

## Fiction and transformations of historical memory in *NO* by Pablo Larraín\*

*Ficción y transformaciones de la memoria histórica en NO de Pablo Larraín\**

**Rocío Silva Moreno**

Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile  
rocio.silva.m@gmail.com

### Abstract

This article exposes part of the results of the analysis of the film *NO* (2012), by Pablo Larraín, in his inclusion to the memory regime the dictatorship 40 years after the *coup d'état* in Chile, after being converted into a television series. It was analyzed, under a discursive and culturalist perspective, the construction narrative made by fiction and what its incorporation into that memory regime implies, positioned as a hegemonic narrative of the transition to democracy. The analysis addresses how fiction produces, visibilizes and conceals different dimensions of the historical process, concluding that the production redistributes the political conflict and the subjectivities implied in it, influencing differentially the construction of memories about the dictatorship, by establishing the use of the marketing language as the main responsible for the success of the *NO* in the plebiscite.

**Keywords:** Discursive dispositive, historical fiction, mass media, hegemony, memory, transition to democracy in Chile.

### Resumen

Este artículo expone parte de los resultados del análisis de la película *NO* (2012), de Pablo Larraín, en su incorporación al régimen de memoria de la dictadura a 40 años del golpe de Estado en Chile, tras ser convertida en serie de televisión. Se analizó, desde una perspectiva discursiva y culturalista, la construcción narrativa efectuada por la ficción y qué comporta su incorporación a ese régimen de memoria, posicionado como relato hegemónico de la transición a la democracia. El análisis aborda cómo la ficción produce, visibiliza y oculta distintas dimensiones del proceso histórico, concluyendo que la producción redistribuye el conflicto político y las subjetividades implicadas en él, incidiendo de manera diferencial la construcción de memorias sobre la dictadura, al establecer la utilización del lenguaje del marketing como principal responsable del triunfo del *NO*.

**Palabras clave:** Dispositivo discursivo, ficción histórica, medios de comunicación masiva, hegemonía, memoria.

---

\* The article shows part of the results of a master thesis project, financed by the Fondecyt project No.1160050 "Images of the memory: generational interpretations of TV fiction series about Chile's recent past".

## 1. Introduction

Audiovisual discourses have become our main mode of communication and way of speaking about our world. Therefore, today we know much more about it based on what is shown in films, on TV and internet than based on formal education, especially when a large number of this type of production have come to create the story, organizing its meaning.

In Chile, the civic-military dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) has become one of the periods most focused on by these productions, both for its traumatic aspects and connection to current conflicts and its numerous current axis, still subject to important recreation of meanings and controversies. Furthermore, its proliferation is favored by the potential of the period to be treated as a dramatic and/or suspense focus, according to the way the audiovisual market in Chile works.

The film *NO* (2012), directed by Pablo Larraín, whose analysis we address in this article, carried out a significantly different proposal to what had been said in massive audiovisual discourses on the period, both in its perspective as well as directly addressing a very scarcely visited moment by discourses of its type: the 1988 plebiscite, the starting point for the *transition to democracy* in Chile (García, 2006; Otano, 1995; Waldman, 2014).

The production can be considered as a historical fiction, in which the creation process of the *NO* televised political campaign is *re-created*, through an advertising executive involved in the campaign. The film version was transformed into a 4-part miniseries and incorporated into the period's regime of TV memory upon being broadcast in the context of the 40th anniversary of the military overthrow of the government (TVN, 2014), and later, in October 2018 (Canal 13, 2018), 30 years after the plebiscite.

From a discursive (Foucault, 1969, 1970, 1977) and cultural (Hall, 1973; Williams, 1977) perspective, the discourses build our reality, organizing our perception, as the comprehensive reticle that organizes our inhabitation in the world. Thus, they play a key role in the formation of identities, the characterization of social relationships, and in the construction of the "common meanings" that give the dominant system of meanings stability (Massey, 2013).

Audiovisual historical fictions produce a certain type of knowledge of the past (Antezana & Cabalin, 2017), proving themselves especially capable of providing new meanings of massive scope, whose influence is amplified when they are incorporated into a mediatic regime of memory and institutionalized.

This paper exhibits part of the results of a more extensive investigation, of exploratory and inductive nature, in which an analysis was performed on how the narrative formulated by *NO* explains the events related with the end of Pinochet's dictatorship, and later, on how this story was integrated into the regime of memory on the dictatorship some 40 years after the military overthrow of the government in Chile, exploring the political consequences of its positioning and constructions of meaning.

The analysis sustains that the production is able to establish itself as hegemonic narration on the period, both via its strategies of verisimilitude as well as with its institutional validation, positioning a construction of complex political implications. Although it is critical regarding the most stabilized stories of the post dictatorship, it redistributes the conflict in such a way that it becomes functional to the dominant model.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Referencing the notion from Foucault (1977), Agamben referred to the dispositive as "anything that in some way has the ability to sense, guide, determine, intercept, model, control and ensure the gestures, behaviors, opinions and the discourses of living beings" (2007, p. 257).

Language itself can be understood as a dispositive, perhaps the oldest of all (Agamben, 2007). One that since prehistoric times and on the basis of the establishment of certain relations and rules, and of the accumulation and overlapping of knowledge organized by criteria of truth, has distributed our relationships with others and the production of new discourses, identifying elements based on differentiating positions.

The narrations have allowed human communities give order to their existence, in itself inapprehen-

sible, affected by multiple factors, subject to the limitations of human reasoning and language. In particular, the discourses on the past have fulfilled the role of giving meaning to events, experiences and conflicts that have shaped both the collective and individual present, based on socio-cultural categories anchored in the same discourses with which the past is interpreted and transmitted (Baer, 2010; Jelin, 2001).

The discourses only consider certain elements and formulations of the events in order to create the story. They provide frames, players, events, causes and responsibilities via the common thread of a narration, but based on tons of singular events, overlapping and discontinuous. They direct the attention and emphasize in an interpretation what often appears as if it were a complete story on that world, although it is not necessarily planned to be, hence the importance of commemorative discourses in our societies. Every time, these work as dispositives that reiterate and also refresh our knowledge of the past, where its meaning and relevance are discussed (Baer, 2010).

In this sense, it is possible to say that the discourses on the past circulate and are organized according to the *regimes of memory* (Ohanian, 2012), built by collections of stories on the past, that can be considered as the result of power relationships supported by knowledge, subject to continuous updating, where there is always a dispute on the way events are comprehended, on the legitimacy of the narrations, and where relations are continuously reconfigured between the elements of the narrated and among the different discourses that comprise them. They bring about a complex fabric of memory practices that are constantly interwoven, in a way that is more or less structured and/or conflictive, in institutional, alternative and prohibited places, according to that which goes modifying what we consider as hegemonic memory (Ohanian, 2012).

This implies that the knowledge of the past is not determinant by the clarifying of an extra-discursive truth, but rather how each discursive construction produces it, protected in certain historic criteria of truth, that obey interests and power relationships (Foucault, 1970), being able to be used as a political capital capable of providing yields depending on the moment, the situation and the strategic place of the discourse in it.

These regimes of memory are not found at the margin of the processes of contemporary media-tization, whose discourses and images have redistributed our regimes of visibility and enunciation, and the ways we relate to each other. Processes in which audiovisual discourses have transformed into the key element of the "post-literary" societies, in which despite more and more people can read, almost no one does (Rosenstone, 2013). They are discourses that not only speak about what is common, but rather they show it, visually demonstrating the past, present and future possibilities; its path and ways we function in it (Salinas & Stange, 2011). In constructions, crossed by meaningful intentions, but also, like all discourse, by others that come before and make it possible, with those that it relates, dialogues and transposes (Foucault, 1969; Deleuze, 1985).

Mass communication media today plays a key role in the production of these discourses and in the configuration of the regimes of memory, especially when they have become the main agents involved in the dissemination of meanings and collective imaginaries, of reality and the past. Meanings and imaginaries that are not simply injected, but that continue to the main source and resource available for their appropriation. Although they are stories that do not work on the level of an "official" memory, they do work on an institutional basis, based on own interests and state policies, focused on promoting certain themes and points of view considered relevant in regards to context power relationships between political, economic, social, and cultural agents.

They are discourses that have an unknown power for historiography, given they present a world of *live* images, capable of evoking empathies that have an impact on the perception of that history (Rosenstone, 2013). In addition, they have a large amount of legitimacy and recognition, in the degree that they contribute to the education and "cultural heritage", in a way that is familiar and entertaining (Arancibia, 2006).

This issue constitutes one of the major complexities in our relation with these productions, given that the belief still exists that, while historiography builds a reflexive discourse on the past, the audiovisual, both in terms of documentaries and historical fiction, could reflect the truth of the events *just how the happened* (Salinas & Stange, 2017). The

immediacy of the images can cause, eventually, these productions to be interpreted as transparent windows to the past, hiding the fact that they are discourses subject to the possibilities of discursive constructions, and that, therefore, the staging, the narration and the mounting are just another way of formulating meaningful ensembles on the sole thread of sequences.

On this level, the “communication contract” (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2005) to which the discourses subscribe is crucial, given that it regulates the statute of truth depending on if it is a genre of reality or fiction. This distinction often seems stable and well defined, but also obliterates the impossibility of the discourses to tell the naked truth of things, that is, the fictional condition of all discourse, beyond any verisimilar appearance.

Hybrid genres, like historical fictions, appear like the occasional exception to this distribution, what they really do is explore the limits that are vague and cross all discursive production. They sustain a fictional statute that allows them to emancipate themselves from any historiographic rigor, while the historic classification insists in giving them some value of truth, but that remains indistinguishable, easily amplifiable, and without the discourse showing that what it is doing to the past that *re-creates*, that, more than copy it, alters it and produces materially, with a persistence that both portrays and hides that past.

### 3. Methodology

This work exhibits part of the results of a more extensive investigation, in which first an analysis was done of the narrative proposed by the film *NO*, and later, of this proposal in terms of its socially situated discourse, put into circulation 40 years after the military coup in Chile, incorporating it into the regime of media memories of the dictatorship as a television series broadcast in 2014 and 2018.

An inductive addressment was developed, aligned with the theoretical framework, using conceptual tools taken from Cultural Studies (Williams, 1977; Hall, 1973) and from the analysis proposal of Foucault’s discourses (1969, 1970), to analyze the narrative construction in its context, as a discursi-

ve event, and also as a remanence, in the process that in which it took the place of a discourse of memory of the end of the dictatorship.

Firstly, there was a description and analysis of the way in which the different elements of the film articulated a narrative of the production of the NO campaign and how the 1988 plebiscite came about. An analysis sheet by sequence was made, recording aspects like staging, characters, actions, relationships and dialogues, sound and the montage; in order to identify what the narration shows and proposes: how the process is framed, its most relevant connections, how the different positions and practices of the characters are articulated, how the conflict is distributed in its dramatic arc and how that combination justifies an outcome, in which causes and responsibilities established by the narration are assigned, relative to its internal story but also to the historical process it alludes to, in relation to that which justifies it and gives it meaning, inscribing itself in the combination of stories that speak about that past and at the same time about our present. All this was considered in addition to the technical provisions used for it in the film and that are made visible in it, in particular, those that allow construction of the reality by the audiovisual and that allow this be interpreted as a fiction, but that recall a singular period in history.

Then the voyage was analyzed followed by the film from its production to transforming into a nationally and internationally validated discourse, incorporating itself into the group of mediatic discourses of memory on the dictatorship, after being converted into a TV series broadcast in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the military coup and, afterwards, for the 30th year anniversary of the plebiscite. The different forces that played a part in it are considered, and how they determined the place that the discourse took and the interpretations that have been made on it, inscribed in that larger network of practices of memory; assuming the political potentialities of this type of audiovisual product when they become hegemonic stories about the past.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. A problematic context

*NO* came to show a key time in Chile's recent history, for the first time a fiction on the 1988 plebiscite was brought to the big screen, in a style that was similar to a *making of* the NO campaign.

Its premiere took place after a year of intense student protests, in which the cry for the *end to profit* in education directly questioned a central aspect of the model instated by Pinochet and continued by the Concertación de Partidos, or group of parties, that took executive office after the plebiscite; coalition that was then significantly weak after losing the 2009 presidential elections, to right wing candidate Sebastián Piñera.

The movements erupted after 20 years in which the debate in relation to the dictatorship had been dominated by the need of the administrations of the Concertación to stabilize a conciliatory story on the period, based on the formal rejection but unpunished for the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the dictatorship, and in the recognition of the political and economic model imposed, for which these crimes were committed (Waldman, 2014).

This way of understanding the period, previously censored, went consolidating thanks to hegemonic discursivity from governmental institutions, and also from the mass communication media, in which, with nuances and above all in the last years, different discursivities had made an emphasis on sentences given for human rights violations, but without questioning other aspects of the dictatorship and its legacy. In a reinforced perspective, as well as, indirectly, due to the daily practices of these agents, that continually insist in the prevalence of the neoliberal model as an unquestionable reality regardless of the excesses that threaten it and that turn the questioning into a moral issue.

In this context, *NO* joined the courting of discourses that have addressed the dictatorship and, in this way, they have shaped it as a somewhat intelligible historical process for our present. After relating itself to them and taking a place among them, it recognized them, questioned them and dislocated them. In this sense, the film came to propose an end result for the multiple discourses used until then, focused on the horrors of the dictatorship.

This outcome that for Santa Cruz (2017) works as an end to the "myth of origin" of our reality, beginning by the government overthrow and that constitutes our own "domestic myth of the catastrophe", with which our modes of comprehension of reality were disrupted, marking our entrance to "differed modernity" started by Auschwitz, in which a rationalization of the horror was produced and with it, the paradigm of the technical progress resulted in separating itself from the humanist justification, to subordinate itself to the sole mandate of global capitalism.

This proposal operated a complex outcome, given that not only did it bring closure to that mythical story often recommended by others, but rather it did so distancing itself from the most stabilized interpretations on the period: rejecting, on one hand, to perform a justification of the favorable aspects of the dictatorship (as many would expect to happen based on the affiliation of its director)<sup>1</sup>, as well as insisting in a redeeming story of the democracy "as much as possible", as the then President Aylwin once said. It also rejected a construction founded on the enhancement of the social struggles of the people in the realizing of its historic destiny, in the style of the New Chilean Cinema of the 60s and 70s (Santa Cruz, 2017). Therefore, it is a significantly different proposal, whose statements, as we will see, are not easily assignable to a previous discursive tradition, and nevertheless it managed to pave the way and transform into a hegemonic discursivity on the end of the dictatorship.

### 4.2. A historical fiction

Although the production used, like other historical fictions, the resource of a staging of that time period and TV archive material, it also used other less common strategies, like filming with cameras from the late 80s and using real historical figures playing themselves within the narration. All these techniques allowed the production to insert itself in a way that is completely verisimilar and at the same time unique in the group of stories on the dictatorship. Thus, the production creates its own version of this *making of* the campaigns of the plebiscite, almost as if it were a documentary, generating an effect of "visual anachronism" (Richard, 2014), that transforms what the fiction makes visible.

The construction is organized around René Saavedra, a fictional character, advertising executive, son of Chilean exiles<sup>2</sup>, involved in the NO campaign, whose role sets of the chain of events operated by the production.

Far from the left-wing enthroned hero character that has dominated in the post-dictatorship representations, René does not possess any of the qualities that these have shown, such as courage and fearlessness, lacking all types of virtues different from the professionals, appearing like a completely self-centered character. He is not the leader of a historical process in which he is involved nor is he motivated by an ideological belief, even when operating in a completely polarized environment. Nevertheless, in contrast to other main characters of Larraín in his “trilogy of the dictatorship”<sup>3</sup>, René does get involved in the process, although he does it guided by his own individual obsessions, intervened by historical circumstances beyond his control and function as a natural environment that remain unexplained, naturalized (Santa Cruz, 2017).

Despite the YES and NO plebiscite being what organizes the plot, the narration shifts this basic antagonism, as had been established by other productions of the post-dictatorship, in which the good guys and the bad guys were easily identifiable. Here all of the opposing forces mix, appearing a singular range of grays that not only disassemble this binary construction tending towards ambiguity and to the homologation, but rather resituates the space of political conflict, placing us on a little explored axis in the mass discursivity, in which there are also lines of irony and black humor, in general alien to this type of production.

The construction carried out distances itself from the common staging stereotypes, giving way to characters that are not only morally more complex, but, in addition, opened in silence that avoid any closing of meaning. Nevertheless, the construct circumscribes well the limits within which the action and the conflict are resolved, marginalizing the figures that had been central to the construction of hegemonic meaning during the post-dictatorship.

On one hand, the agents of the dictatorship, which in other stories have been profiled as the perfect villain, have been replaced here by Lucho Guzmán – René’s boss at the advertising agency that also

participated in the YES campaign-, and for the Minister in charge of the campaign. Both embody a right-wing Pinochet-like and banalized caricature, not sinister but rather insipid even in their threats, innocent, and whose roles in the story end up being scenes of humor, as if they only appear in order to emphasize the ingenuity of the main character. On the other hand, the character of Veronica, René’s ex, vital to the story in allowing formulating of the critique of the plebiscite, appears representing an even more radical left wing, but here completely isolated and immobile, reduced to the private sphere, to the intimacy and above all in René’s head, lacking social connections and at the margin of any interference in the political process.

This distribution operated by the story quickly refocuses the problem and the action, risking mainly what happens inside of the NO campaign, in addition to some awkward interventions by the YES. René and Fernando argue as to which path the campaign should follow, in the difficult task of provoking those voters who are convinced but incredulous of the plebiscite, but also those in fear, undecided, tired of the political polarization, being those on which the election depended. The main conflict thus is situated in the dilemma regarding which is the best strategy for the victory, regardless of any political project.

The operation replaces *political communication* in terms of the strategic practice of contemporary politics where Fernando appears as the promoter of an obsolete language, focused on showing the crimes of the dictatorship, and occupying a role that in other productions could have been the protagonist; René is the bearer of new strategies imported to the political *marketing* where advertising in terms of market language, belonging to the model installed by Pinochet, focused on capitalization of the desire of the voter-consumer.

The production shows how the advertising perspective that finally won is responsible for the triumph of NO, upon defeating the denouncement of Fernando to what *works* in the consumption of political products, emphasizing just how that calculation and handling of the effects of the television campaign takes place in order to make it decisive. In this way it highlights the convergence between René and Guzmán -the NO and the YES-, who perhaps have more similarities than diffe-



rences. Because beyond being on opposing sides, they share the same knowledge. Therefore, it is not about a clashing of classes, as Guzmán makes René aware that he is as “wealthy” as the rest of the protagonists, but rather a personal-professional rivalry. The election between YES and NO, more than a substantial deliberation, is the election between two brands of the same product, one that is more attractive than the other, but between which, in the end, there is no great difference beyond a regimen of images that are shown as pure form without content, more or less efficient at the time of achieving the desired effect.

What the fiction makes clear is a conflict exclusively dealing with bourgeoisie in favor of or against the dictatorship<sup>4</sup>. And in the case of the latter, one that never suffers the ferocity of the regimen, and that nevertheless wants to get rid of it -and thus recover lost political positions-, has no choice but to play by its rules, accepting its transformations, that it is even willing to perpetuate.

With this construction, elements used by the fiction to give the story verisimilitude, like the clips of the real YES and NO campaigns, take on new meanings, ordered to say something different to that said in their first enunciation. In fact, the staging of the campaigns recovers a series of known visibilities and declarations, associated to the epic genre of the NO as principal symbolic capital, here shifted and put at the fiction’s disposal, in such a way that NO no longer appears as a promise to some degree honest yet unsatisfied, but rather completely like a marketing tool of the institutional opposition to the dictatorship, bitterly useful.

The film certainly proposes a different perspective. However, it is finely disguised by the operation of visual anachronism that sustains in part the verisimilitude of the story, making us sensitively lose the time perspective (Richard, 2014) under that documentary appearance, that seems to show the naked truth of NO. The effect is singularly reinforced by historical figures playing themselves in the plot, performing repeat scenes already lived in their past, in which they are superimposed. However, by doing it *without makeup* that could make them look younger and give them their innocence, a contradictory effect occurs: as if, despite the loss of perspective caused by their presence and by the costumed images, the years that the production decided not to hide once again shows irremissibly

that distance, that makes them reaffirm their past decision even knowing that the promise was not kept.

Thus, the presence of these characters sustains a double operation. Although it shows the time distance, it persists in hiding the perspective of the fiction, it presents but hides behind them, validated by them. Because in no case is it a mere imitation of the visuality and past events doomed to repeat themselves in a way that is identical and naturalized, as Richard (2014) would state, but rather from the explicit willingness to dodge that point of view under the appearance of an imitation that, like a simulation carried out by the protagonists themselves, tends to take the place of a completely lost original.

### 4.3. The remanence of the discourse

On the occasion of the premiere of the film, the filmmakers put emphasis on two interpretations. According to the first, the object of its accent was to critique the transition and show that the victory of the NO also meant a victory for the Pinochet model; interpretation for which the production was received positively, for example, among the leaders of the student movement in 2011 (Mardones, 2012). Nevertheless, depending on the situation, the filmmakers also put emphasis on the genius of the campaign and on its importance for the triumph, which allowed the production to also receive the support of various of the country’s ex-presidents who were part of the transition, that saw in the film the story of a battle and a triumph of great importance to the country, of which they were in charge (Charpentier, 2012).

In that sense, part of the film’s success is linked to a sensitivity already positioned in the social space, with which old and new political players have had to settle accounts: from the critique, in the case of the new, coming from the student movement; from the recognition of that critique in order to make possible its revalidation, in the case of the Concertación of the Transition; but also from the right, divided between assuming its past dictatorship and rejecting it to obtain the yields of appearing democratic while still obtaining the benefits of the neoliberal transformations forcefully imposed.

But the sensitivity of the production did not exclusively deal with only the national sphere, given that it took on an issue Chile is widely known for worldwide, and was able to strip up the interest of the cinematographic market. This speaks of a production strategy and advertising strategy that puts into practice a knowledge of communication and politics, while at the same time it dramatizes it, and give it relation, this time, to a sensitivity as to what *works* in the film market. With a novel proposal, on a topic that interests people both in Chile and abroad, but sufficiently ambiguous in order to attract the interest of different players in conflict in the local scene. It is a proposal that, as mentioned, in terms of a domestic closure of that “myth of origin” of entrance to the contemporary world, shows its universal vocation, this time as allegory of the transformation of the political with the victory of global neoliberal movement.

The international awards, crowned by the Oscar nomination, favored its recognition in Chile<sup>5</sup>, being reshown in cinemas and receiving government grants so that it would be converted into a TV series. It was broadcast not long after the 40th year anniversary of the military coup, and rebroadcast in 2018, marking 30 years since the plebiscite; transforming into the main current audiovisual resource on this historic moment. Thus, even when the discourse maintained its identity in its “extended version”, it modified its illustrative statute via its institutionalization, that declared it not only as the reference to the most massive and accessible period especially for new audiovisual-savvy generations, but also as a reference supported by the real historical figures that lived it, for the recognition it received, and for its naming as discourse of memory<sup>6</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

No discourse can create a total truth as to the transformation of historic constructions over time when there is no ontological coincidence that supports it, but rather just dispositives of real production, of *effects of truth*, that concern the discursive shot. In it, historical audiovisual fictions have a great ability to construct truth and cultural memory, in terms of providing an up-to-date *knowledge* on the past, and for the type of approach that they support via images and narrative, based on which can easily be confused with its referentes, especially when lacking other perspectives that nuance hegemonic discursive proposals.

In the case of *NO*, the strategies of verisimilitude used tend to obliterate and naturalize its perspective, validated by the real historical figures that participate as characters in it, but also, for its incorporation to the regimen of memory, thanks to its sensitivity to the market and the contemporary social climate in which it was released.

The emphasis in the advertising campaign that positions the film and the series not only presents a metaphor of that performed by the governments of the Concertación, but rather tends to naturalize, in a less evident way, the cause-effect relationship that explains the events related to the end of the dictatorship.

The story obstructs the multiplicity of other factors involved in those such events, here diminished or omitted, among others, the mass protests, the failure of the strategies of armed struggles, the work of the human rights organizations to denounce, the desperation of many because of their friends and family members deaths, international pressure, economic sanctions, and the fact that the institutional itinerary of the transition had already been designed by the dictatorship.

The emphasis that positions *NO* is that, in fact, it was the work of an advertising strategy. Therefore, it establishes a verisimilar cause, that appears as already established, but that not for that reason is it obvious or necessarily true, especially in regards to the relevance that it is given. At the same time, implicitly, fiction calls the *NO*-voter to respond positively to the campaign as the motive for which it must shift the strategy towards market language,



in that it is he who has become sensitive to that consumption logic, explaining the rupture of the social connections and the proscription of an anti-capitalist political project operated by the dictatorship as simple tiredness of the political polarization and fall to spectacle and to consumption.

The film and series communicate two things to audiences: first, that such market logic transformed us all, despite having undesirable consequences; and secondly, that currently, the conditions of a possibility for democracy and of success in political dispute are circumscribed to these market strategies and that, like the *Concertación* at that time, it is necessary to know how to use them<sup>7</sup>.

In this sense, the subjectivation that *NO* proposes to audiences as a story of memory is functional and complementary to the destruction of these connections, continuing the interpretation of Tironi (1988) according to whom the social discontent during the dictatorship was a result of unequal access to the privileges of modernization carried out by the regime and not to a rejection of the imposed economic system. Of course, it is not about requiring this type of production to tell a historiographic truth on these processes. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that what they do is always political and has an impact, especially upon becoming a resource to learn and know about history, and to the degree that historical fiction overlaps the memory of a time, and in that sense produces it, regardless of that you cannot deduce any generalized effect.

Then, it is extremely delicate that, with the passing of time, the relevant will not be what actually brought the triumph of *NO*, but rather what is attributed to that triumph in the discourses that have built that past. And among them, those that have a higher mass communication, validity and verisimilitude will have an advantage when competing with others, without it being shown in the discourse what this does to the past, how it frames it, replaces it or invents it. After all, mass communication media can have a great impact on the construction of "popular memory", in that "it doesn't show people what it was, but what it is necessary that they remember it being" (Foucault en Bonitzer et. al., 1974, p. 102), which implies the colonization of popular, cultural, and intergenerational memories, and can have important scopes in relation to the bio-political dimension of memory constructions.

## Notes

1 Larraín is son of one of the most important figures of the post-dictatorship conservative right wing, the current Minister of Justice and Human Rights of the President Piñera's second administration, Hernán Larraín; and of the business woman belonging to one of the country's richest families, Magdalena Matte.

2 This is almost of no importance for the plot, except for justifying the actor cast, the Mexican Gael García Bernal, as we know nothing about the past of the protagonist, who does not show connections with exile or with that which it could mean for a life.

3 Different authors, among them José Miguel Santa Cruz (2017) have referred to the group of Larraín films *Tony Manero* (2008), *Post Mortem* (2010) and *NO* (2012) as the director's "the trilogy of the dictatorship". As José Miguel Santa Cruz (2017) states, following Tzvi Tal, they are constructions marked by a radical transformation of the imaginary associated to the Unidad Popular and the intervention of the North American cultural models, where there is a tendency to focus on derivas individuales, and more specifically, on "perverse characters", morally corrupt, "that symbolize identification with the symbolic structuration of the neoliberal world" (Tal, 2012; citado en Santa Cruz, 2017, p. 168).

4 In that respect, it is important that the fiction's only low socioeconomic class character, Carmen, the nanny of René's son, is also exclusive to the private sphere, and in addition, adept to the YES.

5 It is unique how in Chile, international recognition facilitates validation of discourses that without this recognition could have remained in a much more marginal space, like what occurred for example, with *A Wonderful Woman* (2017), by Sebastián Lelio, and also produced by Fábula.

6 In this point, the reflection made by Larraín related to the construction of memory loses relevance: "Something that has always been en pugna en mí is the idea that in Chile you have to beautify the past, idealize it, to put it inside a cristalería and that this is organically structured in a memory. And I feel like the memory, in general, is much more disorganized and caotic, and that our memories are organized based on how one wants the present to be. Or how one wants it to be remembered" (Chernin, 2013). Even when the autoral intention may have sought the desestructuration of the dictatorship memory, it does not impide the discourse from acquiring that statute when the institucionalization of the memory favors the fixation, at least partial, of the meanings/senses, and especially, of that which the production replaces of the historic process.

7 Gael García dedication to the student movement of 2011 in the context of the prerelease of the film is illustrative, for its media positioning worldwide (Mardones, 2012; Nazarala, 2012).

## Bibliographic References

- Antezana, L. & Cabalin, C. (2017). "The price of consensus. The dictatorship in Chilean fiction television of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the military coup". *Chasqui. Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación* No. 136, 2017- 2018 (pp. 249-262).
- Arancibia, J. (2006). *Political Communication*. Santiago: Editorial Arcis.
- Baer, A. (2010). "Social Memory. Brief guide for the Perplexed". *Memoria - Política - Justicia. En diálogo con Reyes Mate* (pp. 131-148). Madrid: Trotta.
- Bonitzer, P.; Daney, S; Toubiana, S.(1974). "Anti-portrait. Interview of Michel Foucault". *Cahiers du Cinema*, No. 251-252. En Maniglier, P. & Zabunyan, D. *Foucault va al cine*. (p. 101-106). Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 2011.
- Charaudeau, P. & Maingueneau, D. (2005). *Dictionary of analysis of the discourse*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.
- Charpentier, D. (30 de julio de 2012). Ex-presidents of the Republic attend premiere of film NO. *Biobío Chile*. [En línea] <http://www.biobiochile.cl/noticias/2012/07/30/ex-presidentes-de-la-republica-asisten-a-avant-premiere-de-pelicula-no.shtml> [Consulta: 1 de abril de 2018].
- Chernin, A. (20 de enero de 2013). Understanding Pablo Larraín. *La Tercera*, Chile. [En línea] <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/entendiendo-a-pablo-larrain/>. [Consulta: 10 de enero de 2018].
- Deleuze, G. (1985). *Knowledge: Course on Foucault. Tomo I*. Buenos Aires: Cactus., 2013.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). "What is a dispositive?" *Contribución a la guerra en curso* (pp. 7-25). Madrid: Errata Naturae Editores, 2012.
- Fajardo, M. (9 de marzo de 2018). "The Fantastic 'Fable' of the Larraín Brothers". *El Mostrador*, Chile. [En línea] <http://www.elmostrador.cl/cultura/2018/03/09/la-fabula-de-los-hermanos-fantasticos/> [Consulta: el 10 de marzo de 2018].
- Foucault, M. (1969). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. México, D.F.: Siglo XXI Ediciones, 2010 .
- Foucault, M. (1970). *The Order of the Discourse*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2011.
- Foucault, M. (1977). "The game of Michel Foucault". *Saber y verdad* (pp. 127-162). Madrid: Ediciones La Piqueta, 1991.
- Hall, S. (1973). "Coding and decoding in the television discourse". *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, 2004, No. 9, 210-236.
- Jelin, E. (2001). "What are we talking about when we talk about memories?" *Los trabajos de la memoria*. Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores.

- Larraín, P. (2012). *NO*. Fábula Films.
- Maldonado, M. (30 de julio de 2012). "Gael García Bernal and cast of NO participated in viewing together with Confech". *Cooperativa*. [En línea] [http://www.cooperativa.cl/gael-garcia-bernal-y-elenco-de-no-participaron-en-visionado-junto-a-la-confech/prontus\\_notas/2012-07-30/000034.html](http://www.cooperativa.cl/gael-garcia-bernal-y-elenco-de-no-participaron-en-visionado-junto-a-la-confech/prontus_notas/2012-07-30/000034.html) [Consulta: 1 de abril de 2018].
- Mardones, C. (30 de julio de 2012.). "Gael García arrives in Chile and meets with Vallejo and Jackson to see the film NO". *Biobío Chile*. [En línea] <http://www.biobiochile.cl/noticias/2012/07/30/gael-garcia-llega-a-chile-y-se-reune-con-vallejo-y-jackson-para-ver-pelicula-no.shtml> [Consulta: 1 de abril de 2018].
- Massey, D. (2013). "Language of the economy". *El ABC del neoliberalismo* (pp. 27-49). Viña del Mar: Asociación Communes, 2016.
- Ohanian, B. (2012). "Dispositive of government, memory and subjectivity. A possible addressment". *Aletheia*, V. 2, N°4. Buenos Aires.
- Richard, N. (2014). "Contemplative memory and critical-transformative memory". *La Fuga*, 16. [En línea] <http://2016.lafuga.cl/memoria-contemplativa-y-memoria-critico-transformadora/675>. [Consulta: 11 de enero de 2018].
- Rosenstone, R. (2013). *Cinema and visibility. Historization of the contemporary image*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad FinisTerra.
- Salinas, C. & Stange, H. (2011). "Politics in images: A review of the documentary Venceremos". *Política y comunicación: democracia y elecciones en América Latina* (pp. 319 – 338). Lima: Departamento Académico de Comunicaciones. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.
- Salinas, C. & Stange, H. (Eds.). (2017). *The obedient perspective. National history in Chilean cinema*. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria.
- Tironi, E. (1988). *The silences of the revolution. Chile: The other side of modernization*. Santiago: Editorial La Puerta Abierta.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Barcelona, Barcelona: Editorial Península, 1980.
- Waldman, G. (2014). "40 years after the military coup in Chile. Reflections regarding commemorations and memories". *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, Universidad Autónoma de México, Nueva Época, año LIX, núm. 221, mayo-agosto 2014, 243-266.

---

- About the author:

**Rocío Silva Moreno** es Licenciada en Comunicación Social, Periodista y Magíster en Comunicación Política de la Universidad de Chile. Trabaja como asistente de investigación y en actividades de docencia, en temas relacionados con el estudio y análisis interdisciplinar de discursos mediáticos, en sus dimensiones políticas y culturales.

- How to cite:

Silva Moreno, R. (2019). Fiction and transformations of historical memory in NO by Pablo Larraín. *Comunicación y Medios*, (39), 174-185.