

Mario Aguilar*

⇒ The Ethnography of the Villa Grimaldi in Pinochet's Chile: From Public Landscape to Secret Detention Centre (1973-1980)

Abstract: Ethnographic explorations of ideas and changes related to contextual and social landscapes have become ever more central to social methodologies used to study history and social change in Latin America. However, less research on the historical changes affected by societies on the landscape of the urban centres has been attempted, with an over-concentration of research on rural landscapes. This paper explores the changes in the social and cultural landscape of the Peñalolén area of Santiago, Chile, particularly those at the Villa Grimaldi. The Villa Grimaldi represents an important place for social memory as it underwent dramatic changes linked to the ethnography of colonialism/nationalism and, more recently, aesthetic changes related to the history of landscapes, and memories of abduction, torture and disappearance related to the military period of Chilean history.

Keywords: Villa Grimaldi; Landscape; History and Memory; Chile; 20th Century.

En la Villa Grimaldi la tierra tierna y pura fue convertida en surco de un ancho cementerio y 132 soledades sufrientes se hundieron desde entonces en su falaz misterio (Patricio Manns 20/9/91).

Introduction: Methodological considerations

This paper explores three kinds of methodological considerations in order to interpret the history of the Villa Grimaldi: the anthropology of landscape, the historiography of landscape and the production of history through oral testimonies inscribed in legal documentation. It assumes that the gathering of historical facts through archival research and periods of anthropological fieldwork complement an interpretive project of historical reconstruction that always remains interpretive by creating semantic fields of social understanding rather than grand narratives of unified discourse and common historical markers.

* Mario I. Aguilar is the Dean of the Faculty of Divinity at the University of St. Andrews and the author of *Current Issues on Theology and Religion in Latin America and Africa* (2002). He is currently working on a three-volume *Social History of the Catholic Church in Chile: the first volume (1973-1980)* has won the Adele Mellen Prize in the United States.

This paper expands the ethnography of the Villa Grimaldi, a particular place in Santiago (Chile), where political opponents of general Pinochet were kept in detention and tortured. The bodies of those who died were then secretly removed to other locations between 1973 and 1978. It deals with the ethnography of landscape transformation in three phases:

- (i) From private landscape to social landscape (private home to discotheque)
- (ii) From public space to secluded space (discotheque to torture centre)
- (iii) From secluded space to social landscape (torture centre to park of remembrance).

In exploring such an ethnography of history, this paper recognises that the anthropological study of landscape has become central to the study of society and therefore argues that

- (a) Landscapes of secrecy exist within every society.
- (b) These landscapes of secrecy must constitute part of the ethnographic description provided by anthropologists.
- (c) These secret landscapes and their secret social practices require another kind of “participant observation”.
- (d) Oral narratives, textual testimonies and legal files constitute ethnographic data for an anthropological analysis and a further ethnological knowledge of peoples in the contemporary world.

Ethnology, Landscape and History

Most anthropological writing as ethnography relates to a period of fieldwork in which anthropologists are prepared to experience the life of a community. Within such periods “participant observation” has become a well-known paradigm of anthropological work, with its subsequent period of writing and the publication of an ethnographic account that relates particular social practices to other societies’ social patterns using the comparative method. In fact, “ethnography itself, as writing about culture, is also engaged with pieces of paper” (Gow 1995: 59). Thus, “it seems to be a truism bordering on the trivial that an ethnographer is out to collect information and that he can get it from those who have it” (Fabian 1990: 6).

However, there are occasions where a part of society remains closed to the anthropologist’s gaze. In some cases, for example, a male anthropologist does not have direct access to women’s activities related to domestic realms of influence (e.g. parts of the home) or to bodily activities that only women can address and talk about (e.g. menstruation, contraception). In most cases, such societal closure does not constitute an immediate ethnographic problem as anthropologists can consult with others about such practices or ignore them altogether in their writings.

Nevertheless, there are areas of ethnographic description that are not available for “participant observation” at all. For example, there are sacred enclosures, i.e. places where initiates going through rites of passage cannot be disturbed, and where visitors can pollute and therefore ruin a whole ritual moment or a succession of rituals. Beyond

rites of passage and their performance, these “secret enclosures” within a larger landscape include secret prisons, detention centres and locations where torture is inflicted on those detained in order to extract information, to create fear among others, or to eliminate political opponents.

If, in Africa, secret societies do exist, and only those initiated have access to their ritual performances, in other places such as Latin America, secret associations with limited access to their membership, practices and knowledge do exist during periods of authoritarian political regimes. In fact, within the time and space of these authoritarian regimes some practices are conducted in secrecy and in private, practices that because of their “secrecy” are well known to others, but cannot be spoken about in the public sphere. Indeed, they are not spoken about at all until questions are asked by society at large in the context of history as recipient of the anthropological “ethnographic present”. However, as in the case of the Orientalist Victor Segalen in China, “we are unable to dismiss what we hear as lies and fantasy. The story has too much historical specificity, following very closely as it does the overthrow of the empire”.¹

Thus, social practices take place within cultural contexts, and those contexts require a particular space and time. Ritual practices, for example, take place within a particular society, a group of people that live in a particular territory and whose practices have elements of change and continuity that need to be studied over a period of time and space, i.e. history. The political practices of group associations, elections and social competition for resources follow the same patterns. Groups operate in context, where in a particular time and space human beings interact with each other and become social actors that inherit social histories and at the same time create their new social practices and their history. Therefore, as recently suggested, context becomes a central concept within the study of anthropology (Dilley 1999).

While the ethnography of historical patterns allows us to analyse change and continuity in a particular society, the changing patterns in landscape become closely intertwined with the human agency of social activity and of social change. In fact, landscape is affected by social action, as in the case of building construction and urbanisation. At the same time, human sociability is affected by patterns of landscape, nature and the environment.

Within this construction of landscapes by social communities, spaces are assigned to social activities that can be perceived as public and other activities are assigned to the private realm. Spaces are socially constructed, and therefore social activities become part of a social embodiment that allows public demonstrations of sociability in some cases, and in others restricts human access and participation to particular spaces and landscapes.

While sacred spaces associated with myths of origins and ancestral lands become part of a mythical social beginning that remains unchanged, most spaces change their social connotation through the social use assigned to them. For example, roads are for circulation, dining rooms for food consumption, sacred spaces for communication with the other world, and cemeteries for burial and mourning. Misunderstanding of these communally given meanings results in misfortune, social unrest, and punishment. Thus,

¹ Clifford (1988: 159); cf. Clifford (1986).

prisons and centres of detention are not only inaccessible to most members of the community, but in their practices they also remain closed to the public eye, dangerous to non-residents, and landscapes that remain at the periphery of social landscapes.

However isolated they remain, their history and their practices reflect social understandings and events that have taken place in a particular community, ethnic group or society. If humans pass through recognised rites of passage and of initiation within a society that incorporates them into a group and that includes them in social practices, there are others who are excluded from society and secluded within private spaces on the periphery, outside society's gaze and ordinary activities. Even when within "ethnographic presents" these spaces remain outside ethnographic knowledge, sooner or later they are incorporated into the ethnological knowledge of a particular society, because they represent social behaviour as exclusion and therefore they possess a socially assigned meaning and social representation.

If the ordinary "ethnographic present" portrayed by a single anthropologist during fieldwork remains synchronic, landscapes of exclusion can only be understood within the diachronic sense of the social. Such diachronic sense is generally expressed through historical patterns within the anthropology of history. Such history is further expressed by changes in landscape patterns as social creations that evolve and that can express human agency and its confrontation with change and continuity.

In the case of "secret landscapes" they are not available for people's immediate cognition and they are closed to the anthropologist's gaze. It is only after social action has taken place, i.e. imprisonment and rituals of torture, that the landscape appears within the construction of society. Thus, the anthropological description of such ethnographic landscapes changes, following the insightful comment by Eric Hirsch,

There is thus the landscape we initially see and a second landscape which is produced through local practice and which we come to recognise and understand through fieldwork and through ethnographic description and interpretation (Hirsch 1995: 2).

In fact, anthropologists have felt a creative tension between a static landscape that forms social life and dictates social action and the discourse that suggests that landscape is cultured by societies that create "cultural landscapes". Therefore, Sauer (geographer) and Durkheim (sociologist) perceived society as a biological body in need of expansion that took over landscapes and appropriated them as society's terrain. While Durkheim did not address the relation between society and nature, Sauer suggested that,

The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result (Sauer 1963: 343 in Hirsch 1995: 9).

It is clear that the social understanding of landscape is culturally constructed, so that different groups can have a different understanding of the social implications of a particular landscape, the space occupied and the changes undergone within it. For example, Peter Gow in his analysis of the Amazonian landscape suggests that outsiders do not perceive the Amazonian forest as a "cultural landscape". They only do so when the forest has been cut down and roads have been built, so that nature has been tamed and human

civilisation has created a cultured landscape. However, within the landscape, shamans, in their dreams, perceive the forest as full of people and full of disembodied beings (Gow 1991, cf. Humphrey 1995). Therefore,

The general categories of space, the forest and the river, which in everyday experience are the location of specific landscapes of implication of specific persons, are transformed into the specific houses and villages of powerful beings, the agents of space at its most general. This transformation of the general into the specific, and the specific into the general, is a hallmark of shamanic experience (Gow 1995: 55).

While it is not possible to suggest that all societies have “shamanic experiences”, the reading of landscape is pertinent to issues of landscape understood as process. Such a view of landscape presupposes change and it suggests that a landscape cannot be absolute, but includes “a series of related, if contradictory, moments – perspectives – which cohere in what can be recognised as a singular form: landscape as a cultural process” (Hirsch 1995: 23).

In the following historiography of the Villa Grimaldi I attempt a reading of such a landscape, assuming that it has changed not only physically but that its perception by those living beside or around it has also changed. Those readings remain cultural markers of semantic understanding, sometimes contradictory, sometime public, other times secret, frightening and unspoken.

From Indigenous Land to Colonial Mansion

The first owner of the lands that became the farm later associated with the Villa Grimaldi was the Spanish Captain Pastene, a sailor from Genoa.² He landed in Chile in 1544 and requested land from the colonial authorities that extended from the contemporary Ñuñoa to the Andes towards the east of Santiago. Pastene continued appropriating land without proper title deeds and thus came to own most of what was known as Peñalolén.

In the language of the Picunche Indians, Peñalolén means “the rock that cries”, that is, the rock that produces water. The Picunche had inhabited the land and had suffered the Inca conquest and oppression before the Spaniards arrived and treated them in a similar fashion. Therefore, Pastene had Indians working under the Spanish *encomienda* agreement. According to this agreement, they would work for and belong to a Spaniard, who in return for that work would feed them, look after them and make them Christians.

Later, Pastene's daughter María Pastene inherited the land. She married Francisco Rodríguez de Ovalle and they had a son, Alonso de Ovalle. Alonso was the first Chilean historian, and he wrote the first history of the Kingdom of Chile. When Ovalle joined the Society of Jesus the farm became the property of the Jesuits who directed farming enterprises with great innovative technology and, as was customary at that time, with Indians working the land.

² Throughout this colonial historical section I have followed the text of the presentation made by M. Angélica Illanes O. at the Peñalolén Primary School (Escuela Comunal Peñalolén) in 1991.

However, because of their economic power and their challenge to the absolute monarchical model of Spain, the Jesuits were expelled from the Americas in 1776. As a result, the colonial authorities confiscated the lands in Peñalolén; they were sold and bought many times during the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Mrs. Josefa Vicuña owned the lands of Peñalolén, and she later transferred its ownership to the lawyer Juan Egaña in payment for his professional services. Egaña became a leading intellectual figure at the time of Chilean independence;³ he and his son Mariano Egaña⁴ drafted the Chilean Constitutions of 1828 and 1833. In the houses on the farm, intellectual and political figures of the time rested and met to discuss politics, literature and governance. These individuals included Camilo Henríquez,⁵ Manuel de Salas,⁶ Ignacio Domeyko,⁷ Victorino Lastarria,⁸ and Andrés Bello⁹.

³ Juan Egaña Risco (1768-1836) was born in Lima of a Chilean father and a Peruvian mother. In 1802 he received his doctorate in Latin and Rhetoric and became a professor at the University of San Felipe. After the independence of Chile and when the Spanish army re-conquered the colonies he was taken to Juan Fernández Island as a prisoner (1814-1817). After his release he became a central figure in political circles and was the main writer behind the Chilean Constitution of 1823.

⁴ Mariano Egaña Fabres (1793-1846) was born in Santiago. After studying law at the University of San Felipe he became a lawyer in 1811. He was also sent to Juan Fernández Island as a prisoner, and after his release he became a member of the Santiago Council. Later he was a diplomat in England and a member of the Commission that drafted the 1833 Chilean Constitution.

⁵ Camilo Henríquez González (1769-1825) was born in Valdivia. Known as the 'Fraile de la Buena Muerte' because he was a prominent member of the Religious of the Good Death who looked after the dying poor, Henríquez was ordained as a priest in 1790 and had to leave for Lima after the inquisition discovered that he had read some forbidden books, e.g. *The Social Contract* by Jean Jacques Rousseau. On his return to Chile in 1811 he became a member of the Lower Chamber and advocated total independence from Spain. In 1821 he became the editor of the first Chilean Newspaper, *La Aurora de Chile*. After exile in Argentina he returned and became a member of the Lower Chamber once again.

⁶ Manuel de Salas y Corbalán (1754-1841) was born in Santiago. After becoming a lawyer and serving on the Santiago Council he advocated the installation of the Chilean Junta of 1810. He taught at the University of San Felipe and drafted the *Ley de Libertad de Ventres* (1811), a law that abolished slavery in Chile and advocated the freedom of all slaves' children born there. After being imprisoned on Juan Fernández Island he became a librarian at the National Library and president of the State Council.

⁷ Ignacio Domeyko Ankuba (1802-1889) was born in Missik, which at the time belonged to Poland and is now a part of Lithuania. After taking part in the failed Polish revolution against Soviet Union occupation he had to leave Poland and, after a brief spell in France, landed in Chile in 1838. His first position was as a teacher in Coquimbo, in the north of Chile, where he developed new knowledge about mining and revolutionised the teaching of the subject within the Coquimbo School. After becoming a Chilean citizen in 1848 he became Rector of the Chilean University in 1867.

⁸ José Victorino Lastarria Santander (1817-1888) was born in Rancagua, Chile. He studied philosophy and natural law, the latter under the guidance of Andrés Bello. Between 1836 and 1838 he qualified as a teacher of Universal Law and Geography at the University of San Felipe. In 1839 he also qualified as a lawyer while teaching at the Instituto Nacional, a government school. In 1843 he was one of eighty-six teachers who founded the Chilean University together with Andrés Bello. Lastarria was elected to the Chilean Senate (1867-1879) and promoted the ideal of a secular (non-religious) education for all. His works include *Elementos de Derecho Público Constitucional y Teoría del Derecho Penal* (1847), *Historia Constitucional del Medio Siglo* (1853), *Constitución Comentada* (1856), and *Juicio Histórico a Portales* (1860).

⁹ Andrés Bello López (1780-1865) was born in Caracas, Venezuela. Bello represented Venezuela in London during the process of independence. However, when the Spanish re-conquered the colonies (1812) he remained in Europe where he was employed by the Chilean government to represent Chilean inter-

Mariano Egaña died in 1846 and the land did not become property of his brothers, firstly because Mariano had not completed papers of ownership together with his brothers, and secondly because one of his brothers, having fought in the Chilean Civil War of 1851, had been arrested and deported. Therefore none of the brothers was legally allowed to take over Juan and Mariano Egaña's land.

As a result of these legal litigations, Mariano Egaña's granddaughter inherited the land and subsequently sold it in 1869 to the Uruguayan diplomat José Arrieta¹⁰, who later gave it to his son. José Arrieta Jr. restored the intellectual tradition previously associated with Peñalolén, and invited intellectuals such as Valentín Braudeau, Pedro Prado, Ricardo Dávila Silva, Julio Vicuña Cifuentes, Luis Orrego Luco and Alone. This tradition extended until the 1940s, when the Grimaldi family occupied the farm.

The Villa Grimaldi palace was originally one of the houses occupied by the administrator of Arrieta's land, and was later owned by a Chilean aristocrat, Iván Altamirano. Later, when Emilio Vassallo bought the Villa, it became a wonderful place with statues, fountains, rich marble, and European landscaping with paintings and aesthetic figures. It was a colonial mansion of beauty and wealth.¹¹ By the late 1960s it had become a restaurant, a public place where couples used to dance. It was a beautiful landscape on the hills of Santiago with the name of *El Paraíso* –paradise (Marín 1995: 105, 114). By then, Peñalolén, the area where the Villa was located, was an agrarian village outside Santiago. As a result, when the military coup took place in 1973, the Villa Grimaldi was still relatively isolated, although it was part of a road with the name of José Arrieta, located at number 8220.

From Colonial Mansion to Secret Landscape

It is not clear why the military occupied or had access to the Villa Grimaldi after the military coup.¹² The Villa was known to president Allende who had visited it in the early 1970s and it was a couple of blocks away from the Communications Army Commando Regiment, where Pinochet was stationed the morning of the military coup (11 September 1973).¹³ The Villa was also close to a small civilian airport, the Aeródromo de Tobalaba,

ests in London. In 1829 Bello moved to Chile, where he founded the Chilean University (1842) and drafted the Legal Civil Code. After becoming a Chilean citizen in 1832, he was elected Senator for Santiago in 1837 and served several periods of public office.

¹⁰ José Arrieta was born in Uruguay and arrived in Chile when he was eleven years of age. He represented the interests of Uruguay in Chile for over forty years, and founded primary schools, philanthropic associations and the 1900 School for the Poor. Arrieta wanted rights and education for the marginalised and had contacts with workers' movements. His close friend Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna was to push for social and political reforms that departed from the ownership of land and access to education granted only to the Chilean aristocracy.

¹¹ The last civilian owner of the Villa, Emilio Vassallo Rojas, published a limited edition of a book with pictures of the sculptures and the architectonic beauty of the Villa Grimaldi (Vassallo Rojas 1967).

¹² The oral tradition suggests that Vassallo gave the Villa to the military in order to save the life of his daughter, a member of the MIR (oral communication, unchecked).

¹³ The property had previously been a clinic for the treatment of children of military families who had contracted tuberculosis.

from where helicopters carried dead bodies to be dumped into the sea and into rivers, or from where prisoners were carried to another Villa, the Villa Baviera in the south of Chile, near Parral, where important prisoners were interrogated. Right-wing German immigrants had built houses, shops and stables at the Villa Baviera in order to live in a communal way by working the land.

By December 1973 the first two prisoners had been brought to the Villa Grimaldi. Bautista van Schowen and Patricio Munita were militants from a paramilitary left-wing organisation, the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR) that had pushed for further radical reforms within the government of president Salvador Allende (1970-1973).

Both of them were captured at the Capuchin Church in Santiago, where they had been in hiding, aided by a Catholic priest. At the Villa Grimaldi they were tortured, burned with cigarettes, underwent torture with electricity and had their limbs and legs smashed by moving vehicles. Later their bodies were dumped at one of the nearby roundabouts and transported by police for burial in unmarked graves at the Santiago General Cemetery (Guzmán 1998). While Munita's body was recovered, thanks to a relative who was a high-ranking officer in Pinochet's government, van Schouwen's remains were later secretly cremated and not returned to his family.

While the Chilean secret police (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional DINA) was officially created in 1974, it is clear from the details relating to the assassination of van Schouwen and Munita that the Villa Grimaldi was already being prepared as a secret detention centre in December 1973. By the time the DINA was in operation, under the direction of Army Major Manuel Contreras, the Villa Grimaldi was known as the Cuartel Terranova, the official headquarters of the Brigada de Inteligencia Metropolitana (BIM). However, for most of the local population the Villa remained a quiet house where vehicles only entered its large steel doors at night.

The transformation of the colonial mansion included the transformation of the space for interrogation purposes. The main house hosted a group of military officers and civilians in charge of the detention centre. The sculptures and works of art were taken away and a large black door installed in the high stone walls that closed the place off from view; passers-by were also deterred by barbed wire placed on the colonial walls. The tower where water had been kept was converted into "The Tower", where prisoners of extreme importance or displaying bad behaviour were kept hanging for days.

Prisoners were kept in the following places within the Cuartel Terranova:

- (i) The Tower (*la Torre*): A water storage facility in the form of a tower with two floors. On the top floor small cubicles of 70cm x 70cm x 2 metres were built. Two prisoners were kept in each box for long periods of time. On the lower floor prisoners were kept hanging and there were facilities for interrogation using electricity on a metallic bed. Most prisoners brought to the tower were of some importance and had already been subject to preliminary interrogations. Most of them were never seen again.
- (ii) The *Casas Chile* (Chile Houses): Eight small wooden constructions resembling coffins where prisoners were kept standing in darkness for days.
- (iii) The *Casas Corvi* (Corvi Houses): Nine small wooden rooms within a larger room, where bunk beds were located. Prisoners staying in the Corvi Houses had an intense timetable of interrogation and torture. There were also facilities for

torture by electricity, large containers with dirty water and faeces where prisoners could be submerged, and the only bathroom for a population of more than one hundred prisoners.

The administration of prisoners' records and the falsification of individuals' documentation were carried out in the two changing rooms adjacent to the swimming pool. The swimming pool, with its blue tiles, remained filled with water. Prisoners were immersed by force and electricity was generated into the water in order to allow for the torture of more than one prisoner at the same time.

The prisoners were allowed out during the summer months, but kept blindfolded. Thus those who survived the torture at the Cuartel Terranova remember the bench in the rose garden where they sat so many times. While blindfolded they could still smell the roses' scent and could dream of ordinary things such as spring and summer in Santiago. However, personal hygiene did not exist, communal toilets were used at set times, food was extremely meagre and insufficient and torture was frequent. As a result the prisoners' health deteriorated very quickly.

A Landscape of Torture and Pain

Around 5,000 prisoners passed through the Villa Grimaldi. Of those, 142 are still not accounted for, and today they are listed among the disappeared (*detenidos-desaparecidos*).¹⁴

Most of these prisoners were kidnapped from their homes, from their work or from the streets by the DINA. The DINA operated a fleet of Ford pick-ups with canvas covers. Those kidnapped were blindfolded and already burned with cigarettes on their way to the Cuartel Terranova. In most cases, they had been mentioned by other prisoners under torture or had been deemed to have information about wanted left-wing sympathisers or activists. However, in other cases, such as that of the suspended Catholic priest Antonio Llidó, the DINA kidnapped prisoners from other detention centres, sometimes in direct competition with other security services (Aguilar 2002: 143-144).

Prisoners' memories of the Villa Grimaldi include the cooler air of the Santiago hills and the noise of the big gates when they were opened. They experienced the landscape of the Cuartel Terranova through other senses rather than through vision. Though sight remains the "privileged sense of the West", the prisoners experienced the Villa through other senses, particularly through the painful reality of feeling their bodies through torture.¹⁵

Torture by means of electric shocks applied to the genitals, tongue, breasts, teeth, anus, etc. was a norm for all prisoners. The aim of torture was not always to extract information about others. Those prisoners who gave up information quickly raised suspi-

¹⁴ This figure keeps changing as human remains are found and identified. Thus in November 1996 the list of those who disappeared or were executed at the Villa Grimaldi included 223 names, see Corporación Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi, "Nómina de detenidos desaparecidos y ejecutados que permanecieron en Villa Grimaldi", November 1996.

¹⁵ Paul Stoller has consistently argued that, in the case of the Songhay of Niger, "taste, smell, and hearing are often more important for the Songhay than sight, the privileged sense of the West", thus "in Songhay one can taste kinship, smell witches, and hear the ancestors" (1989: 5). Cf. Stoller (1984a) and (1984b).

cions with their rapid confessions. In these cases the torturers tried harder so as to verify the information already provided. Viewed in this manner, torture was part of a rite of passage within a liminal stage away from the ordinary life of citizens. During this liminal stage, using Victor Turner's understanding of a formative process of education (Turner 1967), prisoners were given the choice of agreeing with the existence of an authoritarian state, or of dying, with the subsequent disappearance of their bodies.

I would like to suggest that this is rather like the rite of initiation in other societies (e.g. the Kuranko of Sierra Leone),

Initiation is said to be a process of taming (unruly emotions and bodies), of moulding (clay), of making dry and cool (as in cooking, smoking and curing), of ripening (as of grain and fruit), of strengthening (the heart), hardening or strengthening (the body), of getting "new sense" (*hankili kura*) (Jackson 1989: 132).

In the Cuartel Terranova prisoners certainly underwent a process of taming, and those who were returned to their homes and families were supposed to offer a good example to other citizens who might stray from their duties towards the country (*la patria*). However, those who did not give up any information after days of torture by electricity, particularly those prisoners deemed "special" because of their ranks within political organisations, were administered other kinds of torture. Thus,

- (a) prisoners were hanged and beaten up for days,
- (b) they were submerged in dirty water until they experienced a complete lack of air, or their heads were put in plastic bags until they suffocated,
- (c) drugs and hypnosis were also used on prisoners,
- (d) women were raped in front of their loved ones, sometimes with the help of trained dogs kept only at the Cuartel Terranova.

The length of stay varied enormously. Some prisoners were kept for only a few days while others stayed there for months.

Daily life was different for those who were in the tower (*la torre*). Only those who had already been tortured could join the daily routine of cleaning, and receive tea and dirty water for meals. Some prisoners, particularly women, cleaned toilets, the officers' mess, the torturers' barracks and swept the floors, particularly in summer when the dust spread on the hills of Santiago.

Within this landscape of pain it was difficult to know how many days had passed, and the questions posed during torture were always related to the location of government opponents that the DINA wanted to interrogate. The activities of the Cuartel Terranova continued day and night as prisoners were brought in or were transferred to other locations.

Narratives of the Landscape

The Villa Grimaldi read as cultural construction remained during this period "secret", "forbidden", "unspoken", "secretive". Only those that had passed through its gates and survived the experience were able to convey their horrific experiences to the outside world, which for the most part did not believe them. Their testimonies became not aesthetic works of literature but legal testimonies used in the Chilean Courts in order to ask

questions about people who had disappeared, and, much later, as legal accusations against those who had created the landscape of secrecy and terror.

Thus, legal narratives allow the contemporary historian and anthropologist to fill in details of what happened at these landscapes and how they were filled with bodies and lives. Textual narratives express the ethnography of the past, which, within our ethnographic present, suggests patterns and social action. Thus, the reasons for the existence of the Cuartel Terranova are found within the suppression of political dissent in Pinochet's Chile. However, the social breach of community and the wide practice of human rights abuses can only be intimated by looking at some of the cases of prisoners who passed through the landscape previously known as the Villa Grimaldi, some young, some old, men, women and children. The following biographical texts are an example of what was happening within this landscape of secrecy and it illustrates the ethnography of the dead and not of the living.

Example 1: Felix Santiago de la Jara Goyeneche.- 24 years of age at the time of his arrest on the 27th of November 1974. He was a member of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR) and a former student of History and Geography at the National Chilean University. Civilians who accompanied his girlfriend Sonia Valenzuela Jorquera, who had already been abducted, arrested him at 7.45 a.m. on Independencia and Olivos Streets, Santiago. At 11 a.m. that day five members of the military intelligence (Servicio de Inteligencia Militar) searched the house of his mother Eugenia Goyeneche Mora for two hours without finding anything of interest to them.

In December 1974 prisoners at another torture centre "La Venda Sexy", located in Irán and Los Plátanos Streets, Santiago, spoke to him between interrogations. On the 16th or 17th of December another prisoner María Cristina Zamora was brought in to help De la Jara who had an infected wound in one leg. However, it is clear from the testimony of Elías Padilla Ballesteros that De la Jara had already been badly tortured by the time he arrived at La Venda Sexy at the end of November.

It seems likely) that De la Jara had been brought to the Villa Grimaldi for interrogation and that later, when he became ill, his body was brought back to the Villa Grimaldi in order to be thrown into the sea from a helicopter. His name appeared in an edition of the Brazilian newspaper *O'Dia*, reproduced in Chilean newspapers, that reported 59 Chileans who had died in armed internal strife within left-wing Chilean organisations. Despite this news it seems likely that De la Jara was part of an offensive by the military to kill all members of the MIR. His name appears among those inscribed in the Wall of Names at the Villa Grimaldi (*Muro de los Nombres*).

Example 2: María Julieta Ramírez Gallegos.- This case illustrates the fact that older people were also arrested and brought to the Cuartel Terranova. While most of those abducted were in their twenties, the DINA and their military personnel were particularly interested in finding out from family members if their kin was involved with the MIR or other organisations.

María Julieta Ramírez was 65 years of age at the time of her arrest and married to Oscar Castro Alcántara. On the 30th of November 1974 she visited her children Marietta and Oscar Castro Ramírez who had been arrested and were being kept at the detention centre Tres Alamos in the south of Santiago. During her visit she was arrested together

with her son-in-law Juan Rodrigo MacLead, a member of the MIR, in the presence of her daughter. There was no judicial order of arrest and the family was not notified. Mrs. Ramírez was interrogated inside Tres Alamos together with her daughter Marietta and was later moved out of the detention centre. She was later seen at the Cuartel Terranova, where she shared a cell with Mrs. Alejandra Holzaphfeld, later exiled in Berlin.

Through this case it is possible to understand the importance of the Cuartel Terranova and its personnel. Mrs. Ramírez was arrested in Tres Alamos, which was managed by the Chilean police (*carabineros*), however for whatever reason she was moved to the Cuartel Terranova. She remains a disappeared person together with her son-in-law Juan MacLead.

Example 3: Manuel Lautaro Reyes Garrido.- Member of the MIR, 24 years of age, assassinated on the 19th of November 1975. This case illustrates the generalised violence that families of those detained by the DINA had to endure, including pregnant women, older parents and children.

On the 17th of November 1975 there was an attack on army personnel in Bío Bío Street, Santiago, conducted by the MIR. As a result, a soldier Hernán Salinas Calderón was killed together with Roberto Gallardo Moreno, a member of the MIR.

On the 18th of November 1975 the civilian police (*Investigaciones*) arrested Gallardo's parents, three of his brothers, his wife and two nephews (minors). They were brought to the Civilian Police Headquarters in General Mackenna Street, where they were interrogated and beaten up. In the early morning of the 19th, Ofelia Moreno, Isabel Gallardo, Guillermo Gallardo, and the children Viviana Gallardo and Alberto Rodríguez (nine months old) were released. The police informed Ofelia Moreno that her son had been killed and the rest of the family was to be handed over to the DINA.

On the same morning the DINA arrested Ester Torres and her sons Renato Mauricio and Francisco Javier. The DINA was looking for her other son Luis Andrés Ganga who was not at his home that morning. They were all brought to the Cuartel Terranova. Finally, DINA agents accompanied by Luis Andrés Ganga's mother arrested him at his grandfather's house. The DINA brought Ester Torres and her two sons to Cuatro Alamos, and informed her that her son Luis Andrés had managed to escape. She was released while her sons spent a long time under arrest.

Prisoners at the Cuartel Terranova have testified that the night of the 18th of November was noisy and awful. Many vehicles arrived that night with prisoners and interrogations under torture took place in the garden rather than in any of the houses. They remembered requests by guards who needed boiling water and boiling oil followed by horrible screams from prisoners. The following morning prisoners that went to the toilets saw two women in bad condition and bodies, including that of an old man, on the ground in the gardens.¹⁶

By the evening of the 19th of November the military government announced the events at Bío Bío Street and an armed confrontation that followed in the hills of Maipú (Rinconada de Maipú), outside Santiago. The names of those killed were those brought

¹⁶ See the testimony of Lelia Pérez, teacher and former prisoner, to the Human Rights Commission of the Lower House on their visit (6/11/90), in "Un vecino atento" (Donoso/Pey 1996: 14).

to the Villa Grimaldi the night before, i.e. Catalina Ester Moreno (Roberto Gallardo's sister), Alberto Recaredo Gallardo Pacheco (Roberto Gallardo's father), Mónica del Carmen Pacheco Sánchez (Roberto Gallardo's wife, three months pregnant), and Luis Andrés Ganga Torres. Another two people, Manuel Lautaro Reyes Garrido and Pedro Blas Cortés Jelves had also been previously arrested by the DINA.

All of them had been tortured in the gardens of the Cuartel Terranova, and then brought to the Rinconada de Maipú where they were asked to run while they were machine-gunned by members of the DINA. The farm in Maipú, property of the National Chilean University, was used by the secret police from 1973 to 1989.

A Landscape of Peace and Historical Education

By the 1990s another change in the landscape of the Villa Grimaldi took place as the secret landscape changed from being a secret camp of detention and torture to a landscape ready to be integrated once again into the public space of urban development by the planned construction of apartments open to the public view.

Even when the Cuartel Terranova had not been used to host prisoners during the 1980s, it remained army property. On the 17th of September 1990 vehicles started demolishing buildings at the Cuartel Terranova. These vehicles belonged to a construction company (EGPT), the company that intended to build flats on the land. A neighbour alerted the Chilean press, and the news was published in the newspaper *La Epoca*. Further news reported that General Hugo Salas Wenzel, former director of the CNI secret police (Central Nacional de Informaciones) and former director of the Military Academy, had sold the Cuartel Terranova to EGPT on the 21st of September 1987 for ten million pesos. EGPT was a company owned by four people, all relatives of General Salas. At that time the Major of Peñalolén, Carlos Alarcón, had authorised the partition of the land into fifty independent plots to be sold separately.

Members of the Chilean Parliament came to the conclusion that the transfer was not possible due to the fact that the Cuartel Terranova was a property owned by the Chilean Government. On the 6th of November 1990 the Human Rights Commission of the Lower House visited the Cuartel Terranova accompanied by former prisoners. They decided to keep the property and later to make it into a place of memory where so much of Chilean history had taken place.

Later, local organisations based in Peñalolén pushed for the property to be given to a corporation that would build a park for peace (Parque por la Paz de Villa Grimaldi). This idea was in accordance with the wish of these organisations that the park would constitute a symbolic memento against torture. It was also a response, however, to the practical impossibility of restoring the buildings that had been destroyed. Before the industrial vehicles had tried to demolish the walls, the buildings and the house had already been burned. The house had been demolished in order to comply with an expansion of the road, and in order to cover the nature of the activities that took place at the Cuartel Terranova during the time of the military government.

The property remained linked to the army during the early 1990s and several rituals of purification took place outside its walls. On the 15th of January 1994 the ministry in-charge of housing and urbanisation (Ministerio de la Vivienda y Urbanismo) took over

the property through a legal decree of expropriation (1,131 16/12/93 Serviú Metropolitano). The Ministry provided funding for the gardeners who planted grass and flowers and kept the Cuartel Terranova open for visitors and for school children to visit accompanied by their teachers. On the 10th of December 1994 the ex-Villa Grimaldi was finally recovered by community organisations when, in a liturgical celebration, the children of those who disappeared from the Cuartel Terranova opened the gates.

Later, on the 17th of January 1996, the Park for Peace Project at the ex-Villa Grimaldi began when its committee was constituted. As a result, a team of architects was commissioned to design a park for peace. Therefore the secret landscape was opened again to the public. It was re-designed, however, to witness to the history of the Cuartel Terranova, to honour those who had died or disappeared after being prisoners, and to provide a ritual landscape where the dead could finally “rest in peace”.

Through a project of symbolic architecture the architects designed the following:

- (i) Circular signs on the ground that explained to visitors the significance of particular locations, such as The Tower, the rose garden, the places where torture took place, the swimming pool, the guards’ house, etc. The signs were located on the ground because it was the only landscape that the blindfolded prisoners could see.
- (ii) A wall of names (*Muro de los Nombres*) where the names of those that died at the Cuartel Terranova or who disappeared after passing through the place were inscribed on stone. Green vegetation and plants surrounded the monument in order to symbolise life and its re-generation.
- (iii) A fountain at the centre of the park was built to symbolise the waters of life, while two towers with lights on top symbolised a chapel of repose, particularly when lit at night. A general sense of intimacy and reflection was created in these places.
- (iv) A garden, the dream of all those who were prisoners, a place where they could talk with and feel closer to their families.
- (v) A selection of indigenous Chilean trees planted by the families of the disappeared, one for each of those who lost their lives at the Cuartel Terranova.

The opening of the Park of Peace brought new meanings to the landscape. It became a place of peace and tranquillity where the freshness of the water and the green areas sheltered visitors from the summer heat. In one of my visits to the Park together with a survivor and one of the architects we waited for the sunset on a warm March evening. By the time the lights came on it was possible to feel the presence of those who had disappeared. The landscape of daylight associated with visitors and life turned to a landscape of death, where the central lights around the fountain resembled the electric candles around a coffin in a Chilean chapel of repose.

There is no doubt that the landscape will continue to change in the future with the construction of a visitors and conference centre that will meet the educational demands of schools and community-based organisations. Thus, the landscape of the Villa Grimaldi has become a text, a historical text to be studied by those who wish to know the history of Chile. In this case landscape has become a part of social memory within a society that remembers in order to prevent the same happenings in the future. Following this project of symbolic architecture, it is plausible to agree, with caution, that “linking land-

scape to primary human processes helps theoretically defend the symbolic study of land from utilitarian excess" (Abramson 2000: 2).

Conclusions

To suggest that "land now begins to appear in the humanities as a resonant expanse of distinctive representations, meanings and experiences and as an important area to revisit theoretically" (Abramson/Theodossopoulos 2000: 1) seems an unnecessary repetition. In fact it is not repetitive because landscapes continue to provide ways of understanding the social and the human, the physically given and the semantically important.

However, and as this localised study has shown, it has become clearer that landscapes change throughout historical periods and that their use, perception and construction challenges any unified description or interpretation. Thus, landscapes become contested semantic fields that are interpreted and appropriated by different groups and different interpreters.

In the case of the Villa Grimaldi and the Cuartel Terranova, the landscape has provided a place where narratives and constructions of Chilean nationalism have been produced, contested and appropriated. Thus, while the military and the secret police created a secluded place where torture was used as a tool of nationalism, others perceived such military action as an attempt against the same nation (*patria*) that the military itself propitiated as mother and as unifying social principle. Those who were the recipients of such "rituals of nationalism" perceived the Villa Grimaldi and Peñalolén as a landscape where those intellectuals who expounded ideas and practices related to a new independent nation met in order to free others, not to imprison them.

Further, as the military discarded the landscape after the dissolution of the DINA, relatives of those tortured there and those whose social trail disappeared after their appearance at the Cuartel Terranova appropriated the landscape as the place where the memory and the life of their relatives remained frozen in time. Therefore families celebrate birthdays and family occasions in the landscape. Those who have not recovered the bodies of loved ones perceive the landscape as a cemetery where the dead finally rest in peace aided by the company of the living. In the case of the political parties that opposed the military government, the landscape became a place of communal pride, as it represents the challenge of so many human beings to an authoritarian regime. It also represents a social challenge to the secrecy of a landscape that cannot be perceived as necessary within a democratic state of affairs. Therefore the landscape of the Villa Grimaldi represents a changing Chilean history, re-actualised in turn by every generation, through the oral tradition of those who were there and through the concrete symbolic markers on a landscape that tell the young and the ignorant the history of a place. Within that place life and death cohabited within the sociability of human beings, some as captors, others as prisoners.

It is clear from this study that the ethnography of history remains interwoven with the changes in the landscape and the changing perceptions that human beings bring to the same landscape. One can thus explain the urgency displayed by human beings in constructing monuments and landmarks in order to make their claim to landscape and as a result to memory and history. Through this process of landscape appropriation, as in the case of the *Parque por la Paz* at the Villa Grimaldi, those who did not have a history,

i.e. the disappeared, became part of a historical narrative. If, as a result of re-naming the Villa Grimaldi, the military made it into a place of suffering and death, the same human re-naming by a community very much aware of human rights and obligations made the space into a place of life and hope.

Throughout these historical changes and developments “place names are of such vital significance because they act so as to transform the sheerly physical and geographical into something that is historically and socially experienced” (Tilley 1994: 18). As a result of such socially experienced construction, places and their landscapes also become part of the ethnographic investigation and textual narrative of social historians, indeed, one could add, a very central part of any ethnographic investigation.

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