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"Neither here nor there"

A Study of Chilean Political Exiles

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Abstract

Why do political refugees choose to remain in the country of exile instead of returning home even after political conditions safely allow them to make a come back? To what extent does a political exile manage to integrate into the land in which the asylum is permanently sought? This paper draws on first hand data to analyse the social integration of a segment of the Chilean exiles community in London after 1998, the year of the detention of General Pinochet. The point of departure is the social meaning of 'exile', a time of prolonged absence from the land of origin. Once this meaning is assessed, the framework of reference is almost self-defined. Several variables are considered in the appraisal of the transition and integration of the exile: local policies regarding asylum-seekers, globalisation, political commitment, urban milieu, occupation in the land of exile, family unit, peers, household.

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Acknowledgements

El exilio

"No es tan alto el precio que se paga, si se compara. Y sobre todo si se compara con el destino que han encontrado, en nuestras tierras, algunos compañeros".

"El exilio, que siempre nace de una derrota, no solamente proporciona experiencias dolorosas. Cierra unas puertas, pero abre otras. Es una penitencia y, a la vez, una libertad y una responsabilidad. Tiene una cara negra y tiene una cara roja".

Eduardo Galeano, *Entrevistas y artículos* (1962,1987)

Exile

"The price you pay is not that high, if you were to compare. And, above everything, if it is compared with the fate that some of our 'comrades' experienced in our lands."

"Exile, which is always born out of defeat, does not only apportion painful experiences. It closes some doors, but opens others. It is a type of penance and, at the same time, an expression of freedom and responsibility. Exile has a black side and a red side."

Eduardo Galeano, *Interviews and Articles* (1962, 1987)

1. Introduction

Sociology has not been completely equitable as far as political refugees are concerned. If sociology is considered to be the discipline through which truths or partial truths about our world and the people that live in it can be produced, then very few sociologists have devoted their passion and their time to analyse the complex panorama of the diasporas of political exiles. Just a handful of sociological investigations that focus on the 'political refugee-social actor' are available to the public. I am referring to the process of integration of an exile into the country in which he seeks asylum and the possibility of rebuilding a new life. This involves a process of adaptation and reconstruction of one's own life; therefore, one can pose the question: what does it entail to be forced to leave one's own place of origin and settle into a foreign country?

Born in Chile, exiled to the United Kingdom, living in London. What are the historical biographies, the cultural implications, the social and political features behind a seemingly banal statement? Does this sentence contain a sense of beginning and end, a sort of unambiguous linearity, a round-trip character?

Only until recently have few social scientists started to pay attention, in very concrete terms, to the phenomenon of social integration. The question that many social scientists have addressed in the past two decades is "when does a place of exile become 'home'"? Firstly, with this dissertation, I would like to rephrase this question: "does a place of exile become 'home' at all? And secondly, I want to broaden the question and examine to what extent other variables such as politics, culture, language, economics and globalisation are enmeshed within this question.

In the last part of the twentieth century migratory movements have assumed different characters from the first extensive fluxes of migrants who went in search of their 'El Dorado' at the end of the nineteenth century. These new forms of migrations have been subjected to socio-economic and political transformations at an international level. Taking into consideration the general confrontation between the Eastern and Western blocks which exploded after WWII, it is to be noted that many of the so-called third world countries have been directly involved in this race for global, political and economical supremacy. As a direct consequence of the Cold War, various puppet regimes were installed in poor and less developed countries by the same great world powers which sought to defend their interests and consolidate their rule on an international scale. Military interventions, guerrilla warfare, civil war and bloody

military coups throughout the Latin American continent, have created a state of political terror and extreme social instability, which have resulted into the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people forced into exile.

Many thousands of Chileans and other Latin Americans who had taken refuge in Salvador Allende's Chile (1970-1973) were forced to flee to neighbouring Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico and Cuba after the 11th of September 1973, the day of the military coup. Some 20,000 of these were forced to depart once more for Europe. Amnesty International reveals that, between October 1973 and September 1976 approximately 18,500 Chilean refugees had been relocated in other countries, 9 per cent in France and the United Kingdom. (Mörner,1985:106).

The story of political exiles does not always ebb into a happy ending: once the state of terror has vanished, dictators fallen and democracy restored, they were finally able to return to their country where family and friends, a steady job with benefits and pleasing pension schemes open-handedly awaits. The real story of political exiles take on quite different connotations: it is an extraordinarily long and complex journey that alters the exile's identity and, public and personal domains. Furthermore, it is a journey that does not reach a conclusion the day the exiled is allowed to freely go back.

Today, 2000 Chilean exiles still reside in the United Kingdom: but if general Augusto Pinochet is being persecuted in Chile, his regime is in full disrepute on a national and international level and seventeen years of military rule have come to an end, why then have these political exiles, this group of Chilean expatriates, not gone back home to a country in which they could live freely and free of persecution? Do economical and financial conditions only provide a comprehensive explanation? Or, are there other variables involved in the exiles' decision-making? What does 'exile' still mean to them and to what extent have their lives and identities been affected by years of confinement?

1.1 Why are they still here?

It is my intention to assess the exile's present condition empirically and to draw accurate conclusions on these extremely delicate issues. This research deals with the aftermath of the exile period. It deals with the dilemmas the exile faces and the different variables involved once he is legally allowed to safely return home. It is a crucial time for the exile. A time of decision-making, of great confrontation, a dramatic overlapping of public and private fears, a brutal re-emerging of wounds that had been lingering in the unconsciousness of the exile for more than a decade; a coming to terms with a past that

somehow was perceived as buoyant and enthralling and eventually, when the test of time comes, it proves to be painful and traumatic.

The central focus of this dissertation will concentrate on a sample singled out from the London Chilean Community.

The introductory section attempts to outline the Chilean experience and pinpoint the main events which took place in Chile since the 1973 *coup d'état* up until today. The relevance of these events will provide this study with a cultural and historical context in which to locate the exile-social actor. In the literary section, I will discuss two major contributions on Chilean exiles and various other texts which focus on migration. In this section I will also present several theories on the process of integration of the exile in the host country. Chapter three, the methodology section, introduces the deployment of research methods, the collection of data, interview techniques and the sample I have selected for my case study.

In the second part of the dissertation the reader will be provided with different accounts of the respondents as to the exiles' experience. In the final section I will draw on different methods of analysis in order to take to mean the material thus far collected and attempt to interpret my first-hand data. Finally, the conclusive section concerns some arguments I put forward to the reader and for future research.

2. Chile: what happened at home

These following pages attempt to describe what took place in Chile during the military regime and its aftermath. I will pinpoint the underlying events, which helped transform the country from the 1973 *coup d'état* up to 2000 general elections.

"Exile arouse out of a failure", suggests Diana Kay. This failure mentioned here is the 3-year "experiment" of the socialist government of president Salvador Allende. His *Unidad Popular* had won the election in 1970 by a narrow margin of 1.4 points in the final polls. The result was enough for the socialists to form a coalition and enter the presidential palace La Moneda to govern the country.

The *Unidad Popular*'s policies led to a fast nationalisation of the various sectors of the Chilean economical apparatus: private banks and several industries such as copper, iron and nitrate, that until 1970 had been in the hands of the best foreign bidders, were nationalised. A peaceful socialist revolution was underway. It aim was the emancipation and independence of the working class and the peasantry, and an end to centuries of

exploitation by foreign conquerors. In the eyes of the United States, Allende's government represented a real threat in the Western Hemisphere, a situation that could have ignited other revolutions, to put it short, as the CIA saw it, Chile was becoming 'a second Cuba'. Therefore, the Washington government adopted a long-range strategy which meant destabilising the Chilean economy, bribing Congressmen, financing strikes and all sorts of black propaganda operations.

Allende nationalised the American owned International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (ITT). This was the most significant step towards the ousting of foreign control over domestic economy; it gave Richard Nixon's administration and the CIA enough reason to pave the way for a military coup. A strong campaign funded by US agencies led to the bloody overthrow of the *Unidad Popular* on the 11 of September 1973. General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, considered being one of the most loyal generals to the president even up to that day, betrayed the constitution and ordered the bombing of the presidential palace and the killings that would ensue. Following the coup, within 19 days, the USA government obtained concrete reports on the fact that 320 individuals had been summarily executed by the Chilean army, more than 13,500 had been arrested and tortured and yet, even with this type of knowledge the US government was sending rapid, economic and military aid to the military regime to help consolidate its rule. (Kornblush P. Project Director, U.S. National Security Archives, appeared on CH 4, *The Real… General Pinochet*, 16-1-1999).

The regime unleashed an unmatched state of violence, siege and terror. Pinochet and his henchmen, backed by the CIA, the SOA and the DINA committed the most atrocious crimes against humanity in order to eliminate the Marxist threat and relocate the country into the capitalistic Northern Hemisphere. The military regime rapidly privatised the industries, the banks and state controlled monopolies. Chile was, once again, at the mercy of foreign capital.

The military junta was determined to reconstruct the Chilean economy from scratch. The fate of the country was entrusted into the hands of Professor Milton Friedman's "disciples": the so-called 'Chicago Boys', young and eager technocrats who embraced free-market principles and liberal economic theories. The privatisation of large parts of the public sector caused a sudden slump in which millions were pauperised. (Williamson,1992:505). The official version given to the public was that Chile had to endure a period of recession before enjoying some signs of recovery. In 1975 the country hit rock bottom with the highest rate of unemployment ever: 17 per cent. The opposition

was completely eradicated during those years: supporters and member of the Unidad Popular were rounded up, imprisoned, tortured and killed. A few "lucky" ones were sent into exile. The "Trotskyist" MIR[1] was rapidly dismantled and its members tortured and executed.

After 1976 the liberal policies adopted by the regime produced some mixed results. Inflation, from a peak of 600 per cent in 1973, fell to 8.9 per cent in 1981. The export sector begun to grow and lost its dependence on the copper-mining industries. The rate of national production also rose but unemployment rates were still low and the average wage hardly changed. It was an unequal recovery, the upper classes and, to a small extent, the middle class, were favoured by this economic growth, whilst the poorest sections of the population were condemned to live in a continuous state of deprivation. What is significant about this unequal economic development is that it has produced and, as a result, it is still producing the largest gap between rich and poor in any Latin America country. 80 per cent of the wealth of Chile is owned by 5 per cent of the population (Galeano,1999)!

This sudden veering in economic policies towards capitalistic tendencies brought the country into a precarious position. During the 1980s Chile was constantly vulnerable to fluctuations in the international capital markets. This instability forced the ruling classes to rely on huge borrowings from foreign banks, thus deterring the Junta from controlling inflation rates and the national deficit.

As a result, Chile's foreign debt rose up to $17 billion, with interest payments of 49.5 per cent of export earnings. Pinochet's model and the theories applied by the Chicago Boys had succeeded. In the poorest sections and shantytowns of Santiago unemployment fell to an unprecedented 40 per cent, the socialist opposition had been successfully eradicated and the military and its strongman ruled indisputably.

After a rigged plebiscite in 1980 which guaranteed Pinochet's power for nine more years, the effects of his liberal policies and measures to annihilate the opposition soon led to growing unrest amid sectors of the population. During 1983-84 various strikes and protests unsettled the Junta and Pinochet himself teetered on the edge of destruction. In 1986 the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front, the military wing of the Communist Party, attempted the life of the General, who escaped unharmed.

However, for the rest of the decade, the opposition was weak and divided and the

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[1] *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario.*

regime, once again, restored some form of credibility. On the economic front, through a strict austerity programme followed by cuttings on public spending, periodic devaluation and a revitalisation of the export sector, Chile experienced a mixed growth. By 1989 the inflation rate was brought down to 12 per cent, the lowest in the Latin American continent. But, like ten years earlier the recovery was unequal and ill-spread across the population: 50 per cent of Chileans continued to live under the poverty line.

The regime begun to topple and Pinochet, in a new and desperate attempt to salvage it, called for a plebiscite in 1988 to establish whether or not the population wished for him to rule for a further 9 more years. Although he polled 42 per cent of the vote, the General lost the plebiscite. The dictator, persuaded by his entourage, had to call for general elections, which were held in December 1989 and won by the Christian Democrats under Patricio Aylwin. The darkest night for Chile and its people had ended, even though Pinochet would continue to preside over the National Security Council, as well as controlling 1/3 of the Senate and maintaining his rank as Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

The beginning of the past decade saw Chile facing the greatest challenge of all: finding a consensus between the armed forces and the majority of the population in order to build a democratic country based upon free institutions and just political principles. However, behind the economic debates and the political struggles, the enormous and, at some point, unbearable cost of human lives haunted the minds of many and obstructed the path of reconciliation.

Following the example of CONADEP[2] instituted in 1983 after the fall of the military regime in neighbouring Argentina, one of the first measures taken by the new government in order to achieve a full and rapid transition to democracy, was the setting up of a "National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation" headed by the former Senator Raúl Retting. A year later a report was published which traced and detailed the human rights abuses of the more than 1,197 disappearances and 3,000 political executions committed by the armed forces after 1973 coup. However, names were not made public, the perpetrators of the crimes enjoyed military impunity and the president refused to put the generals on trial. Many saw this lack of action as a form of impotence against Pinochet, who was still Commander-in-Chief and capable of amending the constitution to his advantage, should it ever become necessary. Justice was left for

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[2] *Comisión Nacional para la Desaparición de Personas*, National Commission instituted in 1983 by President Raúl Alfonsín that reported 9,848 cases of disappearance.

individuals to find and, since many members of the judiciary apparatus had been appointed during the military rule, their remarkable efforts met with little success. It was within this climate that the government decided to welcome back the hundreds of thousands of Chilean exiles that had fled the regime during the 1970s. Aylwin's administration took other steps towards reconciliation by passing a law[3] that would facilitate the homecoming of exiles and by releasing political prisoners from jail. If on the outside the new government seemed to enjoy ample room for manoeuvring ruling by decree and consensus, the truth was that every move was monitored by right-wing Senators appointed by Pinochet in his efforts to safeguard power through his puppets.

In December 1993, Eduardo Frei, leader of the Christian Democratic Party and son of the president Alessandro Frei in 1964, was elected as president by a large majority. Frei continued to follow the liberal and free-market line adopted by the regime in the late 1980s and as a consequence, foreign companies occupied the copper industry. This multinational involvement in the copper sector boosted production, but also caused a great reduction in the labour force and sealed the fate of other industrial sectors, to give an example, the notorious nitrate ghost towns located in the Northern desert. However, during his first years of presidency, Chile enjoyed substantial signs of economic growth, inflation was controlled and unemployment rates fell to encouraging percentages.

The greatest achievement of the late 1990s was probably the weakening of Pinochet's grip on power and the mounting discredit of his regime in the eyes of the people, even though today a substantial part of the population still point at the success of his fiscal policies, claiming he not only reversed Chile's fortunes in the eighties but pioneered a new economy order. The disrepute of the military regime was heightened by Pinochet's detention in 1998, the endless moral debates over his methods of power and whether or not he was to be put on trial despite his immunity. At the same time, on the domestic front, political parties seemed to have abandoned old ideological clashes in favour of practical solutions and a culture of consensus (Hickman, *News from the end of the earth: a portrait of Chile*). With the 2000 general elections and the appointment of the moderate socialist Ricardo Lagos as president, the transition to democracy and political naturalisation of the country seem to be complete. In recent years the government's efforts were directed to the reduction of social inequalities in housing, health, education and welfare, which are the legacy of the Pinochet regime (Caistor, *Chile in focus*).

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[3] This law consisted of high interest loans available to exiles who returned to Chile, willing to invest in the private sector (this was on offer until October 1994).

3. Literature review

When first confronted with the lay out of my research and later with locating the implications of my findings in some framework of reference, I soon realised what little material I could rely on. Thus, I decided to utilise the meagre amount of information available on my topic as a standpoint or, if you want, as a torch illuminating my departure. The bulk of the evidence available focuses on a stage of the exiles' journey, which is exclusive of my case study. The "political exiled-actor" has been neglected as far as his/her final destination is concerned; an incredible amount of work and research has been made on the process of migration and migration policies but, once the exiled has completed his outward journey the spotlights are switched off and he is left at the mercy of fate. After the asylum-seeker has reached his destination and he is warmly welcomed in the host country, having experienced the first few years of the exile period, for him, the real journey has just begun and he will have to endure enormous hardship, as well as both mental and material deprivation. It is a period of adjustment and integration, a time wherein past faces the present battling to ensure a better future. Analysing this battle is my point of departure; one that will allow me to understand what tools the exiled has acquired once he opts for remaining in the host country instead of returning home. The reasons and conditions, which impel the exiled to choose between going home and 'staying put', are the main topics of my study.

In order to better produce an evaluation of such conditions and motives, the research needs to be located in a broader frame of reference, which informs on the main factors involved in the process of integration of the refugee in a foreign country.

Only two sociological studies focus on the Chilean exiled specifically: Daniele Joly's *Asylum policies and refugees in Europe* in which two minority groups, Chilean and Vietnamese, are compared and contrasted, and Diana Kay's more detailed *Chilean in exile: private struggles, public lives*. Kay's work concentrates on the process of assimilation into the host society, in this case United Kingdom, and analyses different experiences of exiled males and females, that set about reconstructing their lives after the 1973 coup. This book stands out for its originality and for dealing with first-hand data. The findings that emerge seem to consolidate the assumptions in regard to my case study. Different variables work together and against each other in the reconstruction of identity and in order to shape a better future, as the following statements imply: the exiled undergoes dramatic changes in both his/her public and private life; the importance of

changes in the exile's consciousness and the implications that are directly linked to these phenomena; the absolute fragility and, in many cases, the falseness of taken-for-granted concepts on the exiled; the deprivation and permanent loss of a collective identity and a sense of belonging to one particular group fighting for the same ideals, a sort of "de-politization" occurs, a loss of an active part in politics and, as a result, political interests and beliefs weaken.

In Kay's book an entire chapter is dedicated to the different areas of the exile's experience that are strongly stirred by physical displacement. This last aspect is, by all means, the most valuable contribution which Kay's investigation offers to my study: an in depth enquiry into the manifold process of the breaking down of public and private domains of the exiled: "two socially constructed worlds" (Kay,1987:40). This contribution is the point of departure for the present research. In the process of deprivation Kay emphasises the traumatic experience of the "passage of status", from a full member citizen to a refugee, a shift that creates a sense of powerlessness and instability. Linked to this feeling of ambivalence is the impossibility of sharing it with other human beings, the atrocious lack of communication and communicating life, "...inner wounds that could never be shared or fully understood by a people without such a drama" (Kay,1987:60). This impossibility of getting across your own story and views is also enhanced by lengthy periods of time of unemployment, "the general lack of activity which hit the exiles on arrival meant hours in the home with nothing to do but sit and brood" (Kay,1987:61). It is a material deprivation that is constantly accompanied by speech deprivation: a loss, which is not, analysed enough in Kay's book, language.

It is a great barrier that confines the exiled, exposing his limitations and close boundaries. Only a few could comprehend at first what learning a language really entails, especially in adulthood. Here, the exiles are forced to learn a new form of communication in order to survive: it is not a deliberate choice; "the language problem underlines the impotence which we feel in this society. It inhibited the expression of complex ideas and kept conversation at a superficial level" (Kay,1987:70). Private and public spheres often overlap, contributing, and each one with its own weight, to the disruption of the social actor's identity. Kay also highlights the importance of the social location of the exiled paying great attention to class and gender.

Ian Chambers and, to a lesser degree, Kath Woodward remind us that, in the process of shaping identity, it is imperative to consider variables such as the nation, state, culture and subcultures in relation to location and time. And, in my case study, this is confirmed

by the effects that a single episode unexpectedly had on the course of the life of many exiles: Pinochet's arrest and those 503 days of his detention in London.

Joly, on the other hand, brilliantly analyses how, under the 1974 labour government, reception mechanisms were elaborated and *ad hoc* schemes were devised in order to better receive Chilean exiles. Furthermore, her work underlines the importance of creating useful co-ordination committees that, through the co-operation of the central government, facilitated the arrival and settlement of many refugees. Joly's research is extremely useful and important in relation to the "journey" of the exiled, mentioned earlier in this section; Joly's book traces the different stages of the journey where the key factors are for a safe, just and successful integration of the exiled in the host country. She hails the French model as a significant example, the principles laid down by *France Terre d'Asile* under François Mitterand in 1975. With regards to a successful integration of the exiled, specific areas are highlighted: reception centres with paid staff and the active involvement of refugees; free of charge medical care; language classes that are considered to be a top priority; accommodation, to be allotted keeping in mind two complementary factors: " the employment situation and the state of repairs or dereliction" (Joly,1996:114); employment, post-settlement work and finally refugee associations. The last part of the book provides the reader with a framework for future studies on refugees: it considers different approaches on the refugee who, as a subject, either is determined to return to his place of origin and sees exile as a temporary confinement, or is the type of exile who is prepared to gain independence in the land of exile and sever links with his place of origin. This second category comes extremely close to my case study. Joly offers a brief introduction to this phenomenon, which, as she asserts confirming my theory, has been poorly considered and neglected for too long. To conclude, the author asserts that the 1990s are a ripe time to develop this research, taking into consideration different variables such as globalisation on a national and international scale.

Certain characteristics belonging to the asylum-seeker that does not have a collective project in his land of origin and has turned back to his own country are briefly considered. In Joly's book the refugee as a subject, may be concerned with the fate of his relatives back home and still feel attached to the culture of origin but does not retain his commitment towards it. This characteristic will be considered at great lengths and, to a large extent, moulded by the answers of the sample in the interview section. Another characteristic that fits into my case study is what Joly describes as a "positive attitude towards the society of reception" and, as my respondents have stated, the ability to

innovate and "make a fresh start", even though this quality does not incorporate a definite plan for the future. However this last feature, combined with a strong feeling of regret of what was lost and taken away, may lead to what Joly calls a "double marginalisation": a sort of no one's land where the existence of the exiled floats, in Conradian terms. Joly does not dare any further, but timid attempts to tackle this issue are made. Network groups and associations play an important role in the adaptation of the refugee, but socio-economical factors will substantially increase the successful integration of the exile in the host country. A minority group also benefits from active involvement in cultural activities and from taking part in any sort of initiative which focuses on the conditions of the exiled community. The argument here is that whenever there is a space for a minority group, its chances of adaptation are greatly enhanced. What Joly fails to achieve, probably because this case study is marginal to her research, which concentrates on migration and asylum policies in Western Europe, is to provide a clear picture of this category, a well-defined framework in which it is possible to set a new case study (my case study!). Lastly, the representation of what exclusion and marginalisation really entail for this type of refugee is vague and it does exclude *a priori* that setting up associations and cultural groups might be conceived as obstructing personal processes of integration and cause disruptions within the group itself. Joly then concludes that adaptation for the refugee depends heavily on "events in international relations, in the country and region of origin, among the group itself" (Joly,1996:160). It is important to stress that the process of integration in the land of exile is not static and passive but it changes continuously under the direct influence of many variables which have to be constantly analysed in specific conditions of time and space, whether it is a collective project or a singular one.

When I analysed the process of adaptation of the exiles in this case study and I was to define the connotations of the term 'integration', I found several psychological approaches to the phenomena (which emerge in Daniele Joly's book) useful, even though none of the following exhaustively covers the scope of my study or provides a comprehensive explanation for certain dilemmas. Furthermore, since my case study deals with the aftermath of the process of integration, that is, the extent to which the integration has been achieved, and whether or not the process of integration has been so successful that the exiled decides to dwell in the country of exile rather than returning home, the amount of literature available offers a window on the topic of my research, but it does not compromise any further, because, academically, the path has not been

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travelled by.

Zwingmann and Psifter-Ammende (1958) point to the obsession of the refugee with the past and extreme anxiety towards the future. Baskauskas's approach (1981) emphasises a sense of loss and desperation as the dominating feeling in the mind of the exiled. Muñoz (1981) writes of how the refugee is beset and pervaded by a form of bereavement. Another important study by Vásquez (1983) stresses the significance of time for the refugee: exile was perceived as a temporary solution rather than a definitive confinement. Coming to terms with this reality requires different stages characterised by initial trauma and schizophrenic behaviour, disorientation and "transculturation" of values and final integration. Chan and Lam (1987) analysing the Vietnamese exile community in Canada suggest that a sense of loss combined with an awareness of dislocation deeply scar the exiled for an unlimited time. A different approach to the phenomenon is employed by Keller (1975). He advocates that what truly "taints" the exiled is a sense of guilt and remorse which will eventually manifest itself in the guise of violence or any form of extreme behaviour towards family members or oneself.

The Swedish professor Magnus Mörner, after witnessing the high naturalisation of the 1970s policies towards asylum seekers in Scandinavian countries, hails the importance of the cultural heritage of minority groups and its bearings on decision-making in the land of exile. To traditional theories which underline economic reasons behind the decision to return home, Mörner and Sims add a variety of different factors such as cultural tools and original milieu in which the exiled was brought up. This study examines the differences between Latin American exiles, however, it also raises an important issue that is later discussed, that is the birth, or rather, the development of a new sense of belonging: *latinoamericanidad.* (See "living in no man's land" section, p.28).

A common feature that emerges from the majority of these contributions is the fragmentation and multiple character of the process of adaptation. As Joly points out, various researches rely solely on theoretical ground regarding immigrants as one broad group. However, according to Ian Chambers, we should challenge conservative views on the world of the asylum seekers and be prepared to accept its complexity. In other words, it is time for sociology to consider this reality in an adequate manner taking into account the importance of each single subgroup within the immigrant experience and the milieu the transition takes place.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The Chilean experience caught my attention since my first timid attempts at understanding the socio-political forces and the bloodthirsty struggles of the Latin-American continent. Chile is indeed an anomalous case; a military regime had found ways to perpetrate the most atrocious crimes against humanity and, at the same time, thrust the country from a state of economical recession, through a period of transition and economical growth and finally to a situation in which inflation was brought down to 12 per cent, the lowest rate in Latin America. The regime itself shifted several times from the brink of destruction to disguised forms of legitimacy to the eyes of the world. A number haunted me ever since I have come to study this reality: 5,000 victims[4], thousands of people tortured and killed, 30,000 displaced around the globe, mainly Europe. At the head of the killings and the beatings stood a man alone. Behind him, stood a system of economic and political interests so far reaching that went beyond common men's comprehension: Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, former dictator and Head of State of Chile.

It all started on a breezy autumn evening, on the 16th of October 1998. The mastermind of torture, massacres and killings back in Chile in the 70s and 80s, the very same man that was behind the armed forces, the DINA, the death squads and the political parties, was detained at the London Clinic, in London, Great Britain. Two days before the Spanish Judge Baltazar Garzón had made a request for his detention through Interpol and, as a result, the metropolitan magistrate Mr. Nichols Evans issued a provisional warrant for his arrest based on the 1989 Extradition Act. A second warrant was issued on four counts: torture, conspiring to commit torture, detaining hostages with the intention of threatening to kill them and conspiring to commit murder in a Convention country. On the 3rd of November a request for extradition to Spain was presented by Judge Garzón. From that day on, also due to extensive media coverage, the events that followed rapidly caught the attention of people around the globe. But the most striking fact was that as soon as the news of the arrest spread a tireless crowd assembled outside the clinic where Pinochet was held in custody. Their joy, their hope, their singings filled the London

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[4] The Rettig Report (1990) established that 1,197, and counting, people were disappeared during the military regime and 3,000 and above political executions were carried out. As this number is ever increasing the actual figure is estimated at 5,000.

nights for 503 days, the duration of Pinochet's detention in United Kingdom. Those indefatigable human beings chanting and dancing and marching the streets of London became the focus of my admiration. These people, however were just a tiny part of the Chilean generations that had suffered the consequences of that 11th of September and the seventeen years of dictatorship? I soon realised that the opportunity to investigate their diasporas and historical whereabouts was open to me.

This is how I came to know the Chilean community, or, at least some of its members: exiles that were forced to flee the Pinochet regime and still reside in London: this group of people that is the main focus of my investigation.

4.1 The research strategy

Where research is concerned, in my view, an empirical approach was the only way of moving forward. The collection of first-hand data would make my research original and challenging but I needed individual accounts. My emphasis was not on accounts told in a collective voice. Therefore, I would have to discard the term 'we'. The actors had to speak in terms of 'I', only that type of information was useful to me. At this point, it is important to note that the interviewees were more prone to speak in terms of 'we' when relating to the periods 70-73 and the first years of exile. This clearly denotes that, at that time, a strong group identity was still dominant. But as my questions were concentrated on present or recent events, the respondents were more inclined to use the term 'I', thus reflecting the gradual loss of 'group identification'.

I knew that in the first instance my sample would have been compressed to a certain number for obvious reasons and, therefore, I needed it to be as distinctive as possible. I would like to stress this point clearly: each account does not claim any representative authority; each exposé is 'self-representative', if you want; my aim was to receive different perspectives of the same story; I was driven by the necessity of collecting single testimonies, individual experiences.

Selecting the questions for the interviews was a problematic issue. Depending on the type of question a topic could have been over-emphasised or utterly neglected. I had to concentrate solely on information that would sustain my investigation. But again, in doing so, by self-selecting certain issues, my findings could have fallen short of consistency and I could have omitted some potential topics. I decided that my questions would concentrate on the span stretching from the decision of not returning home up to

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the present day. A span of 9 years, a short period compared to 17 years of proscription. Those few years were characterised by the final decision: that is the core of my dissertation.

I was aware that over-enquiring about the past might have led my research in the wrong direction. The past, the *Unidad Popular* period, the days and events immediately after the *coup d'état* and the years of exile, are all seen from a different perspective, indeed through the filter of time, in accordance with the present conditions and the cultural social and economical tools owned by the actor. "In any process of biographical reconstruction, the past is reshaped in accordance with present ideas" (Kay:1987,26), I therefore opted for an unusual interview strategy: firstly, I could not avoid 'preparatory questions' on the physical, cultural, social, political and economical origin of the researched; these questions would pave the way for the main inquiry. Secondly, the main questions were set up in such a way that they would not concentrate on any particular topic but served the purpose of making the interviewee talk. I called them 'triggering questions'. It is to be pointed out that this sort of "Socratic strategy" only works when the talker is at ease and feels free to communicate. To put this strategy into practise the interview would begin as a structured-interview with an orthodox 'question-answer' procedure, and it would culminate into a free conversation or open-interview. By doing so I was able to collect more material on topics that were not easily touched upon by one straightforward question. In most cases my strategy was highly fruitful, but in two situations I would have to proceed with my structured or semi-structured interview tactic. The interview consisted of about 7-8 questions chronologically ordered. To avoid falling into the vacuum of romantic nostalgia and to elude a conversation about the exiles' decisions in retrospective terms, I deliberately directed the main bulk of the questions in the present tense. This would guarantee me a certain degree of rationality and originality.

My questions, as I was well aware, were not focusing exclusively on the public activities of the actors, nor were they highlighting trends or collective choices; indeed my interview entered, if intruding (Kay:1987,27) the private sphere of the exiles, touching upon delicate themes and intimate emotions such as defeat, loss, incapacity, disillusionment, frustration, prolonged instability, unhappiness and solitude. How could I have measured the credibility of my findings, given the 'delicacy' of the topics under investigation? Were there criteria through which, by all means, the answers offered to me, could have been classified as accurate and credible? And, why would they have to be genuinely and willingly prepared in order to disclose to a total stranger, a researcher and

a graduate student, personal experiences and private painful memories which, in all likelihood, have been removed from the mind and precariously stored into the unconscious? All I could view was the tip of the iceberg, but what made me think that I was going to succeed in 'digging out' the rest and foreseeing how big it was? In order to obtain information as close to the truth as possible, I had to establish a connection between the interviewee and myself; in other words, as much as I trusted them, I needed them to trust me.

I had few reasons to believe that their version could be considered credible and therefore solid enough to shape a study upon. The very condition of me being a stranger and principally an 'outsider' was good enough for the fact that the researched had no investment in telling a cautious or twisted account of the facts. Secondly, I was greatly reassured, in more than one occasion, by the interviewee's concern about treating the information confidentially, and, in four cases, their insistence upon anonymity. This particular condition facilitated the interview process; as frequently reported in the section "accounts and accounting" of Kay's book, many respondents felt on more secure ground by constructing "a 'safe story' in case the tape should fall into the wrong hands" (Kay:1987,30). Contrary to Kay's experience, my sample was under no pressure of any kind: we could be sure of a free-consequence account. Neither of the participants felt the need to play on safe ground in order to avoid our recorded conversation ending up in the 'wrong hands'. Another element was that the whole process was not hampered by the time factor, in I.'s words "Probably if we had been sitting here just a few years ago I would have not been able to talk as freely as I am doing it now. The time is ripe for me". This statement added credibility to my findings. Another factor in terms of obtaining credible information was my clear sociological drive and neutrality. I did not, *a priori*, and I do not now hold any political view as far as political refugees are concerned; the speaker was aware that my commitment to this investigation was objective and politically interest-free. At no time did the interviewee perceive my questions as threatening or challenging. And, by no means, was there any underlying assumption or implication in my inquiry. Also to my relief, the majority of the interviewees spontaneously asked me if I was going to be aided by the use of a tape recorder, which many of the people interviewed by Diana Kay found 'intrusive' and uncomfortable.

4.2 The language factor

After structuring the interview plan, I decided that it would have to be carried out in the language that best suited the interviewees. By choosing the language myself, I would have assumed an authoritative role which could have precluded or excluded potential situations. All my interviewees had spent a considerable part of their life in Chile. Spanish was their mother tongue. Since I speak and write Castellano fluently, I had the privilege to let them select the language for the interview. I thought it imperative that they used their own language to better express and elucidate particular experiences. In this regard, language is not just a simple instrument used to report facts, but it becomes a living vehicle through which real communication is made possible.

All the interviews, with the exception of one case, were carried out in Spanish. It is useful to note that often the actor would employ the use of *Chilenismos* and that also, every now and then, English words cropped up in the interview.

When listening to the material, I was decided on not transcribing my interviews. Had I done so, the recorded material would have been at the mercy of re-interpretations and interchangeability. I translated certain extracts remaining as close as possible to the Spanish version. What is meant here, it is that I left the interviews 'untouched' as to render my analysis as close as possible to the intentions of the researched. I was therefore forced to rely on the information offered to me by the interviewee in order to structure my epistemological quest. This study, designed with the purpose of being exclusive of personal interpretations relies on an empirical approach, and this option helped me place my future analysis into a broader sociological context.

4.3 Fieldwork

The interviewing process took almost two months, between January and March 2001. Each interview required approximately from 1 1/2 hours to 2 hours. They took place in a variety of different settings: offices, households and public places. All the interviews were conducted in London. Five of the seven interviews were taped on a Dictaphone. I tried to be as flexible as possible to meet with the interviewee whenever was convenient for them. The only setback in doing so was that on a few occasions background noise was taped on the cassette hampering a clean hearing. I also took careful notes in order to remind myself of key sentences and remember my impressions by observing their body

language.

In most cases I was offered a meal or a tea, which made me feel relaxed and helped me create the right atmosphere for the type of interview needed. Besides my academic objectives, I tried to enjoy the encounters, considering the fact that these people have been witnesses of important historical changes and powerful experiences. In short, I was glad that I could also learn from their accounts. The whole experience of meeting new people, with whom I established some sort of contact, sometimes under emotional conditions, has been personally enriching and culturally stimulating. At times I had an inkling that the interviewee, besides answering my questions out of a sense of duty, "*porque me corresponde*", used the interview to find out about themselves, to see more clearly through this incredible amount of emotional circumstances, almost as a sort of cathartic experience; being able to talk calmly would place them somewhere along a journey begun almost thirty years ago. The people whom I interviewed saw with benevolence my efforts and, in two cases, I was thanked for researching such a topic. The lack of information and research on the exile-actor compelled them to view my work as valuable and significant.

As noted in the strategy section, I would initiate the interview with some introductory questions, but soon enough the actor would 'loosen up' and speak freely on different topics. The fact that I did not deliberately exclude any topic area from my interview allowed me to enlarge the scope of my sample, including university teachers and manual workers.

4.4 The sample group

When selecting my sample I prioritised one element in particular: differentiation. Including different variables would have provided me with a comprehensive umbrella for my case study. It is not a random sample. I selected my group within the London Chilean Community and it was prioritised by age: for the aims of my investigation a group of exiles that had escaped the persecution of the military regime well past their teens was required. In other words, I needed a sample of people that had grown up physically and culturally under Allende's government. This type of selection would offer me two distinctive, if possibly, opposite scenarios. In such a way I reduced the possible overlapping of many answers and analysed more clearly my findings.

I selected exiles who live in the London area; all of them married or divorced and with

grown up children, with the exception of one woman. They were all expatriated to United Kingdom in the period '74 – '78 and spent at least nine years before visiting Chile for the first time. After a few months in Chile, they have all come back to the United Kingdom, eventually settling in London. The majority had the opportunity to travel to Chile several times. By the year 1994 they had all arrived at the final decision not to return.

Not all the members of my sample were politically active. Some were members of political parties or organisations and a selection were not political at all. One of the interviewees was a member of the Chilean armed forces. Another was an active member of the MIR, whilst two people I interviewed were closer to the Catholic Church than to any other institutions. However, the vast majority of my sample associated themselves with the Popular Unity ideals and felt integrated in the 'peaceful road to socialism' ignited by President Salvador Allende. These different degrees of political commitment and orientation created a strong basis for obtaining several distinctive perspectives. I interviewed seven people: four females and three males. All of them were born in Chile. Here I reiterate this point again: throughout my research I was driven by an important factor regarding differentiation when choosing my sample. As a result of my heterogeneous sample, it was possible for me to analyse my material from different angles. A heterogeneous identity can only be understood from different perspectives (Dorfman,1997:220).

This condition of diverse experience also implied that each one of the members of the sample experienced the coup, the following repression and exile at varying degrees. A small number had spent a time in jail and underwent torture. The majority had been able to leave the country under more 'fortunate' conditions.

Following our agreement over anonymity, I shall refer to each individual with the capital letter of their first name, as follows: J., I., R., Jy., T., N., L.

5. Interview section

A number of topics emerged from the interviews. Although a detailed report of the interviews in this section is hampered by the word limit allotted to this dissertation, I have tried to be as descriptive as possible, presenting the most significant parts with regard to the topics under examination.

5.1 Exile is forever

J., one of the interviewed hurriedly summarises "the exile is not for an established period of your life, it is not a jail sentence; exile is for the rest of your life, whether you go back or not".

This is probably the most painful dilemma that haunted the exiles for years and exemplifies the dichotomy of their life: how is it possible that what seemed to be a temporary *jail sentence* with the passing of the years, turned out to be a *life sentence*? Why was I living the first period of my exile in constant certainty that the Military Junta would have lasted *just a short while* and that at any time I could have boarded the plane back home, and only to realise that I am not able to go back and be happy in the country where I was born? The majority of the respondents, when asked about the first years of exile, admitted they had lived that period in constant proximity to departure, they lived *con las maletas hechas*, with the suitcases ready to leave, at any time. R. goes on "we all thought it was going to end soon [the dictatorship]. We thought the Junta was going to clean things up and then call for general elections. In the first months of exile I hated the idea of unpacking, we thought we'd be allowed to travel back to Chile at anytime. But then months became one year, and then two and then three years and gradually I realised it was going to last for a long time".

L. says "I'd live always with the suitcases ready to leave, but with the passing of time I realised it was going to be a long affair (*una question larga*)...and it is still lasting today and it scares you because you need to be honest to yourself and admit that it is going to last forever. But if before it was mainly a "physical impairment" today it is a mental exile, it is a permanent condition which follows you anywhere you go".

Jy. "exile is the worst punishment, they amputate your history and your life, it is internal exile, there is no final destination, a bit like the disappeared".

J. "It is a country that has let you down...you are no longer part of that institution and this decision has been made publicly. You accept it and move on, but don't get me wrong, it is a damn burden which you carry for ever".

I. "I'll always be what I am: an exiled, a stranger, wherever I go, Chile, Spain, England, you learn how to deal with that...Do you think that I would cease to be an exile if I went back to Chile?"

The question here is crucial to the understanding of the implications in terms of decision-making for the exile to return home. What Chile has become and how it is experienced by the exiles bears major implications on the final decision. Here are the most powerful accounts on this matter.

R. "I went back for the first time after 9 years. I found the country living in a state of terror, (*un pais aterorizado*) terrorised... Pinochet's model had won the war and when I visited the country again in '93 I found Chile even in a worst state: engaged in an uncontrolled and mad race for consumerism (*carrera loca del consumismo*). Education, health care and mass media have been bought into the system...the country had developed technologically but lost a sense of humanity and solidarity. In '87 people would talk about politics, in 1993 they would chat about technology and in '97, when I visited Chile for the third time, people would talk pure economics". What powerful words to describe a gradual process of degradation, a rapid descent into the abyss of capitalism!

Jy. explores this issue "in 1994 I went back...to stay I mean, to live there but I could not recognise anything. Everything had changed. I could not distinguish social signs (*las señales sociales*), I could not read them. The most painful realisation for me was not to recognise the working class, which was something that, paradoxically, I could do back in England. That caused me a cultural shock (*un choque cultural*) and I spontaneously asked myself, what contribution can I make to this type of society?

L. argues " When I went back in '88 I knew it was going to be a test for me. I stayed for two months and that time was enough for me to realise that going back for good would have meant a double exile (*reexiliado*). And this was because the country had changed so much. People had changed, my generation was gone. I saw a materialistic country, more individualist and socially changed and very competitive...money was the driving force".

I. "I went back in '94, after 15 years of period abroad. It was a test for me, but Chile had a different face, I felt alienated, very uncomfortable walking down the streets and uneasy at human relations...to see my family, my friends, it was too overwhelming".

J. explains "...oh god, of course it [Chile] has changed. The country now fits into the international panorama of capitalism (*panorama mundial del capitalismo*), society has become highly competitive".

5.3 The concept of 'home'

This idea is crucial towards the survival of the exile. Since it is clear that Chile, supposedly home, has lost its initial forms of security, the exile, almost as an instinctive reaction to a 15-year displacement, has created a physical but mainly cultural and mental idea of 'home', a balanced condition wherein the social actor has carefully planted the seeds and put roots which enable him/her today to stand on safe ground.

I. "My home is my psychological security. I know that I do not have a physical home, a 'fixed' place. You are scattered all over the place (*tus pedazos estan por todos lados*). This condition has its pros and cons, you can gain and you can lose, but in order to survive, I have built a layer of protection, that is my moral structure...I don't have a home, the whole world is my home".

R. "Chile is still my home obviously, I lived a great deal of my life there, I grew up breathing that air, that oceanic breeze, I started my political activities over there, but now it is no longer the same 'home'. Home is a more mental condition, home is my daily commitments, my family, my job".

J. elucidates "home is over there, home is Chile. But it is a choice, I consciously make that choice" (*soy chileno por eleccion*).

T. "home is still Chile, but not exactly...home is that country we dreamt for, the country we gave our life for".

L. "I find my equilibrium in my cultural activities. I feel alienated in Chile and I am definitely alienated here, my sons are adults and well along in their lives, all I have got is my mind, my culture. I love doing theatre and this is my home".

5.4 "Chile can offer me nothing at this point of my life"

This section conveys the socio-political and economic transformations, which have converted Chile into a country with selective employment schemes and highly competitive business. The observations of the actors emphasise the inflexibility of the country towards the full repatriation of political exiles. However, many interviewees insisted upon the fact that economical reasons solely do not suffice to explain their firm decision to not go back home.

R." I went back home with a friend of mine, in 1987. Everybody was busy working even 12-14 hours shift a day for a poor wage, they earned almost nothing. We had to go around and look for money, for a job".

I. "I' d be too old for employment there. And even If I could jet a job, I know it would not cover and satisfy my primary necessities".

J. "Over here I am a university teacher, but back in Chile they probably wouldn't employ me, but why take the chance?"

5.5 Creating a myth

Ten, in some cases fifteen years spent in the land of the exile, away from home, away from the daily struggles of a society in full change under the regime and the following democratic government have resulted into the creation of certain ideas about home which do not match reality. The socialist alternative had been quickly eradicated, the remnants of democratic institutions had been craftily dismantled and the last voices calling for freedom abruptly silenced. And all this happened while the exiled was away. And then the country experienced a gradual process of democratisation. Because the exiles were away for so long, they had continued to imagine a country that, in fact, has progressed in certain areas and regressed in others. For many going back home resulted into facing up with a reality feared and anticipated for so long, disillusionment, disappointment, indifference even. A long time away from home indeed resulted into the creation of myths.

N. "It was an awakening. You hear pieces of news which arrive through the radio, you read nothing or almost nothing on the papers, all you know is what your relatives tell you on the phone, by the time you go back a completely distorted image of home has taken shape in your mind... I had created a myth about my country, about the conditions I was going to find it in".

L. describes his personal "awakening": "the last image you have of the country will be engraved in your mind until the day you return. You realise that that image, that version of home, which is nothing but your own version, was a painful deception".

R. "I was informed of the changes and the modifications of the country. But it was a surprise, an unpleasant surprise, in the sense that when you see it with your eyes, when you actually witness something that you have heard about for so long, and you even see your friends changed, my own friends completely changed...it's shocking (*impactante*)".

J. "When I went back I realised that the country had changed more than what I thought. Throughout my period of exile I was aware that years of confinement would have left a mark but I did not realise how deep that mark until I went back. It was so foolish of me to think that certain mechanisms could not be defaced."

I. goes even further "An illusion. Let me just...yeah...an illusion". As I see tears in her eyes I switch my tape recorder off.

5.6 Living in no man's land

This idea is a very complex one and there is no straightforward explanation for its complexity. It is continuously subjected to different variables and might vary according to the other topics mentioned above and below. It is what Dorfman refers to as "double" identity or, as Joly calls it, "double marginalisation". But, as you will see, a fraction of my sample will deny living in a condition consisting of two or more combined identities. Furthermore, they will vehemently refuse being associated with English culture or any foreign ways of living. But is it like they assert that their identity is immaculate and untouched? Jy. acknowledges that it is hard to admit the defeat and the sense of betrayal that had pervaded in the exile's mind for years. The significance of this type of notion, sociologically speaking, is that the social actor is dead; this assumption is supported by Keller's view (1975) that the sense of guilt results into violence, extreme behaviour or total closure.

R. offers his account "To call it a double identity is right, but it doesn't explain much because many factors come into play...language for example or politics, the way politics is made in my country. When Chile is moving towards a certain direction in any political or cultural sense, I don't feel part of that process and the Anglo 'tint' of my identity acquires a stronger connotation. But, on the other hand, Pinochet's arrest brought me nearer to the Chilean side of my identity. By no means, it is a black and white identity, there are many shades and substratum".

I. dares further, charging this idea with moral and emotional significance "I do not speak one language, I do not belong to one single culture I know that, but in all fairness, I don't want to be English, but, at the same time, I don't feel like I am totally Latin American (*No me siento totalmente latina*). It is not even a double condition, but a multi-layered identity, a conglomerate of identities and experiences... a jigsaw puzzle, with pieces scattered around, here and there. If I had to move to China tomorrow this

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hybridity of mine, encapsulated within my skin, would facilitate the process and I could be Chinese. I can do anything, no matter what happens I survive, this is one of the benefits of my fragmented identity, I refuse to belong to one culture...but sometimes it has devastating effects on me...I don't know where I am...I don't know where to go and neither therapy nor medicines will help...I am neither here nor there (*ni aqui, ni alla*)... Pinochet's detention awakened the Chilean in me that had been asleep for twenty years".

Jy. gives his view in a seemingly confident and positive fashion, he was 15 when was expatriated to the United Kingdom: the youngest interviewee in my sample). "I constructed this situation of double identity. I used to live in the Chilean Community but I would not isolate myself from my external surroundings, it would have been a suicide. I dressed as the English did, same haircut, same music, same books. I would even read Latin American literature in English, I would read Borges in English (!)...While Spanish sounded contrived, English sounded perfect. Over here I became familiar with the working class, whilst I lost contact with the Chilean proletariat. But this splitting of my identity was consciously guided and I was aware of me becoming more and more Anglo. But, I kept my Latin side alive as well, I cultivated it, my being English began in 1975 [the year of the exile], I can't relate to before that date...I fit more in a Latin American option rather than a Chilean one. This exile has awakened certain things I didn't know I had, it has shaped my identity in a way which makes me proud no matter where I live".

L. "...no, I am not English, I do not see myself as English. I reject the language (*rechazo*). Reading in English is a disciplinary act. It is the language of the Empire, but it is also the language of the working class and intellectuals, and not being able to master it, well...it is very frustrating".

N. "I am totally Chilean, we were Chileans when we got in power and we were Chileans afterwards, English language and English culture have always meant to me imperialism and exploitation".

5.7 Disillusioned about politics, but keeping the faith

This issue helps understand to what extent the period of exile has weakened political ideals or personal faith in political ideals.

I. smiles at this point. She appears almost unshakeable in this department, like the vast majority of my sample, "there is a difference between political hopes and psychological security. If there is something they can't take away from you, it is your value, your

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integrity. What happened to Pinochet in London stirred up my emotions and ideals, and political values. But I found them intact, in the same condition. My dreams, my hopes, *mi alegria*, the need to keep vibrating".

R. "Soon after I was sent into exile, I separated myself form the party, I could call it a political crisis, but I remained loyal to the ideology of the party and when they arrested Pinochet I knew that my political ideals stood the test of time. They were in the very same condition of my early days of the struggle in Chile. And it was beautiful to come close to the Chilean Community again and talk to people you wouldn't normally talk to under ordinary circumstances".

L. explains that "those remained untouched and pure [political values]. Look, I was a member of the working class over there and now I am a member of the working class over here".

Jy. "It is different but I am what I was before, politically. I work for human rights, we have a web site with hundreds of different personal accounts on the Pinochet's experience... All conversations with my friends, inevitably go back to the 11th of September 1973...it is inside you".

T." My political values haven't changed at all, they are as complete as before; what is significant is to see that, after that historical 25th of November [1998], the day of the Lords' announcement that Pinochet did not have immunity [as a former head of state], to read it in the newspapers...for years in Chile they told us that whoever supported the Popular Unity and whoever was left-wing...the argument put forward by all the media...was that...we were the bad guys, the terrible guys, (*los malos*, *los terribles*) and then when exile comes, you don't believe that but, somewhere in your unconscious, something must have remained and suggested that we were wrong and to see on the front pages that he was arrested and without his immunity... sort of… wiped that idea away from your unconscious, for that matter, it was the important experience of my life".

5.8 Globalisation of cultures "eases" the exile

This theme is a crucial variable towards a full understanding of the way in which living in a cosmopolitan and capital city is experienced by the exile. Moreover, it does explain to what extent such a surrounding facilitate cultural integration. In view of the fact that I deliberately decided not to insist upon this subject, I believe that this issue would require further and much more extensive investigation. (Should I have opted for a deeper

investigation on this matter, my research would have taken a different direction. My firm intention was to highlight its significance with regard to my topic).

T. "here in London I can get involved in any sort of political discussions and even activity. This is fundamental for me. I know that in Chile there is a sort of inhibition and if I went back I could not be as free to debate and discuss…the interplay of cultures and cultural practises does facilitate my everyday existence in London, it'd be so much different if I lived in the countryside…well I don't think I could".

R" When I went back home I tried to explain to an old friend the fact that back here a lot of gay people would behave naturally and with no self-constraint and the whole affair would be generally quite accepted. He would not comprehend. And the whole country is the same way…there is a lot of bigotry, people are not culturally open-minded and liberal…it is understandable after so many years of prohibitions. But for me here it is easier to live, in this respect I can say I feel more at home here than I would feel in Chile. And it is not only that, but the multitude of different cultures that London offers me…wouldn't even reach in a hundred Santiago".

J. "…this is what is fascinating about living in London. If I had gone back to Chile I 'd have lost this. London is a "global" place, the so called globalisation…it facilitated my decision of staying over here".

6. Findings

It emerges quite clearly that, not one member of my sample could have predicted the traumatic consequences they were about to undergo: the journey that socially and psychologically marked the expatriated for the years to come. Exile, as Edward Said suggests, involves a 'discontinuous state of being'. In this existence the concept of home is 'provisional'. The exile is forced to breach barriers and borders in order to break away from a constant *en route* existence and to reach a cultural, ideological, linguistic and political fixed existence. The sample of Chilean exiles that I have interviewed for the dissertation seemed to agree that a similar transitional passage had to be undertaken, but it was agreed upon with the benefit of hindsight. It is a passage taken without reassuring foundations or a clear destination, a transportation into a *border country* dimension (Chambers,1994:47), that is a potential further space. It offers the exile the possibility of a different future and an alternative destination.

Certain findings transpire recurrently, they are seemingly insignificant subtitles which go under the heading "the incapacity of going back home". There are certain variables that have constantly convoyed the exile throughout the years and have become so impregnated in his identity that now it is impossible to discard them altogether. It calls to memory the image of a body constantly beaten up, marked with scars that would not ever again heal up because the skin does not regenerate.

Forced migration and all those conditions the resettlement process entails have become part of their skin, such as: the reconstruction and redefinition of personal identity, occupation, social life, language, social traditions and the modification of private sphere. All these domains become deeply contaminated in the journey that the exile undertakes when the decision of extending the period of exile has been reached. It is clear that economical reasons do not suffice to thoroughly illustrate the decision of many exiles to not go back. The result is that Chile does not exist anymore. What the homeland has become is a faded reflection of a political and intellectual ideal; it symbolises the loss and first and foremost, defeat. Those still precarious social structures and not satisfying cultural conditions, which Chile has to offer today, would not 'repair' what has been permanently damaged. Many exiles have established a secure position in UK, especially those that were supported by the Joint University Group. But there are also other exiles that without the undoubted privilege of being assisted by such groups after several visits back home have assessed a definitive return as an impossible option.

Societies change rapidly and rapid was the crumbling of the last remnant of the Communist block. Chile had been quickly sucked into the Western Hemisphere. The country experienced a one-way journey into the Marcussian one-dimensional society: the realm of capitalism. Chile today is what the Chicago boys back in the 70s worked hard for.

The exile has to confront a scenario which does not only include his financial situation, his place in the work force or monetary advantages and disadvantages, but also includes his own private domain, which is horrifyingly disturbed as soon as Santiago International Airport is visible from the aeroplane. At the simple question "you're free now, why don't you go home?" two conditions have to be considered: first, the personal condition of the exiled and second, the present situation of what is regarded as 'home'. Chilean exiles have to come to terms with their cultural and ideological shift over the years, almost a 'rite of passage' that the exile willingly or not, consciously or not, has to be subjected to. This act of recognising hybridity might mean social survival or perish

and the difference between mental stability and mental and physical annihilation. Ariel Dorfman speaks of "a search of a centre…the abyss of being bilingual and binational at a time when everything demanded that we be univocal and immaculate". (Dorfman,1997:220) Identity is probably the most intricate issue that the exile needs to extricate. The two identities often overlap and, in trying to ascertain where one ends and where the other one begins, creates great uneasiness.

   More than 10 years spent in a foreign country force the exile to experience a crucial cultural shift. This shift bears its first effects on language. Chambers writes "to translate is always to transform" (Iain Chambers, *Migracy, Culture, Identity,* p.4). This sentence raises the issue of the impossibility of the exile to re-transform the realm of their mother tongue, which, in the last analysis, is altered forever. It would involve a transformation of codes and metaphysical signs that, having inhabited the exile's mind for years, have automatically constructed a sense of authenticity. As was reported in the interview section, one of the situations most-mentioned by the respondents and, by far, the most challenging event occurring during the odyssey of the exile, is the way in which the social actor responds to the obligatory learning of a new language. By opting to not return home, the exile deliberately abandons himself to the fluctuations and uncertainties of having to learn and having to depend, to a great extent, on foreign codes. This event is more so predominant in that the exile regards going back as a concrete possibility; should he ever consider a homecoming as a possible step in a foreseeable future, he would probably not experience that sense of desolation and unpredictability which my sample had widely identified. For the exile that repatriates in a near future, his mother tongue would represent home once again. However, here we are dealing with a completely different scenario. My sample group is involved in the quest for self-possession and self-knowledge that, paradoxically, involves a form of self-abandonment, "a doubling that demands the surrender of his real self for the sake of a simulacrum which is a grotesque parody of the reality he seeks"(Mc Neece,1993:16). Frantz Fanon explains this concept when stating that the exile must become the Other in order to avoid humiliation and acquire a form of authenticity which he believes he lacks. The exile enters the imaginative space of his Landowner to see himself through the former's eyes. It is an ironic, paradoxical self-mutilation which allows the exile to subvert and finally adjust to two different systems, according to his standards: the one from which he had departed a long time ago and then the one in which he has decided to build his life not so long ago.

It is also a cathartic process, through which various elements, that, up until that point, for economical and political reasons, were not made accessible to the exiled.

The underlying theme of the language issue can be found in the symbolic functions which names and words have. Many respondents speak of the impossibility to master the language simply because it represents the language of the oppressor, the coloniser, the landowner, the racist. If we recall what Proust had to say about names and their being continually associated with imaginary visions in early life, then language becomes the strongest form of expression of collective ideology and the key to social identity. As a result, the identity of the exiled is not merely affected by the transformations in his language but he has to pay the price for the exile that language itself had to undergo.

Linked to the issue of nationality there is a deeper and possibly crucial theme that is not so often understood: racism. The racial issue can be unearthed back to the definition of the term 'refugee' as presented in the UN statute of 1951. According to this definition, a refugee can be considered as someone who "owing to well-found fear of being prosecuted for reasons of race, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of protection of that country". According to Spoonley, this definition suggests also the pros of being a refugee: job placement, language courses, training, medical care, social security and housing. However, in many cases the definition of refugee and refugee status itself do not correspond with the person's feelings. Due to a wide spread association of the word *refugee* with flickering footage or newspaper photos of millions of people, victims of ethnic cleansing and mass genocide, fleeing their country in their thousands hanging off boats, huddling to rafts of inner tyres in shark-infested seas or marching in lines through mud and rain and snow and dragging a dirty mattress over their head or soiled clothes, the Chilean refugee is seen a victim of racist offences.

Today, the very idea of migration has become a cliché (Brian Wood, *Leave to stay*, p. 5). Therefore, once the decision not to return has been arrived at, it is fundamental for the person in exile to clear his consciousness from this term that projects a passive, victimised, illiterate and uneducated image. The exile has to get rid of this *burden* and needs to acquire a more dignified and socially respectful status.

I. explains that "after visiting my country…I asked myself if I could be happy there…there was no 'there'". These words convey a condition of perpetual ambivalence. It was imposed upon and never freely chosen by the exile. It is a condition of

estrangement and endless alienation that is individually experienced. The exiled becomes the Camussian *l'étranger*. It is living at an intersection of epochs and memories, without fully recognising the precariousness of one's own life but constantly sensing its proximity: it is parallel to being socially marginalised whilst at the same time, relying exclusively on social relations. A situation that contains two main stages: firstly, the gradual dispersal of the fixed identity and secondly, the subsequent arrangement into a new fragmented and conditional order. Here is a situation in which the exile has to constantly reinvent her place in history, relying on social relations, on a satisfying occupation and on absorbing daily activities. His identity is required to seek a comfortable shelter with the following tools at his disposal: a weary historical legacy, a perpetual sense of loss and unstable present.

By accepting the impossibility of a homecoming the exile is called to challenge the harmonious linearity of life: what Chambers calls 'social order' or 'cultural authority'. A situation, in which the sense of passivity derived from the forced expulsion and the feeling of oblivious existence, is being turned around and constantly questioned. The exile attempts to recreate a new sense of belonging and rewrite his present and, as a result, his own future.

In my case study, this revolution of social order and cultural authority occurs against an urban, heterogeneous milieu: the modern metropolis. By coming back to London, the re-invention of language requires the capturing of urban myths, urban rhythms, languages, signs, music and religions. The last ingredients for a full integration into the metropolitan landscape, according to Walter Benjamin, are aestheticism and life style. It is this new sense of migrancy, of experiencing an endless exile against a modern backdrop, which suggests that the exiled is compelled to seek a sense of stability and cultural and ideological homogeneity. A writer describes London as "the place where someone from everywhere in the world finally comes". There is also a very different interpretation of the fact that rather than residing in small countryside villages, the exiled finally converge in big cities like London, Paris or Stockholm; according to the Argentine sociologist Gino Germani it is more likely that a revolutionary opts for a multicultural urban area rather than returning to the place of origin, especially if it a rural region. The reason is to be found on a psychological level. Germani holds that a big city comes to be a substitute for social revolution (as cited in Mörner,1985). This would imply an *internalisation* and a process of individualisation of whatever ambitions could not be accomplished from the outset of the struggle. In other words, the estrangement

and the final alienation from the political struggle back home would be compensated by accepting London as the ultimate destination. The attraction of the metropolis is the real or illusory promise of better work, better future, and better prospects for the family.

The past, the historical inheritance cannot be cancelled from the memory and be replaced by a different set of signs. The region in which the exiled lives is a *twilight zone*, full of traps and gaps. Again, by choosing not to return home, by refusing to be confined in a place once considered to be 'home' and by denying himself the possibility of a secure, clear-cut identity, the exiled becomes aware that different options open up before him. In so far as they are transformed, both past and present can exist. In some cases going back symbolises living a past that had existed only in the imaginary. Therefore, by going back the exile is confronted with a precarious situation: the transformation of the twisted remembrance of the past to the reality of the world in order to adjust it to his own present. The only possible way of survival out of this transition is to cling on to the social structures, the State, the models of power and the culture of that civilisation. In short, these social structures would have to provide the exiled with a sort of lifeboat, or, if you want, a *cushion*, which would ease the impact of the homecoming. But this does not take place, since Chile in the 90s is perceived by the returnees as alienating and unrecognisable. This is what Abdelkebir Khatibi, the forerunner of Maghreb colonialist identity and bilingualism, defines as "past without a past". It requires memory to perform a leap from a melancholic, dream-like state of being to a present "enriched by the exploration of new and practical thoughts" (Lionnet,1993). Khatibi rather optimistic assumption confirms what R. and Jy. stated in the interviews: the exiled can salvage his happiness and satisfaction by constantly expanding the memory because "by exploring new thoughts and new practices, it learns to better administrate space, time and its will to live". In some cases, it is a process of great joy. The exiled is pervaded by the sense that one single experience transcends different cultures and ways of living and it creates the possibility for a dialogue of space. By contrast, this transformation into a new cultural dimension, according to the experience of the exiles, would not take place in Chile.

A question arises now, if Chile is the impossibility to adapt oneself to the new structures and signs, if this country, that has grown and changed in such a short time without the knowledge and contribution of its fellow citizens and its process of modernisation has not been witnessed and shared by the exiled, then what does Chile represent today? After the conscious decision of the *step migrant* as Parnwell defines, to

make a permanent residence in the host country, can it be said that the place of origin is obliterated by the memory of the refugee?

The majority of the respondents argued that Chile is still "home", but "to a certain degree". The country does acquire an imaginary connotation, a mythical character. Home is still Chile and is physically there but it becomes 'home' on a 'holiday-basis', that is, it is home only when needed.

7. Conclusion

This study has focused on a small sample amongst many thousands of Chilean exiles spread across United Kingdom and Europe. But, if a wider perspective is considered, then some findings can be applied to other clusterings of exiles as well. However, this is not my primary goal. What I have tried to achieve here is to provide a clear account of a topic, which has often been neglected by social science. Taking into account the fact that a small number of sociological studies on exile are available, then social scientists should reconsider whether their works can claim a full and complete account on the exile's experience. They have probably reached a substantial level of understanding of this issue, but as Chambers reminds us, times have changed and so have the exiled communities. We have moved into a time of globalisation, social, political and economical globalisation. This new global shape that the world has assumed, had and is having all sorts of effects on the exile-social actor, on how he/she perceives the external surroundings, on the way he looks upon society and, last but not least, on the way society looks upon the exile-social actor. A major aim of my study was to explore the complex world of political exiles, examining with particular attention the compelling reasons which persuade the actor to remain in the land of exile and not make a comeback home. The attained level of knowledge on most of my questions and on most of the issues raised by the researcher in the interview section requires that one speak with caution. Many questions do not meet satisfactory explanations on the topic under investigation: sociology provides partial answers on my topic but as for the rest, many issues are still shrouded in uncertainty. However, the gains of recent years of studies on this phenomenon give confidence that the deployment of new, effective strategies towards the experience of political exiles can contribute a great deal to the understanding of the issues under consideration. It is a long process that can be developed and brought forth by the actions and passion of researchers willing to qualitatively present to the public the

cost that these exiles had to pay for the arrogance and greed for power of those criminal military regimes (just to say the least…).

E.R. Stoddard suggests that the criterion by which analysis on this issue is conducted does not include all the explanatory variables and greatly overlooks the importance of dominant cultural elements of the host society. The 'refugee' or 'exiled' is merely a definition, almost a label, and it erroneously implies homogeneity and superficiality. Within the realm of what we think is a refugee or political exile, a vast and distinct world is contained; many variables come into play and have a bearing on its course.

The underlying theme of this dissertation is the difficulty for the exile to end once and for all the period of displacement. It is not merely a difficulty, but <u>impossibility</u>. As the totality of the respondents has stated, there is no homecoming, in both a physical and a psychological sense. In the first instance the linearity of history had been broken, a period of exile ensued and a second period of exile followed, characterised by the incapacity to regain the original condition. In this work I have devoted my efforts towards the personal journey of the exile-social actor, I would like to call it "inward journey". It represents the attempts of the exiled to successfully elaborate its fragmented past in order to embrace, socially and mentally speaking, an even more fragmented present.

On the other hand I am aware that there are also other matters that have not been addressed here but need to be considered. That is the second journey for the exile, the "outwards journey", in which the whole of society is directly involved. Does society embrace the exile-social actor? Does it direct its structures and resources to a full social and intellectual acceptance of exiles that cannot return home?

The Anglo dominant society, the very same imperialist society which, in order to serve its purposes and satisfy its greed, had these exiles dislocated in the first place, must relinquish its arrogant claims of superiority and cease to regard exiles from poorer countries as threats or inferiors. This requires a society in which the exiles' cultural heritage is accepted and recognised; it requires mature approaches to the subject of the exiled himself; it requires a society whose very leaders admit the discrepancies and intolerance of their own policies which, like it or not, set an example for the members of society.

"*Neither here nor there*" calls for the breaking down of labels and stereotypes associated with political exiles. It calls for just and unbiased studies on the world of political refugees in order to shed light on the path of tolerance and acceptance and an

immediate end to all forms of violence and domination against so-called minority groups.

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