a piece of black stocking over their eyes. Mariana and I arrived at Universidad Mayor where some 40 people were gathered in one of the dance rooms, practising the dance routine and lyrics to 'Un violador en tu camino' ('A Rapist in Your Path'), inspired by the writings of Argentine feminist Rita Segato.⁷⁵ The plan was to roam around downtown Santiago and perform in front of either symbols of state and religious power or large concentrations of pedestrians. Our small group quickly grew into the hundreds as late stragglers and passers-by joined in, eventually converting into a street demonstration once on our way to the Ministry of Women. Even though I had marched with CF8M at Dignity Plaza in previous weeks, it was the first feminist-centred demonstration since the uprising, making it both exciting and empowering. The last stop was the police precinct in front of Universidad Mayor's Theatre School where the police attacked participants with tear gas, forcing us to disperse. We were unable to celebrate the success of the action. Nevertheless, within a few days, Las Tesis's intervention videos spread like wildfire across social media, motivating others to perform the routine in their cities and neighbourhoods.

Huemul, like other neighbourhoods and communities, organised its own intervention of 'A Rapist in Your Path'. The local school released their students early that day after some parents called in, frightened that the feminists would destroy the neighbourhood. It nonetheless allowed a few assembly members to pick up their daughters and take them to the action. We performed at Huemul Plaza, at a nearby hospital, the Franklin metro station and at Franklin Plaza, where Evangelicals typically preach over loudspeakers. Elderly female neighbours came out in support even if they did not feel able or ready to participate. Mariana said later upon reflection, 'I think older women are our secret weapon. They have seen it all, and they are ready for feminism.' In other words, young feminists have the energy and capacity to lead street protests, but older women have the neighbourhood-based knowledge and network to run and change things, since many already do.⁷⁶

By Friday 29 November, Las Tesis's intervention had brought new life into the movement seen in the massive intervention of their dance performed at Dignity Plaza. Organised feminists had struggled to create a greater presence during the first month of the 2019 uprising. While feminist ideas were widely felt at assembly meetings and *cabildos*, 'A Rapist in Your Path' became a visual and public dialogue, as well as a statement, that the new Chile that we were constructing needed to be feminist. From that point on, feminism was once again visible at the marches and on the local assemblies' agenda. It created momentum for organised feminists to hold the Second Plurinational Feminist Gathering of Those Who Fight on 10–12 January 2020, and to push for the second 8 March General Feminist Strike in 2020.⁷⁷ Organised feminists also coordinated participation in the neighbourhood assemblies.⁷⁸ Leading up to 8 March 2020, Huemul feminists prepared their collective participation by sewing masks and a banner. The Huemul feminist contingent that included old and young, immigrant and queer residents from our small and modest neighbourhood, marched proudly in the extreme heat with more than 2 million women (see Figure 6). We marched for feminism, to end the precarious living produced by neoliberalism and patriarchy, and we marched for our assembly. In a show of support, some of the men in the assembly organised a late lunch when we returned. As we passed around delicious casseroles and salads around a table in Huemul Plaza and described what we saw and felt on that historic day, it became apparent that we had become a family in the few months since we all met. We embodied the new reconfiguration of popular power and the political continuity of those who fought to change the world in the early 1970s. Through our bonds of community and sorority, we were improving our social relations in our little corner of the world while keeping our eye on the prize: a new constitution.



Figure 6 8 March 2020 – Plaza Huemul – feminist members of the Huemul Assembly before their participation in the 8 March General Feminist Strike. The banner reads: ‘More together than ever against patriarchy’ (Source: Paula Andrea Moncada Hernández).

Conclusion

In an online event on unionism and feminism, Karina Nohales stated, ‘Feminism has been able to bring together political lessons that appear to be dispersed.’⁷⁹ Nohales’ comment captured the social impact of feminism on Chilean politics and apparent in the aftermath of the October uprising. Her reflection helps make sense of how feminism has influenced the 2019 political moment from collective engagement with trauma, street demonstrations, assemblies and popular art. Feminism prepared Chileans to discuss societal trauma and gave the 2019 uprising new life when it began to wane. While feminism has not been the only factor that characterised the post-October uprising’s political culture, it nevertheless played a more significant role than it is often given credit for over the last decade. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, organised feminism and neighbourhood assemblies have been the source of community care and love, from delivering hot meals to elderly neighbours to rehousing victims of gender violence. In many ways, we realised that both movements have become the source for our survival.

Chile’s 2019 *despertar* was the awakening from a collective trauma that allowed popular power to flourish in Santiago’s streets once again. The feminist and student movement shook Chilean society from its neoliberal haze, showing that fearless action can engender change and trauma can be the basis for collective action. The October protests offered an opening for Chileans to reconsider our past in a different light: to see the UP period as a moment of possibilities and not the prelude to defeat. The memories of collective trauma can never fully heal, but they can be vehicles for what *could* be. Through feminism and our neighbourhood assemblies, we learned to carry those memories of the past to build a more inclusive and just Chile in our future.

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Declarations and conflict of interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work.

Notes

¹Guzmán and Bouchet, 'Chile Era Una Fiesta', 27.

²Guzmán and Bouchet, 'Chile Era Una Fiesta', 25.

³*Cordones industriales* were territorially based networks of unions and neighbourhood organisations that coordinated political actions such as street blockades and factory takeovers. Siam Di Tella is an Argentinian home appliance and electronics company that was nationalised in 1972 and returned as a private enterprise in 1986. On the radicalisation of factory workers and formation of the *cordones industriales*, see Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*; Gaudichaud, *Poder popular y cordones industriales*.

⁴The Junta de Abastecimiento y Control de Precios (JAP) were local administrative rationing boards created by the UP government to deal with shortages of food and consumer goods, hoarding and the black market.

⁵*Cacerolazos* first emerged in right-wing women's protest against the Allende government but were later used by popular protest against the military dictatorship in the 1980s. In recent years, the tactic has been used in popular uprisings in Venezuela and Argentina: Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile*.

⁶For Karl Marx's analysis on estrangement and alienation, see Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

⁷The best depiction of the Penguin Revolution and the rise of a politically organised secondary school student movement is a 2008 documentary: see 'La Revolución de los Pingüinos'.

⁸'Aula Segura'; Delgado, 'Nuevos incidentes con molotov en el Instituto Nacional'.

⁹Díaz Montero, 'Estudiantes del Instituto Nacional'.

¹⁰Ferrara, *Accessing the Long-Term Impact of Truth Commissions*, 200–5.

¹¹Cathy Lisa Schneider describes this break in an interview with an individual who observed and resided in a shantytown during the military coup who highlighted that 'a lifetime of work' was destroyed in a day; Schneider, *Shantytown Protests*, 1.

¹²Pavilack, *Mining for the Nation*.

¹³The presidential election took place in September 1970 and Allende assumed the presidency in November 1970; Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 54; For references on scholarly works that describe the radicalisation of the Chilean working class, see: Salazar, *Labradores*; Drake, *Socialism and populism*; Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*; Klubock, *Contested Communities*; and Garcés, *El movimiento obrero*; Schlotterbeck, *Beyond the Vanguard*.

¹⁴Guzmán, 'Chile Era Una Fiesta', 28.

¹⁵Conjunctural analysis is a political analysis method that placed the political moment to assess and project the main trends. For works on *coyuntura* analysis, see Gallardo, *Fundamentos de formación política*; and Brandt, *Naming the Moment*; for discussion on the new *coyuntura* following the dictatorship, see the Introduction in: Garcés, *Crisis social*.

¹⁶The concept of 'persecution and awakening' is Stern's thesis about key emblematic memories that formed when remembering the 1980s protests; Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile*, 113–18.

¹⁷Kirkwood, *Ser Política en Chile*; Tessada Sepúlveda, 'Democracia en el país y en la casa', 96–117.

¹⁸*Machismo* is a patriarchal attitude in which men believe they are superior to women.

¹⁹In Argentina, a sector of feminists continued to organise around the banner of feminism inspired by the UN Decade for Women, 1975–85, and organised the first yearly Encuentro de Mujeres (Women's Gathering) in 1986; Craske, *Women and Politics*.

²⁰1980 Chilean Constitution.

²¹Truth Commission: 90.

²²According to Stern, memory knots defined theoretically ‘are sites of society, place, and time so bothersome, insistent, or conflictive that they move human beings, at least temporarily, beyond the homo habitus postulated by anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu’ and using layman’s terms ‘memory knots are sites where the social body screams’; Stern, *Remembering*, 121.

²³Casse, ‘Au Chili, les sirènes de l’oubli’, 9.

²⁴S. Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet*, xxix; V. Stern, *Remembering*, ix.

²⁵For a comprehensive study on intergenerational trauma in global context, see Daniel, *International Handbook*.

²⁶Parson, *Traumatic States*, 10.

²⁷‘The “invisibility” of domestic violence against women and the suffering it entails are related to the difficulty of communicating the pain of being subject to violence by an intimate partner and to the challenges of being truly heard in that communication. The many forms of violence – physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic, and social – that are main features of an abusive domestic relationship are in essence an attempt at the ‘conversation of absolute pain into the fiction of absolute power’; Parson, *Traumatic States*, 10.

²⁸The Chilean military justified state violence by invoking a social malady produced by the germ of Marxism that connected state ideology, the economic order and societal obedience. See Pinochet, *El día decisivo*.

²⁹Mapudungun is the language of the indigenous Mapuche in southern Chile and Argentina. There are many articles and videos showing human rights organisations leading *funas* in Chile or *escraches* in Argentina, publicly humiliating human rights abusers at their workplaces or homes; Francis, ‘Name and shaming’.

³⁰Carrillo, ‘Feminism against capitalism’.

³¹On transversal politics, see Yuval-Davis, ‘What is “transversal politics”?’; for a discussion on how Chilean feminists employ transversal politics, see Busk, ‘Chile’s feminists inspire’.

³²Kirkwood was a Marxist; Caffarena and Poblete supported socialist ideas of class equality but placed feminism first, which put them in conflict with some female members of the PCCh. Members of the PCCh were active in MEMCH and MEMCH 83; According to Caffarena, ‘Soy . . . una socialista moderada’. See Morales Taquia, ‘Elena Caffarena’.

³³I use Foucault’s interpretation of power as a blurred line between consent and violence, while Hannah Arendt viewed power and violence as two politically separate entities.

³⁴*Marianismo* refers to a socially imposed feminine ideal reflected in the Virgin Mary and heavily associated with Catholicism. While *marianismo* was not widely embraced by Chilean women, the point here is that it was used to shame women who did not meet that ideal; Trumper and Tomic, ‘From a cancerous body’, 5.

³⁵Trumper and Tomic, ‘From a cancerous body’, 5; Chilean society has been described as socially conservative in its manner of dress and social expectations, yet recent scholarship has shown that Chilean youth culture of the 1960s was on par with the global countercultural wave of cultural and sexual awakening. A state-enforced conservative shift in dress, men’s hair length and family structures transpired post-1973. For more on the subject, see Barr-Melej, *Psychedelic Chile*.

³⁶Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*.

³⁷Busk, ‘Chile’s feminists inspire’.

³⁸Pozo, ‘La Marea Verde de la Argentina’; Busk, ‘Chile’s feminist movement’.

³⁹A close friend and I developed the term ‘comradewife’ to describe our close friendship and commitment to each other. For other examples, see Cohen, ‘What if friendship, not marriage, was at the center of life?’.

⁴⁰*Cueca* was declared an official national dance during the dictatorship in 1979; Henríquez Orenes, ‘La historia de la cueca sola’; ‘A 46 años del Golpe, la Cueca Sola’.

⁴¹Freixas, ‘A 3 años de la muerte de Macarena Valdés’.

⁴²Aguilera, ‘La lucha de la familia de Nicole Saavedra’.

⁴³Fuentes, ‘La muerte de Joane Florvil’; Batarce, ‘A un año de la muerte de Joane Florvil’.

⁴⁴Devés wrote his prologue on the one-year anniversary of the *Caso Degollados* (Slit-Throat Case) when the military murdered three members of the PCCh in 1985 by slitting their throats; Devés, *Los que van a morir te saludan*.

⁴⁵For an explanation on the Chilean left's political rupture see the beginning of the second section of this article, titled 'Collective trauma before the awakening'.

⁴⁶The 1969 Basic Programme of the Popular Unity, see 'Popular Unity Government'.

⁴⁷Schlotterbeck, *Beyond the Vanguard*.

⁴⁸*The Battle of Chile*, dir. Patricio Guzmán (1975–9), is a three-part documentary that captures the turmoil and political debates during the last year of the Allende presidency. Some of the most emblematic scenes from the documentary are union and assembly meetings organised by workers and landless farmers that demonstrate the subalterns' developed political positions and visions for the future.

⁴⁹The people, or *el pueblo*, in Latin America have a class character and refers to the labouring class.

⁵⁰Since a large portion of the Chilean economy was dependent on the export economy, the ability to halt the production of resources would have directly affected Western companies that profited from those ventures.

⁵¹Clashes emerged within the Chilean left in that period between the pro-UP institutional vision and the MIR-influenced sector that fought for independent action of the working class.

⁵²For the best description of horizontalism as a recent Latin American political current, see Sitrin, *Horizontalism*.

⁵³Sitrin, *Horizontalism*.

⁵⁴González, 'The making of a social history', 248–72.

⁵⁵Dillon, *Violeta Parra*.

⁵⁶I grew up around the exiled community in Los Angeles, California, and since I have no memories of what the music meant prior to 1973, my initial association with New Song music was a music about loss and sadness.

⁵⁷Rohter, 'A voice stilled', 1.

⁵⁸'Confirman el séptimo versión'; 'Mil Guitarras para Victor Jara'.

⁵⁹Careaga, 'El Quilapayuzo de Viña'.

⁶⁰Jara, 'Manifiesto', *Tiempos que cambian*, my translation.

⁶¹Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America*.

⁶²For more information about the BRP, including documents, see 'Las Brigadas Ramona Parra'.

⁶³Castillo Espinoza, *Puño y Letra*.

⁶⁴'Chile despertó en los grafiti'.

⁶⁵Busk, personal Facebook post.

⁶⁶Trumper, *Ephemeral Histories*, 94; For additional description about political propaganda in the streets leading up to Allende's victory and after, see Winn, *Weavers of Revolution*, 69.

⁶⁷For information about the Coordinadora de Asambleas Territoriales, see Coordinator for Territorial Assemblies.

⁶⁸Social Unity was successful during the first few months but fell apart once the PCCh-dominated CUT (labour federation) entered and attempted to dominate the discussion and demands; Bravo, 'Más de 15 mil personas en 42 comunas'.

⁶⁹Bravo, 'Más de 15 mil personas en 42 comunas'.

⁷⁰Few articles were written about these specific *cabildos*. They were advertised through social media and many continued to meet via Zoom through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷¹Matapacos (Cop Killer) was a black stray dog who became an icon of the student movement for his support of students and aggression towards the police. Baila Pikachú is a woman who, depressed after her child bought thousands of pesos worth of Pikachu items on the internet from China without her knowledge, decided to put on one of the inflatable Pikachu outfits that she had and headed to Dignity Plaza to dance; Anania, 'The cop-attacking Chilean dog'; Cruz Giraldo, 'La historia tras "Baila Pikachú"'.
⁷²Asamblea Huemul, 'Síntesis del cabildo barrial del 10 de noviembre de 2019'.

⁷³"Firmaron sin conversar con el pueblo".

⁷⁴On the Popular Constituent Assembly, see the Coordinator for Territorial Assemblies.

⁷⁵This was the second of three theses that Las Tesis planned on developing. The first thesis performance was based on Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* (1998); País, 'Las Tesis sobre "Un violador en tu camino"'.

⁷⁶The housing administration associations and neighbourhood organisation (*junta de vecinos*) in my neighbourhood are mostly run by older women, which is common in other neighbourhoods.

⁷⁷'II Encuentro Plurinacional de Las Que Luchan'.

⁷⁸The CF8M created a committee for feminists active in local assemblies to exchange notes and propose projects.

⁷⁹Quote in Spanish, 'El feminismo ha podido articular la lecturas que parecen ser dispersos', later confirmed with the speaker on the same day of the event. Online event via Zoom organised by the Sindicato de Trabajadores Paicani on 21 August 2020.

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