



## visual ethnography

vol. 3, n. 1, June 2014, pp. 91-126 | www.vejjournal.org | DOI: 10.12835/ve2014.1-0032 | ISSN 2281-1605

---

### **Irène Jonas**

Independent sociologist and photographer

### **Jean-François Noël**

Photographer

## ***Chilean exile seen from « the inside »... 40 years on.***

### **Abstract**

*In our research project, entitled "At the heart of the city: analysing the pulse of the Plaça de Catalunya in Barcelona" and financed by the Inventory of Ethnological Heritage of Catalonia (IPEC), which belongs to the Department of Culture of the Catalan government, the question of images and sounds was central. After our fieldwork, the question of how to present our work arose; we did not want to do it through text alone. The idea then was gradually born of the multimedia format presented here, which is part of a more general reflection on the attention to be paid to sounds and images for the analysis and understanding of contemporary urban life.*

### **Keywords**

Exile, Chile, Decoration pictures Photographs, Domestic space

### **Irène Jonas**

Independent sociologist and photographer. She is author of photographic reportages and exhibitions sociologically based. Currently she is working on memory: « La fin d'un monde » (Galerie Maubert - 2010), « Photos d'exil » (Rencontres photographiques Paris 10e - 2013), « Ailleurs » (Biennale de l'image Nancy – 2014). Dernières publications en sociologie visuelle : *Mort de la photo de famille ? De l'argentique au numérique*, Ed. L'harmattan, 2010. « Les visiteurs du musée Rodin. De l'expérience personnelle au partage » (S. Connord et I. Jonas), in J. Eidelman et M. Roustang, *Visiteurs photographes*, La documentation française, 2013. « L'interprétation des photos de famille par la famille », in *Les mondes de l'interprétation*, Sociologie de l'Art, OPuS 14, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009, p. 53-70.

### **Jean-François Noël**

He is photographer since 60s. Trained in geography and history, he is an activist. His work aims to safeguard the memories of time and spaces in an ephemeral world. He works also on humanity (no-still portraits, street photography, reportages, events, etc.) and its environment, almost on landscapes.. Currently is independent photographer for the association *Regarde!* Personal exhibitions: « Géométries urbaines » (Massy, 2007), « Espèces d'Espaces en Essonne » (2012 – Archives Départementales), « La Grande-Borne aux beaux jours » (Grigny 2013). Directeur du projet "¡ Presentes ! portraits d'exilés chiliens" (2013 - Association Regarde! pour le Conseil Général de l'Essonne).



© Irène Jonas

To celebrate the 40 year-anniversary of Pinochet's coup in Chile, the French association "Regarde!"<sup>1</sup> has initiated a study in visual sociology with 25 Chilean political exiles who have decided to stay in France after the return of democracy<sup>2</sup>. Our approach consisted in using photography as a research tool (Chauvin, Reix 2013). Coupled with images, sociology has become both an observation method instrumented by visual recording tools (here photo cameras) and a way to disseminate the results of the study by relying on visual resources: hoardings with texts and photographs, DVD, catalogue, etc. This paper deals more particularly with the individual and family memory and explores the issue of exile through the observation of the domestic space and the Chilean objects adorning it.

The domestic space is a social construction based on a specific organisation and on the marks left therein by the inhabitants. This marking, operating through objects arrangements or interventions on the inhabited space, corresponds to the most important material aspect of space appropriation. Surreptitiously, the past sneaks into daily life objects and imposes a memory to us. As repositories of the identity, of the heritage, of family memories, all the objects crystallise forms of investment (Debray, Turgeon 2007). As emphasised by Philippe Bonnin (2006), the home plays this particular role, both as a stage and as enactment of domestic life. "The appearance built by the masters of the place seeks to reveal a meaning, elaborated in this permanent arrangement/invention of the personal world; it is somehow the projection of a story and an ideal of life; it is to a certain extent a microcosmic provision of the world, which is almost cosmologic" (Bonnin 2006 : 13). Beyond simple marking and personalisation, if we consider the relation with the inhabitant and its habitat as the project of integrating the inhabited space to the social construction of self, the home of the encountered Chileans has thrown a light on the successive steps of exile, the settlement in France and the feeling of being torn today between two countries and two histories.

### **Methodology**

During that research, we have met 25 people<sup>3</sup>. As political militant(s) or sympathiser(s), men like women, all of them supported the Allende government and had to go into exile between 1973 and 1976. Their life conditions under the military dictatorship<sup>4</sup>, the ways they left Chile, their exile itineraries and tribulations constitute as many unique stories. In the face of the urgency of the situation, choosing the host country may have resulted from a desire as much as

---

<sup>1</sup> "Regarde !" means "Look !" in English. Dobrivoje Arsenijevic (Arsa), Jean-François Noël and Irène Jonas are members of the Association.

<sup>2</sup> This work was commissioned by the General Council of the French Departement of Essonne for the 40 years' anniversary of the Coup in Chile. A first diffusion of that study has been designed and presented in the form of a mobile exhibition "¡ presentes !" and of a catalogue including texts on the exile itineraries and of photographic portraits, a larger publication project is in progress.

<sup>3</sup> The people whom we have met came either from Chilean couples who had gone into exile together or from Chilean or mixed couples who had formed in France. Four children of exiled were also interviewed.

<sup>4</sup> Life underground, imprisonments, tortures, internment in concentration camp.

from a selection by default (according to the refusal of other embassies) or an opportunity. There were successive exile waves, most often in Argentina, some eventually arriving in France.

To come in contact with Chileans, we have not used any relay of institutional type, nor even of associative nature. We found that the better way to work in a trusting relationship, was to start with Chilean exiles whom we knew. Jean-François Noël thus visited everybody systematically to introduce our approach, prepare the interview, make the visual tool accepted and collect other addresses. At first, the project often met with reluctance: "why do you want to talk about us? We are exiled, not heroes". Possibly a little distrust: "what is the purpose of this project?" These questions reflected not only the fear, more or less verbalised, to awaken or reopen a never-healed wound, but also a certain restraint with respect to parents and friends who died or "disappeared" and were no longer there to testify.

Once convinced of the merits of this approach, these people were the speakers and the guarantees of our project with their friends, with whom they placed us in contact. The quality of the recommendation and of the first meeting was decisive to obtain the participation of people whom we did not know. A preliminary and sometimes long exchange conducted with each of the people enabled to overcome the fears and the reluctances. We could also agree on the interest of our project to pass on their story and the values of their involvement with Allende's Chile. They welcomed the idea of addressing collective history through life stories, often by calling upon their family, spouse and (especially) children. Going public was not an easy task and that included bringing, even reluctantly, their family and friends into the limelight and thereby divulging a shared story. All of them accepted to take part in this project and were happy to give their testimonies and photos<sup>5</sup>, thereby accepting to "become visible" through words as well as through images.

The photographic act is a communication act, involving the investigated/ photographed people as much as us, researchers/photographers. The photographic approach of the researcher is from then on an aware experience, in which the investigated lend themselves to play with their own image (Meyer 2008). The reciprocal trust established before shooting the photos and our way of proceeding enabled us not to "steal" the pictures, which were somehow given, possibly suggested, to the photographers.

Thanks to the meetings organised before the interviews, three of us could visit people's homes. In a first step, Irène Jonas conducted the interview and Jean-François Noël made *in situ* shots. In a second step, after having listened to and taken part in the interview, Dobrivoje Arsenijevic (Arsa) shot 6/6 argentic black and white portraits intended for the exhibition and the

---

<sup>5</sup> The semi-directive interviews lasted between two and four hours and were structured around three periods of their life: their life in Chile and their engagement at the time of Allende; their exile itinerary between the 11th of September and their arrival in France; their life in France and the evolution of their relation to Chile.

catalogue<sup>6</sup>. A third step of the research consisted in complementary questions and shots of the "Chilean traces" in the household. These photographs were realised by Jean-François Noël and Irène Jonas, either with 24/36 or a Smartphone. Just like for the "Presentes" exhibition and the catalogue, the selection of black and white was favoured all at once, especially for portraits. However, we chose to illustrate certain households with two or three colour snapshots which, according to us, accounted better for the profusion of Chilean objects.

After every meeting, we took a little time to discuss each other's work and the conditions under which it unfolded. This discussion enabled us to readjust our *modi operandi* in order to avoid disquieting interferences between us, but also to implement research in a truly collective manner.

### **The Chilean exile**

The Chilean exile constitutes, like others, an off-site experience, emphasised by the disruption of an initial state, offering a kind of symbiosis between the human being and the territory, the family, the ancestors. This very strong link with the soil, here described by Pablo Neruda, was palpable in many interviews:

I think that a man should live in his country and I believe that uprooting for the human being is a frustration which, one way or the other, atrophies the clarity of his soul. I can only live on my native soil, I cannot live without laying my feet and hands on it, without sticking my ear to it, without feeling the flow of its waters and its shadows, without perceiving how my roots seek in my slit the material substances (Neruda 1987 : 252).

---

<sup>6</sup> For Arsa, these images were also part of a continuous photographic work, conducted for several years: "Destinies of exiles".



*Julio showing us the Chilean tree of fire that he planted in the garden of his house © Irène Jonas*

Every exile thus imposes the construction of a new daily life in which the migrant should both find his bearings with respect to the host society and re-create, from afar, his links with the country of origin. However, it seems important to describe the specific aspects of the Chilean exile. Chile was not a country of emigration, although only transborder, but the military coup of 11 September 1973 triggered a massive political emigration. The scope of that exodus matched the brutality of the break-up of the political system implemented by Salvador Allende (Popular Unity) and the intensity of the repression. In a generalised context of professional purges, of arrests, of tortures, of imprisonment in concentration camps and of "disappearances", going into exile appeared as the sole possible "choice" (Bolzman 2002).

For most of them, the Chilean exiles left at best with a suitcase, at worst with only the clothes they were wearing. Most of them refused to accept exile as a final situation, possibly even

in the middle term, so that the issue of the return was central in their lives. "In this perspective, they turned a provisory situation into a true way of life. According to the now conventional expression, 'they live with their suitcases at the foot of their beds'" (Bolzman 2006). During their first years in France, Chile mostly existed for them through their political commitment to denounce the military regime and to show solidarity with the opponents. This first period of exile was described by Claudio Bolzman (1989) as a one of uprooting and politicisation. For Maribel who got married to Juan Carlos while he was in jail, and then went into exile with him: "We came here to organise the resistance, we were only passing by. We stayed several years with the strict minimum in the flat". The aspirations and activities of the different refugees was then reflected in their daily militantism, with a project of returning home, thereby neglecting the furniture or objects of their household which they saw as a transient camping site.

As years went by, the stabilisation of the military regime and the absence of organised internal resistance made any return inconceivable. The necessity to integrate themselves at least professionally and the birth of children made them set progressively targets that could be locally fulfilled. Maria-Helena, who left Chile with her husband wanted by the military junta, sees the birth of her children as a light bulb experience: "When I had my daughter, I realised that my life was now here, it was not in Chile any longer and I was in charge of others". Francisco, who had the guardianship of his children in Chile and had to wait several years before he could bring them to France: "At the onset, it was the fight against Pinochet, then it was the children, who had to be raised and the family had to be integrated correctly in French society". Some Chileans continued their militant or associative activity in France: "When we understood that returning meant to be shot, we realised that we could be useful in our country of residence and we joined the French Socialist Party". In the late 1980s, the Chilean border opened, but those we have met are not *retornados*<sup>7</sup>. Jose and Loretta, who went into exile with a toddler and a newborn baby, considered, as a majority of Chileans close to retirement or already pensioners, that life could only be contemplated if they were surrounded by their children and grandchildren: "The children have grown, we have now grandchildren, years went by and it has become more difficult to go back".

As emphasised by Fanny Jelicki, the Chilean exiles had been torn brutally and against their will, banned from their native land, so that the country was frozen in their minds in a kind of fantasmagory where reconstructed memories and ideal projections were intertwined. "Nostalgia is the corollary of the impossible grieving work caused by the departure. Country of a childhood gone forever, of the younger years, of the euphoria of the Popular Unity crystallising memory, Chile is adorned with thousand virtues (...). In exile it takes on a culinary form, as in the decoration, the language spoken home, what is transmitted to the children in the community

---

<sup>7</sup> As of 1984, a first publication of *listas* gives the name of people authorised to return to Chile. After the victory of Patricio Alwyn, the candidate of the opposition during the December 1989 elections and his accession to the presidency of the Republic in March 1990, all the Chilean exiles could make their way or return to live in Chile. The *retornados* designate those who return to Chile and stayed.

activities" (Jedlicki 2007: 55). Many featured "Chile" in their home, aware that it was impossible to return to their country of origin and that it was necessary to integrate themselves in France. What traces of Chile can then be found in the homes of Chileans, forty years on after exile?



© Irène Jonas



## Chile at home

Give or take three exceptions, we met the interviewees in their own homes. Many of them offered us to stay longer so as to share *empanadas*<sup>8</sup> before or after our work. In the lounge where we were entertained, at the crossroads between public and private lives, many traces of Chile can be found, more or less ostentatiously. When these traces had not been mentioned spontaneously by the interviewees, we asked them to show us where they had placed objects from Chile, kept testimonies of the time and/or family photos so as to enrich the iconographic work as well as the emergence of memories. We produced images that would help us interpret how signs of exile were still visible in the habitat almost 40 years later.

Given the conditions of the exile, the posters of the Popular Unity, the paintings made by Chilean artists, the books, the artisanal objects or the souvenirs which adorn the apartments or which are grouped in what they call their "Chilean hideout or room" are not (or quite exceptionally) elements they brought from Chile with them. As emphasised by José: "All you can see here is a reconstruction, I left Chile just with a suitcase". For most of them, these objects do not constitute in this sense "exile objects" which would have been chosen as the most precious to take away. A single example was reported, which was somehow close to this case. When he was released from the concentration camp where he had confined since 1974, Oscar, one of the creators of the Aleph theatre in the favelas, made his way to the airport under the protection of the French embassy.

"When I arrived at the airport, I had a mate, the son of General Schneider<sup>9</sup>, who was waiting for me with a gift-wrapped package, closed like a balloon. He told: 'I think it's quite cold in Europe'. I opened the package, it was General Schneider's coat. I then used it in a theatre play called "the exile Mateluna" and the General's jacket accompanied me throughout the exile".

For the researcher, the indoors photographs interestingly offer a memorisation of multiple material (decorative objects, images associated with beliefs - such as those of miraculous rabbis - souvenirs) or more subjective elements (atmospheres, enactments), useful to the understanding of the lifestyles of the population studied. In this sense, the "decorative figures" display an encoded language and the reproductions, photos or objects arranged by the inhabitants reflect their tastes, their past, their memories and their hopes. Three types of decorative figures associated with Chile can be put in evidence in the homes of the Chileans whom we met in the Parisian area: the "militant figures", the "artistic and artisanal figures" and the "intimate figures". The "artistic or artisanal" figures (paintings and/or traditional objects on the walls or the furniture) are mainly present in the common areas (lounge, living-room, kitchen, corridors) and

---

<sup>8</sup> *Empanadas* are small meat-stuffed turnovers. They are a typical Chilean dish.

<sup>9</sup> Chilean general Rene Schneider was assassinated in 1970 by a group of officers, shortly after he pledged himself to respect the democratic process of president Salvador Allende.

more rarely in the rooms. The "militant figures" and the "intimate figures" are essentially grouped in a single room (bedroom or study) dedicated to them in whole or in part. The variations in location are due to different factors: the size of the dwelling, the composition of the family (Chilean couples, mixed couples), the degree of militant activity, the intensity of returns to Chile and the relationship maintained with the country today.

### **The militant figures**

The "militant figures" include in almost all the homes of exiled Chileans the photographic or stylised portraits of Salvador Allende and of Pablo Neruda (see photos below).



© Irène Jonas

The choice to keep a photo or a drawing of the face of Salvador Allende is by no means irrelevant.

"We are the fruit of a political history which unfortunately failed but which is rich in lessons regarding the struggle for a more egalitarian, more interconnected, fairer, more democratic society. This is what Allende taught us and we paid the price for it".

For everyone, he represented an enormous hope of social justice and he is still the symbol of the arrival of the left to power through the democratic path:

"Allende's thinking, the Popular Unity, are still talking to us today. Allende was not an extremist, he was a humanist, a pacifist who wanted to change the Chilean society to go towards a fairer society through democracy, in legality and by respecting others".

He also kept an image of integrity and of fidelity to his engagements:

"President Allende embarked on a programme that he respected and that he kept to the very end. He wanted to eradicate slums, build correct dwellings for everybody... We placed all our hope in President Allende". For Edicto, "It is not Pinochet's dictatorship and torture who would have made me forget my ideas. On the contrary, 40 years after the coup and the death of comrade Allende, his ideas are more active and solid than ever" (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

These portraits can be framed under glass and pinned on a wall or placed on a shelf without a frame. They are sometimes side by side the family photos. At Maribel and Juan-Carlos' home, a portrait of Salvador Allende, a drawing of Pablo Neruda and a few current family photos can be seen on a shelf in the dining-room.



© Irène Jonas

Not surprisingly the family photos and Allende's portrait are side by side. If exile is often implicitly associated with the grief of the lost fatherland or of the lost family, the nostalgia of the previous golden age, the past conditions, designates Chile both as the country of the missing childhood and younger years, but also as the country where a political project was murdered. Loss of their native soil, loss of the family, annihilation of the Popular Unity and death of

Salvador Allende are part of the same grieving process. Francisco explains the arrangement of the photographs above the door of his study:

"My father is in the middle, there are two photos of Allende on the left, and you can see my mother with my brother and me on the right. Allende gave us enormous hope, so Allende has a place here. When I made political campaigns in Chile, we would visit houses on the hills of Valparaiso where the ground was made of earth, there was not even a proper floor, but even in these poor families, there were portraits of Allende, not a portrait like here, but posters. Allende was present in the poorest houses of Chile, one could almost say that he was worshipped. He knew how to talk to the people" (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

The coup and the military dictatorship that ensued are the only causes for being torn from their land and their family as well as for seeing their hopes and their commitments for a fairer society annihilated. Just like Salvador Allende and Pablo Neruda, their next of kin and their progeny were the victims of that violence. Moreover, for many of them, as they were not allowed

to return to Chile, they could not visit their ageing parents or attend the funerals of family members. Maria Teresa thus describes the pain of her first trip to Chile: "This first return to Chile was awful because I had nothing but my mother's tomb to go to". The political struggle and the pain of exile remain extremely present for the next generation and is reflected by posters or photographs of Salvador Allende and Pablo Neruda exposed in the bedroom. Mauricio was four years old at the time of the coup, when his mother had to flee in 1974. He stayed with his maternal grandparents for five years until his mother had the means to bring him to France with his brother:

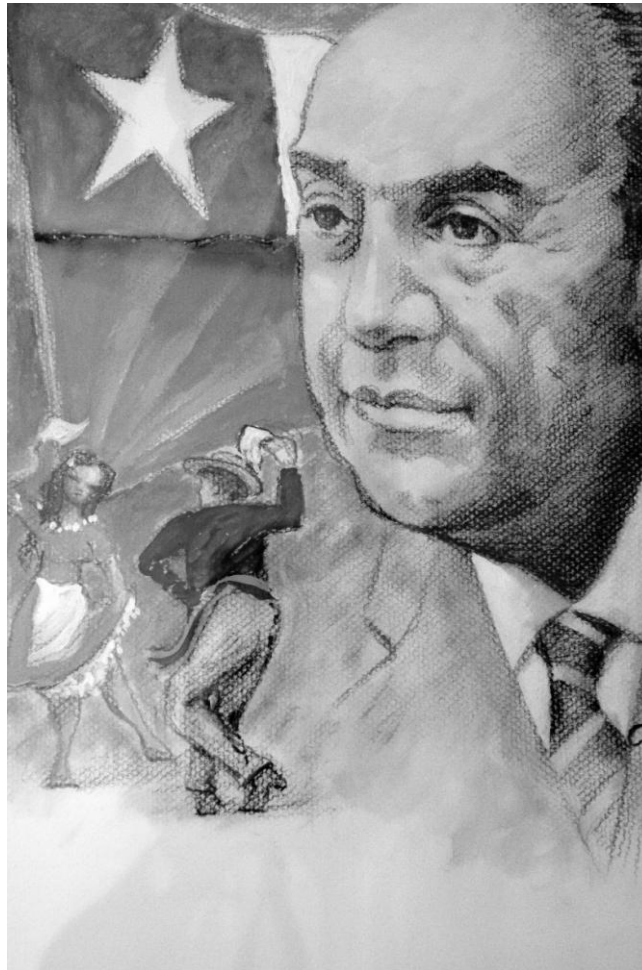
"This coup took a kind of innocence away from me, a life which goes without saying when you're a kid and you live in a stable society. The dictatorship took this portion of youth, of innocence away from me, to the extent that my mother had to leave, and then again, took my grandparents and the soil of Chile away from me". Andres, his half-brother who was born in France, became aware of his parents' history at a very early age: "I remember in school, we played children's games. With magic swords, we had to fight against the evil one whom I had called Pinochet. And everybody screamed "Pinochet must die". I was already aware that there was an evil man who had harmed my parents" (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

The poet Pablo Neruda, the Nobel literature prize-winner in 1971, also occupies a central place in Chilean life, all the more so since the conditions of his death are still suspicious<sup>10</sup>. Photos or drawings of him can often be found in Chilean homes:

"It was a poster made for a Chilean celebration. It was drawn by a Communist Chilean exiled painter/sculptor, now deceased. He also realised a stele of Salvador Allende in Massy" (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noë

---

<sup>10</sup> It was only in 2011 that an investigation was opened into the circumstance surrounding the death of the poet Pablo Neruda. His remains were exhumed in April 2013 so that justice could determine whether he actually died of cancer as claimed by the official version or whether he was murdered.

The militant figures also include two types of posters, the Chilean posters from the time of Allende and the posters of supporting events to Chile they conducted in France. Julio chose to pose in the living-room amidst his posters, among that of the "hope lives on" festival organised in Paris by the Chilean associations for the 100 years of the birth of Salvador Allende.

Erasmus showed us one of his preferred posters, that he has placed on his desk, opposite to the Chilean flag: it is entitled "memoria visual" and refers to the Popular Unity (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

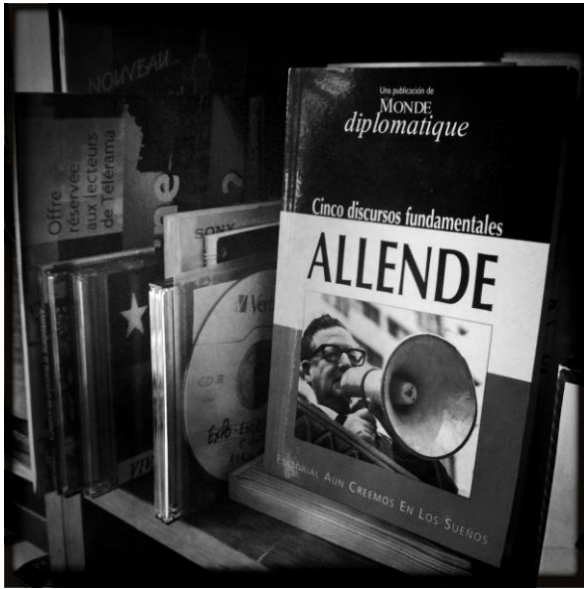


More recently, the little poster of the film "No" by Pablo Larain can also be seen in the homes, with reference to the "No" of the 1988 referendum during which the Chileans had refused a new presidential mandate to Augusto Pinochet (see photos below)



© Irène Jonas

Finally, we cannot overlook the numerous bookshelves packed with Marxist writings in Spanish, poems of Pablo Neruda, analyses on Latin America and books or films about Chile. The presence of a bookcase in most flats of the Chilean exiles is no coincidence, since many intellectuals and artists found refuge in France. However, among the Chilean exiled and alongside young individuals, politically engaged in the Popular Unity and having a real (sometimes significant) academic capital, there are also militant persons from poor families. They benefited "from the fundamental principles of cultural activism to promote the access of popular masses to art, to literature and to means of communication and of diffusion", established under Allende as soon as in 1970, or from the popular educational work of their political parties. Imprisonment with élites of the Popular Unity sometimes also replaced academic training. In exile, some people continued their cultural development, which they considered essential for their political dignity. The bookcase is the best testimony of that inclination (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

Sergio arrived in France after having passed through the hands of the Dina<sup>11</sup> and got away from them miraculously. As an executive of the Socialist Party, he had taken part in 1972 in the creation of the Socialist Party' school of executives. In addition to an immense bookcase covering a wall of the lounge, he arranged a very small windowless space where he now keeps archives and documents. Since 1993, a date on which he published his first book, he has been writing his political books on Chile and also short stories and poetic prose in this space (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

*Edicto grew up in a very modest and illiterate family on the island of Chiloe in Patagonia and was first a shepherd.*

<sup>11</sup> The Dina was Pinochet's military police.

"We were living under miserable conditions, but I never conceded defeat, I wanted to learn again and again. I did not study much and I have been through the university of life. I was working and reading at the same time".

Under the Popular Unity, he took on responsibilities as one of the officials in charge of the Communist Party for the region of Magallanes. Even if he is now retired, books have never left him and he is still writing collections of poems (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

### **The artisanal and artistic figures**

The « artistic or artisanal figures » such as paintings or artisanal objects are also quite numerous. As we have already emphasised, the artisanal objects did not leave Chile together with the exiled. They received them from their families when they had the means to come to France or they brought them back from their trips to Chile. As it was possible to circulate between the two countries again freely in the 1980s, there were more family exchanges, circulations of objects or family souvenirs.

"It depends on the social level of the family, but it was a two-stage process. Some families had the means to come and visit the political refugees here, as in my case. My father has

often visited us and every time, he would bring me gifts from Chile, a painting, an object, things made of copper and the house started to fill up little by little. After the 17 years of travel prohibition, most of us went to Chile and we would go to craftsmanship markets. Craftsmanship had developed quite a lot over there with all these people forced to unemployment by the dictatorship, they simply lived off that. Buying objects from them was a way to show our solidarity, because we bought many useless artefacts and we gave many things to friends on our return to Paris."

Every object refers to a place, to a trip to Chile:

"I had these little coffees produced by an artisan over there. I saw that he was making things and I asked him whether I could order special items: "you will do it for me". He told me "Of course, what should I put?" Café Don Pancho, Café Valparaíso, café Pablo Neruda. I have not forgotten that he lived in the same street as I was. Later on, I made little characters who looked like me to entertain my grandchildren when they visited us" (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

Some of these objects rather relate to potteries, others to weavings, others still to Mapuches craftsmanship. It depends on the exiles' origins as shown by Arauco on the following photograph (see photos below).



© Irène Jonas

In the flat of Francisco, born in 1935 and militant in the Chilean Socialist Party since the age of 15 years, the walls of the dining-room and of the study are covered with paintings of his town of origin.

"I used to live on that hill, there you can see the Valparaiso market, this church is the oldest in the town, it is called "The Matrix". I used to live in this house on the hill. Because my father had been unemployed, he was also persecuted, so we hid far away in the hill".

Compelled to go underground immediately after the coup, he had a chaotic exile from Peru, via Romania, to finally arrive in France and continue a militant activity in the Chilean Socialist Party and in the French Socialist Party. After 17 years in exile, he went back to Chile for the first time when his name disappeared from the wanted lists:

"This painting there depicts a scene in the south of Chile. It was my brother who offered it to me the first time I could return to Chile. It has been made by the painter who was also the art teacher of the daughters of my brother. He was also a friend of mine. This painting there was made by the same painter, but it was him who offered it to me during my second trip, it is even signed and I could buy this one myself. There are many souvenirs of my country of origin" (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

### **The intimate figures**

Finally, the "intimate figures" refer to the family: they are photographs or objects. The old photo camera which belonged to Patricio's father and which he brought to France the day he was authorised to return to Chile is the only object standing on a tray in the dining-room. Andres, born of exiled Chilean parents who met in France, had kept his grandfather's hat carefully in his bedroom. It was the sole object he had brought back from a country in which he had never lived but which was nevertheless part of his life:

"When I was a teenager, I went back on my own and I landed in a country which is mine but not totally mine and I was lucky to spend a little more than a month with my paternal grandparents. It was the last time I saw my grandfather and I could see the man he had been: a head of family and of the Mapuche community. When he died, the only thing I claimed is this hat that I had seen him wear and which was so truly him" (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

For most of them, furniture and family objects had disappeared to a vast extent.

"When I returned to Chile after 17 years' absence, I found former objects of my house at my uncles'. I did not dare to claim them because my mother had given them to my uncles in the first place. But one day, I had a word with my cousin, he had a very beautiful seat which I had had in my study, and a lamp. I told him that I left the armchair to him, but that I would like to retrieve the lamp. He sulked a bit for a start, but he eventually gave it back to me. Because I was the one who had made that lamp with an inkwell that was in the bank where I was working before the coup. When I joined the bank in 1956, there were magnificent artefacts made of bronze and of copper, spittoons... After a claim by the workers' unions who cleaned those spittoons and wanted them to be removed, there were turned into inkwells, then we had fountain pens. They offered me one of these inkwells because all the others were about to be scrapped. Now, this lamp is standing on my desk as before" (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas



Some of the family photos are framed, others are placed on shelves, where they are more or less well secured. Photographs of the ancestors, of the couple and of the progeny can often be seen side by side (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

The family photos we can see on the shelves or on the walls represent either members of the Chilean family now-absent, key moments of the exile itinerary or the progeny (children and grandchildren).



*(From left to right) at the top: José with a photo of his parents, Hugo with a photo of his father with other inhabitants of the village. At the bottom: Julio with a photo of his children who had returned to live in Chile and Maria-Theresa with a photo of herself and of Arauco when they met in the Cimade.*

© Irène Jonas

Maria Theresa (on the photograph above in the bottom right) shows us a photograph which is highly symbolic to her. In 1973, she was 20, very active in the Chilean Socialist Party, working for one of the directors of the ministry of transports and raising both her children on her own. After the coup, she was demoted to the cellar to stick envelopes under the surveillance of a machine-gun. In 1974, after she had been questioned on her work place, her family made her leave the country as soon as possible. She left on her own, leaving both her children in Chile. At the Cimade<sup>12</sup>, she met Arauco, a Chilean exile as well. The photo she chose to show us and with which she wished to pose is symbolic to a founding moment which enabled her both to bring her children from Chile and to create a family in France:

"Our son was born in 1982, but I must admit that both my older children were adopted by Arauco ... It took four years and a half to start afresh, learn the language, find a job that enabled us to rent something decent. The Cimade helped us because Pinochet demanded a tax to let the children, who had neither father nor mother, go, and Arauco and I had to get married. He was giving Spanish lessons and we could rent a three-room flat in Sceaux thanks to a Spaniard, the son of a Republican, who worked by an estate agent and who took the necessary steps so that we could rent the place and bring the children back".

She showed us, without wanting us to reproduce it, a photo she took at the Santiago airport on the day of her departure, when she bid goodbye to her children.

Erasmus arrived in France in 1976 after a first exile in Argentina. In France, he met Joëlle, a history teacher, who attended support groups for the Chilean people and gave some of her time to teach French. An enlarged photo of their wedding in France stands on a shelf side by side with the Chilean flag and close to the bookcase. This photograph symbolises the switch from a life when the exile in France was experienced as temporary to a real settlement in this country:

"I never thought of leaving Chile. Why should I? I was very happy and there was a real political project. We would leave Chile because there was an imminent danger, but we would come back the day after. We wanted to try and organise resistance from the outside, which we did with the means we had. In France, returning seemed more remote, but we endeavoured to succeed. Then time went by and we began to settle in France little by little. I started to have roots here and what changed my frame of mind was meeting my wife. From then on, the emotional connections were stronger and there were increasingly responsibilities at work" (see photo below).

---

<sup>12</sup> The Cimade is an ecumenical service created in 1939 which welcomes and accommodates migrants and asylum seekers in care centres, offers expertise and advice to foreigners and acts "here" and "over there" to people forced to leave their region or their country.



© Jean-François Noël

The way objects are arranged in the home reflects the hierarchy of the souvenirs, classifies them by themes or events. They can be seen in sequences as a historical account or a dialogue with each other (Turgeon 2007). Images or objects associated with several periods of the lives of the Chilean exiled stay alongside on the walls or on the bookshelves. For some people, one could even talk of a "concentrate of life" as flagrantly shown by the accumulation of artefacts. In addition to the books in Spanish, the following snapshots represent members of the Chilean family, of the French one, traces of the political and activist commitment with the Popular Unity (bust of Lenin, etc.) in France or in today's Chile (a photography of Michèle Bachelet) as well as artisanal objects brought back from trips to Chile. A framed maternal portrait can be seen on another bookshelf between books and wooden figurines (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

However, it ought to be stressed that the distinction between the different types of figures is far from being as clearly defined. Both types of "artisanal" and "activist" figures are sometimes confused since their content is directly associated with the struggles or a reason for being activist, like helping the prisoners. Certain "intimate figures" may thus be objects manufactured by the prisoners intended for their family (spouses, children) or public photographs which take on a private dimension because the person is included therein.

### **Between intimate and politics**

Patricio was an almoner in prisons when he was arrested with Auri who was working with him. Tortured in the Grimaldi Villa and imprisoned in the concentration camp of "Tres Alamos", they succeeded in leaving Chile in January 1976. After having obtained from the pope to be freed from his priestly engagement, Patricio married Auri with whom he is still living today. One object, made in concentration camps, never left him:

"It is a piece of nickel. I engraved it when we were in the camp in "Tres Alamos", it was the three poplars. I was shown how to proceed ... and there, on the other side, the name Auri has been marked. It is an object which left with us to France, which we brought back to Chile in 1989 when we decided to go back and which came back to France with us after three years" (see photo below).



© Irène Jonas

Before even the interview had started, Edicto had prepared on the table of the dining-room a small photo album and a black engraved stone. On 11 September 1973 he burnt or buried all the compromising papers and left home to preserve his family. He stayed one month underground. Once he was arrested, he was tortured in both camps where he was interned. Once he was judged by a military tribunal, he was deported with other comrades on the Dawson island where a former Nazi had erected a concentration camp (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

"Here is the living material ... These are stones which I made in concentration camps in the Dawson island in 1974 for my children. This is a resistance stone, I dedicated it to my son who was nine years old. Now, he is a Spanish teacher at the INSA in Lyon. My daughter has got all these stones, except that one which I keep. She wanted to keep these stones which are dedicated to my wife and my four children. We can see the surname and the first name and a stone for every children. I have written texts on stones, it was a symbolic act of resistance, we made it with spiked tips of barbed wire which had fallen on the ground when the inmates enclosed the camp. When we wandered inside the camp, we would rub the ground with our feet and we were looking for spikes. Sometimes, we had one hour out, "freedom" on the island, it is thus that we picked up the stones on the beach and we kept them preciously with a small number of socialist and communist comrades. It took me almost one month to make a stone, and every time I picked up a stone, my fingers needed time to heal and then we hid the stones. If a stone like that had fallen into the hands of the soldiers, we would have been dead. And then, we were lucky to find a loyal officer, there were a few of them and he was the one who let them get out. It was a long travel, from the island to Punta Arena and from Punta Arena to our homes. They had fallen into three or four hands, it was a chain. For me, it was a moral obligation of resistance, we had to keep a stiff upper lip. And even if we died, the stones were there, like a testimony. The stones I made were always intended for the ones I loved. Love, resistance, struggle were reflected in the stones".

Angelica was very active with the Chilean women in France<sup>13</sup>. The text which accompanied the dolls they manufactured and sold in France (emulating the model of those created by imprisoned Chilean women) was meant to support Chilean people.

"One of us said one day that we might manufacture chiffon dolls as before: I believe that Nora was the one to make the first drawing on paper. We cut the first one out of a shirt of Juanita (she gave us lessons in history) and we stuffed it with mattress padding. Lucia gave us the wool of a jumper she was not wearing any longer, to make the hair. "SOPOROPO" was born very dishevelled, but quite unique. I hit the idea of drawing her mouth and the eyes with the fountain pen I used for writing" (extract of the letter enclosed with the doll).

Not only did these objects represent mothers torn from their children under the dictatorship. They also showed the political and feminist dimension and the role played by the women during the repression in Chile as well as in exile, that is so little known:

"We have reproduced these objects and the text which has been written because they epitomised the unrecognised part played by women and the struggle for freedom. In Chile, there is no recognition for the women and I find it is a pity because we were part of history and it is unfair" (see photo below).



© Jean-François Noël

---

<sup>13</sup> Angelica was quite active with the "Marta Ugarte" collective, then the collective of Franco-Chilean Women (COFECH).

Other examples can be found: the *arpilleras* undoubtedly constitute the most symbolic artisanal production of the period of the dictatorship. The *arpilleras* are paintings entirely manufactured with textiles. During the dictatorship, they were used by families of prisoners both as a means of expression and as a source of incomes. Numerous copies were imported to France in the 1970s, notably by the Cimade. Nevertheless, we could not see any one on the walls of the dwellings of exiled whom we visited. First of all, and quite simply, because their vocation was to be sold for the benefit of the prisoners' families. When they could pay for it, the exiled themselves partook of that form of financial solidarity and hung *arpilleras* in their dwellings. They have disappeared today because they have been given as gifts (to the friends, to the members of the family) but undoubtedly also because they have had fewer grounds to be visible after the liberation of the prisoners (see photo below).



© personal archives of Francisco Guajardo-Adam. «Priso», «every man is entitled to life and to freedom».



### **Between public archives and private archives**

Some of our interviewees have sought and kept preciously everything related to the Popular Unity and to the coup. Folders thus include newspaper articles and the few personal and public photographs of the events.

Hugo was member of Salvador Allende's inner circle (GAP) and thus stayed with him until the Moneda was bombed. Once Allende had required from them unconditioned surrender to avoid a useless massacre, he came out of the Palace and was part of the men lying on the ground and threatened by the caterpillars of a tank, as shown by a photograph which went round the world. After he had been arrested and placed in detention in the Chile stadium then in the Nacional stadium, he seized the opportunity of a disorganisation of the soldiers to lie about the causes of his arrest.

"We did not know what was going to happen, I saw people I knew, but they did not talk so as to protect me. When journalists came by, I hid inside so that they could not recognise me, although I had my photo in several magazines. When I was questioned, I said that I had been arrested because I was walking the streets at night after the curfew. I came out one month later, but I did not know where to go".

Once he had been freed, he went underground and nuns helped him and his brother to leave Chile on 28 November 1973. He kept preciously in several folders the testimonies of that time, the covers of periodicals and the photographs on which he appeared alongside Salvador Allende (see photo below).



collection Hugo Garcia

© *personal archives of Hugo Garcia*



© *Irène Jonas*

Francisco has been seeking for several years articles, photos, documents, chronicles or historical books about his native town of Valparaiso and made this activity be an important part of his life in exile:

"I think that it has helped bounce back a lot, because that time of the coup was so awful that one had to bounce back one way or the other and I have been using all these souvenirs to bounce back. My mother and my brother kept every article on Valparaiso for me and as soon as someone came to France, he would bring it to me and I read and read".

His carefully arranged folders include the few images he still owns from his political activity under the Popular Unity or his life in France and a more personal and painful image: "It is the last photo I have of my children and me in Chile, I knew I would have to leave Chile on my own" (see photo below on the right).



© Irène Jonas

### **Conclusion**

The word "home" encompasses several functions. It provides both a shelter and a security, a place of activities and sociability as well as an anchor in the territory. "Habitat also refers to the inhabitant's awareness of his own interiority, his secrets, his family and domestic life, his private arrangements; in a nutshell, of his intimacy" (Serfaty-Gazon 2003 : 66). The Chilean exiled first tended to reject the notion of a "home" in France. It was then a space that became necessary to

obtain and to customise. It was only when they accepted that the situation of exile was there to stay, that they started to reproduce in that space a setting which contained the salient artefacts of their culture of origin. These decorative figures, as we have seen, are intermingled and overlap each other beyond the barriers of intimacy and politics, of the private and public lives, in Chile and in France. These objects constitute decorative figures made a posteriori along with the visits of their families or their returns to their native land. They correspond as well to the different skins through which the broken destiny of the exiled become a reconstructed one.

"I have the feeling of not belonging anywhere, I do not belong in France or in Chile. I cannot cut my roots off, Chile is the country where I was born, but France is a country which I have learned to love"

## Bibliography

Bolzman, Claudio

2006 "Violence politique, exil et formes de résilience", in L. Toscani, J. Boesch éd., *Chemins de résilience. Un éclairage multidisciplinaire à partir des récits de vie*. Genève, Editions Médecine et Hygiène : 162-173.

2002 "De l'exil à la diaspora : l'exemple de la migration chilienne", *Autrepart* 22 : 91-107.

1989 "Apprendre à vivre en exil : les réfugiés chiliens en Suisse", *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 5, 2 : 133-144.

Bonnin, Philippe

2006 *Images habitées. Photographie et spatialité*. Paris, Creaphis : 13.

Chauvin, Pierre-Marie – Reix, Fabien

2013 "Intérêts et difficultés de l'usage des images comme outils de recherche en sociologie", in Réjanne Hamus-Vallée éd., *Sociologie de l'image. Sociologie par l'image*. Cinemaction, Ed. Charles Corlet : 149-156.

Debary, Octave - Turgeon, Laurier (éds.)

2007 *Objets et mémoires*. Paris, Ed. de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Jedlicki, Fanny

2007 "De l'exil au retour", *Hommes et migrations* 1270 : 52-62.

Jonas, Irène

2010 *Mort de la photo de famille, de l'argentique au numérique*. Paris, L'Harmattan.

La Rocca, Fabio

2007 "Introduction à la sociologie visuelle", *Sociétés*, 2007/1, n°95 : 33-40

Maresca, Sylvain – Meyer, Michaël

2013 *Précis de photographie à l'usage des sociologues*. Rennes, PUR.

Meyer, Michaël

2008 "La sociologie visuelle pour enquêter visuellement. L'image comme objet, travail et culture de l'enquête qualitative", *Image et Société* 6, 2. Article en ligne  
[http://www.analisiqualitativa.com/magma/0602/article\\_03.htm](http://www.analisiqualitativa.com/magma/0602/article_03.htm)

Neruda, Pablo Neruda,

1987 *J'avoue que j'ai vécu*. Paris, Gallimard.

Turgeon, Laurier

2007 "La mémoire de la culture matérielle et la culture matérielle de la mémoire", in Octave Debary, Laurier Turgeon éd., *Objets et mémoires*. Paris, Ed. de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme : 13-36.

Serfaty-Gazon, Perla

2003 "Le chez-soi : habitat et intimité", in Marion Segaud, Jacques Brun, Jean-Claude Driant éd., *Dictionnaire Critique de l'habitat et du logement*. Paris, Armand-Colin : 65-69