

TESTIMONIO AS COUNTER-PROPAGANDA:

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN'S
TESTIMONIAL LITERATURE**

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Abstract

This thesis creates a gendered typology of women's *testimonio* that foregrounds the Cold War context of the genre. This new perspective reveals that contrary to the assertions of some critics, the texts struggle to convey a unitary propagandic message. Rather, their prime purpose is to counter hegemonic discourse. Yet, far from being unliterary or impersonal, they impart much personal information using a diversity of stylistic devices.

The *testimonios* challenge the profoundly gendered national security discourse of their own governments and the US. The argument that brutal counter-insurgency tactics, widespread incarceration and torture, were necessary to combat "communist-inspired" insurgency is invalidated by these *testimonios* which replace dichotomising and reductionist Cold War propaganda with accounts of the local, subjective and personal reasons for political involvement. The texts disclose the potentially traumatising lived consequences of US foreign policy and national security strategies to reveal their disproportionate and excessive nature. However, the *testimonialistas*' sense of a greater purpose, collective identity and belonging to a wider community enables them to remain resilient in spite of adverse experiences.

Despite their loyalty to utopian and egalitarian ideals, sexism from within leftist movements and governments is exposed and denounced by the female protagonists as patriarchal institutions, traditions and gendered identities are consistently undermined. Latin American women, as *guerrilleras*, organisers and members of peasant and indigenous communities, present themselves as defiant protagonists who, aside from the male-dominated master narratives of the superpowers, demonstrate the strength of their political agency, psychological resilience and ideological convictions.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother

Paolina Maniscalco

24/10/1957 – 21/06/2010

Proud Sicilian, bilingual poet, defiant feminist

*“Ogni unu mitti la sua parti;
Quandu di sparagnu, quandu d'arte”*

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Introduction

Women's *Testimonio*: A Political Contextualisation

The victory of the Cuban Revolution presented a challenge to the legacy of colonialism, *caciquismo* and *latifundismo* in Latin America. In place of these enduring and unequal social structures, the Revolution of 1959 promoted political independence, economic autonomy and egalitarianism.¹ However, these ideals failed to materialise across the subcontinent and for much of the latter part of the millennium, Latin America was still predominantly under the imperialist influence of the sole victor of the Cold War – the United States of America.² It is from within this context of the opposing political ideologies of the Cold War that *testimonio* arose; the genre originates in Cuba and was institutionalised there in 1970 with its own category in the 'Casa de las

¹ For more information on the "Persistence of the Colonial Structure After Independence" see Jacques Lambert, *Latin America: Social Structures and Political Institutions*, trans. Helen Katel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 52. For more on *caciquismo* and *latifundismo* see "The Latifundio: The Large Estate in Latin America", *ibid.*, 59 – 74, and "Caciquismo and Caudillismo", *ibid.*, 149 – 166. With regards to the Cuban Revolution, Antoni Kapcia notes "*cubanismo* included a belief in history as both past and destiny, in equality, the liberating effect of culture, agrarianism, community, heroic action [and] the responsibility of a benevolent state." Antoni Kapcia, "Ideology and the Cuban Revolution: Myth, Icon and Identity," in *Ideologues and Ideologies in Latin America*, ed. Will Fowler (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 84. See also, Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000) and Nelson Valdés, *Ideological Roots of the Cuban Revolutionary Movement* (Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Glasgow, 1975).

² Literary theorist and post-colonialist Edward Saïd defined imperialism as "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory." In contrast he defines colonialism as "the implanting of settlements on a distant territory," Edward Saïd, *Culture and Imperialism* (London and New York: Vintage, 1994), 8. On the subject of US imperialism, it has been argued: "As leftist and nationalist leaders won elections throughout Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s [...] U.S. security strategists feared the informal U.S. economic and political empire in the hemisphere was threatened." Patrice J. McSherry, *Predatory States. Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 245, this idea is discussed further below. For recent scholarship on the arguably imperialist role of US globally since the Cold War see: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Also Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Holt, 2000) and William Odom, *America's Inadvertent Empire* (Yale University Press, 2004). Specifically with regards to Cuba see: Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic. The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Américas' literary prize.³ Often described as principally committed to conveying the experiences of the oppressed, the genre must not be separated from the historico-political realities of the period in which it emerged.

Whilst much has been written on *testimonio*, drawing from a variety of academic disciplines and theoretical dispositions, this thesis adopts an inductive approach to argue that insufficient critical attention has been paid to political contexts, psychological experiences and to the question of gender. Debates on genre and the role of *testimonio* as post-boom literature or as post-bourgeois novel are explored in Elizabeth Sklodowska's *Testimonio Hispano-Americano. Historia, Teoría, Poética*.⁴ Sklodowska proposes a useful typology of mediated *testimonios*, and she also observes: "En vez de leer el testimonio como ideograma, sus primeros críticos optaron por neutralizarlo, domesticarlo, pregonar la armonía del mismo y silenciar sus contradicciones."⁵ Contrarily, this thesis brings these contradictions to the fore, to analyse the various ways in which women's *testimonios* contradict the hegemonic narratives of US imperialism, patriarchy, and even leftist movements, from a specifically gynocentric perspective.

Testimonio has also been analysed through the prisms of post-modernism, literary theory and sociology in Georg Gugelberger's *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*.⁶ The Gugelberger collection

³ The best known example of Cuban *testimonio* is Miguel Barnet's *Biografía de un Cimarrón* published in Havana by "Editorial de Ciencias Sociales" in 1966. The English translation, *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, translated by Jocasta Innes was published in London by Bodley Head in 1968. Beverley highlights the importance of Barnet's work and the *Casa de las Américas* prize in John Beverley, *Testimonio. On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 32. Bartow observes that the first *Casa de las Américas* prize was awarded to a woman. Joanna R. Bartow, *Subject to Change: The Lessons of Latin American Women's Testimonio for Truth, Fiction and Theory* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 19.

⁴ Elizabeth Sklodowska, *Testimonio Hispano-Americano. Historia, Teoría, Poética* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992). See also René Jara and Hernán Vidal, *Testimonio y Literatura* (Minnesota: Society for the Study of Contemporary Hispanic and Lusophone Revolutionary Literatures, 1986).

⁵ Sklodowska, *Testimonio*, 2. For her typology of mediated *testimonios*, see *ibid.*, 99 – 102.

⁶ Georg Gugelberger, ed., *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996). For a more recent account that further reflects on the 'truth' debates see Bartow, *Subject to Change*. For a detailed overview of theoretical arguments regarding *testimonio*, see Linda Craft, "Testimony in Theory and Practice. Issues of

presents a range of essays authored by critics who reflect on, amongst other issues, the Rigoberta Menchú controversy, discussed presently, and the “institutionalisation of transgression” or the relationship between this transgressive Latin American genre and its reception in academic institutions in the West.⁷ However, the ways in which some of these critical approaches seem to overlook the political, historical and psychological context of the genre has arguably led to profound misunderstandings of the genre, the most obvious example of which can be found with David Stoll’s attack on the veracity of Rigoberta Menchú’s *testimonio*.⁸ In the wake of the controversy caused by Stoll’s publication, critical considerations of the genre have arguably reached an impasse. This thesis aims to move the discussion beyond ‘fact or fiction’ debates by shifting the focus to aforementioned contexts and *testimonio*’s counter-hegemonic or counter-propagandic objectives.⁹ It does this by focusing on women’s *testimonio*, as explained below.

I maintain that Stoll, an anthropologist from the US, fundamentally misapprehends the motivations of *testimonio*, as demonstrated by his conclusion that the genre, “by its very name will continue to arouse expectations of eyewitness truth that [*I, Rigoberta Méncu*] cannot withstand.”¹⁰ Stoll’s preoccupation with “eyewitness truth” overlooks the three

Postmodernism, Subalternity, Decolonization, and Nationalism” in *Novels of Testimony and Resistance from Central America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 5 – 32.

⁷ Gugelberger, “Introduction: Institutionalisation of Transgression. Testimonial Discourse and Beyond”, *The Real Thing*, 1 – 19. Menchú is discussed by John Beverley, *ibid.*, 23 – 41, Marc Zimmerman, *ibid.*, 101 – 129 and Doris Sommer, *ibid.*, 130 – 157.

⁸ See Rigoberta Menchú, Elizabeth Burgos, ed., *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1992) and David Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999). Another famous critic of Menchú is the conservative commentator Dinesh D’Souza. Like Stoll, he is not qualified to comment on Latin American testimonial literature, having no knowledge or expertise in the area. D’ Souza has an undergraduate degree in English. He attacks Menchú and the study of her text at US universities in Dinesh D’Souza, *Illiberal Education: the Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

⁹ Whilst aware of the origin of “hegemony”, the Greek, *hēgemonía*, meaning leadership or rule, the usage of the term in this thesis is closer to Antonio Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony; the culture and beliefs of ruling class elites transmitted as universal, insurmountable truths for all. See Antonio Gramsci, “State and Civil Society” in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 206 – 274.

¹⁰ David Stoll, “The Battle of Rigoberta” in Arturo Arias, ed., *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 406.

widely agreed upon principles of *testimonio*: that it articulates and publicises life stories of those historically excluded from canonical literature and conventional politics; that it testifies to situations of (often officially denied) state violence and repression; and lastly and perhaps most importantly, that its function is representative and metonymical.¹¹ Stoll's attempt to undermine the "enormous authority" he felt others had afforded Menchú's *testimonio* successfully returned it to the position of an unauthorised counter-narrative.¹² As a result of Stoll's arguments, Menchú's account has been discredited. In his recent publication *Memory, War and Trauma*, Nigel Hunt discusses Menchú's *testimonio* in relation to a type of autobiographical fiction which purports to be authentic but is in fact "fabricated" and "entirely false."¹³ Stoll's concern with Menchú's "authority" appears especially incongruous when the context of patriarchy is considered. Women who construct autobiographical narratives attempt to reclaim an androcentric form of literature, and those who, like Menchú, are also disenfranchised due to discourses of race, nation and class find themselves particularly disadvantaged.¹⁴

This thesis is interested primarily in definitions of discourse that foreground its role in reproducing systems of power. Foucault argues that discourses, for example of the medical professions or anthropology, create and legitimise a particular worldview and notions of "truth" by producing objects and subjects, and providing the latter, for example doctors and anthropologists, with

¹¹ Kimberly Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice? Trauma Narrative and Social Action in Latin American Testimonio* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 2. Definitions of *testimonio* are discussed further below. It is important to briefly highlight the difference between the verb to oppress, "to keep under by tyrannical exercise of power; to load or burden with cruel or unjust impositions or restraints" and the verb to repress "to put down by force, suppress, [...] to put down (a rebellion, riot, etc)." William Little and C.T. Onions et al, eds., *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1455, 1800.

¹² Stoll explains "I felt obliged to point out gaps between Rigoberta's story and that of neighbours because of the enormous authority that so many readers have attributed to it." Stoll, "Battle of Rigoberta", 393.

¹³ Of Menchú's account he states "The book won the author the Nobel Prize, but again was later shown to be a fabrication, because the author could not have witnessed many of the things she claimed to have witnessed." Nigel Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 118.

¹⁴ See Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography. Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 51.

authority over others. He writes: “Discourses are not only mere expressions of social practice, but also serve particular ends, namely the exercise of power. [...] Discourses exercise power in a society because they institutionalize and regulate ways of talking, thinking and acting.”¹⁵ In my MA dissertation, I argued that Stoll applied notions of “truth”, as understood among some anthropologists, to Menchú’s text although her *testimonio* was never meant to be taken as an “eye witness” account, but rather a representative form of political literature.¹⁶ Contrary to Stoll’s concerns, Menchú has little authority within anthropological discourse; her race and socio-economic background would ordinarily relegate her to the position of an object, not an agent, of anthropological research. Furthermore, Stoll admits that his research method is flawed, as the accounts he collected to discredit Menchú were no more accurate than her original *testimonio*. In fact, he concedes that as his interviews took place at a much later date, they might have been “even less reliable.”¹⁷ The political motivation behind Stoll’s problematic critique becomes apparent with reference to his previous publication, *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala*, in which he examines peasant involvement in guerrilla struggle.¹⁸ According to Stoll, peasants do not join guerrilla movements due to their experience of harsh inequality or for

¹⁵ Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier, “Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis and Dispositive Analysis,” in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., (London: Sage, 2001), 35. Poststructuralism has been discussed in relation to *testimonio* in the aforementioned Gugelberger, *The Real Thing*, 8, 10, 50, 86, 154, 166. However, while it may well prove to be fruitful, the thorough application of Foucauldian theory to *testimonio* lies beyond the remit of this thesis. For an introduction to the concept of discourse see Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

¹⁶ Needless to say, other anthropologists oppose Stoll. See for example, John Gledhill, “Deromanticizing Subalterns or Recolonizing Anthropology? Denial of Indigenous Agency and Reproduction of Northern Hegemony in the work of David Stoll”, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 8, no.1 (2001): 135 – 161. My MA dissertation, “‘Truth’ and Women’s *testimonio*: Literary Defiance and Political Resistance in Latin America”, University of Nottingham, 2009, compared and contrasted the literary *testimonios* of Alicia Partnoy and Elena Poniatowska with more factual counterparts by Margaret Randall and Margaret Hooks, to reveal that the latter also made use of literary and persuasive techniques. I also examined Stoll’s claims in more detail and presented a gendered analysis of Menchú’s *testimonio*. Her text has received considerable critical attention and could be included in the typology presented here under the category of gynocentric autobiography.

¹⁷ Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú*, 63.

¹⁸ David Stoll, *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

ideological reasons; rather they are forced to fight with either government or guerrilla armies according to who arrives at the village first, or who is most persuasive. Stoll does not allow for the possession of political understanding or agency among *campesinos*. He ignores the economic context of concentrated land ownership in Latin America, along with the fact that one army is fighting to overthrow the political, economic status quo, while the other operates in order to maintain it. Stoll attempts to attribute equal blame to the military and the revolutionary guerrilla forces alike. However, the *Comisión Para el Esclarecimiento Histórico* (CEH), an independent organisation which investigated the Guatemalan conflict, “attributed blame to the Guatemalan army for 93% of the human rights violations”, including “massacres of 626 villages” and the murder of two hundred thousand Guatemalans.¹⁹ The CEH “determined that the army had committed acts of genocide against the Maya.”²⁰ No such claim has been made against the guerrilla forces. Menchú sought to convey some sense of this violence to a wider international audience through her *testimonio*. Stoll’s misunderstanding, his lack of awareness of the genre’s metonymical function and its political objectives, can be attributed to the fact that he is an Anglophone anthropologist who has had little exposure to Latin American history, literary cultures or critical interpretations thereof. Consequently, he fails to acknowledge historical, economic or cultural context. He also overlooks gender and the psychological damage caused by prolonged political violence, and he ignores the role of the US in exacerbating Central American conflict.²¹

With a view to correcting Stoll’s misconstructions, reauthorising women’s autobiographical narratives and resituating critical debates on *testimonio*, this thesis aims to create a typology of women’s testimonial Latin American literature beginning, as the genre did, in Cuba, before tracing its chronological expansion across the Central and South American countries of Nicaragua,

¹⁹ Victoria Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

²¹ See for example: “The Central American Connection” in McSherry, *Predatory States*, 207 – 239.

Bolivia, Honduras, El Salvador and Argentina.²² All the *testimonios* studied disprove Stoll's arguments regarding peasant participation in guerrilla movements, with accounts of the personal experiences and egalitarian ideologies that preceded political militancy. These particular texts were chosen due to the lack of scholarly attention they have received to date, as well as their stylistic and contextual diversity; they range from polyphonic collage to first person autobiographical narratives, thus demonstrating the variety and hybridity of the testimonial genre. Most are compiled and edited by a third person facilitator, with the exception of those from the final chapter.²³ There is a great variety across the first person testimony which is provided in the form of transcriptions of oral testimony, as well as epistolary and diary writing. Significantly, testimony has been defined as: "Personal or documentary evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement; hence, any form of evidence or proof."²⁴ As we shall see, this notion of the personal traversing with the factual is relevant to the analysis presented here. The selected *testimonios* have the common objective of testifying to gendered, potentially traumatic lived experiences that occurred as a result of direct involvement in political movements affected by the Latin American Cold War.²⁵

The comparative analysis put forward in this thesis incorporates a number of new perspectives, outlined in more detail below: first a feminist framework is adopted in order to appreciate the ways in which Cold War narratives and patriarchal norms are undermined by the texts. The relevance of feminist

²² *Testimonio*, as understood in this thesis, began in Cuba, however, antecedents to the genre exist across Latin America; for example Nance cites works by Las Casas, Cabeza de Vaca, Sor Juana and Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice*, 167. A chronology relevant to the thesis is provided in Appendix 3.

²³ Bartow labels texts with a third person narrator/editor "mediated" *testimonios* and she examines several examples, including that of Menchú, in "Legitimation: Mediated *Testimonios*, Authority and Vicarious Identities." Bartow, *Subject to Change*, 31 – 99. We also saw Sklodowska use the same term above.

²⁴ Little et al, *Oxford Dictionary*, 2270.

²⁵ "Latin American Cold War" as defined by Joseph Gilbert and Daniela Spenser, *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 3. Appendix 2 provides dates relevant to the Latin American Cold War and the topic is explored further below.

epistemology, the women's movement and feminist literary theory will be assessed below. Secondly, the political context of the Latin American Cold War (1945 – 1990s) will be explored in more detail along with US 'red threat' propaganda and more localised national security narratives.²⁶ The gendered nature of the Cold War and related counter-insurgency policies will be exposed as inextricably linked to a conservative conceptualisation of gender and a 'natural' order of inequality between the sexes. This thesis argues that *testimonio* emerged in response to US propaganda which it discredits by means of accounts of women's personal, lived experiences to contest official narratives and disturb gendered binaries. Theories and definitions of propaganda are examined to argue that the label propaganda is applicable to US Cold War narratives, but not to *testimonio*. Next, the psychological context of *testimonio* will be brought to the fore with reference to memory and trauma studies. I maintain that Latin American women's testimonial literature contests and exceeds the categorisations of memory studies as the *testimonialistas* construct potentially therapeutic memory narratives of incarceration, torture, armed combat and other forms of violence. While two of the narratives seem to present signs of some psychological distress, most of the texts present signs of resilience in the face of these difficult experiences. Lastly, Genette's study of narrative discourse will enable a new understanding of paratext, how the texts have been compiled and presented to the reader and to what effect. Literary techniques of narrative fiction will also be identified and analysed throughout the thesis contesting critics who deny or downplay the literariness of *testimonio*. Despite critical reflection on the relationship between women and *testimonio*, a typology of the genre that simultaneously acknowledges the significance of gender, the Cold War, trauma studies, memory studies and stylistic techniques has not yet been attempted.

There are two relatively recently published texts on the subject of *testimonio* that make specific reference to gender: Linda Maier and Isabel Dulfano's *Woman as Witness* and Parvathi Kumaraswami and Niamh Thornton's

²⁶ Gilbert and Spenser, *In from the Cold*, 3.

Revolucionarias.²⁷ Both of these texts make a valuable contribution to the study of women's testimonial literature; the former examines critical issues and challenges surrounding women's testimonial literature before examining examples from Central America, Argentina and Mexico. Close readings which pay appropriate attention to the gendered themes of the texts are presented. The latter collection, edited by Kumaraswami and Thornton, examines women's writings on conflicts in Latin America. Examples from Cuba, Chile and Mexico, among others, are analysed for the ways in which women's subjectivity can be expressed and experienced. With the exception of the *testimonio* of Nidia Díaz, none of the texts examined in this thesis are mentioned in either collection. In addition to expanding the study of women's testimonial literature to incorporate previously unstudied material, this thesis also aims to present a new way of reading *testimonio* as a form of counter-propaganda that engaged with the historical, political realities of the period in which it emerged.

Let us now turn to definitions of *testimonio*. John Beverley defines the genre as "a novel or novella length narrative, in a book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts and whose unit of narration is usually a 'life' or significant life experience."²⁸ He states that *testimonio* is "resistance literature" and "a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian form of narrative" highlighting its "representational value."²⁹ Kimberly Nance argues that *testimonio* can be defined with "the tripartite combination of a first-person narrative of injustice, an insistence that the

²⁷ Linda Maier and Isabel Dulfano, eds., *Woman as Witness. Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). Parvathi Kumaraswami and Niamh Thornton, eds., *Revolucionarias. Conflict and Gender in Latin American Narratives by Women* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007). There are also articles: Lynda Marín, "Speaking Out Together: Testimonials of Latin American Women." *Latin American Perspectives* 19, no. 3 (1991): 51 – 68. Nancy Saporta Sternbach, "Re-membering the Dead: Latin American Women's "Testimonial" Discourse." *Latin American Perspectives*, 18, no. 3 (1991): 91 – 102. Eleven examples of Cuban women's *testimonio*, and readers' responses to them, are examined in the doctoral thesis of Parvathi Kumaraswami, "Reading Women's Self-Writing from Revolutionary Cuba", (PhD thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2003).

²⁸ John Beverley, "The Margin at the Centre: On Testimonio" in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. Georg Gugelberger (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 28.

subject's experience is representative of a larger class, and an intent to work towards a more just future.”³⁰ Accordingly, *testimonio* aims to inspire solidarity by articulating the lived experiences of those relegated to a position of subalternity by Western, patriarchal cultural norms and capitalist or neo-liberal political and economic structures.

I am borrowing Spivak's notion of subalternity here, although the term was originally conceived by Antonio Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks*.³¹ On the subject of Gramsci's conceptualisation, John Beverley observes “Gramsci's invention of the idea of the subaltern as a cultural-political category was deeply connected with his attempt to conceptualize the ‘South’ - the Catholic, agrarian, region of Italy, where the peasantry remained the largest social class.”³² Important cultural, historical differences notwithstanding, the economic structure of Latin America has also led to the development of a peasant class and Beverley finds that Gramsci's notion is applicable in this context. Spivak's notion of those speaking from outside the “First World” is also relevant to the Latin American texts studied here:

According to Foucault and Deleuze (in the First World under the standardization and regimentation of socialized capital, though they do not seem to recognise this) the oppressed, if given the chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work here) *can speak and know their conditions*. We must now confront the following question: On the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?*³³

³⁰ Kimberly Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice? Trauma Narrative and Social Action in Latin American Testimonio* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 2.

³¹ Antonio Gramsci, “History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria”, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 52 - 55.

³² John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1999)

³³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 283. A thorough application of Spivak's arguments to the realm of *testimonio*

I will argue that an additional fundamental objective of female-authored *testimonio* is not only to challenge patriarchy, and speak back to Western and Eurocentric norms, but also, more specifically, to counter US propaganda of the Cold War and the simplistic gendered dichotomies that underpin its logic. This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that totalising male-dominated ontological narratives are destabilised by women's testimonies which challenge their inherent assumptions and generalisations through intimate accounts of women's personal lives, their political engagement and, in most cases, their consequential incarceration. As a result, my argument takes issue with those who describe *testimonios* as "impersonal", "propagandist" and "less psychological and personal than [...] Euro-Western counterparts", positing instead that the innovative genre is dialogic and multifaceted, especially when read from a gendered perspective. As explored further in Chapter One, on the subject of Cuban literature, Lynn Stoner states "Despite efforts to preserve the voices of revolutionary heroines, most attention has been focused on their war heroics, to the exclusion of personal introspection, uncertainty, serendipity, romance – in short, the subjective aspects of these women's lives."³⁴ As we shall see, the selected Cuban *testimonios* complicate Stoner's conclusions. Donald Shaw argues that: "As potential works of literature, testimonial narratives usually lack irony, ambiguity and humour. They are declarative, rather than exploratory, and very often melodramatic, in the sense that they appeal to heightened emotions and to consensual moral values which they do not challenge the reader to rethink." He concludes that the *testimonio* he studies, examined in the final chapter of this thesis, "belongs to a pattern of militant, left-wing, propagandist writing, which takes its social role and "truth-telling" function for granted."³⁵ This thesis argues that the label counter-propaganda is more accurate as the *testimonialistas* construct narratives which challenge the simplistic and negative portrayal of Latin American leftist

falls outside the limits of this thesis; however her notion of "epistemic violence" could be fruitfully applied to the aforementioned Stoll controversy.

³⁴ Lynn Stoner, *Cuban Studies* 34, no. 1 (2003): 89.

³⁵ Donald Shaw, "Referentiality and Fabulation in Nidia Díaz's *Nunca estuve sola*", Linda Maier and Isabel Dulfano, eds., *Woman as Witness. Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 99 – 122. These quotes *ibid.*, 101, 105.

movements by the US and its allies in the region. In her otherwise useful account, Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes *testimonio* as “strikingly nonheroic and impersonal.”³⁶ As we shall see below, the genre in fact imparts much personal information in detail as the politically active women reflect on personal relationships and private experiences which informed their political decisions. Finally, Linda Craft argues: “Third World novels – testimonial novels included – tend to be more political and allegorical and less psychological and personal than their Euro-Western counterparts.”³⁷ Contrarily, this thesis finds that the psychological realm is frequently explored as the women reflect on their often challenging life experiences of political activism, incarceration and violent repression. As we shall see in the following five chapters, psychological experiences of distress are often presented alongside examples of striking resilience and resolute dedication to utopian, egalitarian ideals. The inductive methodology employed in this thesis is the careful reading and comparative analysis of selected women’s *testimonios*. The key concepts and theoretical framework informing these readings are outlined presently.

Feminism, Gynocriticism and the Women’s Movement

Patriarchy can be understood as the historical, institutional, economic and social rule or domination of men over women. The term patriarchy refers to:

hierarchical relations between men and women, manifested in familial and social structures alike, in a descending order from an authoritarian – if oftentimes benevolent – male head, to male dominance in personal, political, cultural and social life, and to patriarchal families where the law of the father prevails.³⁸

³⁶ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 81.

³⁷ Craft, *Novels of Testimony*, 25.

³⁸ Loraine Code, “Patriarchy” in *Encyclopaedia of Feminist Theories*, Loraine Code, ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 378. The *testimonios* studied here challenge the notion of a benevolent patriarch, as demonstrated below.

Feminism involves organisation against patriarchy with a view to dismantling patriarchal norms and institutions and ensuring women's liberation and complete equality. Feminism has been defined as theory, "concepts, prepositions and analysis that describe and explain women's situations and experiences and support recommendations about how to improve them", and a practice, "a kind of *social movement*, one that may generate and be aided by theory."³⁹ Traditional or normative gender roles and masculine/feminine patriarchal identities are the characteristics and behaviours expected from men and women under patriarchy.⁴⁰ These include, but are not limited to, submission, passivity, domesticity, infantilisation, sexual objectification and responsibility for child-rearing for women; aggression, physical/sexual dominance, labour and engagement in the public sphere, including political activities and war, for men.⁴¹ As we shall see, women's testimonial literature challenges and destabilises the naturalisation and normalisation of these gendered identities by refusing to conform to them, thus illustrating their social construction.

Women's political and cultural marginalisation is directly challenged by the production of female-authored testimonial literature. This thesis examines texts authored by women to address their historical exclusion and to understand how the texts collectively challenge the gendered dichotomies underpinning patriarchy and war. Of course, men's *testimonios* reflect the gendered nature of political discourse too, but, unlike the texts authored by women, they seldom challenge sexism, male-domination and traditional gender roles. Studying solely women's writing makes for a more focused investigation into the critical perspectives, situated knowledge and analytical insights of female *testimonialistas*.

³⁹ Marilyn Frye, "Feminism" in Code, *Encyclopaedia*, 195.

⁴⁰ For a recent investigation into the social construction of gender roles with specific reference to neuroplasticity i.e. how the social environment affects the brain, see Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender. The Real Science Behind Sex Differences* (London: Icon Books, 2010).

⁴¹ For more on femininity, submission and infantilisation see Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination. Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 73.

Close readings of women's *testimonios* are rare; some critics have claimed that: "A desexualised and masculinized self-identification is evident in several testimonials written by female ex-prisoners and former militants" and that "In the case of memories of repression, moreover, many women narrate their memories in the context of their more traditional gender role, that of caregiver and nurturer, of 'living for others.'"⁴² In contrast, this thesis shows that *testimonios* written by female political activists who have been incarcerated in fact destabilise patriarchal identities and are neither desexualised nor masculinised. None of the texts studied here unconditionally promote normative gender roles; rather they radically reconfigure them, primarily by politicising motherhood and rejecting female relegation to the domestic sphere, as discussed further below.

The first, third and fifth chapters of this thesis examine the *testimonios* of women who transgressed conventional gender roles by joining guerrilla armies. To understand the significance of this, reference will be made to Karen Kampwirth's findings.⁴³ Contrary to the common belief that guerrilla movements are "antithetical to gender equality" Kampwirth demonstrates that "they actually played an indirect role in the rise of women's movements."⁴⁴ Kampwirth's research is supported by the *testimonios* which, once a gendered analysis is adopted, reveal a heightened gynocentric consciousness among politically active women.

A close relationship exists between *testimonio*, feminism and the women's movement. Nance argues that the growth of the movement and associated women's studies courses at numerous universities in the United States provided new audiences for women's *testimonios*.⁴⁵ Jean Franco observes that

⁴² Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory* (London: Social Science Research Council, 2003), 79. Similar assertions made by other critics, namely Treacy and O'Donnell, are contested in Chapter Five.

⁴³ Karen Kampwirth, *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004). See also Karen Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements. Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba*. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Kampwirth, *Feminism and Legacy of Revolution*, 5.

⁴⁵ Nance also highlights the importance of "First World" feminists' notions of international gender-based solidarity. Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice*, 177.

the genre of women's *testimonio* "lends itself effectively to the story of conversion and conscientización that occurs when women transgress the boundaries of domestic space."⁴⁶ The texts studied here firmly support this assertion and female politicisation is identified as a recurring theme. In order to understand the recurrence of gynocentric concerns, this thesis adopts a gendered schema and refers to feminist literature on a diverse range of subjects such as socialist feminism, gendered torture and women's political participation.⁴⁷

Patriarchal discourse is unequivocally challenged by the *testimonios* studied here in three main ways. Firstly, personal experiences are shown to have political implications; the patriarchal division between the public and the private is undone as quotidian female activities are politicised and personal motivations for political involvement are articulated. Women's contribution to the traditionally male-dominated public sphere is foregrounded. Motherhood, women's experiences of sexual and familial relationships, childcare and housework, as well as other specifically female experiences, are resituated within an explicitly politicised framework. Secondly, male violence and dominance are unambiguously denounced by all of the *testimonialistas*. Some explore personal experiences of violent fathers and most are incarcerated and tortured in ways exacerbated by their gender. The *testimonialistas* demonstrate strength and resilience in the face of such circumstances, presenting exemplary narratives of empowerment, politicisation and female solidarity. Lastly, traditional gendered identities, briefly defined above, are subverted as the

⁴⁶ Jean Franco, "Going Public: Reinhabiting the Private" in *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*. George Yúdice and Jean Franco, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 71.

⁴⁷ For example, reference is made to the following texts: Maxine Molyneux, *Women's Movements in International Perspective* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*. (Cambridge, MA: Southend Press, 1981). Ximena Bunster-Burotto, "Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America," in *Women and Change in Latin America*. June Nash and Helen Safa et al (New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1986), 297 – 325. Helen Leslie, "Healing the Psychological Wounds of Gender-related Violence in Latin America: A Model for Gender Sensitive Work in Post-Conflict Contexts." *Gender and Development* 9, no. 3 (2001): 50– 59; Nancy Hollander, "The Gendering of Human Rights: Women and the Latin American Terrorist State." *Feminist Studies* 22, no.1 (1996): 41 – 79. Francesca Miller, *Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1991).

women present themselves as strong, determined political agents and violent guerrilla fighters who are neither typically ‘feminine’ nor submissive.⁴⁸ This thesis adopts the term “politicised motherhood” to refer to the way in which the patriarchal notion of the domesticated, self-sacrificing mother is radically reconfigured by the women’s accounts which present motherhood alongside or as a part of their revolutionary identities and political activities.⁴⁹ As a consequence of this reconfiguration, the patriarchal, elite, European model of the nuclear family unit is replaced by extended family models; solidarity between female relatives, principally grandmothers, mothers and daughters, is brought to the fore.

Further, the *testimonios* dispute gendered discourses on four planes: on an international level they contest gendered Cold War propaganda, as well as defying the internationalisation of US capitalism and associated gender roles, explored further below.⁵⁰ Nationally the texts undermine the gendered narrative of the feminised state protected from feminised subversives by an apparently rational, masculinised and male-dominated, army; instead they depict civilian casualties of disproportionate military violence and repression.⁵¹ Thirdly, *machismo* and the public/private division inherent in local leftist movements are explicitly challenged by the women who reveal and condemn the sexism of male *compañeros*. Lastly, as above, personal and romantic relationships with husbands, lovers and families are politicised and the traditional confines of female behaviour, including relegation to domestic settings, are rejected. Women present themselves as brave, competent,

⁴⁸ For a detailed theoretical discussion on the relationship between femininity and submission see Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*.

⁴⁹ For historical antecedents to the politicisation of motherhood in Latin America see “Feminism and Social Motherhood, 1890 – 1938” in Miller, *Latin American Women*, 68 – 109.

⁵⁰ Capitalism is defined as an economic system organised around private property and private ownership of the means of production, in which trade and industry operate in the interests of profit.

⁵¹ In the context of the Latin American Cold War: “‘Subversives’ were defined as those with dangerous ideas that challenged the traditional order, whether they were peaceful dissenters, social activists, or armed revolutionaries.” McSherry, *Predatory States*, 1.

articulate and intelligent political agents and promote women's solidarity and *conscientización* in all spheres of life.⁵²

Notwithstanding these resounding challenges to patriarchal institutions and ideologies, the *testimonialistas* all reject the word 'feminism', which they equate with a Western political framework. Feminism is understood as a divisive or single-issue stance that fails to acknowledge the need for a class struggle to overcome economic inequality in Latin America. The texts dismiss essentialist feminist notions of inherent female pacificism, radical feminist notions of female superiority/separatism and the liberal feminist belief in reforming the capitalist state. Despite their dismissal of the term, by conveying the notion that male domination must be challenged at the same time as a political struggle for wider social change, the texts largely put forward a specifically Latin American type of socialist feminism.⁵³

The political context of *testimonio* is evidently significant; yet this thesis also acknowledges that the genre is a literary phenomenon. Literary techniques are analysed throughout the chapters and are delineated below. In comparison to critical studies which overlook gender, feminist literary theory engenders a more profound understanding of the historical significance of women's autobiographical writing, the ways in which women have been prevented from producing and publicising their own narratives and how female-authored literature has often been marginalised.⁵⁴ With this in mind, a typology of

⁵² The term *conscientización* is associated with Paulo Freire's work on critical pedagogy and is understood as a critical understanding of social, political injustices as well as action and organisation against oppression. For more on critical consciousness see: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Mayra Bergman Ramos (New York and London: Continuum, 2009).

⁵³ For a recent discussion of essentialism and feminism see Alison Stone, "Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy", *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1, no.2 (2004): 135–153. For an introduction to the notion of female pacificism and skills of reconciliation see Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking Towards a Politics of Peace* (London: The Women's Press, 1990). For an introduction to radical feminism see Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (London: The Women's Press, 1970). A classic debate regarding the relationship between socialism and feminism can be found with Heidi Hartmann, "Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, Lydia Sargent, ed. (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1981) referred to in more detail in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Women's Autobiography*. Also Shirley Neuman, *Autobiography and Questions of Gender* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1991).

women's testimonial literature becomes a feminist project to make visible and legitimise women's seldom heard voices and life experiences.

Elaine Showalter has written extensively on the objectives of feminist literary criticism and her well-known concept of the gynocritic is relevant here: "the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories."⁵⁵ Showalter argues that feminist history, psychology and sociology have enabled the identification of female subcultures and that it is only through studying women writers together that patterns, phases and connections can be adequately examined. She rejects the male-dominated theories of Marxism and Structuralism:

The experience of women can easily disappear, become mute, invalid and invisible, lost in the diagrams of the structuralist or the class conflict of the Marxists. Experience is not emotion; we must protest now as in the nineteenth century against the equation of the feminine with the irrational. But we must also recognize that the questions we most need to ask go beyond those that science can answer.⁵⁶

While this thesis recognises the contribution of Marxist theories to our understanding of class society and capitalist economics, it concurs with Showalter's contention that theories developed from an androcentric perspective do not adequately address the concerns of female writers. Such theories fail to account for, or respond to, the numerous occurrences of feminist themes and specifically female experiences that appear in women's writing. In addition, Eurocentric theories are not found to speak to the Latin American realities, indigenous identities and local specificities belonging to the *testimonialistas*, explored in the following section titled Intersectionality. For a more appropriate framework, this thesis turns to the epistemological theory of Patricia Hill Collins. Collins begins from the situated knowledge of African American women, but her analysis is nevertheless relevant to this thesis. She argues that her epistemological approach furthers debates about knowledge, consciousness, empowerment and truth in two ways:

⁵⁵ Elaine Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism* (London: Virago Press, 1986), 131.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

First, Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression. By embracing a paradigm of race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance. Second, Black feminist thought addresses ongoing epistemological debates in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of assessing “truth.” Offering subordinate groups new knowledge about their own experiences can be empowering. But revealing new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality has far greater implications.⁵⁷

Although the context of the *testimonialistas* is different, both contentions proposed by Collins are upheld by their accounts. They do not prioritise gender discrimination but rather see it as constantly intersecting or interlocking with their oppression as *indígenas*, workers, *campesinos* and Latin Americans and their *testimonios* seek to be understood on their own terms. These women construct their own epistemological understanding of existential concerns rejecting dualistic Western discourses and recognising the false universality of “abstract masculinity.”⁵⁸

Recent scholarship has re-examined the significance of gender with reference to Latin American political developments and political texts from independence to the current day.⁵⁹ *Testimonios* can be seen as part of a cultural legacy of women’s historic demands to be incorporated into and acknowledged as part of the political realm. Below we will consider the theories of Joshua Goldstein, Diana Taylor, Carol Cohn and others who reveal the ways in which the discourses of war and national security are constructed on a gendered foundation that devalues and excludes women.⁶⁰ We will see

⁵⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 221.

⁵⁸ Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (New York: Longman, 1983), 290.

⁵⁹ On independence see Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen, *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006). For recent developments see Miller, *Latin American Women*. Also Jo Fisher, *Out of the Shadows. Women, Resistance and Politics in Latin America* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1993).

⁶⁰ Carol Cohn, “Wars, Wimps and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War” in *Gendering War Talk*. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds., (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

that the contribution of militant women to male-dominated spheres is described and publicised through testimonial literature, while the gendered logic underpinning their exclusion is challenged. First, we will examine the notion of intersectionality, acknowledging the importance of race and class, in more detail.

Intersectionality: Race and Class

Needless to say, Latin America is a racially diverse and socio-economically complex subcontinent. While this thesis focuses on the gendered aspects of the *testimonios* studied, the equally important factors of race, ethnicity and class must not be overlooked. It is therefore useful at this stage to examine some of the ways in which these factors affect the social and political environments studied here, beginning with a brief overview of class, before proceeding to consider race and ethnicity. This section will conclude with a short overview of each of the countries mentioned in the thesis.

Class inequalities in Latin America are stark; a wide divide separates small wealthy elites from more impoverished general populations. Considerations of socio-economic class are relevant to the arguments presented in several ways. Firstly, while Marxist theories on class conflict are useful, the Eurocentric nature of classical Marxist conceptions of class must be acknowledged before applying these concepts to Latin America. Karl Marx developed his theories from a specifically nineteenth-century European perspective, which does not always map easily on to the multifaceted Latin American mid-twentieth century social and political terrain. Secondly, as we shall see in the following chapters, the texts examined emerged in contexts of class conflict, where political mobilisations, acting in the interests of disadvantaged socio-economic groups, came into conflict with elites seeking to maintain established class relations. Finally, the class identity of the *testimonialistas*, and, where relevant,

1993), 227 – 246. Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997). Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender. How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the class background of the third-person facilitator and editor, arguably have a bearing on the way in which class consciousness is reflected in the text.

Any examination of class in Latin America must not be isolated from considerations of ethnicity, Eurocentricity and imperialism. Dependency theory was arguably one of the first approaches to seriously address class differences in Latin America. Initially informed by a Marxist analysis, Dependency theory maintained that the poverty of the majority world is a direct result of colonialism and “the expropriation of resources from the periphery, through a chain of exploitative metropolis– satellite relations, to the centre.”⁶¹ The unequal relationship between descendants of Europeans in Latin America (*criollos*) and the descendants of Africans and the indigenous inhabitants, as well as those of mixed heritage, is often envisaged as a racial hierarchy. However, class ought not to be equated with race, as, although the two are interlinked, it is important to acknowledge that scholars have produced “irrefutable statistical evidence that blacks and browns were being systematically discriminated against [in Latin America] showing unequivocally that racial inequality exists, independently of class stratification.”⁶² While racial discrimination has been used to maintain and justify class divisions, racism also exists independently of such economic structures, so that, for example, wealth does not protect African descendants from racist discrimination.

Some of the key issues surrounding race and ethnicity which are relevant to this thesis include the dynamic nature of racial identity and changes in perceptions of race. For example, in the context of Bolivia, Jeffery R. Webber finds that historically people of Aymara or Quechua descent “have not self-identified as such given the stigma that has been attached to these identities for much of the colonial and republican periods.”⁶³ He notes a change in attitudes during the 1990s as “rates of indigenous self-identification increased parallel

⁶¹ Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 61.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶³ Jeffery R. Webber, *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 23.

to the recomposition of infrastructures of radicalised class-struggle [...] and the explosion of left indigenous resistance.”⁶⁴ All the texts examined in this thesis were produced before this time, and this may explain an apparent lack of emphasis on indigenous identities. A related issue is the way in which racial identities come into conflict with each other and are contested or marginalised. For example, in numerous Latin American countries, the indigenous and African-descended populations have been excluded from mainstream, elite national discourse, relegated by whites to the position of ‘Other’.⁶⁵ National identities have been based, in Latin America and elsewhere, on the inclusion of some ethnicities and the denial and exclusion of others. While taking into consideration these complexities embedded in the race and class contexts of the *testimonios*, my aim in this thesis is to explore the one element the texts have in common: gender. However, in what follows I will briefly outline the ways in which the factors outlined above are manifested in the diverse societies studied here.

In his detailed overview of race in Cuba, where slavery was not abolished until 1886, Alejandro de la Fuente poses two central questions; how racially unequal Cuba has been and how the Revolution of 1959 affected Cubans of African descent.⁶⁶ He finds that after the Revolution:

On the one hand, cultural authorities selectively acknowledged, sponsored, and publicized the African roots of popular culture as key ingredients of Cubanness and national folklore. On the other hand, building upon long-term dominant interpretations of Cuban nationalism, the revolutionary government imposed its own brand of official silence on race. Beginning in the 1960s, the new authorities claimed that racial discrimination had been eliminated from the island. [...] Race was treated as a divisive issue, its open discussion as a threat to national unity. The government had “solved” the racial problem: to speak about it was to address a nonissue.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁵ Wade, *Race and Ethnicity*, 3.

⁶⁶ Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 5 – 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

This silence is noticeable in the texts examined in the first two chapters of this thesis as they avoid representing race in any sustained way. For example, while de la Fuente demonstrates that one third of the voluntary teachers participating in the literacy campaign were black or *mulato*, *El Año de 61*, the *testimonio* that documents this campaign, studied here in the second chapter, fails to mention this fact; it only highlights the race of the peasants who benefitted from the literacy campaigns and housing and school building projects. Despite the limitations of the Revolution's policies on and attitude towards race in Cuba, de la Fuente concludes that "Most blacks and mulattoes benefited materially from the national redistribution of income and resources implemented by the revolution."⁶⁸ The Cuban texts examined here do not refer to this fact either, paying little attention to race. The protagonists and authors of the *testimonios* are, not insignificantly, of a white European ethnic background.

Let us now turn to the dynamics of race in Central America. Honduras has one of the highest percentages of indigenous inhabitants and political conflict here, and in El Salvador, has often been marked by racial tensions. Honduras is home to the *testimonialista* studied in the fourth chapter, and El Salvador is the setting of one of the *testimonios* examined in the final chapter. In the third chapter of this thesis, *testimonios* of women involved with the Nicaraguan *Sandinistas* are studied. Despite significant indigenous and mestizo populations in all three nations, in all these texts a political, class-based identity takes precedence over racial identity which may be explained with reference to the ways in which indigenous communities have been targeted during governmental repression and the reluctance to self-identify as indigenous due to stigma, mentioned above. In his detailed account of the guerrilla wars of Central America, Saul Landau argues that the Pipil Indians of El Salvador, following the *matanza* (massacre) of 30,000 mostly indigenous peasants, "thought better of retaining their traditional dress and language [Nahautl], for fear of reprisals."⁶⁹ While explaining the class conditions that

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁶⁹ Saul Landau, *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America. Nicaragua, El Salvador & Guatemala* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), 68.

led to political conflict in Central America, Landau also maintains that the United Fruit Company and other US investors worked with the ruling elites in Central America to force mostly indigenous “peasantry into a landless and seasonal labour force. They dispossessed families, many of them Indian, from communal lands and thus set the stage for a classic class confrontation.”⁷⁰ A similar situation developed in late nineteenth century Nicaragua with the indigenous communities of Miskitos, Sumos and the African-creoles, as laws were passed forcing indigenous communities to sell communal lands “transforming them into a class of dependent peons or sharecroppers.”⁷¹

Needless to say, the indigenous and African-descent populations of Central America were particularly affected by both economic inequality and political repression. Wade has traced the development of different opinions on the role of the indigenous populations in political, economic conflict: “Previously, there had been a tendency to see indigenous or peasant resistance as a supposedly traditional, conservative resistance to modernisation and national incorporation. Now it began to be seen as a positive thing, the resistance of an oppressed minority against political and cultural domination.”⁷² He finds that indigenous people began to be recognised “as active agents and this was an important antidote to the characterisations of them as powerless objects of change and acculturation that were part and parcel of much official *indigenismo*.”⁷³ While *indigenismo* is not referenced directly in the texts studied here, it is an important feature of Latin American political life that should be borne in mind, especially when examining political conflict in countries with a substantial indigenous population. It is difficult to ascertain exactly why indigenous identity does not arise as a significant factor in the texts; aside from the stigma mentioned above, the role of the Caucasian

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁷¹ Benjamin Keen and Keith Haynes, *A History of Latin America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 469.

⁷² Wade, *Race and Ethnicity*, 68.

⁷³ Ibid., 69. For a more in-depth discussion of *indigenismo* see Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution and Indigenismo”, in Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America: 1870 – 1940* (Houston: University of Texas, 2003).

feminist facilitator and editor, whose focus was gender not race, is almost certainly an additional contributing factor.

In Peru the relationship between class and race has been more directly theorised by means of Marxist approaches to *indigenismo*; this was the belief that “the revolution necessary to regenerate Peru must come from the sierra, from the Andean Indians, who would destroy age-old systems of oppression and unify Peru.”⁷⁴ Perhaps the most famous intellectual from this tradition was José Carlos Mariátegui who “attempted the task of wedding Indianism to the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels”⁷⁵ Despite this historical context, the Peruvian *testimonialistas* interviewed by Randall examined in the third chapter of this thesis focus much more on their experience of patriarchy than their ethnic or class background. This could be because Margaret Randall, a socialist feminist from the US, encouraged discussion of gender to the exclusion of class and race. Nevertheless, it is important to bear this racial context in mind when examining the text so as to engender a more complete understanding of the complex social and political environment inhabited by the *testimonialistas*.

Brazil, like Cuba, did not see slavery abolished until the relatively late date of 1888. The legacy of this colonial history is still felt today as Brazil’s large black population is effectively excluded from high-ranking, highly paid professions, relegated instead to employment with the lowest salary.⁷⁶ In her account, *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race and Racism in Urban Brazil*, Robin Sheriff observes the curious nature of racism in Brazil: “although racism is abundantly evident in Brazil’s bifurcated social structure, in the interactions that constitute everyday life for Brazilians of African descent, and in the derogatory way that blackness is figured in speech, Brazil is renown throughout the world as a ‘racial democracy.’”⁷⁷ African-Brazilians have long

⁷⁴ Keen and Haynes, *History of Latin America*, 409.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 592.

⁷⁷ Robin E. Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race and Racism in Urban Brazil* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 4.

contested the mythology of “racial democracy” in Brazil, and their efforts eventually led to the passing of anti-discrimination law.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, “Brazilians of African descent lag far behind their white counterparts in all the relevant measures of economic well-being and quality of life” including health, education and employment.⁷⁹ The inaccurate but nevertheless pervasive nature of the “racial democracy” myth has largely silenced discussion of race and racism in Brazil and this may go some way towards accounting for the absence of discussion of race in the *testimonio* provided by an African-Brazilian *testimonialista* also examined here in the third chapter and interviewed by Randall. It is again worthy of note that the facilitator is a white American woman who may have overlooked or downplayed such considerations. As we shall see, Randall’s questions set the framework from within which the *testimonio* is produced and questions of race and racism are consequently entirely absent from the text.

As we have seen, race and class can often overlap and intersect. During his examination of the phenomenon of Bolivian Trotskyism, John Sandor argues that: “Seventy years before ‘Evo’, this movement proudly proclaimed the Andean, indigenous, pre-Colombian, Inca (and pre-Inca) roots of a national majority locked out of political power. It organised Quechua and Aymara peasants to take their masters’ land, and their own fate, into their own hands.”⁸⁰ Much as in Central America, a large percentage of the Bolivian population identifies as indigenous: “In contemporary El Alto [...] roughly 93 per cent of the population is working class – in the sense that their labour is commodified in various ways and they do not live off of the labour of others -, and 82 per cent self-identify as indigenous.”⁸¹ This population is far from homogenous: “Bolivia’s indigenous population is comprised of 37 distinct groups. The Quechua and Aymara, concentrated in the western highlands, are

⁷⁸ Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 369.

⁷⁹ Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality*, 6.

⁸⁰ John S. Sandor, *Bolivia’s Radical Tradition: Permanent Revolution in the Andes* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 5.

⁸¹ Jeffery R. Webber, *Red October: Left Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 22.

the largest by far, followed by the Guaraní of the eastern lowlands.”⁸² In the Bolivian text examined in the fourth chapter of this thesis, class is prioritised over gender and race, perhaps due to the influence of a more one dimensional, traditional Marxist understanding, informed by Bolivian Trotskyism, that overlooks such intersectional factors.

The indigenous and African inhabitants of Argentina have largely been excluded from the national narrative, while these ethnicities once constituted a substantial percentage of the Argentinean population, following mass immigration from Europe, and “wars of extermination” against the indigenous population, a century after independence the Argentine nation became predominately white.⁸³ Aline Helg has examined the white supremacist narratives of several Argentine theorists who celebrated and encouraged the deliberate “whitening” of Argentina.⁸⁴ The Argentine author of the *testimonio* examined in the final chapter of this thesis is Jewish, and reference to the author’s Jewish identity arises in the text due to the prison guards’ anti-Semitic abuse. The Jewish community of Argentina have become the subject of recent critical studies.⁸⁵

The racial and socio-economic complexity of the Latin American subcontinent has only been briefly touched on here, an extensive investigation into the relationship between ethnicity, class and *testimonio* lies beyond the remit of this thesis, but is certainly worthy of a separate, future study. An introduction to some of the issues has been provided above in order to produce a more informed reading of the selected texts. Further reference to race and ethnicity will be provided within the relevant chapters. While gender is the primary category of analysis employed here, this does not mean that these other factors

⁸² Ibid., 22.

⁸³ Aline Helg, “Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880- 1930: Theories, Policies and Popular Reaction”, in Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America: 1870 – 1940* (Houston: University of Texas, 2003), 39.

⁸⁴ See “Race Theorizing in Argentina: the Glorification of ‘Whitening’” in Ibid.

⁸⁵ Haim Avni, *Argentina and the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002). And Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity and Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

are of any lesser importance. We will now examine the ways in which the concept of the Latin American Cold War is relevant to the study of *testimonio* presented here, before reviewing critics who have highlighted the gendered nature of the conflict.

The Latin American Cold War

The selected *testimonios* were authored during the Latin American Cold War, a period identified as beginning in 1945 and extending to the mid 1990s involving a series of proxy conflicts between the two superpowers, perhaps most notoriously the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.⁸⁶ Throughout this period, I contend that the discourse of the Cold War, the notion that the “red threat” of communism was aggressively expanding and threatening US interests and security, was projected onto Latin American leftist movements by successive US administrations leading to the injustices memorialised by the *testimonialistas*.⁸⁷

In addition to informing international relations between the superpowers and their less powerful Southern allies and enemies, Cold War rhetoric also profoundly affected national Latin American political discourse: “Not infrequently, Latin American states used a Cold War rationale, generated outside the region, to wage war against their citizens, to gain or perpetuate power, and to create or justify authoritarian military regimes.”⁸⁸ In addition, Franco maintains “Drawn into the deadly logic of the Cold War, the military of the Southern Cone and Central America became engaged in a war on communism that would not only destroy civil society but also facilitate the

⁸⁶ “La Crisis de Octubre” as it is known in Cuba, is explored in the first and second chapters of this thesis.

⁸⁷ The relationship between US and Latin America is focused on here due to the fact that with the exception of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet Union did not become as actively involved in Latin American politics. The United States kept Latin America within its sphere of influence and often intervened militarily.

⁸⁸ Joseph and Spenser, *In from the Cold*, 4.

transition [...] to the porous neo-liberal state.”⁸⁹ The texts studied here witness and oppose the draconian counter-insurgency tactics carried out by Latin American militarised regimes with the support of the United States.⁹⁰

An acknowledgement of the Cold War context of *testimonio* is therefore indispensable for fully understanding the political motivations, preoccupations and perceptions of the genre. Contrary to the critics who describe *testimonio* as “propagandist”, it will be argued here that *testimonio* is a complex literary phenomenon that does not convey a monochromatic propagandist message and is in fact riven with paradoxes as it attempts to construct and popularise a counter-narrative to US, Latin American Cold War propaganda.⁹¹

As we have seen, the Cold War had a profound influence on Latin American governments; several collaborated with the US to enforce counter-insurgency tactics as part of Operation Condor.⁹² This international operation has been described as:

a top secret component of a larger inter-American counterinsurgency strategy – led, financed, and overseen by Washington – to prevent and reverse social and political movements in Latin America in favour of structural change. [The] Condor system was a criminal operation that

⁸⁹ Jean Franco, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City. Latin America in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 12.

⁹⁰ The term neo-liberalism is used to refer to the economic policies of “free market” capitalism: increased deregulation and privatisation coupled with a sharp reduction in funding for social services such as healthcare, welfare and education. Greg Grandin has succinctly defined neo-liberalism as “an extreme version of Reganomics – deregulation privatization, the extension of cheap credit to make up for falling wages, and the gutting of labor rights and social spending.” Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, xi.

⁹¹ The term “Latin American Cold War” is borrowed from Joseph and Spenser’s *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* as mentioned above. For critics who describe *testimonio* as propagandist, see earlier reference to Shaw, “Referentiality and Fabulation.” Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*. Stoner, “Militant Heroines.” Also Craft, *Novels of Testimony*.

⁹² As illustrated in Appendix 2, the countries were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The programme received funding, advice and political will from the United States. Norman S Herman, *The Real Terror Network. Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 69 – 70. The intercontinental military and political operation saw hundreds of thousands of political dissidents tortured and disappeared. See McSherry, *Predatory States*.

used terrorist practices to eliminate political adversaries, and extinguish their ideas, outside the rule of the law.⁹³

This illegality was justified as necessary in the name of fighting political subversion and insurgency. The *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, published by the US Department of Defense, defined insurgency as “a condition resulting from a revolt or insurrection against a constituted government which falls short of a civil war. In [the context of the 1960s and 1970s], subversive insurgency is primarily communist inspired, supported, or exploited.”⁹⁴ This thesis argues that the notion that leftist activity in Latin America was “communist – inspired” overlooks local Latin American specificities, detailed in the *testimonios* studied here, an oversight which arguably resulted in disproportionate and indiscriminate political repression. US foreign policy during the Latin American Cold War will now be examined more closely.

Due to what it perceived as the ideological threat posed by the success of the Cuban Revolution, the US government developed new foreign policies in Latin America. Following the Revolution of 1959, and its resistance to the US-backed invasion at Playa Girón or the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, the US government became concerned that Cuba’s alliance with the Soviet Union had brought the Cold War into their hemisphere. As a result, Washington adopted a “two-pronged strategy”. On the one hand, this meant “counter-insurgency and the repression which invariably accompanied it.”⁹⁵ A massive increase in the training and arming of Latin American militaries was undertaken and took shape especially from 1963. The United States Military Assistance Programme (MAP) began to assist and train Latin American armies so that they might

⁹³ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 241.

⁹⁴ As quoted in Richard R. Fagen, ed., *Capitalism and the State in U.S. Latin American Relations*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 144. Fagen traces the development of diplomatic relations between USA and Latin America during the course of the Cold War. He notes that the Rio Pact (1947) “designed essentially to ensure hemispheric cooperation and security against a Soviet attack” gave way to the Mutual Security Act (1951) which ensured Latin American countries received almost half a billion dollars in military aid. *Ibid.*, 143 – 144.

⁹⁵ Pearce, Jenny. *Under the Eagle: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean*. London: Latin American Bureau, 1981, 38.

defeat emerging guerrilla movements. This involved direct training at the School of the Americas as well as assistance in the form of weapons and equipment, and credit for arms (through the Foreign Military Sales programme).⁹⁶ The School of the Americas is often pointed to as an example of US intervention in Latin America. Keen and Hayes calculate that over 56,000 Latin American personnel received training at the school.⁹⁷ The U.N sponsored Truth Commission found graduates of the School of the Americas guilty of the “majority of the human rights abuses” in Central America.⁹⁸

President John F. Kennedy increased spending on army special forces, whose main role was counter-insurgency, fivefold in 1961. At the same time the United States capacity for intervention, what was referred to as ‘rapid deployment’, was also increased.⁹⁹ The US government made it clear that it was committed to a military response to the supposed new ideological threat in Latin America, but this response had broader political and social implications. Counter-insurgency was defined by the Pentagon as “a combination of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic action carried on by a government in order to destroy any movement of subversive insurgency.”¹⁰⁰ In addition to military training and assistance, local police forces were strengthened, as part of the reorganization of the Office of Public Safety (OPS) of the Agency for International Development.

This new funding and training strengthened state apparatus in the Latin American countries affected, with severe political implications for progressive social change activists such as the women whose *testimonios* are examined in this thesis. As well as installing the Southcom military complex, 14 military bases and 14,000 American soldiers, Southcom also trained Latin American army personnel, many of whom became “heads of government, cabinet

⁹⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁹⁷ Keen and Haynes, *History of Latin America*, 597.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 498.

⁹⁹ Pearce, *Under the Eagle*, 38.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 52.

ministers, commanding generals or heads of intelligence in their own countries.¹⁰¹ This US funded militarisation of Latin America transformed the political landscape of the subcontinent. David Collier argues: “The armed forces take power not as in the past to maintain a dictator in power (such as Vargas or Perón) but rather to reorganize the nation in accordance with the ‘national security’ ideology of modern military doctrine.”¹⁰² However, this military doctrine was only one aspect of the US’s new strategy; the other consisted of a sustained campaign to counter the political and ideological appeal of the Cuban Revolution by pre-empting socialist solutions with the promotion of more moderate reforms which would broaden the social base of the regimes which supported the US, without threatening them. The result of this second aspect of US foreign policy in Latin America was the 1961 programme, backed by Kennedy, called the Alliance for Progress.

The Alliance was a political strategy which aimed to persuade Latin Americans of the United States’ good intentions, and commitment, rather than opposition, to the idea of social reform and democratic principles; a commitment that had been called into question after decades of US support for dictatorships, and after direct intervention such as that which occurred in Guatemala in 1954, when an elected reformist government was overthrown by US-backed exiles. The Kennedy Administration recognised the need for this ideological persuasion, and financially committed to the new programme, which saw Washington funding social and land reform, when put forward by governments allied to the United States.

Part of this new strategy was the creation of new institutions such as the US Agency for International Development (AID), also set up in 1961. This body promoted US commerce under the cover of so-called aid programmes. AID became the principal means of making available Alliance funds for programmes which strengthened the private sector in the countries receiving aid, while at the same time promoting the interests of US corporations. US AID made it clear that the Alliance was not a neutral programme, but one

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰² David Collier, *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 36.

ideologically committed to one side of the Cold War. This was further proven by the creation of another body, the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD), a body connected to the CIA and used as a means of conducting secret operations, such as forming fraudulent trade unions which promoted US interests in the region.¹⁰³

These new institutions demonstrated the close affinity between the military programmes, outlined above, and the political-ideological purposes of the new US approach. This ideology shifted over time; prior to the Kennedy administration, the US defence strategy was focused on external threats. However, as we have seen, following the Cuban Revolution: “The main danger to United States interests was identified as social unrest within Latin America which translated into the language of the Cold War became ‘communist subversion’ fomented as much by indigenous radicals as by the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁴ While the US maintained that ‘subversive insurgency’ demanded a robust policy of ‘counter-insurgency’, it was also believed that the ideological threat of the Cuban Revolution demanded equally robust anti-communist propaganda. During the training courses provided at the School of the Americas highlighted above, the US Defense Department maintained that there was “a strong ideological element in the courses” with a substantial amount of time “devoted to anti-communist and pro-United States propaganda.”¹⁰⁵ This thesis argues that the narratives captured by *testimonio* arose in part as a response to this US propaganda campaign; as an attempt to popularise personal, autobiographical and gynocentric testimonies which disprove the various assumptions implicit to the US interventionist narrative.

As we shall see in the first chapter of this thesis, anti-Cuban US propaganda is analysed in great detail by Louis Pérez Jr. in *Cuba in the American Imagination*.¹⁰⁶ Pérez Jr. finds that Castro was “endlessly the object of

¹⁰³ Pearce, *Under the Eagle*, 45.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). See especially the chapter “Shifting Metaphors, Changing Meanings, Representing Revolution”, *ibid.*, 235 – 263.

caricaturists' drawings, variously ridiculed, mocked, and satirized."¹⁰⁷ He analyses a wide range of depictions of Castro, the Revolution and Cubans, ranging from those which likened Cubans to insubordinate children, the Revolution to an infection or cancer, as well as accounts which described Castro as "insane."¹⁰⁸ These extreme reactions are explained by Perez Jr. thus: "The Americans viewed developments in Cuba with a mixture of incomprehension and incredulity. There was no frame of reference with which to make sense of events: no precedent, no counterpart, no context."¹⁰⁹ He continues: "That the Cubans would presume to challenge the premise of U.S. power was implausible; that they would question its propriety was unimaginable."¹¹⁰ Crucially, he also observes that the Cubans "challenged the master narrative of beneficent purpose so central to the normative determinants from which the Americans derived the moral authority to presume power over Cuba."¹¹¹ This thesis maintains that these observations, particularly the final one, can also be applied to the US's response to uprisings in other Latin American countries. While the political movements to which the *testimonialistas* belonged challenged US dominance in the region, the *testimonios* they created defy the master narrative that presented the US as a benevolent force in Latin America, as we shall see in the following five chapters.

This discussion confirms that the term "propaganda" should not be limited to written texts for the purpose of persuasion. Instead in this thesis, propaganda is seen as a broader concept incorporating sustained political campaigns promoting specific interests, funding for "alternatives to communism", and the dissemination of narratives which support these endeavours, as well as those which promote the notion that the US had the right to intervene in Latin

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 241.

¹⁰⁸ See the cartoon entitled "Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child" printed in Charleston News and Courier, on Jan 1, 1960, reproduced on *ibid.*, 243. For references to Castro as insane, see *ibid.*, 250 and for the Revolution depicted as an illness and as cancer see *ibid.*, 253.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 244.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 245.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 245.

America. Further definitions of propaganda are provided in the section on this subject below.

In keeping with the above, Greg Grandin makes a compelling case that in Latin America: “Cold War terror – either executed, patronized, or excused by the United States – fortified illiberal forces, militarized societies, and broke the link between freedom and equality, thus greatly weakening the likelihood of such fulfilment and making possible the reversal of gains that had been achieved.”¹¹² Contrary to US propaganda narratives which maintained that the US was a benevolent and democratic force in the region, he continues to argue:

In Latin America, in country after country, the mass peasant and working-class movements that gained ground in the middle of the twentieth century were absolutely indispensable to the advancement of democracy. To the degree that Latin America today may be considered democratic, it was the left, including the Marxist left, that made it so. Empire, rather than fortifying democracy, weakened it.¹¹³

In contrast to US narratives which presented leftist Latin American movements as funded or supported by a particularly undemocratic form of Soviet communism, the *testimonios* examined in this thesis support Grandin’s assertion that they in fact served to protect democracy and worked in the interests of the majority of the civilian population. We will now examine the gendered aspects of Cold War and “National Security” discourse in Latin America, as well as how the selected *testimonios* can be read in this context, before proceeding to examine the phenomenon of propaganda more closely.

Gender and the Latin American Cold War

The relationship between war and gender is thoroughly examined in Goldstein’s *War and Gender. How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*: historical examples of “women warriors” are scrutinised to disprove

¹¹² Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), xxii.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, xxii.

biological determinist arguments employed to justify female exclusion from combat roles.¹¹⁴ As highlighted above, the *testimonios* examined in the first, third and final chapters of this thesis depict the life stories of *guerrilleras* whose actions also challenged the idea that women are incapable of partaking in armed combat. Goldstein's dissection of "militarized masculinity" reveals that it is constructed in opposition to notions of the "feminine" that are associated with women who are relegated to feminine support roles as nurses, mothers, sweethearts and witnesses.¹¹⁵ Yet when the *testimonialistas* studied here hold these traditional positions, they politicise and contest them. Goldstein finds that "by linking bravery and discipline in war to manhood – with shame as enforcement – many cultures use gender to motivate participation in combat."¹¹⁶ Further he argues that "The war system influences the socialization of children into *all* their gender roles – a feedback loop that strengthens and stabilizes gendered war roles."¹¹⁷ Goldstein's comprehensive account dismantles common hegemonic assumptions regarding gender, male aggression and female passivity to argue that war is dependent on gender difference; through their personal, autobiographical accounts, the women's *testimonios* examined here confirm this view.

Women's *testimonios* challenge Cold War paradigms regarding the spread of communism; instead, they put forward the notion that personal responses to local economic inequality and militarised repression preceded involvement in political organisation. *Testimonios* form part of a counter-narrative that challenges the logic, assumptions and justifications of the Cold War and its proxy wars. In their aforementioned recent study on the Latin American Cold War, Joseph and Spenser do not mention *testimonio* directly, but their findings are relevant. They maintain that "fine-grained studies" and truth commissions "constitute early attempts to reconstruct the social histories and memories" of

¹¹⁴ "Women warriors: the historical record of female combatants." Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 59.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 406.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 410.

recent conflicts in the region.¹¹⁸ This thesis argues that women's *testimonios* should be added to their list of counter-narratives that "contain surprises that muddy the master narratives [and] give us greater insight into how people remember and come to grips with the telling of episodes of collective violence and trauma, and how the protagonists in culture wars over memory use this arena to shape the political and cultural future."¹¹⁹ In keeping with the findings of this thesis, Joseph and Spenser add that the metanarratives of the superpowers "too often occlude the human beings caught up in the messy process of history" and they suggest that "an attempt to reconstruct and contextualise their complex stories is where a truly 'new history' of the Latin American Cold War should begin."¹²⁰ It is from this new starting point that women's *testimonio*, and the genre's relationship to memory and trauma, will be examined in this thesis.

The findings of Carol Cohn's "Wars, Wimps and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War" are in keeping with the notion that hegemonic Cold War discourse obfuscated the lived realities of the victims of US foreign policy.¹²¹ Cohn worked undercover in the US "defence community" for over a year to assess the extent to which gendered discourse affected conceptualisations and decisions.¹²² She found that the masculinisation of foreign policy, the promotion of aggression, insensitivity and violence as opposed to diplomacy and dialogue, had the effect of obscuring

the emotional, the concrete, the particular, the human bodies and their vulnerability, human lives and their subjectivity – all of which are marked as feminine in the binary dichotomies of gender discourse. [...] In other words, gender discourse informs and shapes nuclear and

¹¹⁸ Joseph and Spenser, *In from the Cold*, 29.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29

¹²¹ Cohn, "Wars, Wimps and Women", 227 – 246.

¹²² For a detailed account of her undercover experience see: Carol Cohn. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987), 687 – 718.

national security discourse, and in so doing creates silences and absences.¹²³

By acknowledging the gendered nature of Cold War national security discourse, this thesis seeks to enable a more profound insight into the context and motivations of women's *testimonio*. The *testimonios* examined here fill the absences and break the silences of national security discourse, rendering visible the devalued aspects marked as feminine. The hierarchical dualisms that Cohn identifies suggest that both patriarchy and war rely on the systematic elimination of women's lived experiences, "mind is opposed to body; culture to nature; thought to feeling; logic to intuition; objectivity to subjectivity; aggression to passivity; confrontation to accommodation; abstraction to particularity; public to private; political to personal."¹²⁴ In the chapters that follow, these dichotomies will be seen to be undermined with accounts which present the natural world, the corporeal, emotions and personal experiences of politically active women alongside their revolutionary organisational activities. Nature is not separated from culture; rather natural imagery is often employed to reinforce political convictions. Feminine gender roles are contested as *guerrilleras* are presented as aggressive militants and yet loving, accommodating mothers. Political theories are confronted with their often traumatising, real life emotional consequences. The women's *testimonios* simultaneously dispute that feminine traits are of less value whilst also demonstrating that women are capable of possessing esteemed characteristics traditionally attributed to men. An example can be found with female domesticity; the family and the home become spaces of political radicalisation as family members inspire and educate each other. Women are admired for their valuable labour as caregivers and their traditional roles become a basis for appreciation and solidarity. At the same time, relegation to the private sphere is challenged through examples of women's successful engagement with public, political organisation.

¹²³ Cohn "Wars, Wimps and Women", 232.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.

Cohn's studies also revealed the normalisation of male aggression, as opposed to the dismissed and disliked emotions, labelled as feminine:

[T]he unacknowledged interweaving of gender discourse into security discourse allows men to not acknowledge that their pristine rational thought is in fact riddled with emotional response. In an 'objective' and 'universal' discourse that valorizes the 'masculine' and deauthorizes the 'feminine,' it is only 'feminine' emotions that are noticed and labelled as emotions, and thus in need of banning from the analytic process. 'Masculine' emotions – such as feelings of aggression, competition, macho pride and swagger, or the sense of identity resting on clearly defined borders – are not so easily noticed and identified as emotions, and are instead invisibly folded into 'self-evident' so-called realist paradigms and analyses.¹²⁵

The gendered assumptions inherent in the rationale exposed by Cohn are challenged with lived examples of the irrational, disproportionate violence and aggressive emotions of the security forces in the *testimonios* studied here.¹²⁶

The universal and objective nature of national security paradigms are in this way thrown into question. Empowered female victims challenge the narratives of the perpetrators of state violence, who are portrayed as paranoid, vindictive and ineffectual, as the perspective of female witnesses is presented as more authoritative and accurate.

Robert Dean's extensive examination of gender and the Cold War sheds further light on the "ideology of masculinity", which is defined as "a cultural system of prescription and proscription that organizes the 'performance' of an individual's role in society, that draws boundaries around the social category of manhood, and that can be used to legitimate power and privilege."¹²⁷ The rule of male elites is naturalised through notions of biological determinism firmly rejected by Dean who argues that single-sex education perpetuates the process of masculinisation by promoting competition and aggression, in

¹²⁵ Ibid., 242.

¹²⁶ I use the term "security forces" throughout this thesis to refer collectively to the military, the police, paramilitaries, mercenaries and all other forces used to execute counter-insurgency policy.

¹²⁷ Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001), 5.

keeping with Goldstein's findings on the socialisation of children. Dean demonstrates that the rhetoric of "red scare" McCarthyism and anti-communism was profoundly gendered: "In this conservative vision of politics and society, effective resistance to communism or other threats to '100 percent Americanism' demanded that citizens adhere to a traditional, patriarchal sexual order."¹²⁸ He finds that Cold War propaganda was infused with misogyny and homophobia as it "linked behaviour that subverted the 'natural' relations between the sexes with behaviour that subverted the proper political relations of American society."¹²⁹ The Cuban paratexts examined in the first chapter of this thesis rearticulate normative gender roles in such a way as to disprove the equation of communism with the total subversion of patriarchy. While opposing US capitalism, the *testimonios* contest relationships of inequality between men and women by bringing female experiences to the fore to expose the hypocrisy, injustice and double standards of patriarchy.

In *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*, Cynthia Enloe also examines "the varieties of masculinity and femininity that it took to create the Cold War."¹³⁰ She argues that: "The Cold War depended on a deeply militarized understanding of identity and security. Militarization relies on distinct notions about masculinity, notions that have staying power only if they are legitimized by women as well as men."¹³¹ She cites conservative women from the US who, in keeping with Dean's findings, maintained that "any movement trying to revise traditional relationships between men and women was a threat to U.S. national security."¹³² Enloe identifies the Cold War's "gendering of danger" in which men are expected to be brave, protecting women from threat.¹³³ Enloe refers to Latin American women who

¹²⁸ Ibid., 66.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹³⁰ Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California 1993), 5.

¹³¹ Ibid., 3.

¹³² Enloe cites the example of Phyllis Schlafly who was against legislative advances for women's equality on the basis that it was a threat to national security. Ibid., 17

¹³³ Ibid., 15.

rejected these gendered war narratives and instead believed that “militarized anti-communism and domestic violence against women needed to be critiqued in the same breath.”¹³⁴ These women saw that a worldview centred on gendered danger was harmful for women, portraying them as powerless victims reliant on male-domination to save them from male violence.

This gendered Cold War discourse, and its related notions of inherent male privilege, was adopted by military regimes across Latin America with financial and technical support from the US, as delineated above. The *testimonios* studied here replace the naturalisation of patriarchy and capitalist “Americanism” with localisms and egalitarian beliefs. The texts challenge the equation of communism with unnatural subversion by exposing the poverty and extreme disparity that capitalist economic structures cause in Latin America. Stark inequality and violent repression are shown as aberrant while leftist movements are naturalised and presented as the inevitable result of injustice. However, the *testimonios* do not simply reverse the dichotomies identified above; rather they disturb the very process of dichotomisation by suggesting that the binaries are reductionist and inaccurate revealing instead a more complex, multifaceted and gynocentric reality.

‘National Security’, Gender and *Testimonio*

The female authored *testimonios* analysed in this thesis maintain that movements labelled “communist inspired” by the US were not motivated by Soviet communism but rather local concerns, such as inequality, poor working conditions, political repression and, for subsistence farmers, lack of access to land. The aforementioned *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* defines counter-insurgency as “those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civil actions taken by a government to defeat subversive insurgency.”¹³⁵ The narratives examined in the following five chapters testify to the potentially traumatic human consequences endured as a result of these

¹³⁴ Enloe makes reference to Brazilian women who “organized against their countries anti-communist military government.” *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³⁵ As quoted in Fagen, *Capitalism and the State*, 144.

actions. In the *testimonios*, the US stands accused of hypocrisy as the rhetoric of democracy and “constituted government” is employed to justify counter-insurgency tactics, while successive US administrations supported undemocratic military coup d’états and dictatorships to institute unpopular Latin American governments that serve the interests of the US economy. During the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration “not only worked with ‘so-called dictator governments’ but also effusively supported them.”¹³⁶ Further, in her compelling study of Operation Condor, McSherry argues:

U.S. national security strategists (who feared “another Cuba”) and their Latin American counterparts began to regard large sectors of [Latin American] societies as potentially or actually subversive. They especially feared leftist or nationalist leaders who were popularly elected, thus giving their ideas legitimacy.¹³⁷

The *testimonios* reject this notion of widespread “communist subversion” by arguing that Latin American movements for social change defended the interests of the vast majority of the populations and were truly patriotic, while politicians who succumbed to US interests are denounced for being controlled by foreign interests. This re-articulation of patriotism is put forward by women who have historically been rendered passive in nationalistic discourses but who here reclaim their place on the national stage, reconfiguring gendered notions of political agency in the process. To expose the apparently erroneous logic of counter-insurgency policies, the *testimonios* recall the violent lived implications of national security tactics, particularly for women who experience political violence differently.¹³⁸ They maintain that the fear, anger and aggression of the military and security forces were in fact irrational

¹³⁶ Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America. The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 87. US support of the military coup against the democratically elected Salvador Allende on the 11th of September 1973 is another example of US economic interests taking precedence over a professed commitment to democracy.

¹³⁷ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 3.

¹³⁸ Discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. See Mary Jane Treacy, “Double Binds: Latin American Women's Prison Memories.” *Hypatia* 11, no. 4 (1996): 130– 145. Also Helen Leslie, “Healing the Psychological Wounds of Gender-related Violence in Latin America: A Model for Gender Sensitive Work in Post-Conflict Contexts.” *Gender and Development* 9, no. 3, (2001): 50– 59.

emotional responses and thus they reverse the gendered reason/emotion binary. In so doing they destabilise the gendered dichotomies, identified by Cohn above, upon which US Cold War narratives are founded.

The gendered nature of counter-insurgency discourse can be further examined through the example of the Argentinean “Dirty War”, euphemistically referred to as the *Proceso de Reorganización Social* by the military government.¹³⁹

Diana Taylor has persuasively argued that, during the conflict, the misogynistic and homophobic military feminised the *Patria*.¹⁴⁰ Codified as female, the nation became a “body, to be penetrated and defended.”¹⁴¹ Taylor examines the gendered propaganda of and censorship by the military junta in Argentina, as well as forms of cultural resistance that arose in its wake.¹⁴² Just as Dean argued above that US propaganda equated communists with the destruction of male domination, so Taylor finds that political subversives were accused of possessing stereotypically feminine flaws: weakness, lack of conviction, immorality and guilt.¹⁴³ As well as examining the “Dirty War” in more detail in the fifth chapter, this thesis applies these findings to other Latin American countries to argue that counter-insurgency policies carried out in the name of national security saw the gendered militarisation of political repression, accompanied by propaganda to justify state violence. Indeed, in keeping with Taylor’s observations, Jelin finds:

The dominant gender system identifies masculinity with domination and aggression, and these characteristics are heightened in military

¹³⁹ For a detailed exploration of the effect of the Cold War discourse on the military in Argentina see Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: the “Dirty War” in Argentina* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 131, 137, 142.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 67 – 69.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁴² For gendered junta propaganda see Taylor’s analysis of the female guerrilla “terrorist” mannequin, on display at the *Museo histórico Juan Carlos Leonetti*, *ibid.*, 82. Taylor also presents a poster “circulated through the education system” instructing young people to dress and cut their hair in keeping with traditional gender roles, *ibid.*, 105. For forms of cultural resistance see *ibid.*, 139 – 265. See also Diana Taylor, “DNA of Performance,” in *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, Doris Sommer, ed., (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

identity. Femininity is conceived as an ambivalent condition, combining the spiritual superiority of women (even the very notions of “nation” and “motherland are feminized) with submissiveness and passivity in the face of the desires and orders of men.¹⁴⁴

The women’s *testimonios* studied here undermine and disprove accusations of immorality, feebleness and passivity by presenting the life stories of strong women with passionate political convictions, persuaded of their moral superiority, who denounce the violence of the military. Male-dominated propagandist discourses of Cold War national security are defied by female-centred approaches that expose the harsh realities which cannot be contained within the reductionist dichotomies that underpin the ideologies of patriarchy and expansionist US capitalism. The assumptions that justify the rule of men over women, the militarised state over civilians and the US over Latin America are firmly rejected as the narratives and rationale which legitimise the status quo are undone. Definitions of propaganda will now be reviewed before a definition of counter-propaganda is provided. Following this, the significance of photography in the texts studied will be highlighted.

Propaganda and Counter-propaganda

The word “propaganda” is from the Latin “to propagate” and originally signified the dissemination of ideas. The insidious connotations of propaganda in an Anglophone context apparently arise from the Vatican’s establishment of the “Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide” or the Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith in the seventeenth century to defend Catholicism from Protestant Reformation.¹⁴⁵ In keeping with more recent usage, this thesis employs the term to refer to messages transmitted via various media (newspapers, television, film and books) which knowingly misinform

¹⁴⁴ Jelin, *State Repression and Struggles for Memory*, 78.

¹⁴⁵ Gareth Jowett and Victoria O’ Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage, 1992), 2. More recently, propaganda’s negative connotations were solidified as it was often employed to refer to Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s USSR. See David Welsh, *Nazi Propaganda: the Power and the Limitations* (New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983) and Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent. 1934 – 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

audiences or present a biased picture with the aim of legitimising a particular political order.

Jacques Ellul's comprehensive study, *Propaganda. The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, eschews moral judgements, political contextualisations or criticisms of propaganda, approaching it instead as "an existing sociological phenomenon" that "is essentially the same in China or the Soviet Union or the United States or Algeria."¹⁴⁶ Ellul creates categories of propaganda comprising four pairs. The first pair is political and sociological propaganda: the former is briefly described as the type most people are familiar with: "It involves techniques of influence employed by a government, a party, an administration, a pressure group, with a view to changing the behaviour of the public."¹⁴⁷ As we shall see, this thesis maintains that this definition is applicable to US Cold War propaganda but not to *testimonio*, which is a corrective counter-narrative often unsupported by governments exercising global hegemony. Further, as an exemplification of sociological propaganda, Ellul turns to the United States; he finds that a society based on mass production and mass consumption necessitates "conformity of life and conformity of thought."¹⁴⁸ He then examines McCarthyism, which, he suspects, "sprang from a vague feeling of ideological weakness", and lists the different US pressure groups which employ lobbying and propaganda into order to protect private interests.¹⁴⁹ Ellul's contentions regarding the ubiquitous nature of propaganda in the US confirm that counter-hegemonic narratives such as *testimonios* emerged in response to pervasive US Cold War propaganda.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda. The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), xii, xiv.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 68 – 69.

¹⁵⁰ The *New York Times* provides numerous examples of "red threat" propaganda. 1, 076 articles contained the phrase "red threat" from the 1st of January 1950 until the December the 31st 1980. The searchable *New York Times* archive database is available at <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html> Accessed throughout January 2011. Examples of Cold War headlines include: Tad Szulc, "U. S. ENVOYS NOTE LATIN RED THREAT; Ten Ambassadors Declare Communists Step Up Drive Against Americas'

Propaganda of agitation and integration is the second pair identified by Ellul, who maintains that agitation propaganda is “most often subversive propaganda and has the stamp of opposition. It is led by a party seeking to destroy the government or the established order. It seeks rebellion or war.”¹⁵¹ This definition is particularly relevant to the US propaganda utilised during the Contra War, as examined in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis and studied further below.¹⁵² Propaganda of integration, “propaganda of conformity [which] aims at stabilizing the social body, at unifying and reinforcing it”, is also applicable to both US domestic propaganda and the propaganda of the Latin American militarised states which, under the influence of the US, sought to eradicate political plurality.¹⁵³ Indeed it has been observed that “The United States used cultural industries to promote its economic and diplomatic initiatives and to convince Latin Americans that the ‘American way’ was the best route to the future. [...] Washington deployed the United States Information Agency to make its presence felt through film.”¹⁵⁴ Unlike this US propaganda, *testimonio* does not conform to Ellul’s definitions; the

Unity” *New York Times*. 10th May, 1959 and Ruby Hart Phillips, “Castro's Cuba Described As Isle of Fear and Hate; About 200,000 Arrested Since the Defeat of April 17 Landing, Says Reporter Reaching Miami From Havana.” *New York Times*. 20th May, 1961, Front page. It is worth pointing out that while the *New York Times* maintains that there was “unity” in the Americas prior to 1959, numerous other sources contend that the subcontinent was profoundly divided between the land owning and corporate elites on the one hand and the disenfranchised, impoverished landless masses on the other. For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between poverty in Latin America and relative affluence in the USA see Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

For more on propaganda and anti-communism see Cyndy Hendershot, *Anti-Communism and Popular Culture in Mid-Century America* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2003). Frances Stoner Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999) specific references to Latin America can be found on pages 143, 144, 215, 247, 256, 260, 347, 349 and 355. Antonio Niño Rodríguez, José Antonio Montero, eds. *Guerra fría y propaganda: Estados Unidos y su cruzada cultural en Europa y América Latina* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2012). The last three chapter of this collection examine US Propaganda in Latin America, including Brazil.

¹⁵¹ Ellul, *Propaganda*, 71.

¹⁵² “Contra” is an abbreviation of *contrarrevolución*, a term used to denote US-funded groups who opposed the *Sandinistas*.

¹⁵³ The third category is vertical and horizontal propaganda, and the fourth is rational and irrational propaganda. *Ibid.*, 61 – 84.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph and Spenser, *In from the Cold*, 386.

genre's primary objectives are to challenge and undermine US propaganda and prevent the internationalisation and homogenisation of that superpower's war narrative. *Testimonio* is not produced by a propagandic institution and it contains contrasting, complex, unorthodox and subversive messages, particularly when read from a gendered perspective, as we shall see.¹⁵⁵

The notion that propaganda is a widespread, fundamental part of US society has been further explored more recently. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky put forward a "propaganda model" comprising five filters, in *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media*.¹⁵⁶ Herman and Chomsky make specific reference to the Contra War, as well as US intervention in El Salvador and other Central American countries, to argue that the US media plays the role of supporting such wars by comprehensively excluding all opposition from the mainstream framework.¹⁵⁷ The propaganda model argues that filters, such as the concentration of media ownership, advertising, sourcing, "flak" and anti-communism, ensure that only views compatible with those of elite political and economic interests are heard.¹⁵⁸ Explaining the filter of anti-communism they state:

The anti-communist control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media. In normal times as well as in periods of Red scares, issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers with gains and losses allocated to contesting sides, and rooting for "our side" considered entirely legitimate news practice.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Jowett and O' Donnell highlight the importance of a "propaganda organisation." Jowett and O' Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 213. They also observe: "There are several examples of counterpropaganda to McCarthyism in the 1950s, especially Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*." *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁵⁶ Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage Books, 1994).

¹⁵⁷ They make such references throughout and have several lengthy appendices dedicated to the subject of US media coverage of Nicaraguan and El Salvadorian politics. *Ibid.*, 40 – 135.

¹⁵⁸ "A Propaganda Model" *Ibid.*, 1 – 37. Concentration, 3, advertising, 14, sourcing, 18, flak, 26, anti-communism, 29.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

The *testimonios* contest this reductionist portrayal of global affairs by asserting Latin American political agency as separate from the Cold War superpowers. In their conclusion, Herman and Chomsky return to the Nicaraguan Contra war and US complicity in “state terror that cost some 200,000 lives in Central America”, pointing out that media support for such conflicts relies on the division of causalities into “worthy and unworthy victims” from “client and errant states” respectively.¹⁶⁰ In Latin American *testimonio*, victims deemed unworthy by US propaganda answer back. Those demonised as communist subversives reassert their humanity by detailing their life stories and personal motivations for political involvement.

As the *testimonios* reached national and international audiences, they served as a corrective to international anti-communist propaganda, as well as seeking to re-educate compatriots. As above, the target audience of US Cold War propaganda was by no means limited to US citizens; Grace Livingstone traces several instances in which the US employed “illegal propaganda” techniques to obscure its complicity in “massacres” and other atrocities and to overthrow democratically elected governments in Central and Latin America.¹⁶¹ The Reagan administration’s “Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean” employed the term “white propaganda” to refer its “pro-Contra newspaper articles by paid consultants who did not disclose their connection to the administration.”¹⁶² The office was directed by Cuban-American Otto Reich, an opponent of Castro, infamous for the censure he received for employing “prohibited, covert propaganda activities” during his involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 300.

¹⁶¹ Grace Livingstone, *America’s Backyard. The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2009), 84.

¹⁶² Ibid., 84.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 126. The Iran-Contra scandal, which took place during the Reagan administration, involved senior US officials selling arms to Iran (the subject of an arms embargo), in order to fund the Contras (which was prohibited by congress under the Boland Amendment of 1982 – 1984).

Jean Franco writes extensively on the connection between the CIA and the use of covert anti-communist US propaganda in Latin America during the Cold War.¹⁶⁴ She finds that the Communist Party was proscribed in numerous countries and that the US falsely labelled as communist “populist nationalist regimes” as “[a]nticommunism became an alibi for slaughter, torture and censorship.”¹⁶⁵ Describing Nelson Rockefeller’s “formidable propaganda machine” Franco notes that over one thousand Latin American newspapers and numerous radio programmes were subsidised by the Office of Coordination of Inter-American Affairs.¹⁶⁶ Franco analyses the use of animation and the work of Walt Disney in the transmission of US Cold War narratives across Latin America.¹⁶⁷ In addition to the United States Information Agency’s production and distribution of film, Franco notes that the Agency published one hundred and seventy five million translations, “many of which were targeted for Latin America [yet] there was no acknowledgement in the publications that the translations had been subsidized by the U.S. government.”¹⁶⁸ The aim of these Cold War cultural interventions was to make “influential” Latin Americans “more receptive to the assumptions of U.S. foreign policy.”¹⁶⁹

Regarding US propaganda in Latin America, Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano asserts:

In general, it can be truly said that many education centers and almost all the massive communication media radiate translated messages fabricated outside designed to drain the Latin American memory and prevent it from recognizing its own reality and capacity: they induce it

¹⁶⁴ See Franco, “Killing Them Softly: The Cold War and Culture” in *Decline and Fall*, 21 – 56.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22, 23.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 – 29.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Warren Dean, “The USIA Book Program: Latin America” *Point of Contact* 3 (1976): 4 – 14 as quoted in Franco, *Decline and Fall*, 30.

to consume and passively reproduce the symbols of the very power that humbles it.¹⁷⁰

Women's *testimonio* effectively memorialises resistance and popularises a counter-narrative which contests US hegemony. The *testimonios* occasionally promote socialist ideals, can seem didactic in tone and, in the case of the Cuban and Nicaraguan examples, were to some extent supported and promoted by socialist governments. However, they cannot be described as monolithic propagandist writing. The *testimonios* which received some support from leftist governments are nevertheless counter-hegemonic in the context of international US Cold War narratives. Further, socialism is not upheld uncritically in any of the texts. Women's experiences of sexism from socialist men are candidly explored, complicating the political message.¹⁷¹ The *testimonios* contend that US foreign policy towards leftist movements in Latin America during the Cold War was simplistic, self-interested and appeared to misunderstand the motivations and aspirations of those it sought to defeat. Assumptions regarding the Soviet-orchestrated nature of the Latin American left are disproven, as local grievances regarding economic inequality, political repression and US intervention in Latin America are shown to be more influential.

Counter-propaganda is defined here as those narratives which aim to popularise a corrective account to counteract misinformation and mainstream state narratives, especially regarding political conflict. Counter-propaganda testifies to acts of violence officially denied by military, police and government forces, thus contesting and undermining hegemonic propaganda. Borrowing from Foucault, my understanding of counter-propaganda is in

¹⁷⁰ Eduardo Galeano, "The Revolution as Revelation." *Socialist Review* 65 (1982): 9 – 16. As quoted by Laura Rice-Sayre, "Witnessing History: Diplomacy versus Testimony," in *Testimonio y Literatura*, Jara, René and Hernán Vidal, eds. (Minnesota: Society for the Study of Contemporary Hispanic and Lusophone Revolutionary Literatures, 1986), 50. Galeano is perhaps most famous for his *Venas Abiertas de América Latina* (Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores, 1980), translated as *Open Veins of Latin America. Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997).

¹⁷¹ As we shall see in Chapter Three, it is noteworthy that Margaret Randall later published *Gathering Rage. The Failure of 20th Century Revolutions to Develop a Feminist Agenda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992).

keeping with this theorist's notion of counter-histories.¹⁷² The latter has been defined as comprising "those experiences and memories that have not been heard and integrated into official histories."¹⁷³ The *testimonios* examined in this thesis also comprise unheard and marginalised experiences and memories. They form an important part of the "critical battle against the monopolization of knowledge producing practices."¹⁷⁴ This thesis situates the analysis of these narratives in a context which acknowledges the role of political power in shaping history:

When it comes to knowledge of the past and the power associated with it, this [critical] battle involves resisting the 'omissions' and distortions of official histories, returning to lost voices and forgotten experiences, relating to the past from the perspective of the present in an alternative (out-of-the-mainstream) way.¹⁷⁵

The *testimonios* examined in this thesis prevent voices from being lost and experiences from being forgotten. They resist the distortions of US Cold War propaganda by presenting a range of personal experiences and politicised memories which contest the assumptions of the superpower. As we shall see in the remainder of this thesis, once the Cold War context and US ideological opposition to and military aggression against Latin American social movements have been taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that, despite the assertions of some critics, *testimonio* is most accurately categorised as counter-propaganda. We shall now examine the role of the photographic image in the texts studied, and the relationship between the photograph and the contestation of hegemonic narratives.

¹⁷² Michel Foucault and Donald F. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977).

¹⁷³ José Medina, "Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerrilla Pluralism*", *Foucault Studies*, no.12 (2011), 9 – 35, 12.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 13.

Photography

A variety of photographs is incorporated into the *testimonios* examined here. All texts include photographs, with the exception of Alicia Partnoy's publication, examined in the final chapter, which as we shall see instead makes use of drawings. The photographs incorporated into the other *testimonios* fall into the category of documentary photographs as: "In the broadest sense, all photography not intended purely as a means of artistic expression might be considered 'documentary', the photograph a visual document of an event, place, object, or person, providing evidence of a moment in time."¹⁷⁶ Further, documentary photography, like *testimonio*, is often described as committed to portraying events often overlooked by dominant narratives, with the hope of affecting the viewer: "Documentary photographers often see things that do not officially exist. Indignities. Cruelties. People pinned to a wall with fire hoses because they want to vote."¹⁷⁷ The photographic images presented in the texts examined here also document Latin American realities that are obscured by the aforementioned dominant narratives transmitted by the US during the Latin American Cold War.

The use of photography in *testimonio* can also be placed within a tradition of employing photography as a means to promote social change and political reform. In response to paternalistic, liberal photography, that sought to document, but also often monitor and police, the poor:

exhibitions exploring the lives of working people [were produced] in order to expose and question taken-for-granted social histories. Such projects inter-linked with work by feminists and radical labour historians, photography workshops were intended not only to assert

¹⁷⁶ Constance B. Schulz, "Documentary Photography", in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, Robin Lenman, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ebook, accessed throughout February 2013, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662716.001.0001/acref-9780198662716-e-437>.

¹⁷⁷ Kerry Tremain, "Introduction: Seeing and Believing", in *Witness in our Time*, Sebastião Salgado, ed., (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2000), 4.

alternative stories/histories (in terms of class, locality, gender, ethnicity) but also to empower people as makers of images.¹⁷⁸

Testimonio also employs the medium of photography as a means of political empowerment. As we shall see, workers' demonstrations and other mobilisations are presented in order to document but also to promote these political movements. The power of the photograph in the specific context of Latin America was raised in 1967 by Cuban author Edmundo Desnoes.

Desnoes passionately criticised the role of the photographic image in the maintenance of stereotypes first conceptualised during colonialism in his article titled "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo."¹⁷⁹ He argued that images of "playas desiertas, costumbres típicas y nativos serviciales" all served to create the image of an ideal paradise for tourist escapism. However, Desnoes points out that these images hide a brutal reality, one of poverty, hunger and "caos social."¹⁸⁰ Desnoes analyses photographic images of Cuba, Mexico and other "underdeveloped" nations, as reproduced in American publications such as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Time* and *Life*, to reveal the ways in which the images dehumanise the local population, criticise the Cuban Revolution and other leftist movements, and project unrealistic fantasies of an imagined paradise. Desnoes draws the significant conclusion that local populations internalise these deformed images:

Esta imagen del subdesarrollo no se limita sólo a los países condicionados por la publicidad norteamericana. Nosotros mismos somos también a veces víctimas de la forma en que los otros nos ven, y así perdemos con frecuencia nuestra perspectiva y nos falsificamos viviendo una mentira en lugar de comprender que se trata de una imagen proyectada. Nos vemos como nos ven desde los países industrializados: o como quisieran vernos.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Liz Wells, "Documentary and Photojournalism", in *The Photography Reader*, Liz Wells, ed., (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 253 – 254.

¹⁷⁹ "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo", Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista*, (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 65, 66 – 67.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 69.

In this context, the images used in the *testimonios* studied here attempt to assert a novel representation of Latin America and, in so doing, produce a new self-identification. In order to counter the photographic propaganda produced in the US, analysed in detail by Desnoes, Latin Americans are presented as political agents and empowered protagonists, resisting attempts to relegate them to positions of compliance, passivity and marginality.

The use of photography in *testimonio* may also be linked to attempts to counter capitalist consumerism. As Susan Sontag has argued: “A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race and sex.”¹⁸² Sontag also argues that images are used “as a spectacle (for the masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers).”¹⁸³ Sontag concludes that social change is replaced by a change in images. Needless to say, the photographic images in the *testimonios* studied here evidence attempts at real social change and therefore transform and redefine the role of the photograph as outlined by Sontag.

Several different types of photographs are included in the *testimonios*. Portraits and childhood photographs humanise and memorialise the individual *testimonialistas*, particularly in the Cuban examples. Photographs of social change, the construction of new schools in the case of the one of the Cuban texts, or workers’ demonstrations in the case of the Bolivian *testimonio*, document and promote political movements. Finally, quotidian images, of women with children and carrying out domestic chores or other day-to-day activities function as a type of documentary image to provide credibility to the written account and to deliver visual information regarding these activities to the reader. Where the photographs appear in the texts studied in this thesis, they will be described and analysed.

¹⁸² Susan Sontag, “The Image World”, in *On Photography*, (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 178.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 178.

Memory and Trauma Studies

While Sontag highlighted the role of photography to enforce social control, French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault emphasised the importance of control over memory as fundamental for maintaining the social and political order. He posited the term counter-memories to refer to “memories that differ from, and often challenge, dominant discourses,” much like the documentary photography alluded to above.¹⁸⁴ Counter-memories play a particularly important role in the wake of repressive regimes guilty of committing human rights abuses with impunity; they serve as a solemn reminder, preventing denial and erasure.¹⁸⁵ The *testimonios* examined here lend authority to other counter-memories, creating a framework from within which such accounts can be listened to, empowering and legitimising those who might otherwise be ignored. The *testimonios* describe massacres, widespread torture and other atrocities denied by the perpetrators. By articulating their memories, the *testimonialistas* hope to ensure that the victims of state violence in Latin America will not be forgotten.

Testimonio comprises collective, as well as personal and autobiographical, memory. The final chapter of this thesis presents testimonial narratives that juxtapose memories of incarceration written while free with memories of freedom experienced while incarcerated. The incorporation of memory studies into the comparative analysis of *testimonio* presented here challenges some of the categorisations and conceptualisations of memory studies, while engendering a more nuanced understanding of the testimonial genre.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Olick, Jeffrey K and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 109, 126. Michel Foucault and Donald F. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977).

¹⁸⁵ As argued by Andreas Langenohl. “Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies” in *Cultural Memory Studies: an International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds., (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 163. I borrow Langenohl’s notion of the “internationalization of memory.” *Ibid.*, 164. While Langenohl uses the term with reference to the Holocaust, this thesis refers instead to Cold War narratives.

¹⁸⁶ For a discussion of memory and the aforementioned work of Miguel Barnet, see William Luis, “The Politics of Memory and Miguel Barnet’s *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*” *Modern Language Notes* 104, no. 2 (1989): 475 – 491. Luis argues that the narrative is circular

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs coined the term “collective memory” to contend that memory is not an individual process, as it is mediated by and through language which is a social phenomenon.¹⁸⁷ Rejecting Freudian psychological accounts, Halbwachs argues that “it is impossible for individuals to remember in any coherent and persistent fashion outside of their group contexts.”¹⁸⁸ He maintains: “Every collective memory [...] requires the support of a group delimited in space and time” and that “while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember.”¹⁸⁹ The *testimonios* studied here confirm this view and are self-consciously representative and metonymical; they reject Western notions of individualism in favour of revolutionary conceptions of collective identity. The individual is seen as part of an oppressed class, race, nation and gender and the *testimonialistas* are motivated by the interests of the group rather than those of the individual.

Halbwachs also delineated a distinction between autobiographical memory and historical memory. He described the latter as that which “reaches the social actor only through written records” and is kept alive through commemorations which become focal points for engaged citizenship.¹⁹⁰ Evidently, *testimonio* is a written record and, as we shall see in the first and second chapters of this thesis, the events described become dates that are commemorated. The events of the Cuban *testimonios* examined in the first chapter, namely the 1953 Moncada barracks attack and the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, are commemorated in the texts of the second chapter which are published on the twentieth anniversaries of these events.

in that conditions for African-Cubans did not substantially change after the abolition of slavery, they worked on the same sugar plantations, as they were not qualified for other work.

¹⁸⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁸ Olick and Robbins, “Social Memory Studies”, 109.

¹⁸⁹ Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*, 21.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

In contrast to historical memory, autobiographical memory is defined as that of “events that we have personally experienced in the past.”¹⁹¹ Needless to say, this definition is equally applicable to *testimonio*. One might argue therefore that *testimonio* is a process through which autobiographical memory becomes historical memory; indeed Halbwachs acknowledges that the two categories might overlap and inform each other.¹⁹² Nevertheless Halbwachs maintained a distinction between personal or lived memory and historical or political memory, asserting that one only recognises the connection between lived events and those of political or historical significance “after the fact.”¹⁹³ Whilst this may be the case for those who do not actively engage with, or attempt to affect, political events, *testimonio* is written by those who do, and as such it disturbs Halbwachian distinctions, operating simultaneously at the level of historical and autobiographical, personal and collective memory.

Memory and trauma are closely related; the counter-memories alluded to above are often memories of traumatic experiences. Much like memory studies, the emerging field of trauma studies has not yet been extensively applied to *testimonio*, despite the obvious relevance. Trauma studies emerged relatively recently. In the wake of the Vietnam War (1955 – 1975) returning soldiers suffered from a range of symptoms eventually defined as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The American Psychiatric Association first incorporated a definition of PTSD into its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980.¹⁹⁴ Since then, our understanding of post-traumatic stress has been expanded, notably with Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, a seminal text on the subject of trauma and gender.¹⁹⁵ The most often quoted definition of trauma, from the American Psychiatric Association, as an event “outside the range of

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁹² Ibid., 52.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 53.

¹⁹⁴ Hunt. *Memory, War and Trauma*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1998).

normal human experience”, is dismissed by feminist psychiatrist Herman who argues that sexual and domestic violence are all too “normal” for many women.¹⁹⁶ Instead, she suggests that traumatic events are those which “involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence or death.”¹⁹⁷ Herman maintains that the current understanding of PTSD, which is primarily concerned with predominantly male soldiers and victims of natural disasters or other publicly visible atrocities, must be extended to acknowledge the more common instances of trauma among women who are victims of domestic violence and other forms of “prolonged, repeated trauma.”¹⁹⁸

Herman’s work enables a greater understanding of the psychological effects of patriarchal violence on women and its connections to and commonalities with political violence. The *testimonios* examined below inscribe both forms of potentially traumatic violence, as well as delineating gynocentric forms of resistance. Herman’s observations on incarceration and survivor missions will underpin the analysis of traumatised narratives presented here.¹⁹⁹ Her findings that resilience to trauma was shown in individuals with “high sociability, a thoughtful and active coping style, and a strong perception of their ability to control their destiny” are also relevant.²⁰⁰ As women with firm political convictions, the *testimonialistas* often manifest these characteristics. Her suggestion that there is a psychological need to reconstruct a personal life story to recover from trauma will also prove invaluable in presenting a new interpretation and understanding of the testimonial texts.²⁰¹ Herman argues

¹⁹⁶ Hunt, *Memory*, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 33.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118. To incorporate these victims, she coins a new concept, Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and describes sufferers as those who have been subject to “totalitarian control over a long period”, for example political prisoners and victims of domestic violence. She lists symptoms as: “Altercations in affect regulation, consciousness, self-perception, perception of the perpetrator and systems of meaning.” *Ibid.*, 121. This thesis does not mean to diagnose the *testimonialistas*, but it will draw on these observations when analysing their narratives.

¹⁹⁹ Those who engage in a survivor mission “transform the meaning of their personal tragedy by making it a basis for social action.” This can take the form of participation in related organisations and “pursuing justice” against perpetrators. *Testimonio* is arguably such an attempt to hold perpetrators of state violence to account. *Ibid.*, 207 – 209.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁰¹ Importance of integrating traumatic memory into life story, *ibid.*, 175 – 181.

that trauma can operate on both an individual and a collective level. The *testimonios* studied here can be seen as attempts to prevent denial and erasure, common responses to trauma, and facilitate a narrative that might assist both the victims and the traumatised society in coming to terms with atrocities witnessed or experienced.²⁰² If, as Herman maintains: “The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma,” then *testimonio* could be read as the cathartic inscription of this proclamation.²⁰³

This thesis does not aim to diagnose post-traumatic stress disorder in the texts or the *testimonialistas*. Rather the field of trauma studies is sporadically referred to in order to analyse the narratives of women who have experienced extreme adversity such as political violence and torture during incarceration. The field is suggested as one potential way of analysing testimonial narratives drawing on the tendency within Critical Theory and Cultural Studies to refer to the psychological realm as a means of literary, discourse analysis.²⁰⁴

While the aspects of Herman’s work outlined above are found to be relevant to some of the texts examined in this thesis, Herman has been criticised, notably by Ann Cvetkovich, in *An Archive of Feelings*. Cvetkovich rejects what she perceives as Herman’s “search for a universal model of trauma because it runs the risk of erasing essential differences between traumatic experiences, differences of historical context and geopolitical location, as well as the specificities of individual experiences.”²⁰⁵ Further, Cvetkovich takes issue with the definition of trauma as a catastrophic event; she examines more

²⁰² “Denial, repression and dissociation operate in a social as well as an individual level.” Ibid., 2. See also: Jeffrey Alexander, “Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity” in *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 85 – 108.

²⁰³ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1.

²⁰⁴ See for example James Berger, “Trauma and Literary Theory.” *Contemporary Literature*. 38, no. 3 (1997): 569 – 582, which reviews Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) and Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁰⁵ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 30 - 1.

diffuse and insidious forms of trauma, resulting from oppressive social and political structures. The *testimonialistas* examined here arguably experience both forms of trauma; due to their position as Latin American, indigenous, socialist and working class women, they are subjected to structural, and intersecting, forms of trauma. Nevertheless, the application of trauma studies in this thesis acknowledges the importance of Cvetkovich's observations.

A significant element of trauma studies relates to the Holocaust. Perhaps the most famous account of this type is that of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. Their study, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, approaches the subject of trauma from a pedagogical perspective. The texts they examine and refer to throughout "were all written and produced consequent to the historic trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider a watershed of our times and which the book will come to view not as an event encapsulated in the past, but as a history which is essentially not over..."²⁰⁶ Despite the fact that the European context they are working within differs from the Latin American realities of the *testimonialistas*, they make observations regarding the nature of testimony which is applicable to the texts examined here. They argue that testimony does not offer "a completed statement", rather testimony is "a discursive *practice*, as opposed to pure *theory*." To testify "is to accomplish as *speech act*, rather than to simply formulate a statement. As a performative speech act, testimony in effect addresses what in history is *action* that exceeds any substantialized significance, and what in happenings is *impact* that dynamically explodes any conceptual reifications and any constative delimitations."²⁰⁷

Whilst Herman, Cvetkovich, Laub and Felman may shed considerable light on the act of testifying and its relationship to trauma, as mentioned above, they all inhabit a reality far removed from the state violence and terror, combat and guerrilla warfare experienced by the *testimonialistas*. Needless to say, Western notions of the individual self and the "working through" of trauma with, for

²⁰⁶ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), xiv.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 5. (Emphasis in the original.)

example, a psychotherapist are a far cry from what the *testimonialistas* are experiencing when they construct their life narrative, or when their testimony is crafted into a *testimonio* by a facilitator. This thesis does not mean to force Eurocentric notions of psychotherapy onto Latin American experiences. Rather, it is argued here that Western notions of the importance of the self are largely disregarded by the *testimonialistas* as the revolutionary collective is put forward as a political imperative, and perhaps also, a type of psychological coping mechanism.

For a more appropriate theoretical framework, we can turn to the work of Nancy Hollander. In *Uprooted Minds: Surviving the Politics of Terror in the Americas. Psychoanalysis, History, Memoir*, she examines how:

progressive psychoanalysts engage in social activism on behalf of human rights and redistributive justice they believe to be the fundamental social matrix for collective psychological health. By illuminating themes related to the mutual effects of social power and ideology, large group dynamics and unconscious fantasies, affects and defences, I hope to encourage reflection about our experience as social/psychological subjects.”²⁰⁸

This thesis likewise aims to examine the work of the *testimonialistas* as social/psychological subjects. The objective here is not to provide a therapeutic or clinical diagnosis based on the texts, but rather to begin a new analysis of the difficult experiences that are expressed in the *testimonios*, which is informed by an awareness of the psychological dimension, as it is believed that this element has been neglected in the scholarship thus far.

The relationship between trauma, economic disparity and counter-insurgency violence has been articulated in Naomi Klein’s international best seller, *The Shock Doctrine*. Klein quotes the Central Intelligence Agency’s *Counterintelligence Interrogation* manual on the deliberate induction of “a kind of psychological shock or paralysis” which “is caused by a traumatic or sub-traumatic experience”, with the result that the prisoner is “far more open to suggestion” and “far likelier to comply.”²⁰⁹ Klein finds that, just as the CIA

²⁰⁸ Nancy Hollander, *Uprooted Minds: Surviving the Politics of Terror in the Americas. Psychoanalysis, History, Memoir* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), xviii.

encourages torture with the specific aim of traumatising prisoners so that they are “so regressed” that they cannot “think rationally or protect their own interests”, so Milton Friedman also advocated the use of destabilisation, shock and crisis to implement neo-liberal policies while civil society defences were down.²¹⁰ Klein maintains: “Like the terrorized prisoner who gives up the names of comrades and renounces his faith, shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect.”²¹¹ As Herman suggests, trauma and terror therefore operate on both individual and societal levels:

Terror is used to engineer compliant behaviour not only among victims, but also among larger target populations. While victims suffer direct consequences, broad sectors of society are the principal target. The underlying goal of state terrorism is to eliminate potential power contenders and to impose silence and political paralysis, thereby consolidating existing power relations.²¹²

Silence and paralysis, a result of shock, are common initial responses to trauma. Through the strategy of producing an autobiographical narrative that presents the revolutionary female protagonist as resilient and defiant, the *testimonios* examined here seek to resist the use of trauma and terror to enforce submission and silence at both the individual and the national level, by the military and neo-liberal economists. The texts memorialise instances of female resilience in the face of potentially traumatising state violence. They present psychological coping strategies and political, economic alternatives.

Two of the *testimonialistas* studied here, Haydée Santamaría and Alicia Partnoy, present fragmented narratives which show signs of some psychological distress. However, most other *testimonialistas*, despite undergoing the potentially traumatic experiences of armed conflict, incarceration, torture and witnessing the death of loved ones, are defiant. The

²⁰⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, *Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation*, (1963) as quoted in Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2007), 15.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹² McSherry, *Predatory States*, 6.

testimonialistas demonstrate various signs of psychological resilience.²¹³ Stephen Joseph and Alex Linley have argued persuasively that following extreme adversity psychological growth can take place in the form of “changes in life philosophy” including a clearer understanding of one’s purpose in life, “changes in perceptions of self” including personal growth and self-acceptance as well as the development of more positive relationships with others.²¹⁴ In most of the narratives examined here, a renewed sense of purpose, increased political conviction, determination and a stronger sense of solidarity among survivors are noticeable. The *testimonialistas* largely confirm Herman’s argument that the “solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience.”²¹⁵ A strong sense of identity and collective purpose enabled the women to locate difficult experiences of violence and incarceration within a wider political narrative that accounts for, and seeks to resist, the underlying cause of these experiences. While critics thus far have not assessed the psychological context of or motivations for producing *testimonios*, a noteworthy factor must be the desire to “speak out”, to prevent further atrocities, to strengthen one’s own sense of self and to legitimise the experiences of other survivors.

Trauma and testimony are inextricably linked. Much work on trauma, including Herman’s clinical study, relies on the testimonies of survivors.²¹⁶ It has been argued that trauma involves “the impossibility of assigning meaning to past occurrences, by the inability to incorporate [them] in a narrative.”²¹⁷ Creating a testimonial narrative can therefore assist in recovery from trauma. Chilean psychologists Elizabeth Lira and Eugenia Weinstein published “The Testimony of Political Repression as a Therapeutic Instrument”, under the

²¹³ Stephen Joseph and Alex Linley, *Trauma, Recovery and Growth. Positive Psychological Perspectives on Posttraumatic Stress* (New Jersey: John Wiley, 2008).

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 214.

²¹⁶ Herman explains that the “testimony of trauma survivors” informs her findings. *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹⁷ Jelin, *State Repression and Struggles for Memory*, 17.

pseudonyms Cienfuegos and Monelli in 1983.²¹⁸ Interestingly, the method employed by Lira and Weinstein (the testimony is first recorded by the therapist, a transcript is then transformed with the patient into a written document) is similar to the method used to construct the *testimonios* studied in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis. The method was discovered inadvertently; testimonies were originally recorded to testify to the brutality of the torture undergone, to contest official denial. Meanwhile “therapeutic effects observed among those who took part in the process of testimony indicated its potential use as a healing device.”²¹⁹ Most of those who testified noticed a marked reduction in symptoms; much like Freud’s “talking cure”, Lira and Weinstein’s testimony method acts as a form of catharsis. By articulating their experiences survivors can experience relief from symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Due to the fact that if a reaction is suppressed, the affect remains in the memory: “An insult retaliated, be it only in words, is differently recalled than one that has to be taken in silence [...] the reaction of an injured person to trauma might be said to be truly “cathartic” only if it is expressed in a form equal to the insult, a form such as revenge.”²²⁰ Here it could be argued that *testimonio* is a form of revenge – the construction of a public narrative that names and calls to account those who have carried out atrocities. This is supported by the assertion that the testimony method was successful because “it channelled the patients’ anger into a socially constructive action – production of a document that could be used as an indictment against the offenders.”²²¹

As an explanation of the power of testimony, Freud and Liberman are referred to in order to argue “that language not only symbolizes experience, but also sets object-conscious processes in motion through verbalization of experience”

²¹⁸ Ana Julia Cienfuegos and Christina Monelli, “The Testimony of Political Repression as a Therapeutic Instrument.” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 53, no.1 (1983): 43 – 51. They explain that they have been working “in a mental health program created to provide psychotherapeutic assistance to individuals persecuted by the military government” in Chile and that they use pseudonyms “for reasons of security.” *Ibid.*, 43.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

and that auto-assertiveness, epistemological and ontological understandings are all formed through language.²²² In keeping with arguments articulated above, Lira and Weinstein conclude that:

The therapeutic process of testimony helps patients to integrate the traumatic experience into their lives by identifying its significance in the context of political and social events as well as the context of their personal history. [...] In summary, the testimony acts by restoring affective ties, by orienting aggression in a constructive manner, and by integrating fragmented experiences.²²³

The findings of Lira and Weinstein formed the basis of the book *Trauma and Healing under State Terrorism* by psychologist Inger Agger and psychiatrist Søren Buus Jensen which saliently they describe as “a map of the psychological strategies of terror and of the counter-strategies against them, seen through the Chilean ‘prism.’”²²⁴ As well as counter-memory, therefore, *testimonio* can also be seen as a counter-strategy. Counter-insurgency tactics are met with resilience both physically at the site of their implementation, and culturally through the construction of defiant counter- narratives.

To analyse the significance of trauma and catharsis in the texts written by the *testimonialistas*, as opposed to an editor/narrator, Suzette Henke’s notion of “scriptotherapy” is particularly useful.²²⁵ Henke argues that as well as being alleviated through the “talking cure” trauma can also be addressed with scriptotherapy or “the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment.”²²⁶ The notion of *testimonio* as catharsis is, therefore, equally applicable to the texts that are primarily written testimonies.²²⁷ Henke finds that different types of women’s

²²² Ibid., 45.

²²³ Ibid., 50.

²²⁴ Inger Agger and Søren Buus Jensen, *Trauma and Healing Under State Terrorism* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1996), 3.

²²⁵ Suzette Henke, *Shattered Subjects. Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life Writing* (New York: St Martin’s press. 2000).

²²⁶ Ibid., xii.

²²⁷ James Pennebaker has written extensively on the subject of the healing power of writing and self-disclosure. Unlike Henke he does not incorporate a gendered analysis. See James W.

autobiography have common themes. *Testimonio* can be included in her description of texts that inscribe “an author attempting to fashion an enabling discourse of testimony and self-revelation, to establish a sense of agency.”²²⁸

As well as helping to explain the psychological motivations and emotional disposition of the *testimonialista*, trauma studies can also shed new light on the construction of the *testimonios* and the inconsistencies ostensibly highlighted by Stoll. Menchú underwent a series of potentially traumatising experiences and while Stoll and numerous other critics have failed to recognise that *testimonios* are traumatised narratives, trauma has been shown to have a profound effect on memory and the ability to construct a coherent narrative. Traumatic memories are difficult to cognitively process, as a result the individual may experience repression of traumatic memories and forgetfulness while simultaneously becoming troubled by uncontrollable, unusually intense, invasive memories. Trauma can “fundamentally affect the processes of memory” and “may affect neurological functions, changing the way that survivors think.”²²⁹ As a result, memories of traumatic experiences can be unusually vivid but also fragmented. Most *testimonios* examined here have been mediated by an editor who, working on the assumption that it was necessary for comprehension, ironed out inconsistencies and rearranged the narrative, in some cases chronologically. Nevertheless, when analysing the *testimonios*, especially those of Haydée Santamaría in the first chapter and Alicia Partnoy in the last, it is illuminating to consider the effects of trauma on memory and the ability to construct a coherent narrative.

While it can be argued that some clinical studies of trauma are therefore relevant to *testimonio*, there is profound disagreement amongst trauma studies theorists with regards to the nature and theoretical grounding of the field. Opinions can be divided into two general camps; on the one hand, Cathy

Pennbaker, *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1997). On “working through” see also Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

²²⁸ Henke, *Shattered Subjects*, xvi.

²²⁹ Kim Lacy Rogers and Selma Leydesdorff, *Trauma. Life Stories of Survivors* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 4.

Caruth, professor of comparative literature and English, argues for an understanding of trauma founded on readings of Lacan, Kant and Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*.²³⁰ From a theoretical position she maintains that cultural trauma is essentially "incomprehensible."²³¹ Caruth argues that post-structuralist questions with regards to the ambiguity of language and its relationship to history can be solved through an analysis of trauma.²³² On the other hand, Wulf Kansteiner, a professor of history, and Harald Weilnböck, an expert in cultural and media studies, passionately take issue with Caruth's approach. In their article "Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma" they argue that Caruth paradoxically claims that trauma is unspeakable and yet simultaneously that it provides unique insight into the human condition.²³³ They assert instead that "the limits of representation can be explored and overcome in some contexts and by way of a number of different representational strategies."²³⁴ In accordance with this argument, this thesis suggests that *testimonio* is an example of such a representational strategy. Caruth's theoretical approach is incompatible with the study of traumatic testimonial narratives, as her abstraction has the effect of obscuring the lived realities presented in the texts. Kansteiner and Weilnböck contend that, for the victim of trauma, "Caruth's exuberant aesthetization and valorization of trauma appears ruthless, perhaps even cynical" as she and other critics are against "efforts to verbalize and integrate traumatic experiences" because such efforts will apparently destroy

²³⁰ See Cathy Caruth, *Trauma. Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

²³¹ Caruth, *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*, 6, 58.

²³² *Ibid.*, 73.

²³³ Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck, "Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma" in *Media and Cultural Memory: Cultural Memory Studies: an International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds. (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 229 – 240.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

their conception of trauma.²³⁵ In keeping with the findings outlined above, Kansteiner and Weilnböck maintain:

[T]he indiscriminate rejection of narrative renders the deconstructive trauma paradigm incompatible with the results of clinical research which has shown consistently that integrating traumatic experiences within narrative frameworks is an indispensable tool of psychotherapy and that narrative forms of representation help groups and collective entities to come to terms with violence and its mental and social consequences.²³⁶

The inclusion of clinical and psychological approaches to trauma are fully justified as the authors, through numerous examples, claim that to ignore clinical aspects of trauma is, at best, to fail to understand trauma and, at worse, to aggravate suffering. Accordingly, this thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach, while staying close to the texts themselves and the traumatic lived realities they recount.

Narrative Discourse Analysis and Techniques of Narrative Fiction

To testify is to produce a narrative of a lived experience. Therefore, analysis of *testimonio* should not be divorced from an understanding of how narratives are constructed and how they achieve their desired effect. The work of French literary theorist Gerard Genette is incorporated here to analyse paratext and narrative discourse. Needless to say, the *testimonios* are not fictional, but rather based on lived experience, yet “the procedures used in the analysis of fiction may be applied to texts conventionally defined as ‘non-fiction.’”²³⁷ Literary aspects of *testimonio* are examined in this thesis to contribute to discussions of the genre, as Moreiras has observed: “The literary status of *testimonio* is a hotly debated issue.”²³⁸ In addition, Linda Craft maintains:

²³⁵ Ibid., 233.

²³⁶ Ibid., 233.

²³⁷ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

²³⁸ Alberto Moreiras, “The Aura of Testimonio” in *The Exhaustion of Difference. The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 215.

“Part of the debate over the literary “worthiness” of testimony centers on its often blatant politicization. It can seem more a pamphlet than a work of art.”²³⁹ Here I argue that in addition to its political objectives, *testimonio* is often also literary, incorporating a range of stylistic techniques usually employed in fiction.

These critical debates underscore the variety of the genre. The *testimonios* examined in this thesis vary greatly. They range from transcripts of first-person speech, first-person epistolary and diary writing, to interview transcripts with a third person narrator/editor. The latter, more common, interview transcript strategy is also considerably diverse: for example, Randall’s early work includes her questions in an apparently unedited format, while in the *testimonios* studied in chapter four there is no evidence of the questions that were asked or the editing decisions taken. Throughout the thesis, the paratexts of the *testimonios* are examined in order to reveal the ways in which editing strategies attempt to contain and direct the first-person *testimonio*. The effect of these different strategies and formats cannot be overstated; the readers’ experience of the *testimonio* is transformed according to the ways in which the *testimonialista*’s account is presented. The youthful poetry of Olga Alonso and Haydée Santamaria’s hesitant speech are both contained within a pro-revolutionary paratext which discourages unorthodox readings of these texts, examined in the first two chapters of this thesis. Meanwhile, the factual nature of the first-person writing of Alicia Partnoy and Nidia Díaz is reaffirmed by their paratexts which seem to downplay the fictionalised and literary aspects of their texts. *Testimonio* is an exceptionally diverse, hybrid genre; however, strong differences in format and structure notwithstanding, the texts demonstrate substantial thematic concurrences. It is perhaps due to the accommodating and varied nature of the genre that such a wide range of women’s experiences can be incorporated.

In the first chapter of this thesis the paratexts examined include prefatorial texts, photographs, footnotes and chapter titles. In the following chapter, the paratext includes prefatorial texts, dedications and chapter titles while in the

²³⁹ Craft, *Novels of Testimony*, 6.

third chapter the paratext includes prefatorial texts, chapter titles, and also photography. In Chapter Four the paratext incorporates prefatorial texts, including maps and appendices, footnotes and photography. In the fifth and final chapter the paratext includes prefatorial texts, including appendices and maps, as well as footnotes, photography and drawings. The paratext of each text studied will be identified and examined more closely throughout the following five chapters.

G rard Genette creates a series of distinctions and categorisations, as well as observations regarding paratexts, which can be fruitfully applied to Latin American testimonial literature.²⁴⁰ Genette’s distinction between heterodiegetic narrators, who are absent from the story they tell, and homodiegetic narrators who are present in the story as a character, is applicable here.²⁴¹ The *testimonios* inscribe both types of narrators – the anonymous Cuban narrators of the first and second chapters and Margaret Randall of the third are heterodiegetic, while *testimonialistas* Nidia D az and Alicia Partnoy from the final chapter, are homodiegetic narrators. This distinction is significant, as, in the *testimonios* with intrusive heterodiegetic narrators, the relationship between the editor and the first-person narrative of the *testimonialistas* becomes a site of contestation. Particularly in the Cuban texts of the first chapter, a paradox emerges as the narrator struggles to contain the first person narration of revolutionary *guerrilleras* within acceptable patriarchal parameters.

To return to the subject of paratexts, Genette defines the same as that which “enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public.”²⁴² A variety of paratextual strategies, such as the anonymity of the editors, the production and presentation of the preface, intertitles and footnotes, present a particular message about the *testimonios* to

²⁴⁰ G rard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

²⁴² G rard Genette, *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 1.7

the reader as mentioned above. Through the paratextual techniques identified by Genette, notions of veracity and authenticity continually resurface. In the Cuban texts the paratext also comes into conflict with the first-person narration of the *testimonialistas*, attempting to direct and manage transgressions. Editors Margaret Randall in the third chapter, and Moema Viezzer and Medea Benjamin in the fourth chapter, ensure that their paratexts uphold counter-propagandic, socialist feminist objectives. The paratext of Alicia Partnoy's heavily fictionalised *testimonio* stresses the factual nature of the account. By examining the ways in which the paratexts interact with the *testimonios*, the texts' construction are analysed and the objectives are ascertained.

The way in which analysis of narrative fiction has been divided into three aspects is also relevant to *testimonio*; Rimmon-Kenan's tripartite division comprises: the events that are narrated, the text which represents these events, and the act of narrating. The life story of the *testimonialista* corresponds with the first aspect, the testimonial texts with the second, and the act of testifying with the act of narrating.²⁴³ This thesis focuses on the second aspect as this is the most immediately accessible.

Several techniques of fiction are employed by the *testimonialistas*. In relation to the concept of time and chronology, homodiegetic analepsis (narration of an event after more recent occurrences have been described by the narrator who experienced both events) is employed.²⁴⁴ Memories, of childhood or earlier periods of political organisation often in rural areas, are in this way juxtaposed against more recent narration. The texts make creative use of pace, both acceleration and deceleration are effectively utilised.²⁴⁵ This has the effect of emphasising certain aspects of the *testimonialistas*' lived experiences, typically their political involvement. With regards to characterisation, the *testimonialistas* use both direct definition, naming character traits using nouns and adjectives, and indirect presentation, displaying character traits and

²⁴³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 3.

²⁴⁴ Homodiegetic analepsis, *ibid.*, 47.

²⁴⁵ Acceleration and deceleration, *ibid.*, 53.

allowing the reader to infer their implications.²⁴⁶ In the Cuban examples, these techniques of characterisation are employed to present exemplary revolutionary citizens. In later examples, characterisation is also used for a contrastive effect, to criticise Western feminists and to demonstrate the immorality of soldiers and the police force.²⁴⁷

The concept of focalisation is also significant for testimonial literature; the *testimonios* are presented from a particular stand point and through an ideological lens. The *testimonialistas* can be described as fixed, retrospective and subjective focalisers.²⁴⁸ The ideological facet of focalisation, through which the norms, concepts and world view of the narrator inform how events and characters are presented in the text, is particularly relevant.²⁴⁹ In the case of the women's *testimonio*, the ideology of the focaliser is of an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and gynocentric disposition. Finally, the notion of the implied or ideal reader is another aspect that can successfully be applied to *testimonio*.²⁵⁰ This thesis maintains that *testimonios* written and edited by women assume a female implied reader, as often substantiated or implied by the editors and paratexts.²⁵¹ However, a detailed examination of readers' responses to *testimonio* lies beyond the spatial and temporal limitations of this thesis.²⁵²

²⁴⁶ Indirect presentation has been divided into the description of traits to do with action, speech, external appearance and environment, *ibid.*, 59 – 67.

²⁴⁷ Dora Alonso employs characterisation extensively as we shall see in Chapter Two. Domitila Barrios de Chungara characterises Western feminists critically in Chapter Four. Nidia Díaz negatively portrays the police through characterisation in Chapter Five.

²⁴⁸ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 79, 87.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 82, 83.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁵¹ When the term “reader” is employed henceforth, the notion of an implied reader is suggested.

²⁵² See Nance, “A Genre Without an Addressee? Readers, Rhetoric and Resistance” in *Can Literature Promote Justice*, 48 – 65. See also Kumaraswami, “Reading Women’s Self-Writing”; the doctoral thesis includes analysis of readers’ responses to Cuban *testimonio*.

Chapter One examines two early examples of Cuban *testimonio* produced to commemorate the lives of iconic female revolutionaries. Haydée Santamaría's memories of the failed Moncada Barracks attack of 1953 challenge principal tenets of the Cuban Revolutionary ideology and politicise motherhood, failing to simplistically reproduce revolutionary Cuban narratives.²⁵³ The more widely known, collectively edited *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable*, is also riven with paradoxes and contradictions as it renegotiates post-revolutionary gender roles.²⁵⁴ These texts reject US Cold War rhetoric and simplistic portrayals of the Cuban Revolution. However, far from presenting a monolithic endorsement of the Revolution, *Tania* inscribes a struggle between the heterodiegetic editors and the first-person narration of the exemplary revolutionary heroine, Haydée Tamara Bide Bunker, who professes a dedication to armed warfare and a passion for shooting. Third-person memories of her contrast with her own account as the paratext attempts to tame these unfeminine passions, assuring the reader that despite her revolutionary zeal, "Tania la guerrillera" had always planned on marrying and having children. Haydée is also presented as a mother who enjoyed ironing and cleaning. These attempts to contain the significance of the *guerrilleras* can be placed in the context, highlighted above, of US propaganda equating communism with the "unnatural" subversion of patriarchal norms.

Chapter Two examines more explicitly literary texts, *El Año de 61* by prolific Cuban fiction writer Dora Alonso and *Testimonios* by Olga Alonso, an unusual collection of poems, letters and diary entries.²⁵⁵ Both of the texts were produced to commemorate revolutionary volunteering efforts in Cuba and they overlap with the theme of conflict in the *guerrillera* texts as altercations with the US appear in the narratives. Nevertheless, the commemorative paratext of the former text is challenged by its personal and literary content. Dora Alonso

²⁵³ The text was first published in 1967 as we shall see in Chapter One. Haydée Santamaría, *Haydée habla del Moncada* (Melbourne, New York, Havana: Ocean Press, 2005).

²⁵⁴ Marta Rojas and Mirta Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable* (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1970).

²⁵⁵ Dora Alonso, *El Año de 61* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1981). Olga Alonso, *Testimonios* (La Habana: Editorial Gente Nueva, 1973).

reveals uncertainties and emotions of fear and reluctance that do not map easily on to the rhetoric of bravery and valour disseminated in the wake of the 1961 Bay of Pigs attack. Her career in fictional writing results in a hybrid text which employs literary techniques such as characterisation, pace, alliteration and the juxtaposition of benevolent and malevolent natural imagery. Olga Alonso's text is more unorthodox, stylistically varied and unique.

Psychological difficulties are explored through poetry and epistolary writing which are found to therapeutically articulate adolescent emotions of frustration and distress. Natural imagery expresses sexual desire through poetic techniques. The variety and complexity of these rarely studied, original Cuban *testimonios* is revealed as the poetic, the fictional and the personal converge with the political rhetoric of the Revolution.

The third chapter studies *testimonios* edited by socialist feminist Margaret Randall. The Cuban Revolution is not uncritically promoted in *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* and, in the case of *Todas estamos despiertas/Sandino's Daughters*, the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua are justified in the face of US opposition and evaluated from a gynocentric perspective.²⁵⁶ Randall is primarily a feminist and her endorsement of these socialist governments is complicated by her dedication to gender equality. The texts overlap with those of the first two chapters as the former was published in Cuba and it cautiously celebrates the steps towards gender equality taken in that country. Similarly, despite the institutionalisation of the *Sandinista* movement, Randall and her *testimonialistas* remain critical of the maintenance of normative gender roles in Nicaragua. Further, the *Sandinista* victory is framed by the violence caused by US support for the Somoza dictatorship on the one hand, and US intervention in the form of the Contra War on the other. Gendered torture, resulting from counter-insurgency policies, is a recurring theme as opposition to US intervention is voiced. Personal pronouns are creatively employed to reinforce the sense of a united, politicised female collective whilst also reinforcing the physical and psychological isolation of

²⁵⁶ Margaret Randall, *Sandino's Daughters* (London: Zed Press, 1981); *Todas estamos despiertas. Testimonios de la mujer Nicaragüense de hoy* (Distrito Federal: Siglo veintiuno editores, 1980); *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* (Habana: Casa de Las Américas, 1978).

incarceration, motherhood and domesticity. Female solidarity and women's political radicalisation are suggested as forms of resistance to the violence of counter-revolutionary forces and sexism among *compañeros*.

The gynocentric, fully autobiographical accounts of Domitila Barrios de Chungara and Elvia Alvarado, edited by feminist activists Moema Viezzer and Medea Benjamin respectively, are examined in Chapter Four.²⁵⁷ The Contra War is scrutinised from a Honduran perspective, as that country was heavily militarised as a result of the conflict, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara's attempt to inspire guerrilla war in Bolivia is assessed from the point of view of Bolivian miners and their families. Both texts categorically reject Cold War discourse, US intervention in Central and Latin America, and counter-insurgency strategies, testifying to the repression of Bolivian trade unions and Honduran land movements, neither of which were connected to Soviet Communism. Dialogue, imagery and comedic exaggeration are employed to critique sexist men of the Left as well as liberal Western feminists, as a specifically Latin American gynocentricity is articulated. Both *testimonialistas* categorically reject sexist attitudes and traditions while refusing to conform to patriarchal gendered identities and norms.

The final chapter presents memories of incarceration; while Nidia Díaz passionately denounces the role of the US in El Salvador, Alicia Partnoy poignantly recreates the atmosphere of the counter-insurgency concentration camps that operated during the aforementioned Argentinean "Dirty War."²⁵⁸ Díaz employs literary techniques such as natural imagery and dialogue to recreate her psychological experience of solitary confinement and she returns us to Cuba, as she travels there on her release. Partnoy's account is the most fictionalised of all the texts examined here. She makes creative use of shifting narrative perspective and gendered natural imagery, as she demonstrates her

²⁵⁷ Domitila Barrios de Chungara y Moema Viezzer, *Si me permiten hablar... Testimonio de Domitila una mujer de las minas de Bolivia* (Distrito Federal: Siglo veintiuno editores, primera edición, 1977. Decimoséptima edición, 1999). Elvia Alvarado and Medea Benjamin, *Don't be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989).

²⁵⁸ Nidia Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1988). Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School. Tales of Disappearance and Survival*, trans. Alicia Partnoy, Lois Athey and Sandra Braunstein (San Francisco: Midnight Editions, 1986).

attempts to resist the violence of the Argentine military. Her aesthetically original, highly literary *testimonio* completes the spectrum of women's testimonial literature analysed throughout this thesis. None of the texts examined in this thesis have received sustained critical attention; where secondary sources are available, these can be found in the relevant chapters.

Chapter One

Paradoxes and Patriarchy: *Guerrilleras and Testimonio in Cuba*

Female guerrilla fighters played a significant role in the Cuban Revolution. In her study, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives*, Cynthia Enloe proposes that guerrilla conflicts have the potential to challenge women's position of subordination under patriarchy as they "seem to open up possibilities for reducing the stratified sexual division of labour and trivialisation of women's needs that so mark state military force."¹ In contrast she then concludes that female participation in guerrilla wars has not been liberating for women but rather: "Many liberation armies were themselves built on sexual divisions of labour" as women were relegated to auxiliary posts while men engaged in combat.² Enloe's apparently contradictory analysis is relevant to Cuba, where female participation did not end the sexual division of labour but did present a challenge to traditional gender roles. This chapter will examine the fraught relationship between patriarchal paratexts and transgressive first-person narratives in two Cuban *guerrillera testimonios*: *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable*, compiled and edited by Marta Rojas and Mirta Rodríguez Calderón, published in 1970, and *Haydée habla del Moncada*, by Haydée Santamaría, first published in 1967.³

Lois Smith and Alfred Padula argue that *guerrilleras* in Cuba mobilised their femininity strategically: "At one level women played their traditional role as helpers – raising money, giving shelter, teaching, nursing. As couriers they exploited the stereotypical image of women as innocent and incompetent and

¹ Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora Press, 1988), 160.

² *Ibid.*, 161.

³ Marta Rojas and Mirta Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable* [sic] (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1970). Haydée Santamaría, *Haydée habla del Moncada* (Melbourne, New York, Havana: Ocean Press, 2005).

were thus able to foil the dictator's police."⁴ Women also engaged in more central roles that contrasted sharply with the notion that they were not suited to combat: "Women made and planted bombs and hurled Molotov cocktails. And some women entered the revolutionary pantheon as heroic martyrs."⁵ The first *testimonio* studied in this chapter commemorates the life of Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider, who died a "heroic martyr" in the Bolivian guerrilla war, through a diversity of *testimonios* which contradictorily portray her revolutionary contribution and conformity to normative gender roles.⁶ The *testimonio* of Haydée Santamaría, who participated in the 1953 Moncada barracks attack and the guerrilla war in the Sierra Maestra, is examined next. She is also idealised as an iconic *guerrillera* and her *testimonio* is framed as heroic and celebratory. However, her first-person narration diverges from this framework as it rejects revolutionary violence and conveys arguably traumatised memories and gynocentric experiences.⁷

The participation of Haydée Santamaría and other women in the guerrilla conflicts that preceded the Revolution arguably had the effect of legitimising calls for women's equality in Cuba. The *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (FMC) was founded in 1960 and legislation for women's equality, such as the Maternity Law (1974) and the Family Code (1975), was also passed.⁸ However, despite these legislative advances, *machista* attitudes were still common in post-revolutionary society and the patriarchal status quo largely remained intact.⁹ The discrepancies between the paratext of the *testimonios*

⁴ Lois Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution. Women in Socialist Cuba* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

⁶ Tamara Bunke is described as the female counterpart to Che Guevara, a "myth and legend." Miller, *Latin American Women*, 167.

⁷ Haydée was recognised with the Ana Betancourt Medal. Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 48. For more on Moncada see Marta Rojas, *El grito del Moncada* (La Habana: Editora Política, 1986).

⁸ Maternity Law and Family Code, Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 104. Founding of FMC, *ibid.*, 32.

⁹ Catherine Davies argues that demands on women increased in post-revolutionary Cuba as women continued disproportionate domestic labour and childcare, while also contending with food shortages and meetings etc. Catherine Davies, *A Place in the Sun? Women Writers in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997), 120. Hamilton also

and the voices of the *guerrilleras*, examined below, are indicative of the novel questions and challenges that arose as female gender roles were reconfigured in keeping with the needs and values of the Cuban Revolution.

Women's involvement in revolutionary movements has been closely tied to concerns for female equality and liberation. As we saw in the Introduction, Karen Kampwirth has examined the motivations for and consequences of female participation in guerrilla war in Latin America.¹⁰ Through interviews with two hundred women, she discovered a connection between fighting for social justice and believing in gender equality.¹¹ Women's mobilisation as guerrilla fighters led them to become feminist activists due to three main factors: ideological awareness-raising, especially on issues such as egalitarianism; organisational skills developed whilst clandestinely supporting the male *guerrilleros*; and contacts with other politically conscious women.¹² The editors of the *testimonios* examined in this chapter arguably attempt to neutralise this feminist potential by stressing the *guerrilleras*' submission to male leaders and familial roles, foregrounding their apparent beauty, caring nature and ability to carry out domestic tasks, as well as suggesting that their involvement in armed conflict was an exception to an otherwise traditionally feminine character, brought about by the force of their revolutionary convictions. The involvement of politically conscious women in the revolutionary process may have led to the aforementioned legislative improvements for women; however it also arguably caused friction as post-revolutionary political power structures remained male dominated. Increased female participation also provided opportunities for male leaders to legitimise their revolutionary regime in the face of opposition, through the appearance of gender equality.

notes the "triple shift" Cuban women are expected to undertake involving paid work, domestic labour and political activity. See Carrie Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions in Cuba: Passion, Politics and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 31, 91.

¹⁰ Karen Kampwirth, *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004) and also by Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements. Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba*. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Kampwirth, *Feminism and Legacy of Revolution*, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5 – 6.

Lynn Stoner examines the way in which Cuban revolutionary discourse employed the image of politically active women to its own advantage: “The female *militante* embodied militancy, the Revolution, and the idealization of Fidel Castro. It is instructive, then, to examine how the Revolution represented legendary stories of women who fought and died for the Cuban Revolution.”¹³ The analysis presented here concurs with Stoner’s argument that female revolutionaries were used to legitimise the male-dominated Revolution. It is argued that *testimonio* is one of the most important ways in which the Revolution represented the life stories of these women.

The presentation of the protagonist Haydée Tamara Bide Bunker’s relationship with Guevara in *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable* supports Stoner’s argument. The event at which they met is described in detail: “En diciembre de 1960 llegó a Berlín la delegación comercial con Ernesto Che Guevara a la cabeza”, the reader is informed: “En esa oportunidad, Tamara por primera vez tuvo contacto con Ernesto Che Guevara.”¹⁴ The narrative voice underlines that the meeting “tuvo gran importancia para Tamara” asserting: “Este primer encuentro con el Che profundizó aún más su admiración y estimación hacia el Che como argentino, como comunista y guerrillero, y como hombre de brillante pensamiento y expresión.”¹⁵ This part of Stoner’s argument is also confirmed in the prologue to *Haydée habla del Moncada* in which Haydée mourns the death of Celia not because of its negative effect on Celia’s family or loved ones but for its impact on Fidel Castro: “La muerte de Celia unos meses antes de la suya la conmovió a límites increíbles. Sobre todas las cosas me decía, entre una lágrima y otra, que quien nos debía preocupar era Fidel. ¿¡Quién lo cuidaría como Celia!?” A woman famous for her role in an armed

¹³ Stoner, “Militant Heroines”, 89.

¹⁴ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44. Tamara’s relationship with Guevara has been the subject of much speculation, see Ian Adam, *Becoming Tania – Che Guevara & Tamara Bunke Gutierrez – a Novel of Love, Revolution, Betrayal and KGB Spies in Bolivia* (Toronto and London: McClelland and Stewart, 1990). José Antonio Friedl Zapata, *Tania la guerrillera: la enigmática espía a la sombra del Che* (Santafé de Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Planeta, 1999). The speculations presented by these authors are dismissed by Estrada in *Tania. Undercover with Che Guevara in Bolivia* as we shall see below.

conflict is characterised, in keeping with traditional values, as primarily useful as a carer for men.¹⁶

The remainder of this chapter contests Stoner's argument that: "Despite efforts to preserve the voices of revolutionary heroines, most attention has been focused on their war heroics, to the exclusion of personal introspection, uncertainty, serendipity, romance – in short, the subjective aspects of these women's lives."¹⁷ The texts studied here impart rich detail about the personal lives of Haydée Santamaría and Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider; neither is monochromatic, propagandist or impersonal. Both inscribe a conflict between the notion that *guerrilleras* were dedicated to their family and subjected to the male revolutionary leadership on the one hand, and the idea that they subverted feminine attributes such as passivity, subservience and relegation to the private sphere on the other. As we saw in the Introduction, this thesis employs the term femininity to refer to a set of social and cultural practices, attitudes and behaviours typically ascribed to women under patriarchy. The well-known, second-wave feminist distinction between gender and sex is accepted here, with an additional acknowledgement of Goldstein's argument that sex and biology are also profoundly affected by culture. Goldstein argues that levels of testosterone, for example, are suppressed or encouraged in response to social and environmental factors.¹⁸

Paratextual techniques foreground the women's role as (potential) mothers, wives and daughters in an attempt to downplay the disruptive implications of their involvement in guerrilla war to the founding patriarchal institution of the

¹⁶ Santamaría, *Haydée habla del Moncada*, 4. While their first-person *testimonios* are largely overlooked, biographies about the two women have been recently published in English. Betsy Maclean, ed., *haydée santamaría* [sic] (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 2003) and Ulises Estrada, *Tania. Undercover with Che Guevara in Bolivia* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 2005) studied in more detail below.

¹⁷ Stoner, "Militant Heroines," 91.

¹⁸ See Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 2, 157. Goldstein's arguments are in keeping with the latest research on the subject of "neuroplasticity" see Fine, *Delusions of Gender*. This thesis also maintains that femininity is synonymous with submission and servitude, while masculinity is a system of behaviours and emotions more compatible with dominant behaviour. This notion is explored theoretically with reference to Foucault and Marx in Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*.

nuclear family.¹⁹ Subjective aspects of the protagonists' lives are often included, although this is arguably in order to feminise them.

Halbwachs' distinction between historical and autobiographical memory is undone as historically important events are presented through the life stories of the two women. Both texts are counter-propaganda; they reject the US's negative and reductionist portrayal of the Cuban Revolution and they posit instead more complex and nuanced personal experiences. As we saw in the Introduction, an in-depth analysis of anti-Cuban US propaganda is provided by Louis Pérez Jr. in *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*.²⁰ We saw that Pérez Jr. finds that Castro was "endlessly the object of caricaturists' drawings, variously ridiculed, mocked, and satirized."²¹ The Cuban texts examined in this and the following chapter can be seen as attempts to justify, defend and promote the Revolution in the context of intense US opposition.

Despite her apparent overall support for the Revolution, Haydée Santamaría's narrative demonstrates ambivalence towards the Cuban Revolution's glorification of violence. *Tania* is significantly more mediated, edited and controlled, and ostensibly therefore more in keeping with the Cuban revolutionary ideology; however, it too inscribes inconsistencies, personal information, romance and uncertainty as revolutionary gender roles are formulated in a way that is not unproblematic. The texts clearly vary in style, content and form, demonstrating the diversity of the *testimonio* genre.

Whereas *Tania* contains a plethora of voices, united by the editors and the paratext in a manner that is often inconsistent, Haydée Santamaría's testimony primarily comprises her reluctant speech transcript. Needless to say, these

¹⁹ Feminist theories have critiqued the patriarchal nature of the family: "Typically, liberal feminism emphasises family impediments to gender equality, e.g. socialisation, reproduction, childcare and domestic labour. Radical feminism sees family as the embodiment of patriarchy, imposing heterosexism and sexism. [...] Socialist/Marxist feminism views families as economic units that, linked with patriarchy, benefit the capitalist system." Sharon McIrvin Abu-Laban, "family, the" [sic] in *Encyclopaedia*, Code, ed., 191 – 192. See also Hilde Lindemann Nelson, *Feminism and Families* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

²⁰ Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). See especially "Shifting Metaphors, Changing Meanings, Representing Revolution", *ibid.*, 235 – 263.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 241.

profound differences markedly affect the tone and structure of the texts. Both texts have nevertheless been labelled *testimonio*, demonstrating that fluidity and variability have been defining features of the genre since its earliest inception in Cuba.

This chapter acknowledges this complexity arguing that to label Cuban women's testimonial narratives as impersonal propaganda is unduly simplistic, and refers more to the paratextual framing of the narratives than to the first-person *testimonios* themselves. The Cold War context, structure and paratext of *Tania* will now be briefly examined before the texts' gendered paradoxes are scrutinised more closely.

**Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider,
*Tania, La Guerrillera Inolvidable, 1970***

Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider, or more commonly Tamara, was given the title 'La Guerrillera' by Castro on her death. The addition of the adjective "inolvidable" into the title of the *testimonio* foregrounds its objective to memorialise and commemorate Tamara's lifetime achievements. A popular revolutionary figure, her German parentage and Argentinean childhood can be seen as a reflection of international support for the Cuban Revolution and the internationalist nature of its ideological foundation.²² Tamara was born in Argentina in 1937 to parents who, as communists with Russian-Jewish roots, had escaped to Latin America from Nazi Germany in 1935.²³ She is often presented as having dedicated her life to communism and the Cuban Revolution – indeed she died in 1967 during Guevara's Bolivian guerrilla war. Her political dedication and multilingualism enabled her to work as a translator for leftist youth groups internationally before arriving in Cuba in 1961, the month after the Bay of Pigs invasion.

As argued in the Introduction, *Tania* was produced in an environment marked by global conflict and male-dominated geopolitics; the Bay of Pigs was arguably at the height of the Latin American Cold War and it certainly affected

²² Miller, *Latin American Women*, 167.

²³ *Ibid.*, 162.

Tamara's time in Cuba.²⁴ Perturbed by the Cuban Revolution, the Eisenhower administration funded Cuban counter-revolutionaries, based in Guatemala, through the auspices of the Central Intelligence Agency:

Confronted by [the] 'Castro-Communist' challenge, the Eisenhower administration rapidly revised its Latin American policies. It prepared to overthrow Castro and dismantle the Cuban Revolution. It also decided that, to prevent radicalism from spreading, it had to underwrite a thoroughgoing reform of Latin America's political, social, and economic institutions.²⁵

In 1961, Kennedy's presidency supported the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, which saw several thousand Cuban émigrés stranded on Playa Girón, having grossly underestimated Castro's military organisation and popularity: "Poorly planned and executed, the invasion was based on the false assumption that the Cuban people would rise in revolt as soon as they heard the exiles had landed."²⁶ Rather than weakening the Revolution, the attack arguably had the effect of consolidating support for it, by proving the existence of aggressive and interventionist US imperialism. In keeping with the notion that the US attack consolidated support for the revolutionary government, Tamara writes to her family that she is lucky to be in Cuba at a time of such importance: "[sic]Cuántos quisieran estar ahora aquí en Cuba y participar en la defensa de la Revolución Cubana!"²⁷ In the wake of Playa Girón, Castro eventually declared his allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, turned to the USSR for military support and accepted their offer of missiles.²⁸ The Cuban Missile Crisis, referred to as "la crisis de Octubre" in Cuba and throughout *Tania*, saw the world anticipating an apocalyptic nuclear ending to the Cold War as international attention focused on Cuba. In spite of the often didactic and moralising tone adopted by the editors, *Tania* is best understood as counter-

²⁴ See Appendix 2: The Latin American Cold War.

²⁵ Stephen G. Rabe, "The Castro-Communist Threat 1959 – 1960" in *Eisenhower and Latin America. The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 117. For more on the relationship between Cuban exiles and the CIA see McSherry, *Predatory States*, 250.

²⁶ Keen and Haynes, *History of Latin America*, 443.

²⁷ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 165.

²⁸ James Nathan, *The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 44.

propaganda to US Cold War narratives, a corrective to US assumptions that Castro was unpopular and associated justifications for military intervention in Cuba.

Tania has an overarching chronological structure, organised into twenty chapters across two sections; within these chapters material is arranged thematically. Of the complex, fragmented structure of *Tania*, Verity Smith states:

Como para compensar por su falta de “habladora”, la estructura de *Tania* es mucho más compleja y pulida de lo que suele ser el caso con testimonios. Parece irónico, puesto que este testimonio se base en la creencia en un grandioso diseño histórico, que ahora se podría describir su estructura como posmoderna: es polifónica, fragmentaria, presenta una variedad de discursos y de signos semióticos heterogéneos y la narración no es rígidamente cronológica.²⁹

This chapter supports Smith’s assertions regarding the polyphonic, fragmented and heterogeneous structure of the text; however it argues that *Tania*’s most significant paradoxes and contradictions are only identified and understood when a gendered analysis is adopted.

Testimonios from co-workers, friends and family comprise the first section; Tamara’s first-person narrative appears in epistolary form, through letters to her parents which remind the reader of her connection to the family, humanising but also feminising the revolutionary icon. Photographs and official certificates are reproduced from Tamara’s infancy and adolescence, documenting her hobbies, interests and political activities. Photographic images function here as documentary photography - Tamara’s political activities are verified, in keeping with the definition of documentary photography provided in the Introduction.³⁰ In this way Tamara’s ideological

²⁹ Verity Smith, “La construcción de la héroe socialista: *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable.*” *Letras Femeninas* XXV, no.1 (1999): 31.

³⁰ See page 50 of the Introduction to this thesis which refers to Constance B. Schulz, “Documentary Photography”, in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, Robin Lenman, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ebook, accessed throughout February 2013, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662716.001.0001/acref-9780198662716-e-437>.

dedication is verified, as her participation in the Cuban Revolution is documented for the reader. However, more personal photographic images from her childhood are also included to provide the reader a more intimate insight into her character. Nonetheless, her life before arriving in Cuba is summarised briefly, while her time in Cuba comprises most of the text, as the pace is controlled through acceleration and deceleration for emphasis.³¹ This collage of texts and photographic images creates a sense of documentary realism while presenting Tamara as a capable and well-rounded supporter of the Revolution.³²

The third-person narrative voice contextualises information for the reader while also emotively emphasising Tamara's dedication and recommending the Revolution. The editors of the first section are not anonymous, unlike the other Cuban *testimonios*; the reader is informed that "dos periodistas Cubanas, Marta Rojas y Mirta Rodríguez Calderón" arranged the text. "Para que los dos periodistas Cubanas, Marta Rojas y Mirta Rodríguez Calderón, se encargaran de estructurar un texto en que la figura de Tania, su vida y acción heroicas, emergen de los propios testimonios."³³ However, Ulises Estrada edited the second section anonymously as revealed in *Tania. Undercover with Che Guevara in Bolivia*, in which he also discloses the intimate nature of their relationship.³⁴ In spite of the presence of these heterodiegetic narrator/editors, the paratext is not able to convey a unitary message; rather Tamara's first-person narrative contrasts with the paratext and the other voices that attempt to feminise her.

³¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 53, 56.

³² For a discussion of the term "Documentary literature" and how this relates to oral histories see Clas Zilliacus, "Radical Naturalism: First-Person Documentary Literature." *Comparative Literature* 31, no. 2 (1979): 97– 112.

³³ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 7.

³⁴ In the inside cover he is described as "co-author" of *Tania* and he states that "under Piñeiro's orders, I became involved in writing a book with the journalists Marta Rojas and Mirta Rodríguez Calderón." Estrada, *Tania*, 59. Ulises Estrada's relationship with Tamara is referred to in more detail below.

An important theme throughout *Tania* is the construction of multiple personas; the second part details the birth of Tamara's *guerrillera* persona through her experience of the guerrilla training process, her work as a spy and her time in Bolivia and Europe. To emphasise her transformation from revolutionary volunteer to heroic revolutionary, Tamara is renamed with her *nom de guerre* Tania.³⁵ She is also called Ita by her parents and Tamara by most of her friends. In addition, her espionage personae are listed as "Haydée Bidel González en Europa", "Marta Iriarte en Berlín" and "Laura Gutiérrez en Bolivia" with most attention focused on the latter, and photographic images of these spy personae are presented to the reader again to provide a sense of veracity.³⁶ Tamara's various personae suggest that she attempted to adjust her identity to meet expectations; Ita was the dutiful daughter for her parents, Tamara the committed revolutionary volunteer for Fidel Castro, and Tania the *guerrillera* and eventual martyr for Guevara.³⁷ The text is able to introduce and explore the diverse epochs in Tamara's life through numerous short testimonies, a guiding editorial presence and an accommodating thematic, chronological structure, although this diversity also becomes paradoxical as we shall see.

Multiple personae and perspectives are controlled by means of editorial processes of selection and organisation which impose an increasingly monologic structure as the text progresses. To depict the second stage in

³⁵ On arrival in Cuba, Tamara worked at the Ministry of Education as a translator, before joining the militias, the *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (CDRs), the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (FMC) and other revolutionary organisations.

³⁶ Under the code name, Laura Gutiérrez Bauer, Tamara eventually went to work as spy in Bolivia, but there is controversy surrounding her work in espionage. An East German official has claimed that he "assigned Tamara Bunke as an agent against Guevara" and that she was in fact a double agent, working to collect intelligence for East Berlin and Moscow about "the unpredictable Castro people." Guenther Maennel and Daniel James as quoted in Miller, *Latin American Women*, 167. There does not seem to be much further evidence to support this claim; her presentation in *Tania* certainly refutes it, as does Ulises Estrada's account, which he states he wrote to counteract such "crude lies." Estrada, *Tania*, 3.

³⁷ Despite the emotive and partial nature of the word "martyr" it is employed throughout this thesis in order to stay close to the intentions and meanings of the *testimonios*. Although it may well prove a fruitful area of investigation, thorough examination of the theme of martyrdom in *testimonio* has not been undertaken in this thesis. For an exploration of the concept's religious connotations, and the notion that Jesus was the archetypal martyr, from within the context of El Salvador see Anna Lisa Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion. Progressive Catholicism in El Salvador's Civil War* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

Tamara's life and to differentiate it from the first, short polyphonic *testimonios* are replaced with much longer passages of first and third person narrative from Tamara, other *guerrilleros* and Estrada, whose role as editor accounts for the differences in tone, structure and style in the second section. Yet, despite this increase in editorial control, the paradoxes of the first section are enhanced, as Estrada attempts to articulate new revolutionary gender roles without acknowledgment of patriarchy or traditional gendered identities. Male-authored *testimonios* regularly appear throughout and the prologue is authored by Guido 'Inti' Peredo.³⁸ *Tania* is the only text studied here with a known male editor, whose interventions contrast structurally and thematically with the texts authored and facilitated exclusively by women studied in the remainder of this thesis. As we shall see, this male editorial presence arguably exacerbates stark gendered paradoxes.

Testimonios by and about Tamara are juxtaposed with the articulation of her own aspirations, so that she is seen to conform to more traditional gendered norms. Through their brief testimonies, numerous Cubans share their memories of Tamara. She is portrayed as an exemplary member of revolutionary society, volunteering for the Revolution's mass organisations. However, this polyphony becomes contradictory as Tamara's first-person narrative focuses on her opinions, feelings and political achievements whilst others' memories commend her domestic skills, appearance and feminine qualities. For example, Jorge Montes, a neighbour of Tamara, states: "Siempre le veía caminando aprisa; tenía muchas ocupaciones, creo yo, en el Ministerio, en la FMC..."³⁹ Illustrating the thematic organisation of the text and further exploring Tamara's involvement in the FMC, this is immediately followed with a letter from Tamara to her parents, dated 9th of November 1963, in which she describes her numerous occupations with the women's organisation:

Estoy en este momento en la Dirección Nacional de la Federación de Mujeres y cerca está el correo desde donde les enviaré enseguida esta

³⁸ "Jefe del Ejército de Liberación Nacional de Bolivia, Guido 'Inti' Peredo" wrote the prologue in hiding and was later killed in combat. Rojas, Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 11. The remaining Cuban texts are edited anonymously, making the gender of the editor impossible to ascertain.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

carta. Es que dentro de algunos minutos tengo una reunión. Trabajo en la Comisión de Divulgación. Participo, entre otras actividades, en el programa radial de la organización y soy responsable del boletín internacional.⁴⁰

Whereas Tamara appears proud of her political activities and responsibilities, her epistolary writing is followed with a “Conversatorio con quienes habían sido sus compañeras de trabajo en la FMC”, which focuses on Tamara’s musical skills, her attempt to teach her fellow FMC members how to play the guitar and her singing: “Tamara cantaba como una especie de lamento argentino.”⁴¹ An Argentine member of the organisation, Carolina Aguilar, recounts how Guevara recommended they make contact with Tamara, as she had good ideas about the kind of food and drink that should be served at a party that they were arranging. Whereas Guevara is described as giving “un discurso maravilloso, en el que habló de la lucha armada en la América Latina e hizo un análisis histórico de Argentina”, Tamara is praised for her catering skills.⁴²

In contrast, Tamara writes to her parents about her translation work: “Por el momento estoy traduciendo algunos libros interesantes y muy importantes: Marx y Engels, sobre la pedagogía socialista, el trabajo productivo, etc, y sus obras más importantes como <<El Capital>>, etc.”⁴³ While Tamara’s letter focuses on her translations and the article she had written about East German politics, the other selected testimonies focus on the more informal aspects of Tamara’s contribution to the FMC. Tamara’s involvement in the Cuban women’s organisation is presented without political context; again, the focus is on her musical and catering abilities rather than how her work at the FMC benefited, or politicised, Cuban women. The inclusion of such information develops the readers’ understanding of the subjective and personal aspects of Tamara’s life. However, juxtaposed with her own writings about her political activities, these details also have the effect of feminising her and neutralising

⁴⁰ Ibid., 117 – 118.

⁴¹ Ibid., 119.

⁴² Ibid., 109.

⁴³ Ibid., 105 – 106.

any potential threat her organising with the FMC might otherwise have posed to the patriarchal status quo.

One of the principal objectives of the editing of *Tania* is to present Tamara as a revolutionary woman who did not challenge hegemonic gender roles, as exemplified by an editorial decision to place a letter from Tamara to her parents in which she states “ya aprendí a cocinar” immediately following the section about the FMC.⁴⁴ The letter is contrasted with a testimony from Jorge Méndez Campos, a neighbour, who initially returns to the subject of Tamara’s singing: “La escuché cantar varias veces. Lo hacía muy bonito [...] Se me preguntaran que era lo más característico en ella, el denominador común de su personalidad, diría que era su sonrisa, alegre, franca y bella. De su carácter puedo decir que era fuerte, pero no brusco. Más bien firme.”⁴⁵ The most significant aspect of her personality is said to be her smile, and not her intelligence or political dedication, as her feminine attributes are again brought to the fore. The description of her personality as strong, but not rough or masculine, is followed with more of his opinion on her physical appearance: “En cuanto a su físico, su estatura era más bien mediana. Delgada. De pelo rubio, o casi rubio, que ella en esta época peinaba con una trenza.”⁴⁶ Tamara becomes a passive object of male approval, as the reader is reminded that while political and revolutionary, she was also womanly and beautiful, attractive to men in a way that did not disturb ingrained, heteronormative identities.⁴⁷

Tania consistently transmits contradictory messages so that juxtaposition becomes a major structuring device. The above testimony is contrasted with

⁴⁴ Ibid., 120.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 122. The equation of women described as “fuerte” with masculinity and lesbianism in Cuba is revealed and analysed by Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions*, 139 – 140.

⁴⁷ The term “heteronormative” was coined in Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). The concept originates from an article first published by Dutch feminist group The Purple September Staff in 1975. See Purple September Staff, “The Normative Status of Heterosexuality.” Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975) 80. The arguments are relevant here as a strictly heterosexual model of human relationships is put forward.

that of Raúl Sarmiento, described simply as “un cubano”, who does focus on Tamara’s political convictions: “Creo que Tamara vivió intensamente toda su vida y debe haber sido así también en la lucha guerrillera, que fue su obsesión.”⁴⁸ Needless to say, obsessing about guerrilla war is not a typically feminine characteristic. Sarmiento continues to discuss her political ideals: “Ella siempre vio la Revolución Cubana como parte de una revolución continental.” The theme of Tamara’s dedication to Latin American armed conflict is explored further as Tamara’s shooting lessons are detailed in a chapter dedicated to the subject, in which Fernando Alonso concludes: “ella era muy buena tiradora, tiraba muy bien con fusil.”⁴⁹ Further, an unnamed “revolucionaria latinoamericana amiga de Tamara” states:

Todo el día conversábamos. ¿De qué? De la lucha armada, constantemente; sobre la necesidad del entrenamiento, de que la mujer participara como guerrillera en la lucha armada; éramos las dos bastante obsesivas en ese sentido. Y Tamara, particularmente, hacía todos los esfuerzos inimaginables, para orientarse y buscar la vía para hacerse una guerrillera.⁵⁰

Tania communicates Tamara’s dedication to revolutionary combat and her belief in the necessity of female participation in a way that disputes the notion that women are inherently less aggressive than men, while questioning women’s historical exclusion from warfare. The text often affirms her feminine characteristics; however it also allows for the expression of her passion for guns and dedication to political violence confirming the argument that Cuban *testimonio* is multifaceted and complex, when examined from within a gendered framework.

Tamara’s physical involvement in guerrilla war is then contradictorily explored in the second section of *Tania*. The narrator describes Tamara in a way that seems to reject the patriarchal pressure on women to wear make-up

⁴⁸ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 125.

⁴⁹ The chapter is entitled “tirar ... y tirar son cosas diferentes.” *Ibid.*, 127. Alonso quote, *ibid.*, 136.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

and dress in such a way that is sexually appealing to men.⁵¹ Simultaneously, the controversial ideal of women's inherently beautiful and delicate demeanour is put forward:⁵² "Tamara, íntegramente política, revolucionaria, era eminentemente mujer, su belleza natural, su toque delicado, la profundidad de su ojos, sobresalían con el uniforme de milicias que generalmente vestía sin maquillaje, sin retoques artificiales."⁵³ Again, the overwhelming focus is on appearance; Tamara is repeatedly described with adjectives which seek to affirm her innate femininity. Despite being in a military uniform, which carries strong connotations of masculinity, and in spite of the fact she usually did not wear make-up, her natural beauty, the reader is assured, still shone through. The narrative continues in italics for emphasis:

*La mujer es así, no necesita del vestido elegante, costoso, o el trabajo cuidadoso que no dañe sus manos, ha de llevar dentro de ella misma amor, ternura, pero ha de ser ante todo revolucionaria y ésta será la premisa que busque en el hombre que seleccione como esposo.*⁵⁴

It is as if the assertion that Tamara was "íntegramente política" must be followed with a description of her intention to marry a revolutionary man, in order to resituate her life story within the confines of patriarchal norms. The narrator's didactic tone seems to address female readers, presenting them with an ideal of revolutionary womanhood and romantic relationships to which they should aspire. It is possible that there is also a wider political motive: in contrast to the way in which the US Cold War narrative, explored in the Introduction to this thesis, equated communist revolutionaries with radical feminists, who allegedly sought to destroy the family, heterosexuality, and the 'natural' relationship of inequality between men and women, *Tania* demonstrates that this naturalised social order will not be disturbed by the

⁵¹ For more on the pressure on women to appeal to the (often internalised) male gaze see "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 63 – 82.

⁵² This controversy is explored in Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth. How Images of Beauty are used Against Women* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).

⁵³ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 194.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 194. This is contradicted by the narrator who later states that the Bolivian army "al ocuparse uno de los depósitos de los guerrilleros se encuentran cosméticos, ropa interior y vestidos de mujer." *Ibid.*, 324.

Cuban Revolution; women will still be feminine, attractive, dutiful daughters and aspiring wives.⁵⁵

The conflict between *guerrilleras* and patriarchal norms resurfaces in the section of the narrative that follows. In the chapter dedicated to the birth of Tamara's guerrilla persona, "Nace Tania", the heterodiegetic narrator provides the reader with information regarding Tamara's private life: "Ella había encontrado a ese hombre a quien entregó su amor y contaminó con lo mejor de sus virtudes revolucionarias. TAMARA amaba la vida, soñaba con un hijo a quien dedicar su ternura [sic]."⁵⁶ Romantic relationships are repeatedly politicised as female readers are provided with a reconfigured notion of love, based on mutual revolutionary dedication. With reference to his recent publication, we are aware that Estrada is in fact reporting on his own intimate relationship with Tamara.⁵⁷ He continues:

Sin embargo, la misión que ahora TANIA debía cumplir la hacía reflexionar, no debía casarse ni tener el hijo que tanto añoraba, nadie se lo impedía, era ella misma quien consideraba que ante la dura prueba que como revolucionaria debía atravesar, era necesario concentrar al máximo sus esfuerzos, no dejar más añoranzas detrás de ella y sólo cuando regresara, tras la victoria, empeñarse entonces en construir su propio futuro.⁵⁸

The division between the different personae is clear; whereas Tamara, the normal, revolutionary woman, dreamt of having children, Tania the extraordinary guerrilla combatant has put her maternal instincts aside for the Revolution. It is stressed that Tamara had only planned to be a *guerrillera* in the short term; following this she was to return to Cuba, marry a revolutionary Cuban man and have children. Estrada's editorial voice lacks a critical understanding of patriarchy as normative gender roles for women, their historical relegation to the domestic sphere and the public/private dichotomy,

⁵⁵ See Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 67.

⁵⁶ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 195.

⁵⁷ See Estrada, *Tania*, 1, 57, 59. Capitals are in the original text.

⁵⁸ Rojas, Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 195. Capitals are in the original text.

are overlooked. This oversight emphasises the already present paradox in *Tania* between a patriarchal paratext and Tamara's first-person narration.

It is noteworthy that Tamara's relationship with Estrada was interracial; this fact is overlooked in the text and an acknowledgement of issues surrounding race are noticeably absent. One possible explanation for this is that: "By the early 1960s authorities [in Cuba] referred to racial discrimination in the past tense, so any attempt to incorporate race into the political agenda was deemed to be counterrevolutionary – a divisionist act."⁵⁹ As a text which clearly attempts to reaffirm the Cuban Revolution's central narratives, *Tania* therefore seems to avoid all discussions of race. Curiously however, this apparent homogeneity is not maintained during the portrayal of gendered aspects of Tamara's identity.

The relationship between traditional femininity and a new revolutionary female identity is formulated in the text, in keeping with the fact that the Cuban Revolution's male leadership sought to renegotiate gender relations according to the capacity and requirements of post-revolutionary society. The *ex-guerrillero* government sought to persuade Cuban women that they did not need the commodities that could no longer be easily provided for them, such as cosmetics and fine dresses. Relatively privileged Cuban women were to embrace work that might "dañe sus manos" and integrate into the labour force. The revolutionary government required this female contribution to rebuild the economy and survive the US trade embargo. Simultaneously, all women were required to continue their disproportionate responsibility for unpaid domestic work and childcare; a complete overhaul of gender relations was not on the agenda; this was not a feminist revolution.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 18.

⁶⁰ For a detailed exploration of gender and the Cuban Revolution see Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*. Enloe's aforementioned study argues that women were swiftly returned to previous roles at the end of revolutionary wars: "Women performing [guerrilla war] support roles were doing something they had never been allowed to do before, something recognised as politically important. Nonetheless, as such, they were placed in the posts most likely to be demobilised when the war ended." Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*, 161.

Tamara's engagement with military activity continues to cause challenges for the editorial framing. The latter part of *Tania* becomes more dramatic as long passages of third-person editorial, first-person accounts by Tamara and Pombo (a *guerrillero*) and excerpts from Guevara's diary combine to recount the Bolivian guerrilla war.⁶¹ As Tamara's guerrilla training is detailed, it is affirmed that she developed:

los principios que rigen la vida de los hombres dedicados a este trabajo revolucionario: odio al enemigo, firmeza ideológica, disciplina, superación constante y disposición al sacrificio, sin otra ambición ajena a la satisfacción del deber cumplido.⁶²

Here the third-person narrator presents Tamara as equally capable as men and she is attributed with the masculinised characteristics of hatred, ideological conviction and discipline. However, this presentation is challenged by Pombo who describes Tamara's contribution thus:

La primera tarea que realizó fue la de preocuparse de coserle la ropa a los compañeros, atender toda una serie de cosas – que una mujer realiza siempre mucho mejor que el hombre –, como los botones y algún otro tipo de actividad de esa índole, la segunda era que se hizo responsable de todo lo de era la recopilación de la información.⁶³

Pombo ignores the social construction of gender as he suggests that women are inherently better at sewing than men. He also implies that Tamara's role was auxiliary, contrasting strongly with her portrayal as a brave *guerrillera*. *Tania* and *Haydée habla del Moncada* both present their female protagonists attending to the clothes of their male *compañeros*. Here Tamara sews buttons and Haydée is presented ironing the uniforms of male *combatientes* as seen below.

In spite of the emphasis Pombo places on her sewing, the narrator in *Tania* asserts that “TANIA ya era parte inseparable de la guerrilla” and first-person “mensajes” written by Tamara are included to communicate her experience of

⁶¹ The chapter is entitled “preparación: táctica operativa contra el enemigo.” Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 197.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 199.

⁶³ Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 325.

training and spying activities in Europe and Bolivia.⁶⁴ During the depiction of espionage, Tamara's own voice is afforded more prominence; she confidently states that she has mastered the art, "interpreto perfectamente mi papel."⁶⁵ However, she also explains: "Un problema difícil de resolver en Europa, especialmente para una mujer, que es turista y anda sola, son las amistades."⁶⁶ Having highlighted the fact that her gender made working undercover more difficult, she also later admits "Si me he sentido sola? [Sic] Sí, muchas veces."⁶⁷ She describes the way she copes with her loneliness "simplemente volver a la realidad, pensar en el trabajo, en la responsabilidad."⁶⁸ Far from romanticising espionage, difficult experiences of solitude and isolation are expressed. The text does not simplistically idealise her life; rather it allows for the honest articulation of some of her more challenging tasks, again disproving the argument that Cuban revolutionary literature fails to reveal personal introspection (pace Stoner).⁶⁹

The editorial voice resumes control of the text to communicate Tamara's death using a long excerpt from an article published in *Granma* on the 29th of August 1969.⁷⁰ She is presented as a martyr for Latin American independence and worldwide revolution as the paratext attempts simultaneously to celebrate and mourn her death. While initially such martyrdom may appear propagandistic, the text in fact serves as a counter-narrative to US depictions of the conflict in Bolivia.

At the centre of *Tania* there is conflict between two contrasting discourses: the Cuban revolutionary ideology and that of patriarchy. The former has equality

⁶⁴ Ibid., 308.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 234.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 215.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 235.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁶⁹ Stoner, "Militant Heroines."

⁷⁰ The article details the ambush and even provides information about her corpse. The following appears in a bold typeface: "El cadáver de Tania siguió río abajo y solo pudo ser recuperado días después." Rojas and Rodríguez Calderón, *Tania*, 335.

as a key principle, while the latter is predicated on the hierarchical domination of men over women. In spite of the revolutionary paratext, the notion that women should adhere to traditional gender roles, appear attractive to men, partake in domestic chores, marry and have children, resurfaces.⁷¹ While Tamara's first-person narrative and some *testimonios* challenge conventional conceptions of acceptable feminine behaviour, through discussions of Tamara's revolutionary ideology and dedication to guerrilla war, the editors, the paratext and other *testimonialistas* feminise her within a heteronormative framework. A paradoxical prototype of female revolutionary identity is promoted which reflects the fact that the male-dominated revolutionary Cuban leadership sought to incorporate women into mass organisations and the workplace, whilst leaving fundamental aspects of patriarchy, such as the sexual division of labour and the dichotomisation of public and private spheres, largely intact.

The second text examined in this chapter also contains a stark paradox; Haydée Santamaría's *testimonio* is presented by the paratext as a glorification and commemoration of the Moncada barracks attack, but a close reading reveals it to be a traumatised narrative which seems to reject, or at least question, revolutionary violence and martyrdom. This chapter will now introduce the protagonist, the text and its paratext before assessing the relevance of trauma and memory to a gendered reading of the account.

Haydée Santamaría, *Haydée habla del Moncada, 1967, 2005*

Haydée Santamaría was born in 1923 in Las Villas province of Central Cuba, where she is said to have developed compassion for the poor.⁷² With her

⁷¹ For a recent, in-depth investigation into the significance of marriage and the family during the Cuban revolutionary process, see Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions*. In "Sexual Evolutions", *ibid.*, 23 – 50, Hamilton traces the history of the family in Cuba and delineates the ways in which this institution and marriage were promoted by the Revolution, see *ibid.*, 24, 28. The chapter "New Women, New Men?" is also relevant to the texts studied here, as the aforementioned triple shift, reproduction and motherhood, are closely examined. *Ibid.*, 75 – 116.

⁷² Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 23.

brother Abel, she moved to Havana to escape less politically enlightened parents, sharing a flat that would later become Fidel Castro's headquarters.⁷³ Haydée was intimately involved in the preparation and execution of the famous Moncada barracks attack on the 26th of July 1953; she and Melba Hernández smuggled the weapons used in the attack and Fidel Castro has praised her contribution.⁷⁴

However, as with *Tania*, accounts regarding the level of Haydée's participation differ. The cover of an English publication *haydée santamaría* [sic] describes her as having "first achieved notoriety by being one of two women who participated in the armed attack that sparked the Cuban Revolution."⁷⁵ She is described as "a gunrunner, a tactician, international fundraiser, coordinator of the urban underground and guerrilla combatant."⁷⁶ But according to Smith and Padula, Celia Sánchez and Oniria Gutiérrez were the first women to take up arms in the Sierra, several years later.⁷⁷ Further, it is claimed that Castro banned women from taking part in armed conflict, despite Melba Hernández protesting that the women had shown themselves equally capable and dedicated. Allegedly Castro eventually conceded that women could attend the Moncada attack, but only "as nurses to care for the wounded."⁷⁸

Whatever her level of involvement, in the wake of Moncada, Haydée was arrested, sentenced to seven months in prison and subjected to interrogation and torture, during which her brother and fiancé were killed: "Haydée was presented with her brother's eyeballs as a means of breaking her will to keep

⁷³ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁴ Betsy Maclean, ed., *haydée santamaría* [sic] (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 2003), 119.

⁷⁵ Ibid., sleeve.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁷ For Celia Sánchez see Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 27. For Oniria Gutiérrez see *ibid.*, 30

⁷⁸ Ibid., 24.

silent.”⁷⁹ Castro has commended Haydée’s “heroism and dignity”, as she refused to speak to her interrogators even in such difficult circumstances.⁸⁰ The memory of the attack on the Moncada barracks popularised Castro’s 26th of July movement but its failure profoundly affected Haydée whose *testimonio* reveals that she was still apparently troubled by the event fourteen years later. In spite of the celebratory, commemorative paratext, including chapter titles and prefatorial texts, examined below, Haydée’s narrative is tentative and reluctant.⁸¹

Despite her experiences of imprisonment and torture, Haydée continued her political activism following Moncada and she was involved in the printing and distributing of “La Historia me Absolverá”, as well as other organisational duties: “During Castro’s imprisonment, the M-26-7 Movement had been managed by women: Melba, Haydée, Castro’s sister Lidia, Natalia Revuelta and to some extent his wife, Mirta. They printed and distributed ten thousand copies of Castro’s justification for the Moncada attack, entitled ‘History Will Absolve Me’”⁸² When Castro set up a National Directorate for the 26th of July Movement, Haydée was a key member.⁸³ In 1981, Margaret Randall described Haydée as “a member of the Central Committee of the Party, member of the

⁷⁹ Stoner, “Militant Heroines”, 86.

⁸⁰ Maclean, *haydée* [sic], 5.

⁸¹ Haydée committed suicide on the 27th anniversary of Moncada. Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 32. Her suicide has also been reported as a reaction to an affair between her husband, the Culture Minister Armando Hart, and a younger woman. *Ibid.*, 155. Others have suggested that Haydée opposed Cuba’s alliance with the Soviet Union and that the death of her close friend Celia Sánchez profoundly affected her. Maclean, *haydée* [sic], 2 – 3. Supporting the arguments put forward in this chapter, it has also been noted that “Haydée never truly recovered from her brother Abel’s tortuous death, after the Moncada attack” and that her poor health due to a near fatal car accident months before her suicide left her in “constant pain.” *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸² Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 25 See also Keen and Haynes’s account: “the leadership of the 26th of July Movement fell largely to women compatriots like Haydée Santamaría, a founding member of the 1952 anti-Batista resistance, and Melba Hernández, the intrepid lawyer who had defended Castro at trial. They forged political alliances with other anti-Batista groups like the Association of United Cuban Women, led by Gloria Cuadras, and the Women’s Martí Civic Front, organized by Carmen Castro Porta [...] Together, they built a network of urban and rural women who served the revolution as lawyers, interpreters, educators, spies, messengers, and armed combatants. Keen and Haynes, *History of Latin America*, 440.

⁸³ See “Fuimos conociendo *La Historia me Absolverá*” Santamaría, *Haydée*, 48 – 51. Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 25.

Council of the State, and director of the Casa de las Américas cultural institution.”⁸⁴ Haydée’s role transformed from participation in armed rebellion to membership of the Cuban Revolution’s political leadership. Yet Haydée’s is an unorthodox account that communicates her unresolved psychological trauma, lack of self-esteem, and is even suggestive of political disillusionment.

That the text was published in Cuba, despite being a rather unorthodox *testimonio*, might seem surprising; male-dominated dichotomies of patriarchy and war are untied through the politicisation of motherhood and the rejection of revolutionary violence. However, simultaneously, the *testimonio* discounts US Cold War propaganda that presented communists as immoral and unpatriotic, as it explores specifically female experiences of, and responses to, the Revolution.

Haydée habla del Moncada consists of a reluctant speech for an audience of political science students at the University of Havana, given and first published in 1967.⁸⁵ This was reprinted in 2005 by Ocean Press in Melbourne, New York and Havana, twenty-four years after Haydée’s suicide. There are a few minor differences in formatting between the original and the recent edition; the first-person narration is exactly the same.⁸⁶ The latter has chapter titles, a prologue written by Haydée’s daughter and an additional chapter comprising a letter that Haydée wrote to her parents while incarcerated. As with *Tania*, the paratext foregrounds her relationship with her family to stress her connection to the private sphere. Due to the significance of these paratextual changes, the 2005 edition will be referred to here. The author of the 2005 edition is said to be Haydée Santamaría while the editors remain anonymous, to emphasise Haydée’s role as the revolutionary protagonist.

⁸⁴ Margaret Randall, *Women in Cuba Twenty Years Later* (New York: Smyrna Press, 1981), 22.

⁸⁵ First published in *Ediciones el orientador revolucionario*, a Cuban magazine.

⁸⁶ Aside from minor formatting adjustments, the only difference between the 1967 original and the 2005 edition of *Haydée habla del Moncada* is the paratextual framing. The original has no prologue, no epilogue and no footnotes. It does, however, have the same Introduction as the 2005 edition discussed below. The more recent edition contains an additional two paragraphs the first of which highlights the continued struggle against globalisation. The second introduces the paratextual differences between the original text and the 2005 edition, focusing most attention on the Prologue written by Haydée’s daughter, and is signed “Los Editores.”

Haydée habla del Moncada is divided into twenty chapters, nineteen of which contain the transcript of her speech and her response to questions from unnamed members of the audience, referred to as “Estudiante”, “Profesor”, “Alguien del Público” or “Familiar de un mártir.”⁸⁷

The images chosen by the editors are revealing of their intent as documentary photography is employed. Yet, photography is not used extensively in either publication; in the 2005 edition it serves as background images on the front and back cover. In the former, Haydée is seated next to Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra and the latter presents a close-up - the police photograph taken on Haydée’s arrest. These photographs underline Haydée’s allegiance to the Revolution and Fidel, and remind the reader that she was imprisoned as a result of it. The original *Ediciones* text was accompanied with a close up of Haydée’s face, frowning, her hand clutching the side of her face; in all photographs she appears perturbed and serious. The title page of an earlier English edition presents a close-up of Haydée with her lips pursed and her eyes looking down; she appears timid and humble. Her close-ups stand in stark contrast to the familiar image of Guevara boldly gazing towards the horizon.⁸⁸ Photography is here being employed, much like the documentary photography alluded to in the Introduction to this thesis, as a means of verifying and authenticating Haydée’s participation in the guerrilla movement that preceded the Revolution. Photography produced and disseminated by the Cuban Revolution stands in stark contrast to the US photography, analysed by Edmundo Desnoes as we saw in the Introduction to this thesis, which purported to present Latin America to a US audience, but which instead merely regurgitated dated stereotypes.⁸⁹ Here, Cuban protagonists are presented as heroes and martyrs, as political agents capable of affecting drastic social change.

⁸⁷ Santamaría, *Haydée*, 35, 45, 58.

⁸⁸ Haydée Santamaría, *Moncada. Memories of the Attack that Launched the Cuban Revolution*, trans. Robert Taber (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart Inc, 1980).

⁸⁹ “La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo”, Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista*, (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

Haydée's *testimonio* has been translated and subjected to further editorial control in an English publication, *Moncada Memories of the Attack that Launched the Cuban Revolution* (1980) which brought Haydée's narrative to an international Anglophone audience. This text varies considerably from the original; the Introduction is written in 1979 by Robert Taber, an American journalist and author who travelled to the Sierra Maestra in the 1950s and the Afterword is by Roberto Fernández Retamar. Taber's Introduction is a subjective and descriptive account of the historical context leading up to the Moncada attack, it begins:

HAYDÉE SANTAMARÍA is one of the great names of the Cuban Revolution. Circumstance, talent and a natural inclination have made her a cultural rather than a political force; she is known in the hemisphere today as head of Casa de las Américas, the Latin American and Caribbean arts institute that she founded in 1959. But revolutionary history casts her in another light: Cubans know her as a legendary underground fighter, an original member of the tiny *fidelista* inner circle that plotted the downfall of the dictator, Fulgencio Batista, from the day that Batista, pistol in hand, seized power in Havana March 10, 1952.⁹⁰

The provision of a date attempts to create a sense of historic value but the adjectives "great" and "legendary" betray the bias of the writer, while the adjective "tiny" contributes to the casual style. Taber explains that Haydée attempts to "find personal meaning in a historic event that was, for her, an overwhelming, traumatic, transforming experience" before providing his own personal experience of meeting Haydée and travelling to the Sierra Maestra with her. This personal anecdote warmly recommends Haydée and underlines her revolutionary activity prior to 1959. The contextual information that begins seven of the chapters is written in the same style as the Introduction, although the first-person is replaced with the third-person to create a more formal and factual sounding narrative voice.

Like the second section of *Tania*, this edition has a male-authored paratext and overlooks the significance of gender and patriarchy. The English and Spanish

⁹⁰ Ibid., 11. Jean Franco notes that Roberto Fernández Retamar was editor of *Casa de Las Américas* after Antonio Arrufat was removed. Franco, *Decline and Fall*, 91.

language editions differ in format as well as editorial style; six of the chapter titles coincide, but the others do not.⁹¹ The 2005 Spanish text has seven additional chapters and is longer, due to being an apparently unedited transcript of Haydée's original speech. This is a further reason, along with the fact it has not undergone the problematic process of translation, for the examination of the most recent publication of *Haydée habla del Moncada* here.

Perhaps due to the fact that Haydée's *testimonio* relates potentially traumatic experiences, time and memory become fragmented, despite the generally chronological structure. The chapters towards the beginning describe the lead-up to Moncada and the attack itself, while the later chapters discuss Haydée's arrest and court appearance. Chapter titles are one of the main paratextual strategies that impose a particular, pro-revolutionary reading onto Haydée's traumatised narrative. However, despite this strong guidance, as we shall see there are noticeable silences and absences throughout, as Haydée cannot bring herself to detail her traumatic experiences of incarceration, torture or the death of her brother and fiancé.

While the paratext presents Haydée as a revolutionary heroine, her first-person narration is hesitant and uncomfortable, conveying a sense of disillusionment with regard to armed combat. Whilst there are moments of clarity in Haydée's *testimonio*, the absences in the narrative, the frequent nervous repetitions, the continued insistence on her memory loss and her difficulty in discussing Moncada might suggest that she had some difficulty processing thoughts and emotions regarding the attack. It might also be the case that conveying her experiences to a large audience was intimidating, and the hesitations in the narrative are due to inhibitions and a reluctance to assume the position of revolutionary heroine.

The arguably traumatised elements of the narrative are obscured, and the commemorative function is highlighted, through the prefatorial texts. An unsigned 'Nota' situates the text, providing the location and date of the

⁹¹ Although the contents page does not list them, the text is divided into thirteen separate chapters, seven of which are introduced in italics with contextual information presumably written by Taber.

speech.⁹² Historical information is subjectively provided by the anonymous narrator to contextualise the Moncada attack and encourage support for the Revolution: “El 26 de Julio de 1953, por su parte, inició la rebeldía armada contra la situación tiránica en el país.” The text is recommended thus: “Pocos testimonios sobre ese día tan conmovedores, veraces y hermosos como el que nos ha dado una de sus protagonistas decisivas, la compañera Haydée Santamaría Cuadrado.”⁹³ The reader is encouraged to appreciate the text as a valid and authentic historical source whilst also engaging with it on an emotional and aesthetic level. Haydée’s obvious discomfort and uncertainty remain unaccounted for as the reader is encouraged to interpret her account as an uncritical endorsement of revolutionary Cuban ideology.

As well as obscuring what might be her psychological state, third-person voices feminise the *testimonialista* as discussed above in relation to *Tania*. The prologue, written by her daughter Celia María Hart Santamaría, refers to the subject of the *testimonio* as “Mama” [sic] throughout. The potential disruption to patriarchal gendered identities posed by *guerrilleras* is neutralised by stressing feminine qualities and conformity to traditional gender roles: “Desde que planchaba con sus manos tan femeninas los uniformes de los combatientes, ella ya era parte de esta Historia”.⁹⁴ As well as the use of the adjective “femeninas” to describe her hands, the sentence presents us with the image of Haydée engaged in domestic labour typically undertaken by women and in this way contributing to the epic narrative of the Revolution. Significantly, she is ironing the uniforms of the *combatientes*, implying that she is not a combatant herself.⁹⁵ A paradox emerges, as this description undercuts the paratextual framing of the *testimonio* above which asserts that Haydée was a “protagonista decisiva” in the battle. The domestic theme is echoed throughout and is always connected to the Revolution: “Esta

⁹² Santamaría, *Haydée*, ix – x.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁵ This is clearly a reference to the fact that “At a farm outside Santiago, Melba and Haydée cleaned and set up cots and ironed the uniforms for the 120 men who would attack Moncada.” Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 24.

Revolución, que entró por la estrecha puerta del apartamento de 25 y O, el que ella se preocupaba por limpiar, fue la razón de toda su existencia.”⁹⁶ Haydée’s preoccupation with cleaning is foregrounded while her political convictions are omitted.⁹⁷ Whereas, in *Tania*, Tamara’s first person narrative challenged the paratext’s feminisation of her by asserting her political agency and dedication to armed warfare, Haydée largely avoids questions of political theory and rejects revolutionary violence.

A close reading of her *testimonio* reveals that, far from idealistically promoting the Revolution and the role of Moncada, Haydée is uncertain and unconfident. She begins by confessing that she finds it hard to talk about the failed attack:

Compañeros:

Cuando se nos invitó a venir aquí a hablar sobre la fecha del 26 de Julio, como siempre, nuestra primera reacción fue negarnos. Eso nos ocurre siempre, porque, en primer lugar, son catorce años hablando de algo que, aunque sea infinito, siempre es difícil hablarlo...⁹⁸

She employs the third person plural as a reflection of her nervousness and her discomfort at assuming the role of singular revolutionary heroine. Haydée highlights the difficulty she has faced revisiting these memories and worries that her story will be rejected, perhaps for not conforming to the celebratory narrative of the Cuban Revolution, “tal vez ustedes piensan que todo lo que narro es demasiado trágico.”⁹⁹

In spite of her fear of rejection due to the tragic nature of her account, Haydée is able to respond to questions regarding the attack. When she discusses these events, her narrative becomes more gynocentric. Omitted from the English publication, perhaps due to its morbid tone, the second chapter answers a

⁹⁶ Santamaría, *Haydée*, 2.

⁹⁷ In the recent English publication *haydée* [sic] she is referred to as a “giant of revolutionary history, [a] shining example of feminism and internationalism.” Maclean, *haydée* [sic], 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

question regarding the significance of Moncada, in comparison to other events in Cuban history, through a metaphor of a becoming a mother:¹⁰⁰

Cuando nació mi hijo Abel fueron momentos difíciles, momentos iguales a los que cualquier mujer cuando va a tener un hijo, muy difíciles. Eran dolores profundísimos, eran dolores que nos desgarraban las entrañas y, en cambio, había fuerza para no llorar, no gritar o no maldecir. Cuando ocurren dolores así, se maldice, se grita y se llora; ¿y por qué se tienen fuerzas para no llorar y maldecir cuando hay dolores? Porque va a llegar un hijo. En aquellos momentos se me reveló qué era el Moncada.¹⁰¹

Her participation in a historically significant military attack is compared to her personal experience of motherhood; thus Stoner's argument that "personal introspection" is excluded from revolutionary Cuban women's literature is challenged.¹⁰² Haydée communicates her subjective experiences of the pain of motherhood and political involvement as "dolor[es]" is repeated four times. That pain should arise as the defining emotion of both her political activism and her experiences as a mother confirms that Haydée had suffered emotionally. However, in both cases strength is found through compassion for others and optimism about the future. Cuban mothers, as members of the audience and readers, may relate to, and be encouraged by, Haydée's concept of politicised motherhood as she communicates a tentatively optimistic ideological message through the specifically female experience of motherhood.

Nevertheless, overall Haydée rarely discusses political theory. When she is asked directly about becoming a communist, at a time in which US-led propaganda suggested that "el comunista era antidios, antipatriótico y todas esas cosas," Haydée replies that in order to answer this political question she has to "hablar muy personalmente." She continues: "Lo que yo no quería era una doctrina falsa; no aceptaba ni antes ni después, una doctrina falsa. Porque en mi caso personal, compañero, para mí ser comunista no es militar en un

¹⁰⁰ The question asked is: "¿qué razón hay para que el Moncada sea algo distinto a lo otro?" Ibid., 13.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 13 – 14.

¹⁰² Stoner, "Militant Heroines", 91.

partido: para mí ser comunista es tener una actitud ante la vida.”¹⁰³ Unlike Tamara, she seems ambivalent about membership of communist parties, with the pronouncement that her political position is a holistic attitude to life. She presumably means an egalitarian attitude, but she provides no further details as to what this might entail. Despite her somewhat vague response, she rejects the demonisation of communists by US Cold War propaganda.¹⁰⁴

As the text develops, Haydée’s responses begin to reveal the psychological impact of armed conflict. In keeping with the notion that the paratext of *Haydée* conflicts with her first-person narration, the chapter “Hay que ser violenta e ir a la Guerra si hay necesidad” is a highly unorthodox account of warfare: “Soy enemiga de matar por gusto, soy hasta enemiga de ser violento por gusto. Creo que hay un gran esfuerzo para ser violenta, para ir a la guerra.”¹⁰⁵ The question that opens the chapter refers to Haydée’s emotional response immediately following the attack: “¿qué fue lo que más la conmovió a usted de todo lo que sucedió allí en el hospital?”¹⁰⁶ Her answer reflects the sentiments expressed at the beginning of her testimony, regarding the difficulty she faced on reconstructing these memories: “Es difícil decir lo que más nos conmovió, pero pudiéramos decir algunos hechos porque es difícil algo tan grande reducirlo a una respuesta sola.”¹⁰⁷ In the following four paragraphs, Haydée repeats “me impresionó” four times.¹⁰⁸ Her tendency to repeat words or phrases conveys a sense of insecurity. The words she repeats, “dolor” previously and “me impresionó” here, are of significance. The latter expression reflects the fact that the violence at Moncada had a profound psychological impact on her. The reluctant and uncertain tone of this chapter contrasts strongly with Tamara’s professed love of guns and dedication to

¹⁰³ Santamaría, *Haydée*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed analysis of US propaganda regarding the Cuban Revolution see the aforementioned “Shifting Metaphors, Changing Meanings, Representing Revolution” in Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 235 – 263.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 41, 43.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

guerrilla war. In fact, as we have seen, Haydée explicitly rejects the glorification of armed conflict found in *Tania* stressing the injustice of premature death during combat:

Me impresionó tremendamente ver caer a aquél que veníamos a combatir; tanto, que me paralicé. Porque pensé que aquel hombre tenía madre, tenía hijos tal vez, mujer y no había nacido ni bueno ni malo: que le habíamos disparado porque un sistema lo había convertido en malo, o tal vez ni siquiera era malo. Y a mí me impresionó por mucho tiempo aquel primer hombre que vi caer y morir, aquel hombre que íbamos a combatir; cuando sentí caer su cuerpo, me impresionó tanto que por mucho tiempo no olvidé aquella caída.¹⁰⁹

The enemy soldier is humanised through connection to female family members: a mother and a wife. She suggests that the loss of any human life is unfortunate and questions the Manichean division between good heroic revolutionaries and evil counter-revolutionaries rejecting the “odio al enemigo” that Tamara was said to have embraced. Regret and guilt are expressed as she reasons that fallen enemies had not been born evil but had been converted into who they were by an unfair system. Here Haydée rejects the determinist male-dominated systems of thought that justify war, positing instead a more reconciliatory and compassionate approach.¹¹⁰

Haydée seems to demonstrate memory loss or else a reluctance to discuss certain events; when asked about her actions on the first anniversary of Moncada, she responds: “Yo creo que tendrá que venir una de las compañeras a narrar esto, porque de verdad que tengo una neblasa en eso.”¹¹¹ When the “familiar de un mártir” reminds her that she had said to a policeman “Mátame, que yo sí es verdad que no tengo miedo, mátame cobarde”, she responds “Mal hecho, mal hecho. Porque el objetivo era celebrar el aniversario y no era que me mataron [...] Fue una cosa mal hecha, no era una cosa de valor.”¹¹² She

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹¹⁰ For more on female compassion and war see Sara Ruddick. “Notes Towards a Feminist Peace Politics” in *Gendering War Talk*, Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 109 – 126.

¹¹¹ Santamaría, *Haydée*, 52.

¹¹² Ibid., 53.

disapproves of what she is said to have done but remains unable to remember it. Towards the end of the testimony, she asserts that she is not satisfied with her account “Porque hay cosas que es difícil recordar en una noche o que es difícil decirlas.”¹¹³ Haydée confirms that, as well as encountering memory loss, she struggles to articulate her memories, perhaps due to her aforementioned fear of how they will be received. She goes on to say that she has “recordado cosas tremendas” when talking to friends.¹¹⁴ In keeping with Herman’s arguments regarding the necessity of a safe environment, Haydée suggests that, when in the company of those she trusts, she has begun to reconstruct a narrative regarding her experiences.

Haydée vividly recounts the violence she witnessed at Moncada, despite her intermittent memory loss or apparent unwillingness to present these memories to a larger audience. The intensification of her memories is communicated through sections of the *testimonio* that present more aesthetic scenes and images. For example, she poeticises the night of the attack:

Aquella noche fue la noche de la vida, porque queríamos ver, sentir, mirar todo lo que ya tal vez nunca más miraríamos, ni sentiríamos, ni veríamos. Todo se hace más hermoso cuando se piensa que después no se va a tener. Salíamos al patio, y la luna era más grande y más brillante; las estrellas eran más grandes, más relucientes, las palmas más altas y más verdes. Las caras de nuestros compañeros eran las caras de algo que tal vez no veríamos más y que tendríamos toda la vida.¹¹⁵

There is a strong melancholic tone; celestial bodies, nature and people only looked beautiful because the *combatientes* were aware that they might never see them again as death was potentially imminent. When her narrative is examined from within its psychological context and with reference to Herman’s findings highlighted above, it becomes apparent that Haydée seemingly suffered difficult emotions, perhaps due to the fact that her brother and fiancé were killed in the aftermath of the attack. After repeating the fact that she and her comrades were “en busca de vida y no la muerte”, she states:

¹¹³ Ibid., 70.

¹¹⁴ She states she talked about Moncada “sin querer.” Ibid., 70.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 33.

Pero de todas maneras, aunque no querramos [sic] admitirlo, la muerte lo tronchó y por minutos lo devoró todo. Hubo momentos allí, en que nada más que veíamos y sentíamos la muerte por todas partes. Y queríamos encontrar la vida y no podíamos. Hubo momentos allí en que no podíamos conformarnos con que viviera el que no tenía que vivir y que muriera el que debía vivir.¹¹⁶

Haydée laments the death of her loved ones, whilst recognising that the failure of the attack meant that others, members of Batista's army, had survived. This tone disproves the argument that Cuban *testimonio* triumphantly and uncritically promotes Cuban revolutionary ideology. Far from conceptualising her brother's death as martyrdom, Haydée's personal experience of loss and regret is expressed.

The contradiction between Haydée's potentially traumatic lived experiences and her audience's expectations of celebratory heroism results in an insecure and disjointed testimonial narrative. Haydée ends by reiterating the difficulty she faced in constructing her *testimonio*; in the last few sentences she repeats three times that she was scared and had not wanted to speak in front of political science students.¹¹⁷ Of her shyness and aversion to public speaking she states "Eso es un defecto mío, no lo puedo remediar."¹¹⁸ This statement, which also reflects her lack of self-esteem is followed with a curious explanation of the relationship between the Revolution and Moncada:

Es que mientras más pasan los años, más grande se hace ese hecho, porque la Revolución es más grande y ha hecho el hecho más grande, mientras más se avance la Revolución, mientras más haga este pueblo, más grande será el Moncada. Entonces nos será más difícil cada día hablar del Moncada.¹¹⁹

This final sentence of the *testimonio* suggests that, due to the fact that her own experiences are not compatible with the Revolution's glorification of Moncada, while the Revolution grows and places increased importance on the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹¹⁷ She repeats "tenía miedo", *ibid.*, 70.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

attack, she incrementally feels unable to articulate her honest “tragic” memories.

The absences in Haydée’s account are partly addressed through the inclusion of a prison letter which deals with the missing issues. The last chapter, “Carta enviada por Haydée Santamaría a sus padres, al llegar a la cárcel de mujeres de Guanajay, 1953”, provides quotidian details such as the quality of the food and the visiting hours in prison. Haydée then laments the death of her brother Abel.¹²⁰ In contrast to her rejection of martyrdom above, the letter ends with a call to arms, in which the death of Abel is used as motivation and encouragement for support for Fidel:

Mamá, piensa que Cuba existe y Fidel está vivo para hacer la Cuba que Abel quería. Mamá, piensa que Fidel también te quiere, y para Abel, Cuba y Fidel eran la misma cosa, y Fidel te necesita mucho. No permitas a ninguna madre te hable mal de Fidel, piensa que eso sí Abel no te lo perdonaría.¹²¹

It is no coincidence that the editors have included a letter that discusses the two subjects which Haydée found too difficult to articulate in her testimony, her brother’s death and her incarceration. The paratext’s incorporation of this more optimistic letter is undermined by the rest of Haydée’s first-person account which communicates the trauma and guilt she experienced as a result of the failed military manoeuvre.

The protagonist’s death is dealt with in a way that differs considerably from the heroising of Tamara. Whilst the editor does not mention it, Haydée’s daughter refers briefly to her mother’s suicide in the prologue. Contradicting: “El viejo cliché que los revolucionarios no se quitan la vida”, her suicide is humanised: “Dicen que los animales no se suicidan, a no ser para defender la especie. Es pues, al menos, una forma muy humana de morir.”¹²² While Tamara died in battle and was thus transformed into a heroic martyr, Haydée

¹²⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹²¹ Ibid., 74.

¹²² Ibid., 8.

ended her own life, arguably due to an irreversible trauma sustained during the Moncada attack and its aftermath.¹²³

Conclusions

Haydée's suicide and the potentially subversive tone of her account contrasts with the revolutionary dedication demonstrated by Tamara; while Haydée seems to reject the notion of political violence, Tamara actively endorses it. The texts differ in style, content and structure, yet they coincide in that the paratexts conflict with the *testimonialistas'* accounts, feminising the *guerrilleras* by stressing their conformity to normative gender roles. The depiction of Tamara's personal life, her love of singing and playing the guitar, as well as her relationship with her parents and Ulises Estrada, leads to a more three dimensional representation of the revolutionary icon. Personal information about Haydée's experience of motherhood and her doubts about revolutionary violence reveal the subjective aspects of her life. This information contradicts critics who maintain that these aspects are excluded from Cuban revolutionary literature about women. However, these details are arguably presented in such a way as to highlight the *guerrilleras'* femininity and their conformity to patriarchal gendered identities. In the context of the Latin American Cold War, this reaffirmation of patriarchy can be seen as a challenge to US propaganda that, as we saw in the Introduction, equated communists with feminists who sought to usurp the relationship of inequality between the sexes, disturb heterosexuality and destroy the traditional nuclear family.¹²⁴

In both *testimonios* a paratextual paradox emerges as an attempt to frame Tamara and Haydée as militant protagonists of the Revolution is undone by suggestions that they were in fact relegated to positions of servitude and domesticity. The central question posed here concerns the primary role of these women: did they provide auxiliary support from within established

¹²³ On the 29th July 1980, *Granma*, ran an article on the subject of Haydée's death with the title: "Se prive la vida la compañera Haydée Santamaría."

¹²⁴ Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 67. Enloe, *Morning After*, 17.

norms of female behaviour under patriarchy? Or did they transgress these norms fighting alongside men as equals united in their dedication to Revolution? The answer appears to be both – while some of their actions challenged traditional gender roles, at other times they conformed to patriarchal expectations in keeping with Enloe's findings outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Tania and *Haydée* undermine US Cold War propaganda. Despite her psychological difficulties and reservations about revolutionary violence, Haydée rejects the demonisation of communists as unpatriotic. *Tania* emerges during a time profoundly affected by the Cold War and Tamara's account serves as a counter-narrative to depictions of the Cuban Revolution as unpopular. Female experiences of the Revolution are presented which, although critical and paradoxical, are nevertheless supportive of Castro's government in the face of North American opposition.

Both texts present the female protagonists carrying out domestic chores, such as ironing, cleaning, sewing and cooking. Their relationship to the family is highlighted through letters to their parents in both cases. Haydée's role as a mother and daughter and Tamara's plan to marry and have children are foregrounded. Both women are described as womanly and beautiful. Despite this attempt to downplay the potentially feminist significance of their actions by highlighting their compliance to patriarchal norms, Haydée and Tamara were none the less able to defy restrictions on female behaviour proving the capabilities of women in the male dominated spheres of politics and armed conflict.

While Tamara's narrative confronts others' differing memories of her, Haydée struggles with intensified and fragmented memories of Moncada. The paratext of Haydée's *testimonio* suggests it is a celebratory commemorative account when it is in fact a reluctant narrative. We do not have access to Tamara's account of the last moments of her fatal, almost certainly traumatic, guerrilla involvement, but we know that she struggled emotionally during her time as a spy. Haydée's account is riven with regret, memory loss and rejection of violence as she is unable to resolve the psychological and political issues

posed by her experiences. Neither *guerrillera testimonio* conveys a monochromatic pro-revolutionary message, rather they are both complex and multifaceted, and can be better understood once the role of gender, the Cold War context, counter-propaganda, trauma and memory are acknowledged.

The next chapter will explore more literary examples of Cuban *testimonio* that provide an intimate insight into the role of Cuban women who did not directly take part in armed combat, but who were involved in militarised literacy brigades and other volunteer campaigns. The chapter examines Dora Alonso's *El Año de 61* which thematically coincides with the two *testimonios* examined above in that the second part details the attack at Playa Girón in the style of a war diary but which rather drastically departs from them in its literary descriptions of Cuban countryside. Olga Alonso's *Testimonios* is assessed next. This is an intriguing combination of poetry, letters and diary entries that provide an extremely personal, and at times seemingly critical, account of revolutionary volunteering in rural Cuba. Like Haydée and Tamara, Olga died prematurely and the paratext commemorates both the Revolution's achievements and the young woman's life.

Chapter Two

Commemoration and Catharsis:

Testimonio of Volunteering in Rural Cuba

Following the Revolution of 1959, the new Cuban government set about consolidating its popularity and putting its egalitarian ideals into practice. The *Comisión de Alfabetización* was founded to confront the high level of illiteracy in rural areas and 1961 was declared the Year of Education.¹ This was also the year Cuba defeated the US-backed invasion at Playa Girón. Justifying the Revolution in the face of the attack, mass mobilisation facilitated its educational objectives and by December 1961 Fidel Castro declared that illiteracy had been eradicated.² Castro and his *guerrillero* government approached the struggle to abolish illiteracy as if it were a military operation, as reflected in his speech to the United Nations in 1960.³ Teacher training schools were situated in the Sierra Maestra, the site of the guerrilla war, volunteers were organised into brigades with uniforms resembling military fatigues, and illiteracy was personified as the enemy. The campaign was the Revolution's first major, nationwide operation, and, despite its militaristic tone, it was both a humanitarian mission and "a profoundly political effort, one tied intimately to the revolutionary transformation of society and the

¹ Richard Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (California: Stanford University Press, 1969), 38.

² Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 84.

³ "El Gobierno Revolucionario ha construido, en ese breve período de tiempo, 25. 000 viviendas en las zonas rurales y urbanas; 50 nuevos pueblos están surgiendo en este momento en nuestro país; las fortalezas militares más importantes albergan hoy decenas de miles de estudiantes, y, en el próximo año, nuestro pueblo se propone librar su gran batalla contra el analfabetismo, con la meta ambiciosa de enseñar a leer y escribir hasta el último analfabeto en el próximo año, y, con ese fin, organizaciones de maestros, de estudiantes, de trabajadores, es decir, todo el pueblo, están preparándose para una intensa campaña y Cuba será el primer país de América que a la vuelta de algunos meses pueda decir que no tiene un solo analfabeto." "Discurso Pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario, en la Sede de las Naciones, Estados Unidos, el 26 de Septiembre de 1960." Portal Cuba. Política y Gobierno. <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1960/esp/f260960e.html>. Date accessed: 17th August 2012. Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 83.

economy.”⁴ During the literacy campaign, one hundred and twenty one thousand volunteers travelled across rural Cuba armed with lanterns, pencils and books.⁵

Just as women participated in the guerrilla war, so too were they an integral part of literacy and educational campaigns. Approximately half the *brigadistas* were female.⁶ When new schools were built, women accounted for a large percentage of the teachers.⁷ The racial characteristics of the volunteers is also worthy of note; according to de la Fuente, among the voluntary teachers participating in the literacy campaign, thirty percent were black or mulatto.⁸ The fact that neither text studied in this chapter explicitly refers to race can be seen as a reflection of the “official silence” surrounding race and racism in Cuba, identified in the Introduction to this thesis and thoroughly explored by de la Fuente.⁹

Female voluntary labour was also utilised during national emergencies; the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC) trained and co-ordinated volunteer health workers during the Playa Girón invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁰ Women occupied positions in industry and agriculture left vacant by men drafted into other posts. In 1963, during the aftermath of Hurricane Flora, women worked to evacuate survivors and provide medical aid, as well as replanting the fields and harvesting crops. The following year, women were also encouraged to work voluntarily on agricultural projects in Oriente Province.¹¹ High levels of female participation might be perceived as liberating women from normative gender roles and domesticity, by proving

⁴ Fagen, *Transformation of Political Culture*, 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶ Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 83.

⁷ Davies, *Place in the Sun*, 116.

⁸ Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 275.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18, 279.

¹⁰ Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

their abilities in other areas. However, in keeping with the findings of the first chapter of this thesis, Julie Marie Bunke argues that patriarchal attitudes nevertheless remained prevalent:

For the first time the Cuban government sent adolescent girls out on their own, far from home and the protection of their parents. Such a policy would have been astonishing, unthinkable perhaps, only a few years before. This wholly new experience for Cuban girls caused a great deal of anxiety for parents. To assuage their fears, Fidel Castro insisted that the girls working in the countryside with the literacy campaign would remain “virtuous.” They would not be living with the peasants. The girls would be more closely supervised than their male counterparts and would be housed in huts with females only. The sexual revolution had not reached Cuba, and the leadership tacitly assured parents that the familiar sexual double standard still prevailed.¹²

The two *testimonios* studied here explore volunteering efforts in rural Cuba in opposing ways. Both were published on the twentieth anniversary of the significant events explored in the previous chapter, the Playa Girón invasion and the attack on the Moncada barracks. Dora Alonso’s *El Año de 61* (1981) creates a pro-revolutionary, commemorative collective memory of the literacy brigades and the Playa Girón invasion through her unmediated first-person narration and her use of characterisation, natural imagery and other literary techniques.¹³ Conversely, Olga Alonso’s *Testimonios* (1973) presents a cathartic account of difficult experiences of rural volunteering, detailing personal emotions and exploring female sexuality through poems, diary entries and letters to her family.¹⁴ The potentially therapeutic function of *Testimonios* operates on two planes: Olga’s writing was a cathartic form of expression, as we saw Henke argue in the Introduction to this thesis, and readers of her text might also experience validation of their own reservations about the

¹² Julie Marie Bunke, *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 95.

¹³ Dora Alonso, *El Año de 61* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1981). Davies explores the reasons for long delays in publishing women’s literature in Cuba in Davies, “Contexts: Women Writers in Post-revolutionary Cuba, 1959 – 92,” *Place in the Sun*, 116 – 144.

¹⁴ Olga Alonso, *Testimonios* (La Habana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1973).

revolutionary process.¹⁵ As with the *testimonios* studied in the first chapter of this thesis, Olga Alonso's first-person narrative often seems at variance with the pro-revolutionary paratext which commemorates her contribution as a revolutionary volunteer. As we shall see, despite the fact that her account was published on the twentieth anniversary of Moncada, Olga critically explores facets of revolutionary ideology such as collective identity, self-abnegation and the idealisation of *campesinos*, while the paratext and Dora Alonso's account uphold and promote them. Yet, *El Año de 61* also contains honest, personal responses to the Playa Girón attack which do not unquestioningly reiterate the Cuban government's ideological position and Dora's account could also be read as cathartic. Both texts therefore inscribe a commemorative paratext as well as a more personal cathartic function.

The two texts also coincide in that they both firmly reject Cold War propaganda, denouncing US interference and the Bay of Pigs invasion. They describe women's lived experiences of politically and historically significant periods of the Cuban Revolution through a variety of literary techniques, while disturbing Halbwachian distinctions between historical and autobiographical memory. As we saw in the Introduction, Halbwachs defined historical memory as that which "reaches the social actor only through written records and other types of records such as photography" and is maintained through commemorations which "serve as focal points in the drama of re-enacted citizen participation."¹⁶ While autobiographical memory consists of "events

¹⁵ Catharsis is a Greek word meaning "purification" or "cleansing", derived from the ancient Greek gerund *kocooipeiv*, transliterated as *Kathairein*, to purify, purge. See Ambreen Safder Kharbe. *English Language and Literary Criticism* (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 2009), 193. In his *Poetics* Aristotle states that tragedy 'effects through pity and fear the proper catharsis of these emotions.' Here catharsis might mean purging, as it does in a related passage of Aristotle's *Politics*, in which music is said to get rid of disruptive emotions. Catharsis can also mean a purification and, in addition, a demonstration or display. Beyond the issue of tragedy, catharsis involves the use of traumatic experience in any genre. See David Mikics, *New Handbook of Literary Terms* (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 2007), 52. This chapter also finds relevant the more recent definition: 'The term catharsis has also been adopted by modern psychotherapy, particularly Freudian psychoanalysis, to describe the act of expressing deep emotions often associated with events in the individual's past which have never before been adequately expressed. Catharsis is also an emotional release associated with talking about underlying causes of the problem.' Kharbe, *English Language*, 193.

¹⁶ Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*, 23.

that we have personally experienced in the past.”¹⁷ By revealing the stylistic hybridity and thematic complexity of these rarely studied, early examples of Cuban women’s *testimonio*, this chapter will further demonstrate that critics who describe the genre as “propagandic” and “impersonal” are severely misguided.¹⁸

Needless to say, these two texts vary significantly from the forms adopted by the two texts studied in the previous chapter. While Dora Alonso is an established writer of literary fiction, Olga Alonso’s personal poetry, diary entries and letters are arranged by an anonymous editor to present a commemorative text celebrating the young volunteer’s life, as the reader is afforded a more intimate insight into the protagonist’s experience of volunteering. Dora Alonso will now be introduced, and the structure and paratext of *El Año de 61* will be briefly outlined. The literary techniques and political objectives that have been identified in her text will then be analysed.

Dora Alonso, *El Año de 61*, 1981

Born on the 22nd of December 1910 in Matanzas, Dora Alonso has been described as “the most prolific female short story writer of the post-revolutionary period.”¹⁹ An award-winning poet, journalist, dramatist and writer, her career spanned many decades and she died in 2001.²⁰ Just as much of her literary work interacts with political themes, *El Año de 61* relates historically significant events and personal emotions, employing literary techniques. Alonso’s first-person narration clearly constitutes an autobiographical account of the year 1961, whilst at the same time the *testimonio* becomes historical and collective memory – it is a written record

¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁸ Shaw, “Referentiality and Fabulation,” 101, 105. Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*, 81. Craft, *Novels of Testimony*, 25.

¹⁹ Davies, *Place in the Sun*, 131.

²⁰ Antonio J. Molina, *Mujeres en la Historia de Cuba* (Florida: Ediciones Universal, 2004), 37.

that includes documentary photography and commemoration, contesting Halbwachian categorisations outlined above.²¹

El Año de 61 has received very little critical attention. Parvathi Kumaraswami has described it as a “journalistic style of testimonial writing”, in which the *testimonialista* is a source of “narrative authority.”²² Kumaraswami also acknowledges the presence of a “more personal and interiorised narrative voice” through which Alonso explores the “emotional aspects of her reactions to the bombings.”²³ However, Kumaraswami does not assess the prevalence of characterisation, symbolism, alliteration, internal monologue and other significant literary techniques, examined below, which have the effect of aesthetically enriching the text whilst reinforcing its political objectives.²⁴

Twelve brief chapters are organised into two sections and the dedication to “los combatientes de Playa Girón” serves as the sole prefatory text. Despite this paratextual emphasis on the conflict, in fact only the two last chapters, “15 de Abril en Santiago” and “Diario de guerra”, document the invasion; the remainder commemorate the literacy brigades.²⁵ The first section comprises extensive descriptions of rural Cuba and improvements in education, infrastructure, and living standards there, as a result of the Revolution. Although the celebratory political rhetoric is sporadically explicit, the text also inscribes ornate descriptions, symbolism and natural imagery to dramatise and memorialise the work of the literacy brigades and to consolidate the Revolution’s popularity in Cuba. In the context of continued US aggression, the *testimonio* also serves to legitimise the Cuban system. The second section was written while Alonso worked as a war correspondent, covering the Playa

²¹ Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*, 23 – 4.

²² Parvathi Kumaraswami, “‘Pensamos que somos historia porque sabemos que somos historia’: Context, Self and Self-construction in Women’s Testimonial Writing from Revolutionary Cuba.” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 83, no. 6 (2006): 523 – 539.

²³ *Ibid.*, 531.

²⁴ See also, Sofia Mason, “Lo Político y Lo Personal en *El Año de 61* de Dora Alonso,” *Revolución y Cultura*, no.4 (2010): 5 – 9.

²⁵ 15 de Abril see Alonso, *El Año de 61*, 69. “Diario de guerra” see *ibid.*, 77.

Girón attack.²⁶ Despite the thematic shift, the style does not drastically change; reported speech is still used for effect, first person singular and plural are interchangeably applied to engage the reader, pace communicates speed of action and the language is descriptive. However, natural imagery is employed for a contrastive effect. This is not a solely propagandist or impersonal journalistic account but rather a hybrid *testimonio*, as the literary style and the expression of personal doubts intersect with the defiant political rhetoric provoked by the invasion.

In addition to the overtly literary writing, *El Año de 1961* makes extensive use of documentary photography to communicate a sense of documentary realism. The photographs in the first section present rural Cuba and newly built homes and schools, to commemorate revolutionary advancements. Literary techniques are combined with photography to transmit a sense of the accuracy and veracity of the author's memories; photographs are often accompanied by lengthy descriptions of the journey and the rural environment, as passages reminiscent of travel writing convey her sensory experiences and emotional responses. In contrast to the photographs of the rural idyll, seen in the first section, photographs of the dead and injured, destruction of buildings, aeroplane crashes and soldiers convey some sense of the reality of the conflict in the second. This section becomes a cathartic collective memory, a narrative which recounts a potentially traumatic experience with a pro-revolutionary tone, presenting the Cubans as morally superior and ultimately successful. The final chapter, "Diario de guerra", comprising brief dated diary entries, unites the private and individual narrative of a diary with the public, collective act of war, underscoring *El Año de 61*'s role in exposing the intersectionality between autobiographical memory and collective or historical memory.

Through detailed depictions of difficult terrain and several chapters dedicated to the small villages she visited, the first section of *El Año 61* recreates Alonso's experience of rural Cuba while also communicating revolutionary

²⁶ Ibid., sleeve.

ideology and recognising early revolutionary educational achievements.²⁷ The first chapter, “El Viaje”, opens with a letter from a volunteer teacher which highlights the poverty and generosity of the rural population, to provide an emotive context for the description of the brigades that follows. The letter is immediately juxtaposed with contrasting, less political writing, an ornate description of the journey to the first destination, Bayamo:

¡Aquí Bayamo!, saludan sus calles estrechas, las dibujadas rejas, las memorias de libertad o muerte; los coches, que tan bien encajan en el conjunto evocador... A esa primera impresión se suma la múltiple presencia de chorreantes paraguas, pequeñas y oscuras cúpulas que se reflejan en el pavimento de mojados adoquines.

Está lloviendo en Bayamo.²⁸

The poetic portrayal of rain and the town streets is the first example of the use of symbolism and pathetic fallacy in *El Año de 61* and is suggestive of the interweaving of political rhetoric with scenic descriptions of rural Cuba that occurs throughout. After centuries of ignorance and suffering, the revolutionary brigades have come to liberate the people of Bayamo by providing them with education; the rain represents a cleansing of the unequal past, as well as the idea that the Revolution and the literacy campaigns are a new beginning for the illiterate. As the rain nourishes the fertile soil of the tropical countryside, so the *brigadistas* will nurture the education of the rural poor. Towards the end of the chapter the young volunteers are described as laughing and chatting, before the weather is described again: “No se ve una nube. El sol arde y se explaya.”²⁹ Natural imagery naturalises the Revolution and reaffirms the political message of the text.

The third chapter, “La Escuela”, presents a metonymical account of the Revolution’s school-building programme. A photograph with the caption “La primera escuela de San Francisco de Arroyón” accompanies a long, detailed

²⁷ For example, the villages include “Bayamesa” in the second chapter, *ibid.*, 10, “Arroyón”, the sixth chapter, *ibid.*, 33, the seventh chapter “Guisa”, *ibid.*, 40, the following chapter “Bayamito”, *ibid.*, 47, and tenth chapter, “Oro de Guisa” *ibid.*, 63.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

description of a newly built school. The school stands in the centre of the photograph, the local people occupy the foreground and the background is comprised of a mountain range.³⁰ Reflecting the quasi-militarisation of the literacy campaign detailed above, another teacher, a “[h]abanero de humilde origen” declares: “Si no fui capaz de agarrar un fusil y subir con él a la Sierra, al menos ya estoy haciendo algo.”³¹ His quote serves to include Cuban readers, most of whom would not have been involved in the guerrilla war either but who can, and the implication is that they should, become involved in volunteering. The armed conflict of the Sierra Maestra is evoked to promote patriotism, pride and as a consequence, mass participation.³² Political messages are often conveyed indirectly, and more effectively, through implication. The narrator does not order the reader to volunteer for the Revolution, but she encourages it through characterisation and the celebration of exemplary revolutionary behaviour. The chapter ends with the rhetorical questions: “¿Cómo serán estos jóvenes y estas muchachas, estos hombres y mujeres, después de tan extraordinaria generosa experiencia? Y ¿cómo, los que con ellos aprenden a leer, a pensar, a creer...?”³³ The qualities of self-sacrifice and altruism are thus promoted. However, as we shall see, these questions are answered in surprising ways in the second *testimonio* examined later in this chapter.

Having quoted from teachers above, Alonso develops characterisation in the chapter “Mayor, El Arriero.” Following the same structure as the other chapters, an explicitly political opening is followed by more literary descriptions of the rural environment and local customs. Mayor is then introduced: “Mayor es un mulato que debe de andar por la cincuentena. Es delgado y fuerte. Un hombre de expresión grave, de cara afilada. Le faltan los cuatro dientes superiores, y sus ojos, enrojecidos, se ven enfermos,

³⁰ Ibid., 22.

³¹ Ibid., 21.

³² Ibid., 25.

³³ Ibid., 25.

parpadeantes.”³⁴ The passage underlines the negative health impacts associated with the poverty of rural life, by describing Mayor’s external appearance, as the characterisation technique of indirect presentation is employed.³⁵ Two photographs add veracity to the account. The first shows him sitting outside his humble home with a dog; in the second he is building a house. An unnamed man stands next to Mayor on the foundations of the house and the caption reads “Con el campesino, compartiendo sus tareas”, demonstrating to the reader that Mayor also engages in exemplary volunteering. Mayor does not look at the camera in either photograph. In the former he leans back in his chair while drinking from a white cup, as his dog lies down behind him creating the sense of a relaxed rural environment. In the second he stands at the top of the skeleton of the building, holding a hammer in his hand. The background again consists of impressive mountains. A young woman stands at the base of the building, holding a young child and looking up at Mayor, underscoring his representation as an ordinary working hero or exemplary revolutionary figure.³⁶ Mayor is quoted directly, as photography, characterisation and polyphony interweave to relate his life story:

Nací en Birey [...] no conocí a mi padre. Empecé a trabajar a los seis años como narigonero. A los doce, ya estaba aburrido de coger golpes de mi abuela y me fui de la casa, por ahí [...] Me hice entonces de una vaca, que parió de poco tiempo. Me la compraron con la cría, y logré una ganancia de setenta pesos.³⁷

The narrator of *El Año de 61* responds to Mayor’s brief autobiographical account of rural poverty by asserting that the Revolution has improved his quality of life, and Mayor agrees, expressing loyalty to, and confidence in, Fidel Castro.³⁸ Mayor’s is an embedded *testimonio*, placed within the larger *testimonio*.

³⁴ Ibid., 30.

³⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 65 – 6.

³⁶ Alonso, *El Año de 61*, 28.

³⁷ Ibid., 31.

³⁸ The narrator states: “Con las nuevas leyes que aseguran la carga de los arrieros” and then Mayor is quoted: “Yo sé que Fidel se acuerda de nosotros.” Ibid., 31 – 2.

The chapter closes with an atmospheric and engaging story told by the narrator, Mayor, and another character, Ángela, which combines Mayor's personal life story with the political history of Cuba. The narrator relates the tale in such a way as to build anticipation and encourage admiration for Castro, creating ambience by setting the scene at night:

En la etapa final de la lucha contra la dictadura, Fidel bajaba de La Plata, en su avance hacia los llanos. Dormía Mayor y, en la casa en tinieblas, se escuchó un toque. Un toque firme.

- Al abrir la puerta vi a un barbuse, grande como una peña de los farallones. Me pidió permiso para pasar la noche en la casa. Con él venía una mujer. Y en el momento en que Ángela les preparaba comida, dijo el barbuse: <<Yo soy Fidel Castro, y ella, Celia Sánchez.>>

Ángela, que tuesta café, agrega interés a la anécdota.

- Les dispuse la mesa con hule blanco, platos y vasos.³⁹

Alonso's narrative voice interjects to underline the humility of the revolutionary leader: "No aceptó cama el Comandante. No quiso molestar. Colgó la hamaca de campaña en el sitio donde ahora estamos."⁴⁰ Mayor's character personifies the generosity and hospitality of the rural population, while his personal interaction with the Cuban leader combines autobiographical memory with that of political and historical importance.⁴¹ The text fulfils the pro-revolutionary function of consolidating the ideology and popularity of the Cuban government, as well as humanising Castro. It is also a counter-memory, which contests antagonistic US depictions of the Revolution, by introducing Cubans whose quality of life has been improved as a result of its early efforts. This also has the effect of providing an emotive context for the US aggression detailed in the latter section of the text, suggesting that opposition to the Revolution is an unfounded attack on an ultimately humanitarian mission. The illusion of a peaceful productive

³⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 32.

⁴¹ Ibid., 29.

revolutionary society, painted in the first section, is shattered in the second part, as it becomes apparent that the United States intends to destroy this picture of happiness.

In the final chapter of the first section, an exemplary village, “Oro de Guisa”, serves to further underline Cuba’s revolutionary transformation. The chapter opens with quotes from villagers testifying to political repression prior to the Revolution, before the narrative voice emotively asserts: “Porque así fueron muertos, por atroz que parezca. Por el delito de ser pobres, analfabetos, parias.”⁴² Differing from this violent past, the village is now “un pobladito moderno” with “casas nuevas, pintadas, [...] de colores alegres.”⁴³ Alonso explains that, while the “humilde” villagers are impressed by these new houses, running water, electric lighting, paths and gardens, for the *brigadistas* the village is a “rústico albergue” lacking in the commodities to which they are accustomed.⁴⁴ Olga Alonso’s account, examined below, explores in more detail the notion that volunteers were dissatisfied with the quality of life they discovered in the countryside. However, the apparently grateful villagers now have access to parks, children’s playgrounds, a doctor’s surgery and a school. Unnamed, and therefore representative, villagers testify to this transformation and demonstrate their dedication to defending these gains: “¡Nadie podrá quitarnos lo que nos dio la Revolución!”⁴⁵ The closing image of the chapter symbolically reiterates the message of the text: “Por los caminos de la Revolución, los faroles de los alfabetizadores – luceros nuevos – se van encendiendo en la Sierra Maestra. Cuba resplandece.”⁴⁶ The Brigades are idealised, as they symbolise enlightenment, illuminating a path away from rural ignorance towards the splendour of revolutionary knowledge; Cuba glistens due to their efforts.

⁴² Ibid., 64.

⁴³ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 66 – 67.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 68.

This idyllic image stands in stark contrast to the following chapter, which begins the second part of the text and opens with the news of the Playa Girón invasion:

- ¡Aviones yanquis bombardean La Habana y Santiago de Cuba! Lo acabo de oír por radio. El impacto es tan directo como la noticia. Se siente sacudida que levanta de la silla, que nos hace apartarla, con la respiración entrecortada... ¿Qué más? ¿Qué más se sabe? El primer momento, doloroso, tremendo, arrastra al regreso a la Habana. Se quiere, se necesita... Un uniforme verde olivio, nuestro como la propia sangre, y lo que simboliza ese uniforme, el sitio de mayor peligro donde ha de hallarse, confunden el ánimo y la razón.⁴⁷

Alonso conveys her auditory experience while also creating a patriotic visual image of green uniforms and the red blood of Cubans; these colours contrast with the “colores alegres” of the newly built rural homes and the cheerful imagery of the first section. The lack of quotation marks heightens the sense of confusion, while ellipses control the pace of the passage and emphasise the emotional state of distress, expressed with reference to difficult respiration. Stylistic techniques from the first section, such as rhetorical questions, dialogue, imagery and polyphony remain, but they are employed for a contrastive effect. Whereas the former section contributes to a celebratory collective memory of the literacy brigades, the latter conveys the emotional horrors of an armed invasion.

In contrast to the benevolent natural imagery of rural Cuba above, following the invasion, harsh natural similes describe man-made war machines: “Los restos de los aparatos, retorcidos, negruzcos, parecen de un monstruoso animal sacrificado. Los restos de un avión comercial recuerdan a una mariposa mutilada.”⁴⁸ The adjectives “retorcidos” “negruzcos” and “monstruoso” create a horrific atmosphere and prepare the reader for the emotive image that follows. Alliteration underlines the harsh image of a “mariposa mutilada”, which conveys the violence of the attack and continues the naturalisation of the Revolution, by representing the invasion with images of destruction of the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 74.

natural environment. A further example of Alonso's use of natural imagery to create a morose effect compares an aeroplane to a bird:

En una casa pintada de blanco se vela un recuerdo. Sobre la mesa de la sala hay dos cintas moradas, un ramo de rosas y el retrato de un joven capitán. De madrugada salió el piloto en vuelo de patrulla ordenado por la comandancia. Tripulaba avión en la negrura de las nubes, fugazmente plateadas de luna menguante... Ascendía el avión... Se alejaba... No regresó a la Base. Como un trágico pájaro de fuego cayó al profundo mar, y se apagó como una brasa [sic].⁴⁹

Alliteration strengthens the images of "un ramo de rosas" and "la negrura de las nubes." In the first section, flowers represented vivacity and the natural beauty of Cuba, but here the roses are placed next to the pilot's portrait to commemorate his death. Whereas the *brigadistas* were presented with imagery of pleasant weather conditions, descriptions of the attack are accompanied with ominous black clouds and a waning moon. In both sections, natural imagery serves the purpose of aesthetically, enriching the text and serving its ideological purpose.

While the first section presented exemplary Cubans, characterisation in the second section is employed to condemn the soldiers of the Playa Girón invasion. The depiction of these soldiers seeks to underline the moral superiority of revolutionary Cubans and denounce the US-backed assault. Of one captured soldier the narrator informs: "Pide agua y se le ofrece agua, sin un insulto, sin un maltrato, sin una burla."⁵⁰ While soldiers captured alive are apparently treated well by compassionate Cubans, the dead soldiers of the invasion are met with scorn: "Sus nombres no tendrán el respeto ni el llanto de su pueblo, para salvarles del olvido, como los muertos nuestros."⁵¹ Accompanied by a photograph of a dead soldier on a stretcher, the narrator's passionate denunciation underscores the themes of martyrdom and memory, noted in *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable*. Revolutionary Cubans are presented as dying as unforgettable heroes for the worthy greater cause of social

⁴⁹ Ibid., 75 – 76.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 88 – 89.

⁵¹ Ibid., 95.

equality, emphasised with the description of historic poverty throughout the first section. In contrast, it is asserted that mercenary Cuban exiles die pointlessly and their names will be forgotten; relegation to oblivion is the punishment for betrayal.

The *testimonio* ends with an exemplary character whose wife died during the bombing. As with Mayor, his impoverished physical appearance is described before he is quoted:

- Ayer a las ocho de la mañana salí con mi mujer, mis hijos y algunos niños heridos durante los bombardeos, en busca de un refugio. Al llegar a la curva de Caletón, a pesar de la sábana blanca que agitamos, nos ametrallaron. Casi todos cayeron. Mi mujer entre ellos. La recosté en mi hombro y ella animó a la hija mayor: que no llorara ni dejara la Milicia, porque ésta es nuestra Revolución.⁵²

The narrative voice underlines the bravery of the widower and reinforces the notion of martyrdom above. While *El Año de 61* is the least gynocentric *testimonio* examined in this thesis, it nevertheless concludes with a politicised depiction of motherhood. Even as she is dying, the Cuban mother instructs her eldest daughter to continue to actively participate in the Revolution. As we have seen, the rhetoric of martyrdom is best understood in the context of the Cold War, as an attempt to justify the loss of life during proxy conflicts and as a reaction to US hostility.

In addition to naturalising the Revolution's political ideology and demonising its enemies, the *testimonio* also conveys the narrator's personal doubts. While travelling to Playa Girón to report on the attack, she poses a series of rhetorical, almost existential, questions: "¿Qué busco? ¿Dónde quiero ir?"⁵³ She later queries: "Pero mi asunto personal queda en pie: ¿Qué es el miedo?"⁵⁴ She describes the journey with poetic language and emotional honesty confessing: "Es noche cerrada. Venus tiembla y fulgura a un costado del cielo.

⁵² Ibid., 99– 100.

⁵³ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 80.

No, no me engaño. Camino hacia la guerra y tengo miedo [sic].”⁵⁵ Again, Alonso employs descriptions of the natural environment to create ambience; on this occasion a strong sense of foreboding is communicated. The narrator’s personal misgivings are included, despite the fact that they do not conform to the political rhetoric of valour and heroism. Fear is not an emotion promoted by the Revolution; it undermines the discourse of bravery that dominated in the wake of the attack. However, it is unlikely that Dora Alonso has included this reference in order to undermine the revolutionary notion of courage. Rather, she expresses her own concerns and validates Cuban readers’ similar experiences, incorporating them into a pro-revolutionary cathartic narrative.

El Año de 1961 incorporates literary techniques and personal experiences to legitimise and consolidate the Revolution and to explore recurrent themes, found in all Cuban *testimonios*, of volunteering and self-sacrifice. Through characterisation the personal is connected to the political, the historical is shown as inextricably linked to the autobiographical. Representative, metonymical accounts celebrate and commemorate Cuba’s revolutionary achievements. The first and second parts juxtapose photographs and imagery from nature to heighten the success of the brigades and the horror of the invasion. The second section has a more overtly political tone and yet it makes use of poetic techniques such as alliteration, imagery and varying pace, as it inscribes Alonso’s emotional responses to the attack.

The following Cuban text differs considerably in that the commemorative function is arguably undermined by a cathartic articulation of problematic personal emotions, difficult experiences of volunteering and an unorthodox depiction of the rural population. Olga Alonso and her *Testimonios* will now be introduced before a discussion of the paratext and the relevance of catharsis to the critical interpretation of the text presented here.

Olga Alonso, *Testimonios*, 1973

Born on the 18th February 1945, Olga Alonso joined the *Escuela para Instructores de Arte* in 1961, the year of the Playa Girón invasion. She

⁵⁵ Ibid., 83.

graduated in 1963 and from October to November of that year she volunteered during the coffee harvests and in Camagüey province badly hit by Hurricane Flora.⁵⁶ As an *Orientadora de Teatro Regional* she organised theatre productions and drama classes for the rural population. On the 4th of March 1964, while on her way to teach a class, she was killed in an accident involving a tractor. She was nineteen years old.⁵⁷ In her honour, her birthday is the “Día del Instructor de Arte” in Cuba.

Written during her time volunteering, *Testimonios* radically complicates the idealisation of volunteering and rural Cuba presented by Dora Alonso above. While Olga’s work as an *Instructora de Arte* demonstrated her dedication to revolutionary values, her lived experience of them proved extremely challenging. Her poetry, diaries and epistolary writing explore her response to this contradiction, as well as adolescent themes such as identity, sexuality and death. An understanding of the psychological upheaval of adolescence is crucial for an accurate reading of *Testimonios*.⁵⁸ Olga’s distance from her family can be understood as one of several “main status transitions” that form part of adolescent growth and development.⁵⁹ The observation that during adolescence “Creativity, love and hope battle with hatred, aggression, violence, depression and suicidal despair” is also relevant, as *Testimonios* grapples with all these emotions.⁶⁰ Olga’s recurring concern with death is also explained with reference to this literature, which argues that thoughts of suicide “are not unusual in adolescence. They are not in themselves a sign of serious disturbance, although attempted suicide is. [...] The loss of childhood, the growing awareness of time passing, of their own and parental mortality,

⁵⁶Alonso, *Testimonios*, sleeve.

⁵⁷ Davies, *Place in the Sun*, 130.

⁵⁸ As discussed in the paper “Adolescence, Trauma and Catharsis in Olga Alonso’s *Testimonios*: Women’s life-writing from Revolutionary Cuba” presented by the author of this thesis at the IGRS, University of London, during a conference entitled “Feminine Singular: Women growing up through life writing in the Luso-Hispanic World,” 6– 7 May, 2011. The paper will be published, along with others selected from the conference, by Peter Lang in 2014.

⁵⁹ As outlined by John C. Coleman in *The Nature of Adolescence* (London: Routledge, 1999), 9.

⁶⁰ See Inge Wise, *Adolescence Psychoanalytic Ideas* (London: Karnac Books, 2000), 2.

and overwhelming anxieties in relation to these collide with feelings of omnipotence and youthful exuberance.”⁶¹

As with *Haydée habla del Moncada*, the Revolution has published an account which superficially seems to uncritically transmit revolutionary ideology, and, while the paratext encourages this reading, the first-person account of the *testimonialista* subverts it. An anonymous editorial presence arranges the text, creates chapter titles and provides contextual information to guide the reader towards a pro-revolutionary interpretation through paratextual strategies. The political framework of the text is clear, as it was published to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Moncada.⁶² However, in spite of its pro-revolutionary framing, *Testimonios* in fact comprises a creative expression of homesickness, frustration and distress, as it inscribes a conflict between the commemorative function and the paratext on the one hand and the cathartic first-person narrative on the other.

Through her poetry, letters to her mother and diary entries, Olga reveals a preoccupation with her identity which is explained with reference to the cognitive transformations of adolescence and her new identity as a revolutionary volunteer. Kumaraswami has analysed identity in *Testimonios*, which she finds constitutes:

the early attempts of a young Cuban woman to represent, and therefore define, a new identity-in-the-making, a subject/object definition which might reconcile the conflicting worlds of self-interest and self-sacrifice, of personal love and ‘amor revolucionario’ of private thoughts and public actions.⁶³

⁶¹ Wise, *Adolescence*, 4. Also, “Conscious thoughts about death are not infrequent in adolescence. Most adolescents entertain, at some point or other, they wish to kill themselves, to disappear, to see their parents dead.” *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶² “Reproducción de la edición hecha por el Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, La Habana, 1973, Año del XX aniversario.” Alonso, *Testimonios*, inside sleeve.

⁶³ Parvathi Kumaraswami, “Pensamos que somos historia porque sabemos que somos historia’: Context, Self and Self-construction in Women’s Testimonial Writing from Revolutionary Cuba.” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 83, no. 6 (2006): 523 – 539.

This chapter concurs with Kumaraswami's argument regarding the significance of identity and the tension between individual concerns and the demands of the revolutionary collective; however it argues that the conflicting worlds of childhood and adulthood are more significant than she suggests. Through her participation in revolutionary volunteering, Olga was attempting to sacrifice her individual needs to those of the revolutionary collective, at the precise point in her biological and psychological development in which concerns regarding her own identity and sexuality were coming to the fore.⁶⁴

Olga was arguably affected by the Revolutionary war, the Bay of Pigs invasion at Playa Girón and Hurricane Flora, all of which occurred during her early adolescence. There are also some signs in the text that volunteering in rural Cuba was potentially distressing for her, as it involved leaving her family for an extensive period of time and adapting to a radically different way of life.⁶⁵ While normal for many Cubans, for a middle-class student, the conditions of rural working life were extremely challenging, and were possibly at odds with idealist, revolutionary expectations. Throughout *Testimonios*, Olga repeatedly complains of homesickness and the fatigue she experienced due to the arduous physical labour of working the land. Despite the celebratory tone of the paratext, according to her first-person *testimonio* Olga was not always content submitting her individual desires to those of the revolutionary collective.

Like *El Año de 61*, *Testimonios* performs a cathartic function for the *testimonialista* and the reader alike; ambivalent emotions about volunteering and notions of collective revolutionary identity are therapeutically explored

⁶⁴ The identity crisis that Olga seems to be working through can also be placed in the context of adolescence as: "Intrapsychic restructuring during adolescence brings identity questions to the surface; while socio-cultural factors undoubtedly may accelerate, delay or even arrest this developmental process, sequential stages in the transformation of the self and its way of understanding remain unaltered, according to this developmental perspective. Transformations in cognitive and affective processes or qualitative change in some self (ego) structure which subtends both these facets of identity have all been held accountable for alterations to the subjective sense of 'I' frequently experienced during life's second decade." See Jane Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence: The Balance Between Self and Other* (New York, London: Routledge, 1996), 6.

⁶⁵ According to the APA's definition of trauma, seen in the introduction, as an experience "outside the range of normal human experience", rural volunteering was, for young Olga Alonso, distressing.

and carefully authorised in keeping with Aristotle's observations in *Poetics*.⁶⁶ Gente Nueva's publication of this account functions as a form of catharsis for Cuban readers, validating and legitimising difficult experiences of volunteering and containing them within a pro-revolutionary framework. To analyse the significance of trauma and catharsis in women's life-writing, we return to Henke's notion of "scriptotherapy", or "the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment."⁶⁷ The reading of *Testimonios* presented here argues that Olga attempted to write through emotional issues. However, the examples studied below suggest that, like Haydée Santamaría, Olga is ultimately unable to find comfort and consolation, as the questions she poses are left unanswered and the tensions she highlights are unresolved.

The structure of *Testimonios*, like *Tania*, is fragmented, although the former is subjected to much less editorial control. *Testimonios* comprises eleven letters, thirty-seven poems, three of which are epistolary, and twenty-seven diary entries, all of which are written in the first person.⁶⁸ The first seven, more optimistic, diary entries from 1962 are at the beginning of the text, while the last twenty, from 1963, are towards the end. *Testimonios* has no contents page and the vast majority of the text is not dated. Chapters are simply introduced with a quotation from a poem or letter that follows located in the middle of the page in italics. Most of the letters, and the epistolary poems, are addressed to Olga's mother. An unnamed editor appears at the beginning of the book only to underline his or her own absence: "En esta edición se ha respetado la grafía y el estilo de la autora."⁶⁹ Although she or he is not named, the editor provides brief contextual information throughout to encourage a pro-revolutionary interpretation.

⁶⁶ As we saw at the start of this chapter with reference to Mikics, *Handbook of Literary Terms*, and Kharbe, *English Language*, 193.

⁶⁷ Henke, *Shattered Subjects*, xii.

⁶⁸ Of *Testimonio*'s eleven letters, the first is written to the aforementioned exile, the second to the anonymous "compañero latinoamericano", a further six are written to Olga's mother, one is addressed to her grandmother, one to her grandparents and another is addressed to her mother, father, grandmother and other relatives.

⁶⁹ Alonso, *Testimonios*, 14.

Testimonios only includes one photograph showing Olga with short hair, smiling at the camera with her hands in her pockets; this is followed by a “dedicatoria” written by Olga’s mother, further foregrounding the mother/daughter relationship. Olga’s mother states: “Al pueblo que recibió su sangre humilde, su sangre joven, llena de ardores, deseos, esperanzas. A este pueblo que alimentó sus letras, haciéndolas fuertes y generosas: entrego.”⁷⁰ Throughout the dedication there is a sense that Olga’s mother coped with her daughter’s death by conceptualising it as a revolutionary sacrifice, underscoring the theme of martyrdom demonstrated in the previous examples of Cuban *testimonio*. No reference is made to the fact that Olga died in an accident, although it is noteworthy that the accident would not have occurred had she not been volunteering. As with *Tania* and *Haydée habla del Moncada*, the relationship between mother and daughter is highlighted to create the sense of a personal account and to humanise the *testimonialista* by stressing her connection to the family and the domestic sphere. While the potentially disruptive feminist identity of *guerrilleras* was downplayed with these techniques, as shown in the first chapter of this thesis, here unaccompanied female voluntary labour is rid of the potential controversy highlighted by Bunke above.⁷¹ While Olga may have been far from home, the paratext suggests that she was still a dutiful daughter and that, while somewhat independent, she did not forget the patriarchal norms to which she must abide. However, as we shall see below, Olga’s first person writing often inscribes a radically unconventional exploration of female sexuality and desire.

The dedication and the prologue do not account for the numerous love poems, letters and diary entries which critically explore central facets of revolutionary ideology, rather than unambiguously reinforcing them. The reader is encouraged to ignore these sections or to interpret them as acceptable cathartic expressions of difficulties experienced within revolutionary processes. The prologue simply underscores that Olga’s writing is a spontaneous, direct and

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷¹ Bunke, *Fidel Castro*, 95.

honest expression of a young, dedicated revolutionary which contrasts with the contrived bourgeois art of pre-revolutionary Cuba.⁷²

Most of Olga's letters are addressed to family members, but a deliberate editing decision has placed the most overtly political example of epistolary writing at the beginning of the text. The first letter is introduced under the heading "REMEMBER PLAYA GIRON. [Sic] Esta carta fue escrita en el año 1962, como respuesta a los insultos de una exilada."⁷³ In the zealous and explicitly political letter, Olga accuses the exile of being unaware of the imperialist nature of US economic intervention in Latin America:

¿Cree a Cuba inocente? Ahora es cuando ha dejado de serlo. Ahora. Independiente ya de ese "maravilloso" país donde Ud. Vive. A costa del sudor de bananeros de Panamá y Colombia, a costa de consumir sus vidas los petróleos de Venezuela y México, a costa de destrozarse sus manos los mineros de Bolivia, a costa de todos los pueblos subdesarrollados, que mantienen en la más ignominiosa ignorancia, en la miseria. Nunca ha pensado en eso ¿Verdad? No. Nunca.⁷⁴

The belligerent, sarcastic tone of the letter and the use of angry rhetorical questions persuasively convey the author's political convictions. This defence of Latin America in the face of US economic exploitation is a recurrent theme in all the *testimonios* examined in this thesis.

While Olga coincides with Dora Alonso in denouncing the United States, their accounts of rural volunteering differ considerably. Olga complains about almost every aspect of rural life and volunteer work in a letter to her mother, reproduced later in the text. She provides precise information on daily schedule and meal times, explaining that, due to the heat, their work day is divided into a morning and an afternoon shift, repeatedly reiterating the physical difficulty of such manual labour. She complains about the climate: "hay un calor sofocante y mucho polvo"⁷⁵ which does not suit her: "Tengo la

⁷² "Dedicatoria," Alonso, *Testimonios*, 7. "Prólogo," *ibid.*, 9 – 12.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

cara ardiendo de colorada, dicen que parezco manzanita.”⁷⁶ The rural poverty and lack of basic infrastructure and amenities irritate her: “no hay luz eléctrica y en la tienda del pueblo no hay casi nada”⁷⁷ She laments: “El agua tiene un sabor malísimo, porque no hay cañería, es de pozo, y la tomamos siempre con limón.”⁷⁸ The source of irritation is not indignation for the impoverished living conditions of the local population, but rather her own personal inconvenience. She also complains about the standard of her accommodation to which she is evidently unaccustomed: “Dormimos en una barraca, que está sucísima, llena de telarañas y comején, con pinturas horribles de santos en las paredes... las hamacas de los compañeros son de saco pica-pica...”⁷⁹ In a statement that harbours classist sentiments, as opposed to the way some Marxists idealise the worker, she complains: “Tenemos peste a trabajador de campo, olor a manigua.”⁸⁰ Perhaps the most subversive complaint points to the political apathy and laziness of the rural people: “Las gentes aquí son un poco apáticas y todo es hastio; pero resistimos.”⁸¹ She continues: “Aquí se cree imposible dar ningún acto cultural porque la gente ni canta ni come fruta. Los hombres aquí son muy vagos y son pocos a los que les gusta trabajar la tierra.”⁸² In stark contrast to the hardworking, pro-revolutionary *campesino* presented in *El Año de 61*, Olga describes an apathetic people who resist progress, education and work. The letter ends “Mami, con el cansancio de cinco días de arduo trabajo dejo de escribirte para continuar mi tarea. Escíbeme bastante” and signed “mami, mami tengo que irme ya.- Chao, *Olguita*.”⁸³ The repetition of “mami” sounds almost desperate. By foregrounding her five days of hard work, Olga reveals her middle-class background, as peasant girls would be

⁷⁶ Ibid.,96.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 96.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 96.

⁸¹ Ibid., 98.

⁸² Ibid., 97.

⁸³ Ibid., 99.

accustomed to regular manual labour. Olga's potentially unorthodox account may have been published to highlight the sacrifices made by middle-class young women with a view to encouraging others to volunteer. As above, this apparent authorisation of ambivalence could function as a form of catharsis for Cuban readers.

Like her epistolary writing, Olga's poetry explores anxiety, homesickness and exhaustion. She also expresses her sexuality, feelings of longing for an unnamed *compañero*, as well as other existential concerns. Many poems articulate her physical and emotional responses to volunteer labour:

Vuelvo del cansancio
para venir al cansancio
salgo de tristeza
para penetrar en ella
entierro el recuerdo
y el recuerdo crece a la humedad
de los huesos
de las carnes
del tacto
de los olores
acabo de venir de mí misma
y voy hacia mí⁸⁴

She equates fatigue with melancholy before repeating "recuerdo" to suggest that her sadness stems from persistent memories of family and home, a reading supported by the recurrence of the theme of homesickness throughout. Her use of the verbs "volver" and "venir" communicate a sense of meaningless circular repetition, perhaps indicating her attitude to manual labour. A series of oppositions are articulated, volver/venir, salir/penetrar, enterrar/crecer, suggesting a sense of conflict. From the sixth to the tenth line, the poem articulates her concern with corporality and the olfactory and somatic senses associated with adolescent exploration and sexuality. The final two lines of the poem reinforce the fragmentation of her identity, feelings of loneliness and the cyclical nature of her thoughts and emotions.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 113.

A particularly dramatic poem that provides further outlet for feelings of frustration and distress begins by addressing her *compañero*, before a sense of existential angst emerges:

Amor mío.
Sola con soledad.
No puedo más.
Ni aún conmigo misma.
Me busco.
Me hallo.
Me destruyo.
Sales tú renovado.
Te yergues ante mí.
Te haces gigante.
Te desvaneces.
Mis cenizas se dispersan en tu busca.
Vuelven a unirse en una lágrima.
Yo ya no soy yo.
Tú ya no estás
Hago silencio
Ruido para no oír el silencio.
Estoy loca...loca...loca...loca!
Quiero cambiar de mundo
quiero....quiero....quiero
Y nadie quiere
¡Ya! ¡Ya! ¡Ya!! ¡¡Ya!!
Recuerdo del olvido.
Siempre todos olvidan recordando.
Ya no puedo más
Repetida frase.
Tan rebuscada. Tan dicha.
Basta. Basta. Basta.⁸⁵

The poet searches for herself, finds herself and then destroys herself in this poetic exploration of an identity crisis. The apparition of the other enables self-recognition but this momentary relief then fades to ashes. The internal rhyme and euphony of the line, borrowed from Federico García Lorca, “Yo ya no soy yo” emphasise her self-dissolution and yet the repetition of “yo”

⁸⁵ Ibid., 157–8.

underscores her self-prioritisation.⁸⁶ The nineteenth line, “Quiero cambiar de mundo” following the repetition of “loca”, provides some clarity if read in keeping with the interpretation of *Testimonios* that sees it as a critical, cathartic account of her experience. Olga does not want to change the world, or improve it in keeping with revolutionary objectives; rather she wants to change worlds, and wishes that she was not volunteering in 1960s rural Cuba. The repetition of “quiero” suggests a dismissal of the collective identity at the heart of revolutionary politics as her personal desire takes precedence, while the echo of ‘loca’, ‘ya’ and ‘basta’ clearly communicates a strong sense of frustration and even desperation. The line “Ya no puedo más” encapsulates the defeatist tone of the poem as Olga feels unable to resolve her existential crisis.

The themes of solitude and an insecure sense of self are also present in Olga’s diary entries, which provide an intimate insight into her often sombre feelings. An entry addressed to her lover asks “¿cuándo podré tener el derecho como otras muchachas, de amarte en nuestro hogar? sí: ya sé, la lucha, la revolución...pero... ¿no puedo tenerlo dentro de ella? ¡dí amor! ¿es culpa mía amarte tanto? [Sic].”⁸⁷ Olga explicitly queries the notion that her intimate relationship and personal desire should be sacrificed in the name of the collective. She does not completely reject revolutionary ideology, as she supported the Revolution’s efforts, voluntarily participating in the literacy brigades. Rather she challenges the notion of revolutionary self-sacrifice asking why she is not able to both participate in the Revolution and satisfy her individual romantic desires.

⁸⁶ The poem is a palimpsest as echoes of Lorca and his contemporaries are also found. Lines 5 – 10 are reminiscent of “La Injusticia” by Dámaso Alonso. Dámaso Alonso, *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Gredos, 1972). “Yo ya no soy yo” is a direct quote from Lorca’s “Romance Sonámbulo” as stated, Federico García Lorca, *Romancero Gitano* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1991). The lines “Recuerdo del olvido/ Siempre todos olvidan” might be a reference to Miguel de Unamuno’s “Domirse en el olvido” the first two lines of which read “Dormirse en el olvido del recuerdo, / en el recuerdo del olvido.” Miguel de Unamuno, *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Afrodísio Aguado, 1963). Thanks to Stephen Roberts for sharing these observations following my paper, on Olga Alonso’s *Testimonios*, at the annual Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies Post-Graduate Forum, University of Nottingham, 2011. The papers presented at the forum have been published online in the forum journal, *El fósforo*: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/splas/documents/el-fosforo.pdf>

⁸⁷ Alonso, *Testimonios*, 204 – 205.

Diary entries also cathartically explore identity issues. She writes: “a veces me analizo delante del espejo y no veo mi imagen reflejada: es otra igual a mí...”⁸⁸ Olga no longer recognises her own image, as it has been transformed from that of a child to a young adult, and manual labour in harsh rural conditions no doubt also affected her appearance. This lack of self-recognition is also indicative of an emotional state of confusion and instability. Through her diary entries Olga attempts to therapeutically “write through” concerns regarding notions of self-sacrifice, revolutionary collectivity and an unstable identity, but the tone of the entries suggest she was unable to resolve these problems and her poetry supports this suggestion.⁸⁹

As we have seen, the anonymous editor of *Testimonios* employs paratextual strategies such as chapter titles to underline the political and downplay the potentially critical or personal. The section “¡Seremos ejemplo de amor comunista!” is in fact comprised of erotic love poems.⁹⁰ One poem creates strong sexual connotations by repeating the word “ven” at the beginning of several lines: “ven hasta mi playa”, “ven hasta mi grandeza.”⁹¹ Similar sensual undertones are created by the use of natural imagery such as “caracoles” flowers and gardens: “multiplica la flor/en mí súmate.../aquí... todo un jardín te espera.”⁹² A thunderstorm and rainfall symbolise sexual longing in a poem from the same section which begins:

... está lloviendo...
y...
yo no quiero que llueva
en cada gotica de agua
estás tú

⁸⁸ Ibid., 205.

⁸⁹ Henke, *Shattered Subjects*.

⁹⁰ Alonso, *Testimonios*, 135. Catherine Davies and Carrie Hamilton have noted the political significance of women’s erotic poetry in Cuba. See Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions*, 114 and Davies, *Place in the Sun*, 200.

⁹¹ Alonso, *Testimonios*, 137.

⁹² Ibid., 137.

el mar...
es una prolongación del cielo lluvioso
[...]
quisiera ser una prolongación tuya.⁹³

Images of precipitation convey the omnipresence of the lover; she evokes the reflection of the tempestuous sky in the sea to denote the physical unity she desires. Allusion, symbolism and metaphor communicate the carnal nature of her individual adolescent needs. Abundant natural imagery recurs throughout Olga's love poetry; she repeatedly refers to weather conditions, flora and fauna to explore feelings of longing. Contrasting strongly with Dora Alonso's reference to nature to fortify revolutionary ideology, Olga employs the same technique to explicitly express her female sexuality. While in *Tania* Tamara was portrayed as an object of male desire, Olga exercises sexual agency as she explores intimate desires using powerful imagery from nature.

The notion that *Testimonios* cathartically articulates personal issues is further developed in a poem on the theme of death. Combining poetry, politics and epistolary writing the poem repeatedly addresses the author's mother, "madre camarada":

En esta vida
morir es cosa fácil
Hacer vida es mucho más difícil –dijo
Maiakovski y se pegó un tiro
¡Seamos el ejemplo de su verso
sin pistola!
Los jóvenes, madre camarada
pensamos que somos historia
porque sabemos que somos historia.⁹⁴

The poet and playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky was born in 1893 and committed suicide in 1930. He was a socialist activist who became disillusioned with Stalinism. It has been suggested that he killed himself due to

⁹³ Ibid., 145.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 183.

a failed relationship, and that he had a serious mental illness.⁹⁵ His poetry was concerned with “a man’s longing for love and his suffering at the hands of the loveless”, a theme to which Olga relates as she also wrote of unrequited love.⁹⁶ The cathartic function of the poem becomes further apparent as Olga confesses to feelings of fear while simultaneously reassuring herself by asserting her bravery: “a veces, madre, tengo miedo... los ruidos en la noche son más grandes y sé que no soy cobarde.”⁹⁷ This reassurance seems unsuccessful as the poem ends by exploring her imagined death in more detail:

¡Yo moriré tremendamente llena!
 Resplandeciente
 de blanco marfil
 en el comienzo del Mundo
 donde todos me vean morir
 donde todos me sientan
 donde todos me huelan.
 ¡Seré un cadáver sin cuerpo!
 ¡eternamente humana!
 ¡Madre camarada
 vivirás orgullosa
 de tu hija camarada!⁹⁸

Olga’s sexual frustration and emotional distress culminate in fantasies of death. She visualises and glorifies her own death in an intriguing combination of “adolescent exuberance”, spiritual immortality and revolutionary martyrdom.⁹⁹ The defiant and yet self-consolatory tone of the poem, and the way in which it attempts to assert a sense of individuality and agency against

⁹⁵ Vladmir, Mayakovsky, *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1975), 11.

⁹⁶ Alonso, *Testimonios*, 13. The ending of a particularly passionate poem “te amo intensamente/pero.../no debes saberlo no/no te gustaría” suggests that Olga’s love is unrequited. *ibid.*, 155 She provides more details in another poem: “¡Mi amante es instructor de Arte/y fue electo obrero de vanguardia!” *Ibid.*, 162. Rather than being proud of her lover’s contribution to Revolutionary voluntary work, Olga laments his decision and implies that she blames the Revolution for separating them.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁹⁹ Wise, *Adolescence*, 4.

the inevitability and universality of death, reinforces the reading of the poem, and of *Testimonios*, as a meeting of revolutionary commemoration with emotional catharsis. The recurring themes of death, fear and depression suggest that Olga was considerably distressed by the harsh adolescent experiences of rural volunteering and sought to express and explore these emotions through her creative writing.¹⁰⁰

Towards the end of *Testimonios*, poetry exploring physical exhaustion, sexuality and death give way to political poems, as part of a deliberate editing technique employed to frame the piece inside acceptable pro-revolutionary parameters.¹⁰¹ Passionate, personal poems concerned with unrequited love are framed by the pledge of the *Instructores de Arte*, while the final two poems are unequivocally pro-revolutionary. *Testimonios* ends:

Sois un ejército del arte
-nos dijo nuestro félix pita...
como diploma de graduación
¡Bravo camarada Félix no se equivocaba,
una vez más, ha acertado!
Confiaba usted en nosotros
desde las primeras letras escritas
en las paredes de nuestras aulas
y más aún
cuando fuimos intelectuales
del café
el maíz
del frijol...
de la caña
somos un ejército del arte [..]
tú me enseñas
que se siembra en el tiempo de la seca

¹⁰⁰ There are numerous examples of Olga's poetic exploration of feelings of depression, homesickness, physical exhaustion and identity crisis. Alonso, *Testimonios*, 89, 133. One poem presents a cave as a metaphor for negative emotions and death. A dialogue regarding a missing woman concludes: "una cueva gigante se la ha tragado/sí. sí sé. /esa cueva me ha tragado. /le he visto/- ¿cómo es que me ves a mí?/ ¿no lo sabes?: ¡estamos en ella!/ ¡no. no camines!/no tiene final/- no importa/ya estoy muerta."[sic] Ibid., 125. A particularly brutal poem explores extreme feelings of frustration and self-harm as Olga describes being confined in a cell and biting her veins until she bleeds. Ibid., 127.

¹⁰¹The lengthy poem that begins the last section of the book is largely about *the Segundo Congreso Latinoamericano de Jóvenes*. Ibid., 193.

manejar
un arma
yo te enseño la conjugación de los verbos que te traigo
actuar
cantar
bailar
pintar

[...]

nuestro manifiesto
es consigna de la práctica:
¡y nos pertenece a los instructores,
a ustedes también, si quisieran!
¡por un arte revolucionario socialista
para las masas obreras y campesinas!
Patria o Muerte
¡Venceremos!¹⁰²

This final poem is addressed to the Cuban writer Félix Pita Rodríguez, the only revolutionary figure referred to throughout the text. First person plural is used intermittently throughout the poem to incorporate the other students at the school for *Instructores de Arte* contrasting with the predominance of the first-person singular in the rest of Olga's poetry and demonstrating that, despite her repeated exploration of personal emotions, Olga did attempt to engage with a collective sense of revolutionary identity by volunteering. A nature versus culture dichotomy has the effect of underlining the difference between the rural Cuba of the *campesinos* and the urban Cuba of the volunteers. The words coffee, corn, beans and sugar, all representative of rural Cuba, are separated from the text for emphasis in contrast with the verbs act, sing, dance and paint, also separated, which represent the cultural activities that Olga and her fellow students were to take to the countryside.

Despite this deliberate pro-revolutionary ending and the other examples of Olga's political convictions, *Testimonios* is an exceptionally varied, literary and unorthodox example of Cuban women's testimonial literature that strongly challenges the glorification of voluntary work, and the idealisation of rural

¹⁰² Ibid., 209 – 214.

Cuba and *campesinos*. In addition, through sexual and morbid poetry, diary entries and epistolary writing, concepts of collective identity and revolutionary self-sacrifice are arguably questioned.

El Año de 61 and *Testimonios* coincide in that they both fulfil a commemorative function as they recount historically significant political events, employing literary techniques, while exploring personal experiences. They both perform a cathartic function as potentially unorthodox emotions and experiences are resituated within a pro-revolutionary framework. However their depictions of women's volunteering in Cuba stand in stark contrast. While Dora Alonso presents hardworking, generous and humble *campesinos*, Olga Alonso describes a stubborn, lazy and apathetic people. The former account promotes and consolidates the Revolution, celebrating its educational and military achievements; the latter is a cathartic exploration of intimate thoughts, emotions and desires in which the values of the Revolution are seemingly of secondary importance.

Cuban Women's *Testimonio*: Conclusions

As demonstrated in this and the previous chapters, Cuban women's *testimonio* is multifarious and heterogeneous; the Cuban *testimonios* studied in this thesis vary stylistically and with regard to purpose and intent, ranging from almost complete compliance to Cuban revolutionary ideology on the one hand, to the unorthodox questioning of some of the Revolution's main tenets on the other. All four *testimonios* inscribe paradoxes and contradictions, especially in relation to gender and the tense relationship between the paratext and first-person narration. Against a background of simplistic anti-Castro, anti-communist Cold War propaganda, these texts present complex, varied accounts of women's lived experiences of the revolutionary process.¹⁰³

El Año de 1961 by Dora Alonso is most obviously compliant with the ideology of the Cuban Revolution. This is not surprising as Dora Alonso was a committed *militante* and the year to which the text is dedicated saw the success

¹⁰³ Examples of such propaganda are analysed in Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

of both the literacy crusade and the Cuban military at Playa Girón. Yet this celebratory commemorative text is one of the most literary examples studied here. Reflecting Dora's career as a writer of short fiction, characterisation, juxtaposition, alliteration, symbolism and the incorporation of polyphony are employed to create a detailed collective memory. The literacy brigades are glorified to justify the Revolution and disprove anti-communist propaganda and the theme of martyrdom is also best understood in the context of US aggression. Natural imagery and photography are employed for opposing effects, to depict the idyllic rural setting of the brigades in the first section and to underline the devastation caused by the Playa Girón invasion in the second. The narrator portrays the attack in keeping with the official governmental narrative; the invaders are presented as traitors who have died for a worthless cause, while Cuban casualties are presented as heroic martyrs. But in spite of the themes of courage and resilience, *El Año de 61* also expresses the narrator's feelings of fear and uncertainty. Individual, personal emotions are pronounced despite the emphasis on the collective and the political objectives of the text. Alonso's account might also serve as a cathartic validation of such ambiguous emotions for Cuban readers.

Revolutionary martyrdom is also a recurrent theme in *Tania, la guerrillera inolvidable*. Ostensibly a pro-revolutionary, mass-produced text, distributed by the Cuban government, here *Tania* was found to reinforce elements of the Revolution's rhetoric whilst challenging its gendered norms. Paratextual strategies, polyphony, collage and photographs create the sense of an exemplary revolutionary woman and martyr. A simultaneously thematic and chronological structure (thematic within chapters and chronological from chapter to chapter) allows for the detailed but contradictory exploration of Tamara's life experiences and character. The third-person, omniscient narrative voice and other paratextual strategies arguably attempt to control Tamara's first-person narration, containing it within patriarchal parameters. Unlike the more subtle examples of editing found in the other three examples of *testimonio* studied thus far, the narrative voice in *Tania* interrupts the text to address the reader directly. In spite of this seemingly moralising presence, the text is one of the most paradoxical studied here, as the intrusive, omniscient

narrator fails to assert a coherent narrative. While the paratext promotes Tamara's revolutionary fervour, a struggle between traditional gendered identities and *guerrilleras* emerges. Guevara famously theorised the revolutionary "New Man", but roles for Cuban women in post-revolutionary society were perhaps less clear.¹⁰⁴ The Cuban Revolution, and the editors of *Tania*, encouraged women to enter into the workforce, join mass organisations and engage with the traditionally male-dominated spheres of politics and rural labour. However, it was still necessary for women to continue to undertake unpaid domestic labour and childcare. As a result, corresponding traditional feminine gender roles, and patriarchal double standards, were to be left largely intact.¹⁰⁵ The elements of Tamara's life which potentially subvert normative patriarchal relations are countered with attributes and behaviours that reinforce such roles. Tamara's love for guns and armed combat is juxtaposed with her cooking skills and pretty smile; male-authored testimonies approve of her physical appearance, reducing her to an object of male desire. The way in which she ended her life during guerrilla war in Bolivia is presented as having interrupted her plans to marry and have many children.

El Año de 61 and *Tania* disturb Halbwachs's distinction between autobiographical and historical memory in that these personal narratives are firmly connected to their wider political contexts to encourage support for the Cuban Revolution. The two most unorthodox, and questioning Cuban *testimonios* also combine the personal with the political but for a different effect. Haydée Santamaría appeals to notions of the family to criticise the violence used by the Revolution in *Haydée habla del Moncada*, while Olga Alonso writes to her mother to complain about voluntary work in *Testimonios*.

Despite its commemorative paratextual framing, *Haydée habla del Moncada* is not a simple glorification of the armed attack that launched the Cuban Revolution. Rather Haydée Santamaría, who eventually committed suicide, presents a narrative that critically reflects on, and often seems to regret, the

¹⁰⁴ For a reflection on gender and Guevara's "New Man" see Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ Bunke highlights the social double standards with regards to male and female sexuality in revolutionary Cuba, as referenced above. Bunke, *Fidel Castro*, 95.

armed conflict, as it prematurely took the lives of her brother and her fiancé. There are noticeable absences in the text as Haydée repeatedly states that she cannot remember, and is unable to articulate, her incarceration, subsequent torture and the death of her loved ones. There are also suggestions that she felt political disillusionment, as she does not engage in detailed political commentary, repeating instead vague or clichéd revolutionary rhetoric. Although she is not presented as a political agent through the paratext in the same way as Tamara, a similar endeavour to contain her story within patriarchal norms is evident. The prologue presents a domestic scene in which Haydée's "feminine" hands iron the shirts of the male *combatientes*. Throughout *Haydée*, there is also a struggle to contain the possibly critical aspects of the text.

The editors of *Haydée* use chapter titles to highlight the pro-establishment sentiments she expresses and downplay those that are nonconformist, a strategy employed by the editors of all Cuban *testimonios* studied here. Despite the title of the chapter "Hay que ser violenta e ir a la Guerra si hay necesidad" Haydée in fact criticises violence, sympathising with Batista's soldiers and their families.¹⁰⁶ A poetic description of the night of the Moncada attack concludes with her assertion that those who died should not have – an explicit rejection of the martyrdom in *Tania* and *El Año de 61*.

Testimonios by Olga Alonso is the most stylistically varied literary text studied here. Olga's account of voluntary work provides a negative response to Dora Alonso's rhetorical question: "¿Cómo serán estos jóvenes y estas muchachas, estos hombres y mujeres, después de tan extraordinaria generosa experiencia?"¹⁰⁷ Olga reveals that the experience leaves her feeling exhausted, homesick, frustrated and distressed, the corresponding letter addressed to Olga's mother undermines the celebration of self-sacrifice and rural volunteering found in *El Año 61*. While according to Dora Alonso *campesinos* are pro-revolutionary, hard-working, generous and unjustly impoverished, Olga presents them as lazy and resistant to cultural progress. Of course,

¹⁰⁶ Santamaría, *Haydée*, 41.

¹⁰⁷ Alonso, *El Año de 61*, 25.

Cuba's rural population is not a homogenous group; the two differing accounts may both be accurate.

Over all, Olga's literary writing appears more concerned with cathartically exploring her own individual feelings and desires than producing art that advances the interests of the revolutionary collective. Her inventive poetry reveals a preoccupation with death and explores female sexuality. In sharp contrast to Dora Alonso's use of natural imagery for political effect, Olga evokes nature to express erotic feelings and to communicate a profound sense of melancholy. While Tamara is portrayed as an object of male desire, and Ulises Estrada presented a new model of revolutionary romantic love, Olga's creative writing inscribes her attempt to construct and express her own sexuality. As well as a radical exploration of female desire, however, *Testimonios* includes ample evidence of Olga's pro-revolutionary political convictions; she was certainly opposed to US aggression towards Cuba and intervention in Latin America, and dedicated her teenage years to revolutionary volunteering. As with the other *testimonios* we have seen, an anonymous editor attempts to reframe Olga's first-person narration through chapter titles and the paratext, encouraging readers to focus on the more overtly political sections while failing to account for her more unorthodox personal writing. The paratext foregrounds the commemorative function, yet *Testimonios* also comprises writing that enabled Olga to cathartically explore difficult emotions; through its publication readers with similar concerns could have these validated.

Apparent in all four texts is a conflict between the first-person narration of Cuban women, sometimes subversive and critical, often personal, and the various editors of the texts who attempt to resituate these voices within acceptable, patriarchal, pro-revolutionary parameters. In *Tania* and *Haydée* this struggle is gendered; the potentially feminist act of engaging in armed combat is neutralised with descriptions of these women undertaking domestic chores and belonging to male-dominated relationships. In *Testimonios* Olga seems to question the subjection of individual desires to the needs of the political collective and thus challenges the paratextual emphasis on her less frequent, political writing. Dora Alonso's text is unambiguously pro-

revolutionary, and yet there still appears to be a complication in the text between fictional forms, personal experiences, and her duty to report on politically significant events. In the other three texts, the editing and the paratext impose structures on the women's voices while using them to justify the Revolution, possibly a reflection on the way the male-dominated leadership used the support of women to its own advantage.¹⁰⁸

We have also observed that the four Cuban texts studied in this thesis seem to present a silence on issues of race and racism in Cuba, this is in spite of the fact that race, racism and the racial identity of Cubans is directly relevant to the guerrilla conflicts prior to the Revolution and the literacy campaigns that followed it. This oversight was explained with reference to de la Fuente's observations regarding the official silence on race in Cuba from 1962 onwards: "The dominant discourse was summarized by Fidel Castro himself when he argued that discrimination [on the basis of sex and race] in Cuba had disappeared along with class privileges.[...] The revolution had solved Cuba's historic race problem."¹⁰⁹ Despite this official narrative, discrimination on the basis of race and gender had clearly not been eradicated; the Revolution was attempting to redress historical inequalities, but these profound social divisions were not to disappear instantaneously.

All Cuban *testimonios* explicitly reject the negative portrayal of the Revolution by the US and instead present a variety of women's lived experiences. The *testimonios* inscribe collective and commemorative memories of the Revolution's triumphs, while also transmitting fragmented personal memories of its failures and challenges. While *Tania* and *El Año de 61* may at times appear didactic and, to an undiscerning reader, "propagandist", an acknowledgement of the Cold War context informing the texts as well as the prevalence of anti-communist propaganda, enables a more nuanced understanding. This contextualised approach reveals that the texts sought to construct counter-narratives to challenge the portrayal of the Cuban Revolution as unpopular, immoral and a threat to US security. The

¹⁰⁸ As we saw with reference to Stoner, "Militant Heroines" above.

¹⁰⁹ De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 279.

incongruous depiction of gender roles outlined above can also be better understood in this context; the *testimonialistas*' ties to the family and their conformity to normative gender roles are foregrounded to contest the notion that communists sought to destroy these established patriarchal institutions.

In the same way that Cuba inspired revolutionary political movements and *guerrillerismo* tactics in other Latin American countries, revolutionary culture was also extended across the subcontinent. Female-authored *testimonio* accompanied women's participation in revolutionary movements in Central and Latin America in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The first text examined in the following chapter was published in Cuba, but it celebrates the contribution of women from Brazil, Peru and Nicaragua. The second text emerges in a context not dissimilar to Cuba, the successful socialist revolution in Nicaragua, but it differs in that the *Sandinista* government was ultimately defeated by two decades of US counter-insurgency tactics. Both *testimonios* are edited and compiled by an explicitly identified socialist feminist heterodiegetic narrator, who highlights, rather than obscuring, gynocentric issues and concerns. While testifying to potentially traumatic experiences caused by US tactics and denouncing their apparently indiscriminate violence, these *testimonialistas* also criticise sexism from within leftist movements as they articulate their specifically female experiences of political radicalisation, guerrilla movements and other forms of mobilisation and organisation. As we shall see, the genre of *testimonio* develops thematically, continues to vary stylistically and expand geographically while constructing cathartic counter-memories and gendered political counter-narratives to US Cold War discourse.

Chapter Three

Women's *Conscientización*: Socialist Feminist *Testimonios* In Cuba, Brazil, Peru and Nicaragua

In 1979, following decades of covert organisation and guerrilla warfare, the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) overthrew the US-backed Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. The organisation is named after Augusto César Sandino (1895 – 1934), a revolutionary independence fighter who, having fought an unsuccessful guerrilla war against the US, was killed by the National Guard.¹ Described as a popular, democratic, anti-imperialist movement, the FSLN was founded on notions of national unity, mixed economy and cross-class mobilisations.² According to Kampwirth, “women participated in Sandinista armed struggle in greater numbers than in any other guerrilla movement to date.”³ This increase in female involvement may be explained by the FSLN’s rejection of *foco* strategy in favour of mass mobilisation.⁴ As we saw with reference to the Cuban Revolution, when women become organised politically they often begin to challenge sexist attitudes and, in the case of Nicaragua, “once the FSLN admitted women as equals, the traditional gender divisions of labour often broke down, under the

¹ See Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 22.

² Richard Harris and Carlos Vilas, eds. *Nicaragua. A Revolution under Siege* (London: Zed Books, 1985), 1.

³ Karen Kampwirth, “Confronting Adversity with Experience: The Emergence of Feminism in Nicaragua.” *Social Politics* 2, no. 2 (1996): 136 – 158.

⁴ *Foquismo* is the vanguardist guerrilla strategy developed by Che Guevara and Régis Debray who, inspired by the triumph of an initially small guerrilla army in Cuba, argued that mass mobilisation is not a necessary prerequisite for successful revolution. Guevara posits that “1. Popular forces can win a war against the army. 2. It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them. 3. In underdeveloped America the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting.” He describes the members of the *foco* as “an armed nucleus, the fighting vanguard of the people.” Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), 161, 162. Kampwirth cites the election of mass mobilisation over *foco* tactics as the reason for increased numbers of women in guerrilla conflicts in the wake of the Cuban Revolution. Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 9.

non-traditional conditions of guerrilla life.”⁵ Nicaraguan women organised the clandestine *Asociación de Mujeres Ante la Problemática Nacional* (AMPRONAC) which played a crucial role during the guerrilla war before 1979. With the success of the FSLN the organisation became the *Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza*. The AMNLAE fought to raise awareness about women’s issues such as abortion, contraception and domestic violence, both among the public and the FSLN leadership.⁶ However, just as women’s involvement in the Cuban Revolution did not end gender inequality, Nicaraguan women’s participation involved “the subordination of their specific interests to the broader goals of overthrowing Somoza and establishing a new social order.”⁷ With reference to the Nicaraguan Revolution, Maxine Molyneux poses the question, “if women surrender their specific interests in the universal struggle for a different society, at what point are these interests rehabilitated, legitimised and responded to by the revolutionary forces or by the new socialist state?”⁸ In addition to Molyneux’s reservations, the AMNLAE was severely limited by US President Ronald Reagan’s Contra War (1979 – 1990), examined in more detail below.⁹ The prolonged conflict led to the fall of the FSLN and, under the neo-liberal government that replaced the *Sandinistas*, conditions for women worsened. It has been persuasively argued that this US-backed coalition was particularly harmful for “the working-class, the poor, women and other non-elite groups.”¹⁰

⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁶ Lorraine Bayard de Volo, *Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs. Gender Identity in Nicaragua 1979 – 1999* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 86. Randall describes Luisa Amanda Espinoza as the first female member of the FSLN to die during combat. Margaret Randall, *Sandino’s Daughters* (London: Zed Press, 1981), 1.

⁷ Maxine Molyneux “Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women’s Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua” in *Women’s Movements in International Perspective* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 40.

⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁹ In 1990 the pro-US, neo-liberal Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO) coalition was elected. More recently, in 2006, the leader of the *Sandinistas*, Daniel Ortega, was once again voted into government.

¹⁰ Florence Babb, *After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua* (University of Texas, 2001), 2.

The *testimonios* examined in this chapter present women's counter-narratives which were arguably created at least in part as a response to the Reagan administration's "unprecedented propaganda campaign" which took place during the conflict in Nicaragua, and across Latin America, as part of Operation Condor.¹¹ The *testimonialistas* attempt to answer the question posed by Molyneux by demonstrating that through *concientización* and political organisation, women also began to challenge domesticity and male domination.¹² As with the Cuban examples, these texts are not uncritical or monochromatic, rather they attest to the fact that entrenched patriarchal attitudes persisted among socialist men.

This chapter will examine three polyphonic *testimonios*, compiled and edited by socialist feminist Margaret Randall. These texts differ rather dramatically from the Cuban *testimonios* seen thus far. The editor is no longer anonymous and, rather than a single *testimonialista* providing the focus for the work, Randall selects, guides and edits the *testimonios* elicited from numerous women through her interviews. As Randall's production of *testimonios* develops, her interference in the text seems to expand, as there is a change from apparently unedited interview transcripts to more heavily mediated testimonial narratives which show no signs of the questions asked by Randall. Needless to say, this diverse methodology produces a strikingly different experience for the reader as detailed below.

The first multiregional, rarely studied, early example of Randall's work, *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* (1978), was published in Havana and is a compilation of women's *testimonios* from Cuba, Brazil, Peru and Nicaragua.¹³ Randall seeks to document and promote women's involvement in

¹¹ For more on Reagan's use of "illegal propaganda" see Livingstone, *America's Backyard*, 84. For a comprehensive study of Operation Condor see McSherry, *Predatory States*. See also Appendix Two: The Latin American Cold War.

¹² Jean Franco was quoted as highlighting the relevance of *concientización*, or critical consciousness, to women's *testimonio* in the Introduction to this thesis. Franco, "Going Public", 71. As we saw, the term originates from Paulo Freire's work on critical pedagogy. See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

¹³ Margaret Randall, *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*. (La Habana: Casa de Las Américas, 1978). For details of Operation Condor in Brazil see McSherry, *Predatory States*,

revolutionary movements that were ultimately successful, as well as those that were stifled. *Todas estamos despiertas* (1980), translated into English as *Sandinista's Daughters* (1981), also studied below, presents an array of women's experiences of the violent repression prior to the FSLN victory and political changes thereafter.¹⁴ The account justifies the *Sandinista* government in the face of aforementioned US aggression; however, it also evaluates gender relations under the administration. While the political context of Brazil and Peru in *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* differs in that there the revolutionary organisations were unsuccessful, all three texts share consistent thematic similarities. The women present experiences of gendered state repression and sexism which undermine the justifications for and logic of both counter-insurgency tactics and patriarchy. The *testimonios* in all three collections illustrate that these discourses obscure and marginalise women's specific lived experiences; women's interests are often shown to be overlooked by androcentric revolutionary movements which view such specificity as divisive.¹⁵ Randall attempts to overcome this antagonism by associating patriarchy with capitalism and by demonstrating the high value of women's participation in socialist movements. Prior to highlighting the gendered nature of torture, introducing Randall, examining her work more closely and identifying the *testimonialistas'* significant use of personal pronouns, this chapter will briefly examine Randall's editing techniques and the way in which her work seems to overlook issues of race.

Randall's editing can seem heavy-handed; her conspicuous socialist feminist beliefs and didactic narration make her the most intrusive, heterodiegetic

53. For Peru see *ibid.*, 130. For Nicaragua see "The Central American Connection", *ibid.*, 207 – 239.

¹⁴ Margaret Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas. Testimonios de la mujer nicaragüense de hoy*. (Distrito Federal: Siglo veintiuno editores, 1980). Margaret Randall, *Sandinista's Daughters* (London: Zed Press, 1981).

¹⁵ In the context of Cuba, Molyneux asserts that there was "open hostility" to feminism and that "the official position of the FMC [...] attributed women's subordination to capitalist imperialism [...] Feminism was seen as "bourgeois" and "divisive." Molyneux, *Women's Movements*, 83.

narrator studied in this thesis.¹⁶ Her work has been overlooked by critics of *testimonio*, presumably due to its polyphonic nature and political bias.

However, this chapter argues that Randall's texts may be categorised as *testimonio* of counter-propaganda as they contest Cold War narratives constructed to legitimise US intervention in Central America. The *testimonios* comprise gynocentric narratives which present lived memories of gendered torture and incarceration which occurred as a result of counter-insurgency policies while denouncing *machismo* in local and domestic spheres.

Arguably, however, Randall's socialist feminist approach leads her to overlook issues of race. Despite the fact that she interviews women from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, in countries profoundly affected by racist legacies of European colonialism, Randall never acknowledges the racialised hierarchies from within which her work is produced, or her place within these social, political structures. A thorough analysis of Randall's white privilege and the ways in which it has influenced her work lie beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses on the counter-propagandic function of her work and the ways in which women's lived experiences of repression and revolutionary movements are portrayed. However, future research will examine the issue of Randall's failure to address issues surrounding race more closely.¹⁷

¹⁶ Like other socialist feminists, Randall rejects radical feminism. She describes the women's movement in Europe and the United States as ranging "desde la mujer antimperialista", who believes in the liberation of all women, "hasta las llamadas feministas radicales, cuyas reaccionarias posiciones antihombre encajan a la perfección en el aparato de propaganda del sistema." Randall, *No se puede*, 11. Randall reflects the concerns elucidated in Heidi Hartmann's "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism Towards a More Progressive Union." Hartmann maintains: "while marxist analysis provides essential insight into the laws of historical development, and those of capital in particular, the categories of marxism are sex-blind. Only a specifically feminist analysis reveals the systematic character of relations between men and women." Further, Hartmann maintains that there exists a relationship of "dominance of marxism over feminism in the left's understanding of the woman question." Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: Southend Press, 1981), 2. This publication is discussed further in the following chapter.

¹⁷ With reference to womanist or black feminist literature such as Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings of Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1981), the paper entitled "And when you leave, take your photos with you: White privilege and Randall and Oliveira's *Testimonio*" was presented at the XIV WISPS annual conference at the University of Liverpool, on the 8th November, 2013, by the author of this thesis. The paper reviewed criticisms historically levelled at white feminists by women of colour, of racism, paternalism, discrimination and tokenism, and asked how much of this criticism was applicable to Randall and her work.

Randall employs paratextual strategies similar to the Cuban editors, and thematic and ideological similarities with the Cuban texts soon become apparent. The significant difference between the Cuban texts and those edited by Randall is that whereas the editorial framework of the anonymous Cuban editors was undermined by the first-person *testimonio*, Randall selects and overtly edits testimonies which uphold her own political standpoint. She facilitates gynocentric counter-narratives which oppose male-dominated notions of socialism locally and hegemonic discourse of the Cold War and counter-insurgency nationally and internationally. Despite the lack of critical attention her work has received, Randall was a prolific producer of *testimonio*, and the three texts examined here show the development of her style.¹⁸

Randall's testimonial texts provide an interesting comparison with Cuban versions of the genre, as well as other *testimonios* compiled by heterodiegetic editors, as we shall see in the following chapter. As a result of the significance of Randall's work, the texts examined presently form an important part of the typology. Before introducing Randall in more detail and comparing and contrasting these socialist feminist *testimonios*, the significance of the gendered nature of torture will now be discussed.

Gendered Torture

The *testimonios* of incarceration and torture examined in this chapter will be analysed from a gendered perspective. According to Ximena Bunster-Burotto, the torture of politically active women "exacerbates and magnifies women's already subservient, prescribed, passive, secondary position in Latin American society and culture."¹⁹ Helen Leslie also argues for gendered analysis of

¹⁸ In addition to the *testimonios* examined in this chapter, Randall has published: *Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983); *Sandinó's Daughters Revisited. Feminism in Nicaragua* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994); *Our Voices. Our Lives. Stories of Women from Central America and the Caribbean* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1995); *Las Hijas de Sandino: Una Historia Abierta* (Managua: ANAMA, 1999); *When I Look into the Mirror and See You. Women, Terror, and Resistance* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Ximena Bunster-Burotto, "Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America" in June Nash and Helen Safa, et al, *Women and Change in Latin America* (New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1986), 298.

political violence, asserting that female survivors need specific attention because they are doubly targeted:

Latin American women paid dearly for disrupting dominant cultural constructions of femininity by participating in social movements for change. As well as becoming specific targets of military and paramilitary repression, they faced growing misogynistic attitudes. Escalating assassination, torture, and disappearances of women were accompanied by a legitimisation of violence against women in society more generally, causing an increase in violence and rape in the domestic arena.²⁰

Several of the *testimonialistas* report the sexist attitudes of their husbands and domestic violence perpetrated by their fathers; predominantly, however, they testify to militarised political repression, torture and rape. It has been argued that rape is implicitly or explicitly tolerated by the military “because it embodies that institution’s association of masculinity, aggression and depersonalization.”²¹ Indeed, as we have seen in the Introduction to this thesis, military narratives are founded upon a retaliatory gendered discourse which systematically devalues that which it classifies as feminine.²² The *testimonios* studied below demonstrate that the torture of women is often carried out in ways that specifically humiliate them *as women*, using sexualised violence and attacks on their identity as mothers through the torture of children.

Investigating counter-insurgency in Latin America, Livingstone concludes:

In many of the US [torture] training manuals, no distinction is made between guerrilla fighters and their civilian supporters; both were viewed as ‘subversives.’ This doctrine provided the justification for some of the worst atrocities of Latin America’s military governments and left a lasting legacy in the form of right-wing death squads which

²⁰ Leslie draws on the case study of the El Salvadorian women’s organisation *Las Dignas*. See Helen Leslie, “Healing the Psychological Wounds of Gender-related Violence in Latin America: A Model for Gender Sensitive Work in Post-Conflict Contexts”, *Gender and Development* 9, no. 3, (2001): 50– 59.

²¹ Nancy Hollander, “The Gendering of Human Rights: Women and the Latin American Terrorist State”, *Feminist Studies*, 22, no.1 (1996): 41 – 79.

²² See Carol Cohn “Wars, Wimps and Women.” For “feminization of enemies as symbolic domination” and “the making of militarized masculinity” See Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 251 – 331, 356.

regard trade unionists and human rights lawyers, among others, as legitimate targets.²³

Women were often targeted as “civilian supporters”, as Jelin observes, women were “kidnapped and tortured by state agents as a result of their familial identities and specifically their ties to men [...] with the purpose [of] extracting information about the political activities of these relatives.”²⁴ By testifying to the inhumane and unjust nature of counter-insurgency strategies, which routinely incorporated gendered torture, the *testimonialistas* dispute the argument that such tactics were necessary to combat the spread of communism. By testifying to militarised repression, the women in Randall’s *testimonios* assume narrative control, take charge of difficult memories and portray themselves as strong and determined political agents. Through their *testimonio*, the women envisage a new collective identity, while simultaneously naming acts of repressive violence denied in official state narratives.

Margaret Randall

As stated, whereas the self-effacing Cuban editors were noticeable but mostly anonymous, the two *testimonios* examined here were compiled by the outspoken feminist, socialist, author and photographer Margaret Randall.²⁵ Born in 1936, Randall left the US in 1961 to live in Mexico; in 1962 she founded the bilingual quarterly *El Corno Emplumado/ The Plumed Horn* that reproduced and translated poetry from the student movement. Following a politically motivated raid of her home by “paramilitary forces” she left Mexico for Cuba where she lived from 1969 until 1980 working in publishing and culture.²⁶ Randall became involved in the *Sandinista* Revolution of 1979 and lived in Nicaragua until 1984:

²³ Livingstone, *America’s Backyard*, 41.

²⁴ Jelin, *State Repression and Struggles for Memory*, 78.

²⁵ For a detailed exploration of her more recent socialist feminist beliefs see Randall, “Where It Suddenly Came Clear” in *Gathering Rage*, 27 – 39.

²⁶ Margaret Randall, *Walking to the Edge. Essays of Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 6; *To Change the World: My Years in Cuba* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press,

My family and I were not tourists in the superficial sense. I worked at the Ministry of Culture, for the women's organization and with media; my children went to local schools; my vantage point was one of engaged participation rather than what the guardians of the "free" press would call impartial observation.²⁷

Randall's explicit rejection of depoliticised impartiality is evident in *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* and *Todas estamos despiertas* as her opinions inform and shape the texts. On returning to the US, Randall was threatened with deportation under an act passed by a "McCarthyite Congress."²⁸ She fought her deportation and won back her citizenship in 1989 due to a positive ruling from the Board of Immigration Appeals. She currently tours the US lecturing, exhibiting photographs and reading poetry.²⁹

Randall has published twenty-eight collections of poetry and prose, four photographic works, six translations, and fourteen *testimonios*, which she refers to as oral history. She has also written extensively on the production of *testimonio*; in "Reclaiming Voices Notes on a New Female Practice in Journalism" she again discards the notion of journalistic objectivity. Often referring to the influence of feminism, Randall explains that she sought to recreate memories that had been "invaded, raped, erased" by patriarchy and she stresses the importance of "Listening – to ourselves, as well as our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and to women of different histories, ethnicities, social classes, and cultures."³⁰ "Qué es, y como se hace un testimonio?"

2009), 49. While living in Cuba she produced *Cuban Women Now* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1974) and later published *Women in Cuba: Twenty Years Later* (New York: Smyrna Press, 1981).

²⁷ Randall, *Walking to the Edge*, 7 – 8.

²⁸ The 1952 McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act was invoked due to the socialist opinions expressed in her books. The deportation order stated "[Randall's] writings go far beyond mere dissent, disagreement with, or criticism of the United States or its policies." *Ibid.*, 15 – 16.

²⁹ She has four children, ten grandchildren and currently lives with her partner of two decades, artist and teacher, Barbra Byers. "Biography." Margaret Randall, <http://www.margaretrandall.org/Biography>. Date accessed: September 2012.

³⁰ Margaret Randall, "Reclaiming Voices Notes on a New Female Practice in Journalism" in Gugelberger, *The Real Thing*, 60. She asserts that her work has been classified as oral history, testimony, testimonial journalism and in-depth interviewing before stating that she will describe it as journalism: "This way of telling a story is not product-oriented like the traditional (male-defined) news story, balanced on 'events' and portraying them as static.

further details her opinions on the genre and its production.³¹ She outlines several prerequisites; the *testimonialista* should have a story that is both specific and representative; the interviewer should ask open and neutral questions and the editor should include detailed background information, “testimonios secundarios”, and photographs.³² As we shall see, Randall’s interviews are semi-structured; *testimonialistas* are consistently questioned about their early life, political involvement and experiences of sexism, but Randall also allows for conversational fluidity

Despite her heavy editorial presence, Randall facilitates the expression of diverse *testimonios*, ranging from those which present a feminist critique, personal experiences and emotional responses, to those which succinctly reply with Marxist analysis and more factual information. The *testimonios* employ personal pronouns in a variety of ways: a female implied reader and Randall are directly addressed using the second person singular to include and engage the addressee, and frequent use is made of the feminine first person plural *nosotras* to grammatically reinforce the notion of women’s solidarity (highlighted by the Spanish titles *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* and *Todas estamos despiertas*). This notion of the female revolutionary collective is often contrasted with the use of “ellos” to refer to the male security forces.³³ It is also instructive to observe how the *testimonialistas* refer to themselves as they construct an autobiographical narrative of *concientización*, incarceration and torture. Personal pronouns therefore enhance the reader’s experience, reinforce the political objective of the text and might also reflect the psychological disposition of the *testimonialistas*.

When we tell our stories, or make ourselves vehicles for others to do so, we offer process. We are interested in *how* and *why* our informants did what they did, and what contradictions or complexities were a part of that.” Ibid., 61.

³¹ Margaret, Randall, “Qué es, y como se hace un testimonio?” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 18, no. 36 (1992): 23 – 47.

³² Neutral questions, *ibid.*, 35; *testimonios secundarios*, *ibid.*, 39, importance of photographs, *ibid.*, 41.

³³ As we saw in the Introduction, I use the term “security forces” to refer collectively to the military, the police, paramilitaries, mercenaries and all other forces used to execute counter-insurgency policy.

As stated, many *testimonialistas* report the sexist behaviour of male family members, *compañeros* and the security forces. All firmly oppose the capitalist socio-economic status quo and reject US intervention in Latin America. *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* allows a more direct communication with the *testimonialista* through apparently unedited interview transcripts while the later *Todas estamos despiertas* and *Sandino's Daughters* are more controlled and heavily edited so that superfluous personal pronouns are less prominent as a stylistic feature, they may have been removed. Despite differences in style and emphasis due to the development and maturation of Randall's role as a facilitator/editor, all *testimonios* studied in this chapter explore common themes of incarceration, torture and resilience. Taking into consideration Randall's guidelines, the effect of gendered torture and the political objective of counter-propaganda, this chapter will introduce the paratext, then compare and contrast the *testimonios* and the use of personal pronouns in *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*.

Margaret Randall,

No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras, 1978

Randall frequently refers to the Cuban Revolution throughout her work and the content and paratext of *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* legitimises and defends Castro's government against continued US opposition. *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* was published in Cuba two years after the Quinquenio gris, a five year period, from 1971 until 1976, in which some writers were marginalised.³⁴ The *testimonio* begins with two epigraphs that firmly locate the text within Cuban revolutionary ideology. The first cites José Martí (1853 – 1895), independence fighter and Cuban national hero, to draw a parallel between contemporary movements and female incorporation into historical struggles for Latin American independence.³⁵ The second

³⁴ For a recent discussion of this term see the paper given as part of the round table "La política cultural del período revolucionario: Memoria y reflexión." Ambrosio Fonet. "El Quinquenio Gris: Revisitando el término" La Habana, 2006. <http://www.criterios.es/cicloquinqueniogris.htm>. Date accessed 2nd July 2011. See also Franco, *Decline and Fall*, 101.

³⁵ Randall, *No se puede*, no page number provided.

epigraph reads: “Para mí lo más natural es luchar toda mi vida” and is credited to Tamara Bunke, the iconic *guerrillera* examined at the beginning of this thesis.³⁶ The text comprises five chapters, the first and last of which are predominantly written by Randall. The other chapters combine Randall’s introductions and questions with the first-person narration of the *testimonialistas* in an apparently unedited transcript format. Collectively the *testimonios* explore the empowering effects of politicisation, the difficulties raised by residual sexism, and resilience to gendered political repression.

Randall incorporates photography, or “testimonios gráficos”, in keeping with her aforementioned guidelines.³⁷ The photographs are not limited to the countries mentioned in the text; thirty-six photographs of women from across Latin America are reproduced. According to the captions, which provide information as to where the photograph was taken and the name of the photographer or other source, the women depicted in the photographs are from Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico.³⁸ In many of the photographs women with children engage in everyday activities, in others women are shown working in historically male-dominated spheres, such as defence and construction. Tamara *la guerrillera* Bunke is one of the few middle-class white women portrayed, most are workers or *campesinas* of indigenous and Afro-Latino heritage.³⁹ The inclusion of these photographs points to an overlap between *testimonio* and documentary photography, discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, and photographic journalism, as seen in Dora Alonso’s *El Año de 61*. However, unlike Alonso’s book, the photographs do not interact with or accompany the *testimonios*; only three of the *testimonialistas* are shown. Most of the photographed women are unknown and not named; they are simply described as “Mujer joven con sus hijos” or “Madre indígena” underscoring

³⁶ Ibid., no page number provided.

³⁷ Randall, “Qué es, como se hace testimonio.”

³⁸ Randall, *No se puede*, 160.

³⁹ I borrow the term “Afro-Latino” from Juliet Hooker, “Indigenous Inclusion/Black Exclusion: Race, Ethnicity and multicultural citizenship in Latin America.” *Journal of Latin American Studies*. 37(2005): 285 – 310. For a more detailed investigation see Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 1997).

their representative almost archetypal function.⁴⁰ As a socialist feminist, Randall is consciously employing the medium of photography in order to promote female participation in all spheres of society. By selecting such a wide variety of photographs from across the continent and grouping them together in the text, Randall presumably hopes to celebrate the social and economic contribution of women and the racial and cultural diversity of Latin America to create a sense of unity and solidarity. Published in Cuba, the text presumes a particular, sympathetic, Latin American audience and can in this sense be seen as an attempt to undo the internalisation of negative, patronising and stereotypical photographic images of Latin America as analysed by Edmundo Desnoes.⁴¹

Randall's *testimonios* validate and legitimise the socialist governments of Cuba and Nicaragua and other leftist movements across Latin America by outlining their achievements and contextualising their struggle for economic and social equality. A variety of feminist themes are simultaneously inscribed, from female political participation to motherhood, marriage, sisterhood and sexism, as women's equality is also promoted.

Randall's Political, Economic Contextualisation

Randall employs a variety of paratextual strategies to guide the reader before presenting the *testimonios*. She authors the first chapter, "La mujer latinoamericana de hoy", which incorporates statistical information, emotive language and her own first-person testimony to convey her particular socialist feminist analysis of Latin America in the late 1970s.⁴² She cites a variety of sources, chiefly *The Economist*, the *Organización Internacional de Trabajo* (International Labour Organisation) and the *Partido Socialista de Puerto Rico*, as well as four *testimonialistas*, among them Mirta Aguirre, a Cuban academic and poet, and Lolita Lebrón, a Puerto Rican political prisoner. For the most

⁴⁰ Randall, *No se puede*, 160.

⁴¹ "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo", Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista*, (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20.

part, the introductory chapter focuses on hunger, poverty, and other symptoms of economic inequality in Latin America with specific reference to women and children in order to set the scene for *testimonios* that follow.

Randall condemns the quasi-fascist military regimes of the *Cono Sur* (Argentina, Uruguay and Chile) and passionately denounces US intervention in a later section of the chapter, subtitled “La penetración imperialista y sus consecuencias para la mujer trabajadora latinoamericana”, which expresses disapproval of overt forms of interference such as military intercession, economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure.⁴³ In keeping with the arguments presented by Livingstone, Galeano and others in the Introduction to this thesis, Randall also argues that cultural domination is a crucial method through which the US attempted to assert its ideological authority and stifle local political movements.⁴⁴ She details how the US disseminated propaganda aimed at women through mass media, magazines, educational programmes and books.⁴⁵ Examples from Chilean women’s magazines are provided in which US propaganda ranged from explicit criticism of the *Unidad Popular* government to less explicitly political articles such as “Me enamoré de un millonario.”⁴⁶ Randall contends that such love stories discouraged women from political and economic participation and promoted marriage and domesticity. An interview with a female Christian Democrat is quoted: “Como mujer y como chilena instintivamente rechazo al marxismo, al que veo como la negación de la personalidad, de la libertad y de la democracia.”⁴⁷ Randall argues that freedom and democracy are in fact incompatible with US capitalism in Latin America and she positions herself, and the women she interviews, in opposition to this Cold War propaganda which she identifies as politically and socially conservative. Her objective, here and in the remaining chapters, is to produce counter-propaganda which condemns US intervention, promotes the

⁴³ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 29. Livingstone, *America’s Backyard*. Galeano, “The Revolution as Revelation.”

⁴⁵ Randall, *No se puede*, 41 – 42.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 43, 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 46 – 47.

egalitarian ideals of socialist feminism and provides justification for socialist movements in Latin America.

Brazilian Exile: Interrogation, Torture and Recovery

In the following chapter, Adamaris Oliveira, an Afro-Brazilian exile living in Cuba, recounts her capture and subsequent torture in a detailed, informal and personal account.⁴⁸ As with the Cuban *testimonios*, significant quotes from the *testimonialistas* are used as chapter titles for emphasis. “Una campesina brasileña: ‘Una lucha donde no va la mujer, va más lenta’”, begins with a description of poverty in Brazil and a lengthy introduction of the *testimonialista*. Randall situates the *testimonio* in a particular political economic context by providing malnutrition statistics and contrasting the image of bare-footed Brazilians with Brazil’s extensive production of shoes for export. She provides such information with the formal tone of a sociologist, avoiding emotive language. The *testimonialista*’s life story is interwoven with statistical data to underscore the reality of poverty in Brazil:

Este es el país de donde proviene Adamaris Oliveira un país donde la tuberculosis mata a una persona cada cuarenta minutos; un país que exporta zapatos mientras la quinta parte de su población de cien millones de habitantes anda descalza; un país cuyos funcionarios de Salud Pública han anunciado que el 76% de la población está desnutrida.⁴⁹

Repetition is employed here as a rhetorical device, with a cumulative effect, to create a sense of outrage. The first six pages of the chapter are dedicated to a detailed political, historical and economic overview of Brazil wherein Randall criticises the so-called “economic miracle” for benefitting only foreign companies and 5% of the Brazilian population. The “Operación Bandeirantes”, the body responsible for planning and co-ordinating “las actividades represivas de todas las agencias de seguridad estatal y de las unidades de la policía

⁴⁸ Randall does not mention a Portuguese to Spanish translator so the reader is left to speculate as to whether Adamaris provided her testimony in Spanish.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52. She provides a detailed account of Dutra’s rule (1945), describes Vargas’ suicide (1954) and explains that in 1974 another military dictatorship came to power under Geisel.

federal y del ejército regional”, is then introduced.⁵⁰ Randall’s arguments are in keeping with those of McSherry, who affirms that: “Brazil became a major counterrevolutionary force and U.S. ally” offering “training in repressive methods, including torture, to other militaries in the 1960s.”⁵¹

In contrast to these security forces, Adamaris is presented by the narrator as a blameless *campesina* who, in keeping with the socialist underpinnings of the text, has developed a revolutionary political standpoint as a direct result of economic inequality. Randall contrasts this apparently inevitable and morally justifiable commitment with the regime’s indefensible torture of children, as witnessed by Adamaris:

Durante su encarcelamiento en una jefatura de la Operación Bandeirantes, supo que por lo menos dos niños fueron torturados: a uno, de cuatro meses de nacido, se le aplicaron electroshocks y se le negó la comida; al otro, de ocho meses, se le sumergió repetidamente en agua helada. Ambos niños fueron torturados en presencia de sus padres [...] niños de doce y quince años de edad arrestados por cometer delitos menores, han sido torturados en presencia de prisioneros políticos.⁵²

As noted, such torture was used to target politically active women, damaging their identity as mothers and carers of children. This harrowing description, however, undermines counter-insurgency discourse that rationalised such violent repression. While Randall’s report may at times seem emotive and excessively affected by her political views, a recent account of the Latin American Cold War concurs with her analysis of “the masculine state’s repression of women’s resistance and political participation in Brazil.” Indeed, it has been argued that: “The manner in which the Brazilian military regime handled student and urban guerrilla movements showcases other Cold War-era uses of cultural representation and power – particularly the masculine state’s repression of women’s resistance and political participation.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 55.

⁵¹ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 53.

⁵² Randall, *No se puede*, 55.

⁵³ Joseph and Spenser, *In from the Cold*, 389.

Despite her aforementioned guidelines on the subject of neutral and open questions, however, Randall's enquiries vary in style and format. One of her strategies is to ask closed questions in order to elicit specific, quantitative information, "¿cuándo viniste a Cuba?", as well as longer open-ended questions to encourage more detailed, qualitative answers such as "¿Podrías hablarnos algo de las circunstancias de tu captura...?" to which Adamaris responds with the following excerpt, quoted at length to trace the significant use of personal pronouns:⁵⁴

Las circunstancias... , fui tomada presa porque nosotros estábamos clandestinos hacía un año mi marido y yo; nosotros estábamos en una ciudad pequeña lejos de São Paulo, como a setenta kilómetros, entonces guardábamos una parte del armamento de la organización; nosotros no hacíamos acciones ni teníamos contacto con la organización porque nosotros teníamos todo ese aparato en nuestra casa, el aparato médico y el aparato de armas, el material bélico. Nuestro hijo es el que tenía contacto con la ciudad. Nosotros leíamos algunas cosas, y él volvía con los contactos; entonces la policía cercó nuestra casa, dicen ellos que estaban buscando un ladrón de automóviles, pero cuando llegaron a la casa la cercaron con las armas en la mano y mi marido no tuvo otra alternativa que coger arma e irse contra ellos porque él tenía miedo de caer preso y ser torturado y morir en la tortura, y él siempre hablaba de que no se entregaba y que luchaba con el arma en la mano.⁵⁵

Adamaris begins with the first person singular, "fui," but following the introduction of her husband, "mi marido y yo", there are four repetitions of the first person plural, "nosotros." In keeping with the rest of the account, this repetition suggests that she misses her husband and is struggling to adjust to the loss of her identity as a part of a married couple. With the introduction of "ellos," which is repeated twice, the use of "nosotros" takes on a wider political significance; her account can be read as a microcosm of the guerrilla conflict in Brazil with "nosotros" signifying the *guerrilleros* and "ellos" denoting the military and other security forces. The final two personal pronouns, "él," again refer to her husband, demonstrating that she is still trying to come to terms with his death. The more common instances of "nosotros"

⁵⁴ Randall, *No se puede*, 58.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

and “él” replace the first person singular at the start of the account to suggest that Adamaris was more comfortable talking about others. However, as the narration develops, Adamaris becomes more confident and is able to employ the first person singular “yo” more often.

The long sentences in Adamaris’s answer create the sense of rapid speech without pauses, as she constructs the narrative of her capture. The inclusion of specific detail, such as the exact distance from São Paulo and the police’s pretence for searching the house, reinforces the veracity of the account. The single short sentence, located between the other two, explains that it was her son who was directly involved with the revolutionary organisation, underscoring the politicisation of motherhood noted throughout this thesis.

Here Adamaris alludes to having read political literature and later in the *testimonio* she explains that, despite emphatically denying it to her interrogators, she was in fact a member of the *Vanguardia Popular Revolucionaria*. When asked by interrogators about her VPR membership, Adamaris relates that in order to avoid worse treatment:

yo me puse como inocente: yo no sé, yo no sé, yo no tengo nada con esto, no sé, no sé, y así con todo y mi inocencia me torturaron, me daban cheques para que yo hablara. Y entonces yo dije: no tengo nada que decir, compadre, yo conocía el nombre solamente del que hacía contacto con nosotros, no sabía nada más.⁵⁶

Across several pages, she describes her torture, from beatings to electric shocks, with obvious emotion making frequent use of repetition and exclamations.⁵⁷ She mainly focuses on the incessant nature of her interrogation. Describing herself as “casi muerta” she exclaims: “!Porque aunque uno esté muerto ellos siguen interrogando... y dando golpes!”⁵⁸ She found the electric shocks most difficult and presents an emotive scene of her

⁵⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

screaming, crying and sweating while the guards laughed.⁵⁹ Adamaris also alludes to the gendered nature of her torture:

y tú en aquella aflicción principalmente cuando eres mujer, porque te quedas casi desnuda y con una desesperación porque aquellos hilos eléctricos quedaban amarrados aquí [en los dedos] y una maquinita encima de la mesa y ellos dándole, dándole, aquella cosa... Te quedas en eso... Tú te quedas desesperada, tú como mujer te quedas casi desnuda, levantas las piernas, orinas en la ropa, yo me caía en el suelo casi muerta[...]Sudaba, lloraba, porque era una cosa horrible.⁶⁰

Here Adamaris thrice repeats the second person singular “tú” and “te” as she engages Randall and an assumed female reader encouraging them to imagine themselves incarcerated and tortured as she was. In the middle of this extract, a binary is created between “tú” and “ellos” as the second person singular is repeated to recreate the solitary nature of incarceration for the reader. Personal pronouns reflect and emphasise the feelings of physical and psychological isolation created by the torturers and give the reader an insight into these experiences as well as reflecting the need for survivors to share these experiences with sympathetic listeners. Randall transcribes the ellipses and repetition of Adamaris’s first-person account to recreate her mode of delivery.

In response to a question concerning the traumatising of her children, Adamaris locates her experiences in the larger context of the Brazilian political conflict, thus depersonalising it:

Van venciendo poco a poco, porque yo les voy enseñando que aquella tortura y aquella barbaridad que fue cometida en Brasil vino a causa de la lucha por la liberación de un enorme país, es en contra del hambre, en contra de la miseria, y aquello que pasaron ellos... y como yo les he criado con esa mentalidad revolucionaria de lucha hasta vencer, ellos van venciendo ese trauma.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 62 – 63.

⁶¹ Ibid., 66– 67.

Support from *compañeros* and teachers in Cuba is cited as crucial to her children's rehabilitation.⁶² In tracing their recovery from trauma she also conveys her own attempts to come to terms with her incarceration and her husband's death. Like most *testimonialistas* examined in this thesis, Adamaris reaffirms her revolutionary identity in response to politically motivated violence.

Adamaris ends her *testimonio* with this notion of the strengthening of her political convictions. She presents female solidarity and compassion as reactions to repression and important factors in increasing political participation and consciousness among women: "No fui sólo yo que fui presa y torturada, sino ha habido muchas mujeres presas y torturadas. Entonces muchas compañeras ven eso y entienden que ellas deben ir remplazando a las que ven cayendo en la lucha."⁶³ Randall ends the chapter thus to emphasise the representative function of Adamaris's account and to encourage female readers to be inspired by Adamaris's example. The use of the final pronoun, "ellas", represents other women who should become involved and underscores this call to arms for female readers. Adamaris's dramatic and shocking *testimonio* is an apt opening for *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* as it effectively captivates the reader's attention while introducing the themes of motherhood and the family, incarceration and torture, resilience and female solidarity, explored in the remaining chapters.

Peruvian *campesinas*: Feminism and Female Solidarity

The theme of female solidarity is consolidated in the fourth chapter "Las campesinas peruanas: 'Ya no creemos que nuestra única función es trabajar en el hogar'" which is the most gynocentric account. The chapter differs from the previous two in that Randall's questions are omitted until the fifth page and the contextualisation is limited to two paragraphs rather than several pages. This

⁶² When asked about her other children, Adamaris explains that her nine and three year old children were taken to the "Tribunal de Menores" while she was incarcerated. *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 73.

shorter introduction and removal of questions has the effect of allowing the *testimonialista* to communicate more directly with the reader. Randall introduces Betty González as a member of the Sindicato Ruando, explaining that Ruando was a collectivised farm, before highlighting Betty's role as a delegate of the "federación campesina."⁶⁴ Betty is then quoted directly:

Sobre la participación de la mujer quiero decir que en Ruando las mujeres han ido adquiriendo conciencia en este proceso. Podría decirse que han madurado, ya no creemos que nuestra única función es la de trabajar en el hogar, planchar, y cuidar niños; en Ruando las mujeres ya no piensan que eso es lo único que existe para ellas, sino que deben tener una participación igual a la de los hombres, allí las mujeres han salido y liberado batallas cuando a los hombres han caído o han sido encarcelados; pero por mucho que nos golpeen a nosotras las mujeres no dejaremos de seguir luchando y, al igual que yo, la mayor parte de las mujeres aquí, son verdaderas rebeldes, y nosotras al igual que nuestros hijos hemos participado eficientemente, porque hemos mantenido nuestra lucha a pesar de los insultos, las piedras, los golpes, hemos estado luchando hasta el final y cuando hemos visto que nuestros hombres empezaban a caer continuamos haciendo lo que podíamos.⁶⁵

Although Randall's question is not included, it is apparent that she enquired specifically about female participation, supporting the argument that Randall's socialist feminism informed and shaped the interviews and the text. Like Adamaris, Betty uses long sentences and an informal style of speech. She explicitly rejects traditional patriarchal gender roles for women and their historic relegation to the domestic sphere. She suggests that women became politicised and empowered as a result of the repression and incarceration of men, reinforcing the recurring notion of resilience, and the idea that women were politically radicalised through their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Like all *testimonialistas* studied in this thesis, Betty does not separate the political participation of women from motherhood, commenting that children were also included. Twice Betty highlights the violence that

⁶⁴ During the progressive, reformist, military *Docenio* of 1968 – 1980 in Peru: "About 360,000 farm families received land [...] most as members of farm cooperatives." David Scott Palmer, *Shining Path of Peru* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 12.

⁶⁵ Randall, *No se puede*, 105 – 106.

politically-active women face, but like Adamaris, she asserts that such attacks do not serve as an effective deterrent. Unlike the previous *testimonialista*, Betty assertively employs both “yo” and “nosotras” as she includes herself in a politicised female collective. With the repetition of “nosotras las mujeres” she also encourages female readers to politicise their gender and to engage in collective political action on the basis of this identity.

Randall introduces two other Peruvian women in the same chapter, enforcing the notion of female solidarity structurally by incorporating three women’s voices instead of one.⁶⁶ Both women are briefly introduced: “Delfina es obrera agrícola”, is forty-eight years old and has seven children. Justina is twenty-seven and has worked as a domestic servant but is now “socia y dirigente de la Cooperativa de Producción y Trabajo Ricchari Lorcho.”⁶⁷ She also has a young daughter. Much like Adamaris and Betty, Justina narrates her life story informally and in detail often including her emotional responses. She reveals personal information such as the fact that her father was an alcoholic and explains “pero tuve un buen ejemplo en mi madrastra, su gran fuerza no dejó que muriéramos de hambre.”⁶⁸ It becomes apparent that Delfina is the step-mother whom Justina admires.⁶⁹ Randall selected these two women because their close, though not blood, relationship is a further example of female solidarity. Far from the cliché of evil step-mother and benevolent patriarch, Delfina has provided for and supported Justina compensating for the inadequacies of her father.

Justina politicises motherhood in keeping with a feminist analysis; she explains her mistreatment at the hands of men with reference to societal factors such as male privilege and marriage, rejecting her biological mother’s insistence that her own misfortune was to blame.⁷⁰ On falling pregnant to a

⁶⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 108.

man who soon disappeared, Justina describes how nuns, her father and other members of her family made her feel guilty and inadequate for being a single mother. She was scolded for not finishing her studies at the convent and her father reproached her, yet no one criticised the father of the child.⁷¹ Justina reveals how this double standard made her feel “tan frustrada, tan traumatizada.”⁷² She describes single motherhood as “una andanza y una vida monótona, horrible” undermining the sanctification of motherhood as the sole and most natural role for women.⁷³ Justina’s father is an unsupportive alcoholic, while the father of her child is irresponsible. This portrayal of fatherhood stands in stark contrast to the traditional notion of the benevolent male provider and protector of the family. Throughout her account, Justina also rejects the corresponding notion of motherhood as female domestication and disproportionate responsibility for child rearing.

Despite her demanding experience of single motherhood, Justina organised a collectivised farm with her brother. Due to her relative literacy, she occupied an important position in the organisation, despite being the only woman. However, she describes some of the men as “despreciativos y machistas.”⁷⁴ Randall asks about the associated women’s group, the “Liga de las Mujeres de La Era” which organised literacy campaigns.⁷⁵ In response, Justina describes the way in which, by attending meetings, women overcame their fear of the “qué dirán”, the malicious gossip aimed at women who transgressed patriarchal boundaries with political activism.⁷⁶ She condemns men who attempt to relegate their wives to the domestic sphere and criticises the naturalisation of female submission: “En la sierra, por ejemplo, tiene que obedecer al esposo, aunque la maltrate, le pegue, porque dicen: ‘La vida de la

⁷¹ Ibid., 108.

⁷² Ibid., 109.

⁷³ Randall, *No se puede*, 109.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 110.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 111.

mujer es así, así hemos nacido.”⁷⁷ She also denounces the normalisation of male violence, repeatedly highlights the socialisation of women into the concept of femininity through popular culture and tradition while asserting the necessity of female unity to overcome these challenges. Justina’s feminist analysis of her personal experiences of motherhood and female empowerment through political organisation effectively reaffirms the socialist feminist message of the text. While she has not had the same difficult experiences as the other *testimonialistas*, the disruption to her life caused by her unwanted pregnancy and the subsequent blame and lack of support she faced from family members and the wider community caused her to describe herself as traumatised. By incorporating this account among the others, Randall suggests to readers that patriarchy can be as psychologically prejudicial for women as other forms of political repression.

Throughout her account Justina confidently employs the first person singular. She adopts the feminine first-person plural following Randall’s question regarding the women’s organisation on the collectivised farm. When discussing general mobilisations against evictions and politically motivated incarcerations she employs the masculine or gender neutral “nosotros” to include men, women and herself in the political action.⁷⁸ Towards the end of her account, Justina again employs “nosotras” to strengthen her appeal for female unity: “Creo que deberíamos pensar más en otras cosas y no estar en los concursos de belleza, donde una mujer es enemiga de la otra: no hay solidaridad entre nosotras.”⁷⁹ Personal pronouns uphold the feminist objective of the text while serving to engage an assumed female reader. In short, Justina’s account coincides with the other *testimonios* in that political organisation and female solidarity are proposed as strategies to overcome the limitations placed on women by patriarchy.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 107 – 110.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 115.

Nicaraguan Militant: Prioritising the Political over the Personal

Whereas the *testimonialistas* studied thus far in this chapter recount their participation in social movements operating outside of governmental structures, the *testimonialistas* in the third and final chapters were involved in revolutionary movements that eventually seized power. Written before the *Sandinista* Revolution of 1979, the third chapter conveys the determination of this organisation through the more professional and less intimate account of Nicaraguan militant Doris Tijerino. “Una militante nicaragüense: ‘¡No se trata de mujeres que militan sino de militantes que son mujeres!’” begins with Randall’s usual contextualisation which underscores her own counter-propagandic objective. She describes numerous US military interventions in Nicaragua before announcing: “La última agresión, que se prolonga de 1926 a 1933, encontró la repuesta de la fervorosa lucha sandinista de liberación, que demostró la capacidad de resistir del pueblo.”⁸⁰ Through emotive language and detailed historical analysis Randall encourages reader identification with the contemporary FSLN struggle. The Somoza dictatorship is criticised for its violent repression, its commitment to securing profits for foreign companies, and its collusion with the US.⁸¹

In order to highlight the obstructions to politicisation faced by women, Randall questions whether Doris encountered sexism on becoming politically active, to which Doris responds: “enfrenté muchos problemas tanto familiares como con la sociedad misma.”⁸² Doris emphasises once again that politically active women are seen to transgress norms of decent ‘feminine’ behaviour: “era preferible que uno fuera prostituta y no una militante.”⁸³ In spite of, or perhaps because of, these sexist attitudes, Doris unambiguously rejects feminism: “Yo trataba al máximo también de no caer en las posiciones feministas, de hacer ver a la gente que me rodeaba que no se trataba de mujeres que militan, sino de

⁸⁰ Ibid., 74.

⁸¹ Ibid., 75.

⁸² Ibid., 84.

⁸³ Ibid., 84.

militantes que eran mujeres.”⁸⁴ This sentence, given prominence in the chapter title, challenges Randall’s consistent attempts to foreground the importance of gender; political militancy is more important according to Doris. She explains that due to a lack of consciousness women initially adopted traditional roles in the movement, such as looking after men, cooking and cleaning.⁸⁵ However, she maintains that female participation has increased and asserts that she never faced sexism from within the FSLN.⁸⁶ Whereas here Randall seems tacitly to endorse this description of the organisation, in a later publication she claims that the *Sandinistas* were “womanizers” who did not understand “a feminist agenda.”⁸⁷ As we shall see below, Randall’s later publication *Todas estamos despiertas* examines sexist attitudes among *Sandinistas* in more detail.

In contrast to the previous more informal and emotionally rich *testimonios*, Doris describes her incarceration with distance, a relative lack of detail and few personal pronouns:

En esa ocasión fui torturada con todo lujo de sadismo. No soy la primera mujer torturada en ese sentido. Existen ya antecedentes de la bestialidad con que el régimen trata a la mujer. Ellos no hacen tampoco ninguna distinción entre el hombre y la mujer a la hora de torturar, sino que se valen del aspecto sexual de la mujer para humillarla más. En la Seguridad durante dieciséis días, trece de los cuales permanecí desnuda con una capucha, se me golpeó, no sé con qué objetos porque estaba encapuchada, pero después presentaba señales de culatines de ametralladora, cachas de pistola y unos clavos que ponen en la punta de los zapatos los guardias, en la suela, unas tachuelas. Tenía cicatrices de eso en el cuerpo.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Ibid., 84.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁸⁷ Regarding her attendance at a conference of the FSLN leadership, Randall writes “Suddenly, these were all just men. Men without the inspiring uniforms of their still extraordinary campaign. [...] Most are authoritarian in manner; several are womanizers, in the crudest sense of that term. Only one, perhaps two, have the slightest interest in or respect for a feminist agenda. I do not know if any of them understands a feminist agenda as something beyond the proverbial “equal rights for women.” Randall, *Gathering Rage*, 30.

⁸⁸ Randall, *No se puede*, 89. For more on the illegal use of the *capucha*, or asphyxiation, during Operation Condor see McSherry, *Predatory States*, 207.

Nevertheless, like Adamaris and other *testimonialistas* who have experienced torture, Doris employs personal pronouns to underscore the division between the torturers and the tortured prisoner and to encourage the reader to denounce the former and identify with the latter. She also identifies the way in which women were specifically targeted. However, other than the use of the word “bestial” to describe the prison officers, Doris’s narrative is notable for its lack of emotive language. Whereas Adamaris described herself screaming and crying, Doris simply notes what happened, recounts the exact number of days, and lists the weapons that were used to torture her. There are few adverbs or adjectives to intensify her description. She concurs with the above argument that sexualised torture is utilised to exasperate women’s subordinate position under patriarchy, but her emotional response is not articulated.

To elicit more detailed information regarding her imprisonment, Randall probes “*Y la vida dentro de la cárcel... ¿cómo se dio?*” to which Doris again replies in a succinct and factual way: “Dentro de la cárcel la vida se hace bastante difícil, bastante dura, porque las cárceles del país son represivas. No se permite tener libros. No se le permite informarse ni por periódicos, ni por radio.”⁸⁹ She does not adopt the first person plural to refer to herself and other prisoners, rather the impersonal third person is employed to convey the restrictions of the prison rules. Doris only begins to expose personal emotions and reveal indignation when she talks of the plight of other women; she denounces rape and the way in which it was used by Somoza’s soldiers in rural areas.⁹⁰ Her account supports the observation that rape is one of the main weapons used by the military to physically assault and psychologically undermine politically active women. She accuses Somoza’s sons and the dictator himself of collusion.⁹¹ As well as condemning sexual violence, Doris denounces domestic servitude among women in the strongest of terms: “Es una variante de la esclavitud [...] son totalmente esclavizadas y

⁸⁹ Randall, *No se puede*, 94.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 90 – 91.

atemorizadas.”⁹² She also praises women, from a similarly disadvantaged socio-economic background as the female servants, for their loyalty to her while she was imprisoned, despite the difficulties her status as a political prisoner caused them:

Fueron gente muy noble y de quienes yo tengo muy buenos recuerdos pese a que sufrían las consecuencias de estar en la celda conmigo, porque les quitaba el cine, se les quitaba las visitas, se reducía el sol. [...] Las mujeres nunca protestaron ni tuvieron ninguna manifestación en contra mía [...] jamás actuaron en contra mía por estas cuestiones, siempre fueron solidarias.⁹³

She states that the women provided her with extra food, soap and other necessities.⁹⁴ However, when Randall asks about the incorporation of these ordinary women into the revolutionary movement, Doris’s tone drastically changes as she explains “este tipo de elemento no puede reclutarse como militante.”⁹⁵ While this response may seem harsh and contradictory in light of her praise of their loyalty above, it is in keeping with a Marxist analysis of class society. In spite of her personal experiences, Doris echoes Marx and Engels’s rejection of the *lumpenproletariat* as reactionary and unsuited to revolutionary organisation.⁹⁶

Unlike the way in which Adamaris discussed her children at length, Doris replies to the question “*Y tienes hijos, ¿no?*” with “Sí, tengo dos. El mayor tiene nueve años, y tengo una chiquitica de meses.”⁹⁷ She does not mention her children again. The account reads like that of an official FSLN spokesperson rather than an intimate *testimonio*. It ends:

⁹² Ibid., 97 – 98.

⁹³ Ibid., 95.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 101.

⁹⁶ *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) is unequivocal on the subject of the lower working classes: “The ‘dangerous class’, [*lumpenproletariat*] the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown [off] by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.” Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2009), 16.

⁹⁷ Randall, *No se puede*, 104.

Para terminar, tal vez nos quisieras hablar de las perspectivas de la lucha, actualmente.

Pienso que por un lado el FSLN se ha logrado consolidar como la vanguardia del pueblo nicaragüense en su lucha por el derrocamiento de la dictadura somocista. [...] creo que en Nicaragua los de abajo quieren menos y los de arriba pueden menos gobernar como antes.⁹⁸

The last sentences of the *testimonio* underscore the political, pro-FSLN line adopted throughout. The lack of private information and emotional insight results in a largely impersonal, unmoving account; the poverty and injustice faced by women from rural Nicaragua is articulated in more detail than her own torture and imprisonment. Despite the fact Doris experienced mistreatment during incarceration like the other *testimonialistas*, her account varies in two significant ways. Firstly, political analysis is prioritised over personal anecdotes and emotional details. Where personal experience (of female prisoners) contradicts political ideology (regarding the *lumpenproletariat*) she turns to the authority of the latter. Secondly, she testifies from within a dissimilar political context; she is part of a revolutionary movement which became institutionalised and governed for twelve years. This formalisation of the FSLN may well account for the professional and impersonal nature of Doris's *testimonio*.

Cuba: the Socialist Feminist Ideal?

At the beginning of *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*, Randall states that men and women in Cuba are actively creating a more egalitarian society; in the final chapter, “Cuba: Primer Territorio Libre en América”, she presents *testimonios* from several Cuban women to support this assertion. The first chapter of this thesis explored the complexity of post-revolutionary Cuban gender roles, and, despite her assertion, Randall reflects this ambiguity. The first *testimonialista* quoted in the chapter, Isabel, begins by quoting the *comandante en jefe* on “como había de ser la participación, la importancia, la

⁹⁸ Ibid., 104.

estimación, que se le iba a dar a la mujer en el proceso revolucionario...”⁹⁹

She reveals that not all *compañeros* agreed with Castro and that some were concerned that women’s purported caring and maternal instincts would prevent them from effectively fighting at the front as they would feel compelled to assist fallen enemy soldiers.¹⁰⁰ According to Isabel, Castro rejected these concerns, however, as noted above, he allegedly banned women from taking part in armed conflict.¹⁰¹ The second *testimonialista* from this chapter supports the argument that gender relations in Cuba were progressing as she noticed an improvement in her work environment: “No somos objetos. Somos compañeras trabajadoras. Se desarrolla un nuevo tipo de relaciones.”¹⁰² The remaining three Cuban women attest to their new sense of empowerment and the fact that their husbands share housework.¹⁰³

Randall does not create an uncritical portrait of Cuba. While she celebrates advances in law, education and the workplace, she also highlights the cultural legacy of *machismo* that women encounter in the form of street harassment: “a diario debe enfrentar la imposición posesiva de una docena de hombres piropeadores cada vez que camina por la calle.”¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Randall remains optimistic and she notes that the younger Cuban women she interviewed “parecen haber desechado por completo la noción capitalista de ver su autorealización futura exclusivamente a través del matrimonio y de traer hijos al mundo.”¹⁰⁵ By referring to marriage as a capitalist notion, Randall attempts to engage socialist readers in a political critique of this institution and

⁹⁹ Ibid., 117.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 117.

¹⁰¹ Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 24. As stated at the beginning of the first chapter of this thesis.

¹⁰² Randall, *No se puede*, 122.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 130.

the relationship of inequality between the sexes.¹⁰⁶ She concludes *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* by citing Castro.¹⁰⁷ That the male leader should close a collection of women's *testimonios* underscores the extent to which the text functions to legitimise and popularise the Cuban Revolution.

In short, *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* is a heavily mediated, polyphonic, multi-regional, socialist feminist early example of *testimonio*. All *testimonios* are framed by Randall's contextual introductions, which point to expansionist US-led capitalism as the cause of poverty, inequality and political repression in Latin America. Chapters are mainly comprised of a seemingly untouched transcript of Randall's questions and the *testimonialistas*' responses. The first, third and final chapters articulate women's experiences of institutionalised revolutions, while the second and fourth present women who have participated in non-aligned social movements.

All *testimonialistas* demonstrate resilience and determination in the face of challenging experiences, exemplifying a strengthening of their revolutionary identity as reflected in their use of personal pronouns. Randall's role as a heterodiegetic editor provides her with the power to select material and encourage particular readings. As a result, the *testimonialistas* support Randall's socialist feminism; the peasant women from Peru occupy the most overtly feminist position and Doris Tijerino from Nicaragua is the most traditionally Marxist. The Brazilian and Peruvian *testimonios* are the most personal and informal as the *testimonialistas* revealed numerous details regarding their families and their difficult experiences of torture and motherhood respectively.

Outside of her sometimes leading questions and editorial control, the extent to which Randall has moulded or shaped the first-person narratives cannot be

¹⁰⁶ It is worthy of note that for Marx and Engels marriage is a farce to hide rampant infidelity among bourgeois men. See Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 25. See also Freidrich Engels. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Chippendale: Resistance Books, 2004). It is also significant that the Cuban government promoted marriage, see Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions*, 28.

¹⁰⁷ "El Segundo Congreso Nacional de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas fue una culminación, y al mismo tiempo un nuevo punto de partida, en esta experiencia que Fidel ha definido como una 'lucha por la integración plena de la mujer cubana a la sociedad'" Randall, *No se puede*, 158.

ascertained. Of all the chapters, the final Cuban one is most carefully edited and brief *testimonios* positively reflect on equality and shared domestic labour. Nevertheless, Randall remains critical of gender relations within the Cuban Revolution and reiterates that patriarchal attitudes predominate. Unlike the Cuban *testimonios* examined previously, *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* contains few paratextual paradoxes or inconsistencies due to Randall's implacable editorial control. Nevertheless, she effectively facilitates a variety of *testimonios* to present seldom heard experiences of politically active women, while also disseminating counter-memories that challenge the Cold War discourse and the tactics of counter-insurgency. Two later Randall publications, focusing on the Nicaraguan *Sandinista* Revolution, will now be introduced and examined, after the Contra War is explored in more detail.

Todas Estamos Despiertas and Sandino's Daughters: Justification and Evaluation of Sandinista Nicaragua

Randall published *Todas estamos despiertas, testimonios de la mujer Nicaragüense hoy* in 1980.¹⁰⁸ A year later, a significantly shorter version of the collection was published in English under the title *Sandino's Daughters, Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*.¹⁰⁹ That Randall, an outspoken advocate of feminism, changed the title from one which foregrounds the heightened consciousness of revolutionary women to one which recasts these women as belonging to the named revolutionary father, Augusto César Sandino, is significant. The change suggests that Randall, at the time, accepted the male-dominated nature of the revolutionary leadership believing it would ultimately serve women's interests. As we saw above, she later came to reject this view.¹¹⁰ The title can also be seen as an attempt to appeal to a wider, Anglophone, leftist audience who may well have been familiar with Sandino.

¹⁰⁸ Randall, *Todas Estamos Despiertas*.

¹⁰⁹ Randall, *Sandino's Daughters* is shorter by seventy-nine pages, as most of the *testimonios* are edited down. Repetitions and information that does not directly contribute towards Randall's socialist, feminist objective is removed.

¹¹⁰ As noted above, decades later Randall explicitly criticised male-oriented revolutionary movements and the *Sandinista* leaders in particular, for their failure to develop a feminist agenda. See Randall, "Nicaragua: A Recent Case in Point", in *Gathering Rage*, 30, 41 – 86.

Just as *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* operated as pro-Cuban, socialist feminist counter-propaganda, so the two texts examined here seek to advance the cause of the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua.

Todas estamos despiertas and *Sandino's Daughters* contain the same material, but they have varying aims and objectives according to their target audiences as reflected in their differing paratexts. Published in Mexico, Spain, Argentina and Colombia, *Todas estamos despiertas* informs hispanophone readers of the Nicaraguan Revolution to elicit solidarity. *Sandino's Daughters* seeks to justify the Revolution to English-speaking audiences who may well have come into contact with US Cold War propaganda.¹¹¹ Both titles appeal to a female audience, specifically feminists with an interest in Latin America. The texts simultaneously present a justification of the Revolution in response to US aggression and an evaluation of it from a feminist perspective.

Sandino's Daughters and *Todas estamos despiertas* are divided into ten chapters, each of which presents a different aspect or protagonist of the *Sandinista* revolution. The photographs of *testimonialistas* in *Sandino's Daughters* are placed within the relevant chapters to encourage reader identification. There are fewer photographs in *Todas estamos despiertas* and they are grouped together in the introduction to emphasise collective revolutionary identity, a recurring theme in the Cuban texts. In both collections, images are used in keeping with the objectives of documentary photography – women's contribution to the FLSN is recorded and therefore verified for the reader. In the context of the Contra War, the images also play a further counter-propaganda role; they defend the Nicaraguan regime, and its social gains, in the face of US opposition. Needless to say, the observations of Desnoes, reviewed in the Introduction to this thesis, are again relevant here.¹¹² In the context of centuries of European dominance and stereotypical images disseminated in order to legitimise colonialism, and more recently US imperialism, the images presented in this text attempt to affirm a more

¹¹¹ *Sandino's Daughters* was published by Zed Press in London and by New Star Books in Vancouver.

¹¹² "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo", Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista*, (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

empowered Latin American identity. In addition to photography, in both texts Randall reproduces epistolary writing to convey the women's more intimate thoughts and emotions and to allow the *testimonialistas* to communicate with the readers in a more direct and unmediated fashion. Five of the ten chapters each focus on one Nicaraguan woman and her experiences before and during her involvement with the FSLN.¹¹³ Randall begins these chapters with a description of the woman whose *testimonio* is reproduced; she focuses on their physical appearance and economic background. Personal information is underscored by Randall who, like the Cuban editors, also foregrounds their identity as mothers and wives.

Whereas the paratext of the Cuban *testimonios* arguably reaffirmed these conventional gender roles in order to neutralise any serious threat to patriarchal institutions and relations, as a feminist Randall presents information regarding children, husbands and families alongside political activities to celebrate the wide ranging contribution of these women and their competence carrying out numerous, diverse roles and responsibilities. The other five chapters focus on a specific issue or theme; the first chapter "De AMPRONAC a la Asociación de Mujeres" examines Nicaragua's women's organisations through the testimony of several founding members.¹¹⁴ "Las Comandantes" follows in which Randall interviews five female commanders from the Nicaraguan guerrilla war.¹¹⁵ The penultimate chapter, "Las Madres y Las Hijas", is predominately written by Randall, who quotes from nine women to explore the theme of revolutionary familial relationships, reflecting the politicisation of motherhood found in the other *testimonios* examined in this thesis.¹¹⁶ "Los Cambios Más Grandes", the concluding chapter, presents four final *testimonios* that personify Randall's argument; women previously living

¹¹³ Chapter three, studied below, is dedicated to Amada Pineda a member of FSLN, chapter four to Daisy Zamora the Vice-Minister of Culture, chapter five to Nora Astorga the Special Attorney General, chapter seven to Sister Martha and chapter eight to Gladys Baez a member of AMPRONAC.

¹¹⁴ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 39. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 1.

¹¹⁵ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 74. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 40.

¹¹⁶ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 280. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 184.

in desperate circumstances testify to how their lives have been transformed and improved due to their incorporation into the FSLN.¹¹⁷

Like the final Cuban chapter in *No se puede hacer la revolución*, which opened with accounts of women's involvement in the guerrilla war, the Introduction to *Sandino's Daughters* foregrounds the contribution of *guerrilleras* in Nicaragua to justify the fight for women's equality after the Revolution.¹¹⁸ Randall interweaves first-person narration from Nicaraguan women with statistics that provide evidence of economic inequality in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua. Poverty is related to women specifically; the high percentage of single and working mothers is foregrounded.¹¹⁹ For its hispanophone audience, the introduction to *Todas estamos despiertas* presents female participation with the *Sandinistas* as a continuation of indigenous Latin American opposition to imperialism. Under the sub-heading "El Mundo Indígena" Randall cites Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal's *Antiguas Culturas Precolombinas* (1979) and French ethnologist Laurette Séjourné's *América Latina* (1979) to argue that indigenous women played a significant role with regards to finance and trade. She describes the indigenous population's attitude towards virginity and rape finding that virginity was unimportant and rape was punished with "la reducción a [sic] esclavitud del culpable a beneficio de los padres de la víctima."¹²⁰ She contrasts this positive account of pre-colonial gender relations with the male-dominated nature of colonial society. European women are absolved of blame as they apparently arrived up to one hundred years after the first colonisers who "fueron en su gran mayoría varones."¹²¹ Indigenous women are not portrayed as passive victims of colonisation. Their role as mothers is politicised as is their refusal to have sex with their husbands "para no parir hijos de esclavos"; as well as their insistence on having many

¹¹⁷ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 278. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 204.

¹¹⁸ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, iv.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, v.

¹²⁰ Séjourné quoted by *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

children while at war with the colonisers “para parir más combatientes.”¹²² To create the sense of strong historical antecedents to the political participation of the women she interviews, this account of indigenous women is connected to the women of Sandino’s army. When Randall does engage with issues of race, it is only to support her particular socialist standpoint. The paratextual framing of both texts examined here provides context to encourage the reader to support the *Sandinistas*.

While pro-establishment in the context of Nicaragua, internationally *Sandino’s Daughters* challenges the Cold War propaganda of the United States for its English-speaking target audience.¹²³ In the Preface Randall denounces US involvement in Central America:

This book is being published at a time when the Nicaraguan Revolution is facing a serious threat from the “destabilization” policies being promoted and financed by the Reagan administration. Since the overthrow of Somoza in July 1979, there has been constant military activity on the Nicaraguan-Honduran border, and Somoza’s son has maintained an army base with the remnants of the National Guard. [...] These occurrences signal the urgent need for developing a broad international movement to oppose any foreign intervention in Nicaragua.¹²⁴

Despite Randall’s plea, the Reagan administration continued to fund the Contra War, spending over eighty billion dollars in four years on the “low intensity” conflict.¹²⁵ By the early 1980s, the Contras were well trained in economic sabotage and terrorism aimed specifically at civilians.¹²⁶ The purpose of the Contra war was not a simple military victory but rather the

¹²² Humberto Ortega from a “Discurso pronunciado en la clausura del III Congreso de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas”, as quoted by Randall. *Ibid.*, 17.

¹²³ Livingstone, *America’s Backyard*, 89, as we saw above.

¹²⁴ Randall, *Sandino’s Daughters*, i.

¹²⁵ “Since Vietnam, the Pentagon has tried to develop effective counter-guerrilla strategies which have come to be known as “low intensity conflict.” Duncan Green, *Faces of Latin America* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1997), 153. Between 1981 and 1985 the US government (via the CIA) gave 80 million dollars to the Contras. See “Epilogue”, Harris, *Revolution Under Siege*, 237.

¹²⁶ Katherine Isbester, *Still Fighting: The Nicaraguan Women’s Movement, 1977 – 2000* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 55.

destruction of the Nicaraguan infrastructure and economy with the long-term objective of destabilising the FSLN and undermining its humanitarian achievements.¹²⁷ The US propaganda strategies and military tactics eventually achieved their objective; in the 1990 Nicaragua elections, a pro-US, neo-liberal coalition, Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO), came to power.¹²⁸ The following chapter of this thesis will examine the implications of the conflict from a Honduran perspective.

Sandino's Daughters undermines the justifications given for the 'covert' invasion in two main ways: firstly, by arguing that the FSLN did not pose a threat to the security of the US and was not part of an international plot to undermine that country's hegemony in the region, but that it arose as a local response to economic inequality. Secondly, the text demonstrates the achievements of the revolution and its positive impact on women's lives in particular.¹²⁹ Like the other *testimonios* examined here, *Sandino's Daughters* provides counter-memories which challenge anti-communist US propaganda. However, simultaneously, a critical evaluation of the FSLN from a feminist perspective is put forward. As well as justifying the FSLN in the face of US antagonism, Randall's testimonial texts also justify the existence of separate women's organisations under socialism.

The opening chapter of both *Sandino's Daughters* and *Todas estamos despiertas* charts the development of the women's associations tied to the FSLN. The chapter can be divided into three sections; in the first, two founders and an early member from the shanty towns of Managua describe initial meetings and eventually successful attempts to mobilise particularly peasant and working class women. Relatives of Luisa Amanda Espinosa, the 21 year old killed by the National Guard in 1970, after whom the women's association

¹²⁷ Keen and Haynes, *History of Latin America*, 478.

¹²⁸ Babb, *After Revolution*, 2.

¹²⁹ See Harris, *Revolution under Siege*. It is important to note that contrary to claims made by Washington, the Revolution developed a mixed economy; the majority of wealth and land remained in private hands and much of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie were allied with the *Sandinistas*. The literary brigades almost eradicated illiteracy in Nicaragua. Social progress came in the form of health brigades, the building of schools, hospitals and crèches.

is named, testify to her life, political activities and death in the second section of the chapter. While these two sections might seem to uncritically endorse and conform to the FSLN's ideological position, albeit from a gynocentric perspective, the final section is more critical and unorthodox. The women from the first section return to discuss the necessity of transforming conventional gender roles. Gloria Carrión, General Co-ordinator of AMNLAE, asserts that women must reject their historical relegation to domesticity and that "el hombre también tiene que adquirir conciencia. No solo la mujer."¹³⁰ While Gloria confirms that the FSLN as a political organisation is aware of the need to incorporate women, she suggests that male associates have not brought this awareness of gender inequality into their personal lives:

Dentro de la pareja, sobre todo en nuestra vanguardia, una práctica compartida y la participación misma de la mujer, tienden también a afectar el campo de las relaciones personales [...] Es justo decir que esto no es una situación lograda a cabalidad todavía. Ésta es una lucha larga: el proceso de cambio de las relaciones personales a nivel de la vida cotidiana es el más largo porque tiene que ver con una educación de años.¹³¹

Through her formal and largely impersonal testimony, which ends the first chapter, Gloria diplomatically suggests that men in the FSLN benefit from, and actively maintain, traditional gender roles in the private sphere. Careful not to appear divisive, she suggests that the transformations necessary for female equality will be achieved over a longer time period as part of an ongoing "proceso de educación" and "lucha ideológica."¹³² In the following chapters, Randall selects and edits *testimonios* to further support the view that while political and economic restructuring under the FSLN increased social equality, patriarchal institutions and sexist divisions of labour remained largely unscathed so that a concurrent (socialist) feminist struggle for women's liberation was also necessary.

¹³⁰ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 71. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 35 – 36.

¹³¹ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 72.

¹³² Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 73. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 38.

To further legitimise the demand for female equality, Randall focuses on women's contribution to armed combat through the paratext: two chapters dedicated to the topic, the aforementioned "Las Comandantes" and also "Las 'Compas' de Verde Olivo", as well as questions asked of the other *testimonialistas*.¹³³

The fifth chapter recounts the life of Nora Astorga, described in Randall's introduction as a member of the FSLN, lawyer and mother of four. The reader learns that Nora Astorga's experience of guerrilla conflict was made more difficult by the fact she was heavily pregnant. While she received extra help from the men due to her condition, overall her first-person account upholds Kampwirth's findings, outlined at the start of this chapter, regarding the egalitarian nature of gender roles among Nicaraguan revolutionary combatants:

Fue interesante para nosotras, las mujeres, en el Frente Sur. Uno de repente no era abogada, no era profesional, no era – en la mayoría de los casos – mujer u hombre. Uno de las cosas más interesantes, y para una mujer sobre todo, porque raramente te sucedía en otra situación, era de ser compañero nada más. En el entrenamiento esperaban exactamente lo mismo de nosotras que de los hombres. En el combate igual.¹³⁴

The relative equality Nora experienced during the revolutionary conflict was reflected subsequently; as a lawyer she became the Special Attorney General responsible for the prosecution of approximately seven thousand five hundred guards and others who had worked for Somoza. Prior to 1979 she rose to fame by helping to kill one of Somoza's top guards, a famous womaniser and torturer, by pretending she was going to sleep with him.¹³⁵ Her political feats are presented alongside personal information and she recounts that, her father encouraged her, as the eldest of four, to be ambitious and high achieving: "Me hizo saber que ser mujer no era un limitante, simplemente una

¹³³ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 74, 181. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 40, 129.

¹³⁴ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 178.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 172 – 176.

característica.”¹³⁶ In contrast to the progressive attitude of her father, she describes a “muy poco saludable, bastante deficiente” first marriage with a man who had promised to let her prioritise politics but not allowed her to do so in practice.¹³⁷ Having divorced him she was free to become more politically active. Nora rejects the traditional domestication of mothers, as she left her two young daughters for a year in order to organise clandestinely. She also denounces the notion that women should be primarily responsible for domestic labour:

La mujer, además de que trabajo, tiene que atender a su marido y a sus hijos. En otras palabras, es una especie de *super mujer*. Eso no ha cambiado todavía ni siquiera entre nosotros, en la organización. Entre nosotros apenas *empieza* a cambiar; todavía no es un cambio radical.¹³⁸

Nora’s *testimonio* highlights women’s unpaid “second-shift” and confirms the argument that Randall’s *testimonios* enable women’s criticism of patriarchal attitudes within revolutionary organisations.¹³⁹ Nora repeats “nosotros” to underscore the unity of *Sandinistas* of both sexes and to encourage the notion that both male and female members ought to address the issue of sexism in the domestic sphere. While the *testimonialistas* above made extensive use of “nosotras” when discussing their experience of politicisation, Nora explicitly includes male *compañeros* in her discussion of the failure to adequately transform normative gender roles. Nora’s inclusion of men can be seen as an attempt to counteract the accusation of separatism levelled at feminists by more traditional Marxists.¹⁴⁰ Randall presents Nora’s life story in such a way as to unite the personal and the political, socialism and feminism, while also humanising her with private information. The *Sandinista* government is defended but gender roles are nevertheless critically examined.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 169.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 171.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 180.

¹³⁹ For a sociological investigation into unpaid labour undertaken by women, who also work outside the home, see Arlie Russell Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

¹⁴⁰ Molyneux, *Women’s Movements*, 83. See also Sargent, *Women and Revolution*.

As well as investigating women's specific experiences of political organisation and sexism in the private realm, Randall also presents testimonies of violence at the hands of male-dominated security forces. Here *Todas estamos despiertas* overlaps thematically with *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*. The third chapter is also dedicated to the life story of a single exceptional woman, Amada Pineda, a peasant from the mountains of Nicaragua who demonstrates resilience through her survival of political violence and repression. Her chapter begins quite differently from the others; instead of Randall's introduction, a harrowing, first-person account of the rape and torture endured by Amada immediately captures the attention of the reader:

El mismo día que llegué, a la noche, varios de ellos llegaron a donde me tenían. Y me violaron. Como yo no me dejaba, ellos comenzaban a golpearme, así cometían todas sus barbaridades. Me moretearon las piernas, los muslos, los brazos: toda moreteada.¹⁴¹

Like Adamaris and Doris, when depicting her torture, Amada repeats "ellos" to depict the masculine, plural torturers employing the singular first person to underscore the isolation of the female prisoner. The impact of the violence intensifies as the reader identifies and becomes familiar with Amada's life story. While historical accounts describe Somoza's response to political opposition as "a house-to-house search in a genocidal 'Operation Clean up' with a death toll of some five thousand persons," *Todas estamos despiertas* and *Sandino's Daughters* bring the lived experience of this political repression to the fore through the detailed personal *testimonios* of female victims.¹⁴² As with *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*, Randall facilitates the expression of gendered potentially traumatising experiences, such as rape, a tactic that was employed to target politically active women.

Amada's impoverished background, gradual process of politicisation and involvement with the FSLN is then described. Her *testimonio* is not chronological; her capture is recounted after the above account of incarceration and torture, as homodiegetic analepsis and Randall's

¹⁴¹ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 120.

¹⁴² Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 474.

arrangement of the text makes the testimony more direct.¹⁴³ Amada repeatedly reiterates that governmental repression had the effect of further radicalisation rather than depoliticisation. A self-assured narrative is produced and she does not present herself as a victim. Dialogue is recreated in which she refuses to provide her interrogators with information regarding her husband and instead reminds them of their complicity in murder.¹⁴⁴ Continuing the recurrent themes of resilience in the face of political violence, and subverting the notion of the passive female victim, she describes in detail her reaction to rape:

Cuando venían a violarme, después de varias veces no aguantaba más. Me rebelé entonces con el oficial: “¿Qué se están creyendo ustedes de mí”, le digo, “que me agarraron en el Camino Real, o que soy una prostituta? Si yo soy una mujer casada. Tengo mis hijos y todos son de mi marido [...]” Éramos presos, pero parece que le impactó algo lo que le dije, pues fue entonces que dio la orden y nos enllavaron a nosotros.¹⁴⁵

In order to resist being tortured Amada contested the notion, explored above, that politically active women have contravened patriarchal norms and are comparable to prostitutes. Amada was unable to undo the dichotomisation of womankind into domesticated, married and therefore decent women, on the one hand, and publicly visible, sexually active women who deserve to be raped on the other. However, she suggests that, by reproaching the soldiers and appealing to their sense of decency, she challenged her own categorisation.

Amada’s testimony also describes *machismo* in the private realm. Unlike Nora’s more forward-thinking father, Amada’s father believed women should be excluded from political participation and be solely responsible for child rearing.¹⁴⁶ Amada contradicts this traditional view asserting that participation in the insurrectionary wars has validated women’s subsequent demands for equality:

¹⁴³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 47.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁴⁶ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 135.

Ahora todo eso cambia. La mujer ha mostrado que tiene derecho a participar, y es más: si es posible más que el mismo hombre. Para la insurrección lo demostramos. Porque hubo mujeres que a escondidas de sus padres se fueron a luchar, muchachas bien jóvenes. Todo el tiempo hemos sido marginadas, y ahora más que nunca no queremos serlo más. Queremos luchar. Incluso a veces es necesario luchar en contra del marido de uno. Porque hay veces que el marido quiere tenerle a uno metida en la casa, en medio de cuatro paredes, que uno no salga, que tiene que mirar a los hijos, que tiene que darle de comer a los hijos y a él, lavar ropa, planchar, hacer todo lo que hay que hacer en la casa.¹⁴⁷

Like Betty and Nora, in her account Amada oscillates between “yo” and verbs in the first person plural to highlight her inclusion in a politicised female collective. Towards the end of this extract, she repeats the impersonal “uno” in such a way as to reflect the isolation of domesticity. Arguably, she felt the first person plural denoting the female collective was not appropriate when discussing relations in the private sphere as this realm has not yet been successfully politicised. Through her use of “uno” Amada conveys the sense that confronting sexism in the home feels like a solitary endeavour. In an attempt to rectify this, she equates the movement against Somoza with the fight against *machista* husbands, as she asserts the legitimacy of the struggle against patriarchy. *Todas estamos despiertas* promotes female incorporation into socialist movements in the public arena, while repeatedly suggesting that another battle must be waged against more insidious forms of inequality in the private sphere. Like the other *testimonialistas* interviewed by Randall, Amada rejects servitude and domesticity and promotes instead notions of female militancy and political competency.

Towards the end of the text, Randall dedicates a chapter to the mother-daughter relationship, which she affirms was dramatically transformed in *Sandinista* Nicaragua.¹⁴⁸ She suggests that historically mothers have passed down a legacy of servitude and submission to their daughters. Examples of the politicisation of this relationship are presented in which daughters introduced

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 135.

¹⁴⁸ Randall, *Todas estamos despiertas*, 253. Randall, *Sandino's Daughters*, 186.

their mothers to the FSLN and socialism and vice versa. As we have seen previously, mothers were also politicised by the incarceration of their children.¹⁴⁹ Instead of defending tradition by encouraging their daughters to enter into normative patriarchal relationships, Randall concludes that mothers were able to support and facilitate the revolutionary consciousness and activities of their daughters as this historically private female bond became a political one.

Conclusions

Through multiple, diverse women's *testimonios*, *Todas estamos despiertas* and *Sandino's Daughters* trace the development of women's political consciousness as a result of their incorporation into the FSLN. This presentation is not uncritical, as enduring sexist attitudes are also explored and denounced. In spite of the intrusion of her socialist feminist beliefs, Randall facilitates narratives of incarceration, interrogation, torture and rape which undermine the claims to moral superiority of the security forces and complicate attempts to obscure the consequences of their actions. The women do not subscribe to the role of passive victim; rather they portray themselves as defiant and resilient, as the themes of renewed determination in the face of political violence recur. In this way, these last two texts share substantial thematic and stylistic similarities with *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*.

Nonetheless, in the earlier text, a stylistic variety was identified as Randall enables the *testimonialista* to communicate directly with the reader through transcribed interviews; differences in style, delivery and content are noticeable, especially between the emotive narrative of Adamaris, the gynocentric Peruvian account, and the more controlled, formal and Marxist *testimonio* of FSLN *militante* Doris. *Todas estamos despiertas*, and to an even greater degree the shortened English version *Sandino's Daughters*,

¹⁴⁹ See also Lorraine Bayard de Volo, *Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs. Gender Identity in Nicaragua 1979 – 1999* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

demonstrate a shift in Randall's editorial style as her questions are omitted and transcribed answers are replaced with carefully edited chapters interrupted by Randall's didactic editorial voice.

Notwithstanding Randall's editorial control, the personal pronouns used by the *testimonialistas* reveal political convictions and personal sentiments whilst also profoundly affecting the reader's experience. The extent to which the *testimonialista* envisions herself as part of a revolutionary female collective can arguably be traced through the use of *nosotras*. The women who experienced torture all make use of the same technique; they never refer to their experience of incarceration in the first person plural, despite the widespread nature of political incarcerations. Rather they express the solitary nature of their experience through the use of a singular "yo", or in the case of Adamaris an engaging "tú" which is contrasted with the male, plural "ellos" to denote the torturers. Adamaris's account is the most engaging, due to her use of emotive language, adjectives and personal pronouns. Those accounts which do not make extensive use of personal pronouns are arguably more distanced, controlled and therefore less appealing for the reader. Personal pronouns reinforce political objectives and personal experiences simultaneously, both key features of testimonial literature.

Randall's *testimonios* coincide with the Cuban examples of the genre through recurrent themes such as the promotion of collective identity and the necessity and inevitability of revolutionary guerrilla war, as a response to inequality and perceived injustice. There are also similarities in paratext, structure and style. First-person narration predominates, but an editor interrupts, guides and manipulates the narration, as chapter titles and prefatorial texts are carefully selected to elicit a particular interpretation. The Cuban editors and Randall foreground the international political context of US imperialism and the stark economic inequalities of capitalism as precursors for armed insurrectionary movements. However, one of the most noticeable differences between Randall and the Cuban editors is that, while Randall's explicitly feminist agenda meant that she facilitated accounts which challenged patriarchy, Cuban editors were found to actively enforce patriarchal gender roles. Randall continually asks the

testimonialista about the participation of women and their experiences of sexism as well as their relationships to their husbands and families, in order to elicit information which conforms to her socialist feminist analysis of female oppression in the private and public spheres. In response, the *testimonialistas* denounce male violence and patriarchal traditions and put forward female politicisation and solidarity as strategies to overcome these obstacles.

As will become clear, Randall is the most intrusive editor/facilitator examined in this thesis in several ways. She carefully selects *testimonialistas* who largely concur with her particular political standpoint. Her methodology of semi-structured interviews significantly affects the focus and content of the *testimonios* as Randall is able to control subject matter and guide the discussion. Most noticeably, her voice continually interrupts the first-person *testimonios* as she directly addresses the reader. Paratextual strategies such as chapter titles and prefatorial texts, which she authors, further contextualise and situate the *testimonios* within a socialist feminist framework. Finally, her decision to include multiple *testimonialistas*, instead of a single account as with the other texts studied in this thesis, necessarily results in narratives that are more brief and selective. Needless to say, Randall deliberately attempts to construct the sense of a female collective, and includes numerous *testimonialistas* to this end.

As stated, there is no doubt that all three texts studied in this chapter function as counter-propaganda, as Randall and the *testimonialistas* denounce US intervention in Latin America whilst also rejecting US capitalism. Civilian and child casualties of the former and the social inequality and poverty caused by the latter are consistently brought to the fore. While Randall's texts may ostensibly seem to uncritically endorse the socialist governments of Cuba and Nicaragua, she in fact encourages a careful critique of gender roles in both cases. As we have seen, she deliberately unties the division between the public and private spheres by questioning women about their personal reasons for political involvement. Whilst Randall's presence as editor is intrusive and controlling, she nevertheless enables the communication of gendered memory narratives.

This thesis will now explore two further examples of gynocentric Latin American *testimonio* compiled by less obviously intrusive heterodiegetic narrator/editors. The texts are not multiregional or polyphonic; rather one female protagonist relates her life story in detail to a third person editor who compiles the narrative into a chronological autobiography. As a result of this different methodological approach, the reader is afforded a more intimate and well developed insight into the *testimonialistas*' life experiences. The two texts studied in the next chapter continue to provide counter-memories that contest hegemonic militaristic and patriarchal discourses whilst exploring local specificities and the lived realities of politically active women.

Chapter Four

Gynocentric Counter-propaganda: Autobiographical *Testimonio* In Bolivia and Honduras

In the Cuban *testimonios* studied in the first and second chapters of this thesis, women's narratives transgressed the ideological confines of the male-dominated revolutionary movement. *Testimonios* compiled by Randall were examined in the third chapter, which also explored the specific difficulties faced by female revolutionaries. Issues such as the sexist attitudes of male *compañeros*, a reluctance to politicise the private sphere and the maintenance of hegemonic gendered identities, resurfaced. Lydia Sargent et al theoretically examine the relationship between socialism and women's liberation.¹ In the lead essay, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union", Heidi Hartmann criticises Marxist approaches for failing to account for the ways in which women are oppressed as women, for the benefit of men. She reviews the call for wages for housework and radical feminist definitions of patriarchy, before concluding:

Women should not trust men to liberate them after the revolution, in part because there is no reason to think they would know how; in part because there is no necessity for them to do so. In fact their immediate self-interest lies in our continued oppression. Instead we must have our own organizations and our own power base.²

The two indigenous *testimonialistas* examined in this current chapter grapple with the arguments raised by Hartmann in the context of their lived experiences of political organisation; the first belongs to a women's organisation and both attempt to amass political power while denouncing patriarchal double standards and *machismo*. Demanding that men on the Left in Latin America and US feminists listen to their perspective, they articulate

¹ Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1981).

² Hartmann, "Unhappy Marriage", 6.

their personal experiences of the intersection of class and gender through extensive autobiographical accounts. Despite the fact that both *testimonialistas* are from indigenous communities, race is not thoroughly explored in either account, as discussed further below. This can be partly explained by the editors' interest in gender as opposed to ethnicity; as a result of the focus on gender, issues surrounding race and ethnicity are seemingly neglected despite their profound significance in both countries, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.³

Despite the geographic, cultural and historical differences between Bolivia and Honduras, the two *testimonios* examined in this chapter, *Si me permiten hablar... Testimonio de Domitila una mujer de las minas de Bolivia* (1977), by Domitila Barrios de Chungara and Moema Viezzer, and *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* (1987), by Elvia Alvarado and Medea Benjamin, have strong stylistic and thematic similarities. They emerge in political contexts profoundly affected by the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions. The first examines the local implications of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's guerrilla war in Bolivia; while in the second, the effects of the Contra War are critically explored from a Honduran perspective. The texts coincide in that US intervention irreversibly shaped the political trajectory of the *testimonialistas*' lives and their respective countries. Honduras was heavily militarised as part of US attempts to destabilise the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua, and in Bolivia the US deployed diplomatic pressure as well as engaging in direct military interference. These US foreign policy decisions were arguably influenced by the gendered discourse identified by Cohn, Goldstein and Dean.⁴ In these *testimonios*, culturally diverse perspectives challenge the homogenisation of US capitalism

³ See the Intersectionality section of the Introduction to this thesis. This apparent reluctance to discuss race contrasts with Menchú's famous account; for an investigation into Menchú's representation of her ethnicity see Doris Sommer, "No Secrets" in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, Georg Gugelberger, ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 130 – 157. For a brief but useful overview of the significance Maya culture in Menchú's *testimonio* see Luis O. Arata, "The Testimonial of Rigoberta Menchú in a Native Tradition", in *Teaching and Testimony: Rigoberta Menchú and the North American Class Room*, Allen Carey-Webb and Stephen Benz, eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 81 – 89.

⁴ As we saw in the Introduction with reference to Carol Cohn, "Wars, Wimps and Women", Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood* and Goldstein, *War and Gender*.

in Latin America; the indigenous *testimonialistas* suggest that Washington seemingly misunderstood local contexts and engaged in military operations informed by these erroneous assumptions.

Differing greatly from the texts examined thus far, it is worthy of note that the two *testimonios* studied in this chapter take the form of chronological autobiographies that were produced from interviews, but show no signs of the questions asked by the facilitators. Prompts have been removed so that the narrative is continuous. The material has also been re-arranged and ordered chronologically. Below the paratexts and editorial decisions are analysed more closely.

Si me permiten hablar argues against the conjecture that Bolivian labour organisations were working with Guevara.⁵ The Cold War propaganda of the US and the Soviet Union is rejected, the Communist Party is subtly criticised and Bolivian trade union movements are promoted. *Don't be Afraid, Gringo*, published ten years later, contests the notion that Honduran land reclamations were orchestrated by Nicaraguan and Salvadoran *guerrilleros*; US Contra War narratives are disputed and the agency and legitimacy of local organisations are affirmed.⁶ Both *testimonios* take the form of largely chronological, fully autobiographical, homodiegetic narratives which challenge the US portrayal of leftist movements internationally. National counter-insurgency strategies are denounced through the depiction of massacres and testimony of incarceration, interrogation and torture. Both texts are particularly gynocentric; they condemn male violence and other manifestations of *machismo* in local and personal settings. Women's lived experiences are brought to the fore and female politicisation is shown to take place through traditional roles as wives and mothers. The dichotomising metanarratives of the Cold War, counter-

⁵ Domitila Barrios de Chungara y Moema Viezzer, *Si me permiten hablar... Testimonio de Domitila una mujer de las minas de Bolivia* (Distrito Federal, México y Madrid, España: Siglo veintiuno editores, primera edición, 1977. Decimoséptima edición, 1999). For the English translation see Domitila Barrios de Chungara and Moema Viezzer, *Let Me Speak! Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines*, trans. Victoria Ortiz (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978).

⁶ Elvia Alvarado and Medea Benjamin, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989).

insurgency and patriarchy are challenged by indigenous women's autobiographical *testimonio*. Whilst all *testimonio* is autobiographical, these texts provide a full, chronological autobiography with more detail and depth than we have seen thus far. The political context of Bolivia will now be briefly introduced before the first *testimonio*, and its paratext, are studied in more detail.

Bolivia

In 1952, seven years before the Cuban revolution, the indigenous and economically disadvantaged people of Bolivia benefited from a progressive government that implemented land reforms, nationalised the country's main industry, tin mining, and granted universal suffrage.⁷ In what has been described as "the first true Andean social revolution", the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR), led by Víctor Paz Estenssoro, seized power with the support of tin miners, trade unions and significant sections of the indigenous population.⁸ Land redistribution began with spontaneous indigenous-led land reclamations which were legitimised by the MNR government. Washington eventually offered aid on the condition that the initially progressive government adopt a more conservative political position.⁹ By reducing benefits for miners and inviting foreign investors to Bolivia, the MNR began to alienate previously supportive indigenous peasants.¹⁰ In addition, Benjamin Keen and Keith Haynes maintain that:

Paz abandoned any particular interest in women's rights or their social agenda and instead, cynically manipulated the party's historic support for women's enfranchisement to secure their votes. According to Domitila Barrios de Chungara, a militant activist in the mineworkers'

⁷ Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1991) xii.

⁸ Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 393. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Social Movements and State Force. Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 176.

⁹ Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 394.

¹⁰ Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 395.

Committee of Housewives (CAC), Paz, who excluded women from leadership positions in the government, nonetheless used the Barzolas women [female MNR secret police] to disrupt radical working-class protests: “the Barzolas would jump in front of them, brandishing razors, penknives, and whips, attacking the demonstrators.”¹¹

That historians Keen and Haynes quote Domitila supports the argument that her *testimonio* constructs a gendered counter-narrative which undermines both the national government’s official portrayal of labour disputes and US opposition to leftist political organisation in Latin America. The MNR was eventually overthrown by a military coup in 1964; US involvement in Bolivia took the form of direct military intervention in 1967, following the arrival of Guevara and his guerrilla army. A detailed exploration of US intervention and propaganda in Bolivia has been provided in *Patterns of Protest: Politics and Social Movements in Bolivia*.¹² Bolivians who had no connection to Guevara’s uprising were targeted by the security forces who, according to Domitila, lacked a nuanced understanding of Bolivian politics, and failed to distinguish between trade union organisers and “communist inspired” insurgents.¹³ Domitila’s testimonial narrative, introduced and studied presently, rejects the way in which Bolivia was subject to Cold War projections and affirms instead her own political agency as well as that of women, miners and indigenous Bolivians.

Despite its obvious relevance here, Domitila’s ethnic identity does not arise as a significant issue in the text as mentioned above. This could perhaps be explained with reference to the observation that: “Race and ethnicity are social constructions, terrains of social struggle and political contestation that are altered in accordance with shifts in the wider balance of social forces within a

¹¹ Ibid., 394. See Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 78.

¹² John Crabtree, *Patterns of Protest: Politics and Social Movements in Bolivia* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2005), 33 – 46. See also “The NACLA Report: Bolivia The Poverty of Progress”, *Report on the Americas*, vol. XXV, no. 1 (1991), 10 – 38.

¹³ As insurgency is defined, in the Introduction to this thesis, following the *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, published by the US Department of Defense, quoted by Richard R. Fagen, ed., *Capitalism and the State in U.S. Latin American Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 144. McSherry and Livingstone’s aforementioned observations regarding the way in which civilians were criminalised and regarded with suspicion are also relevant here. McSherry, *Predatory States*, 1. Livingstone, *America’s Backyard*, 41.

particular society.”¹⁴ The text examined presently was produced in an era in which class identity arguably took precedence over that of ethnicity.¹⁵

Domitila Barrios de Chungara and Moema Viezzer, *Si me permiten hablar... Testimonio de Domitila una mujer de las minas de Bolivia, 1977*

Moema Viezzer is a Brazilian sociologist, educator and founder of the *Rede Mulher de Educação*, a feminist popular education network.¹⁶ In spite of her role as editor of *Si me permiten hablar*, there is no intrusive editorial presence, and in this respect the text differs from the *testimonios* studied thus far. Presented in the form of a continuous first-person narration it does not include poems, letters or third-person omniscient narration, but like other *testimonios* studied in this thesis, it does include photography, analysed further below.

The organisation of the text is significant. The first chapter, “SU PUEBLO”, arranged into five subheadings, details the daily life of the miners and their wives, as well as their political organisation and trade union involvement. However, Domitila’s account is predominantly a personal one; her life story is related in the second, lengthier chapter, which is over one hundred and fifty pages long. This chapter, “SU VIDA”, is comprised of twenty-one subsections and is narrated in the first person with extensive use of dialogue. The third and final chapter, “1976”, details Domitila’s life in that year. *Si me permiten hablar* is structured chronologically and, apart from the chapter “SU PUEBLO”, is essentially an autobiography. To appreciate the differing construction of the English and Spanish texts and their presentation to the

¹⁴ Jeffery R. Webber. *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 22.

¹⁵ This has now arguably changed, especially since the election of Morales. See Martin Sivak, *Evo Morales: The Extraordinary Rise of the First Indigenous President of Bolivia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹⁶ “Mission.” Rede Mulher de Educação. <http://www.redemulher.org.br/ingles/instit1.htm>. Date accessed: 2nd September 2011.

reader, it is instructive to examine their paratextual framing and principal objectives.

The English and Spanish publications are identical with three exceptions. The Spanish edition has photographs that are not found in *Let me Speak!*; the first of eight presents Domitila, the second shows three of her children, and the remaining portray the miners' conditions and workers' demonstrations.¹⁷ Documentary photography is thus employed to portray both private and public spheres, drawing on a long history, explored in the Introduction to this thesis, of documentary photography being employed to expose exploitation and encourage opposition to social inequality and poverty. However, in portraying workers' demonstrations, photography also fulfills the role here of authenticating and evidencing the workers' movement in Bolivia. Again, this photography can be seen as an attempt to challenge the images, like those analysed by Desnoes, which portrayed Latin Americans as passive "natives" through crude stereotypes.¹⁸ In stark opposition to those images, photography is here employed to empower and promote Bolivian trade unions.

The Spanish edition includes a paragraph, omitted from the English publication, which appears on a blank page before the *testimonio* proper begins. It reads:

Así como está el libro es mi verdadero pensamiento actual y la expresión que yo quiero darle. Lo he leído y estoy conforme en cuanto al contenido y también al método de trabajo que hemos utilizado. Quiero decir que estoy de pleno acuerdo para que se siga publicando el libro así como está y que sirva realmente este aporte que hemos querido dar. *Domitila Barrios de Chungara*.¹⁹

Domitila asserts her approval of the editing methods and affirms the veracity of the text. Thirdly, in the Spanish edition an interview from 1978 is presented before the *testimonio* begins. The interview allows Domitila to add "aclaraciones con relación a ciertas interpretaciones" of the *testimonio* and to

¹⁷ The photographs appear between page 18 and page 19

¹⁸ "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo", Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista* (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

¹⁹ Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 5.

answer questions raised regarding the relationship between socialism and women's liberation.²⁰

M. – Algunas personas dicen que das a entender que con el socialismo se resuelven todos los problemas de la liberación de la mujer.

D. – No. Lo que pienso es que el socialismo, en Bolivia como en cualquier país, será el mecanismo que creará las condiciones para que la mujer alcance a su nivel. Y lo hará a través de su lucha, a través de su participación. Y será obra de ella misma también de su liberación.

Pero yo pienso que en este momento es mucho más importante pelear por la liberación de nuestro pueblo junto con el varón. No es que yo acepte el machismo, no. Sino que yo considero que el machismo es también un arma del imperialismo, como lo es el feminismo.²¹

Despite rejecting feminism as a weapon of imperialism, Domitila's *testimonio* consistently challenges patriarchal attitudes and institutions and undermines criticisms historically levelled at feminists by some Marxists.²² The English edition places this interview at the end of the book as this is more in keeping with its chronological structure while, as above, the Spanish edition highlights its importance by placing it first, eliciting a particular, non-feminist, reading from a Spanish-speaking audience. To stay as close as possible to the authentic narrative of the *testimonialista*, this chapter will refer to the Spanish original.

Viezzler foregrounds the significance of a women's movement forum in her description of the text's formation: "La idea del presente testimonio surgió de la presencia de Domitila Barrios de Chungara en la Tribuna del Año Internacional de la Mujer, organizada por las Naciones Unidas y realizada en México, en 1975."²³ Jean Franco maintains that Domitila's appearance at the

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

²¹ Ibid., 8.

²² While Randall sought to bring together socialism and feminism in the previous chapter, the two have had a historically antagonistic relationship as we saw at the start of the chapter: "Marxists have criticised feminism as bourgeois in theory and in practice, meaning that it works in the interest of the ruling class. They argue that to analyse society in terms of sex ignores class *divisions* among women, dividing the proletariat." Catherine Mackinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory." *Signs* 7, no. 3 (1982): 517. For a detailed discussion of socialist feminism see the aforementioned Sargent, *Women and Revolution*.

²³ Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 1.

Tribunal was memorable and Amy Kaminsky argues that the text owes its production and warm reception to feminist activists, female social scientists and feminist literary critics.²⁴ While the *testimonios* studied thus far were written and published in support of leftist governments, *Si me permiten hablar* received the support of the women's movement. However, just as *testimonialistas* studied thus far criticised sexism in socialist movements, Domitila rejects the label of feminism and is even critical of the UN Tribunal that led to the production of her *testimonio*. The text primarily focuses on the plight of Bolivian tin miners and their wives. The principal organisation referred to in the text, the *Comité de Amas de Casa*, is an autonomous women's group largely disconnected from state power and political parties. Unlike Franco and Kaminsky, this chapter argues that from this position of relative political autonomy, the *testimonio* inscribes three principal objectives: to disprove US depictions of the labour movement in Bolivia, to refute governmental narratives of counter-insurgency, and to challenge women's inequality across society and on the Left. The title of Domitila's *testimonio*, *Si me permiten hablar*, demands permission to speak from Western feminists and from socialist Bolivian men, as both of these groups arguably overlook the intersectionality of gender and class. Domitila affirms her agency as a Bolivian woman oppressed by both capitalism and *machismo*.

In spite of the common gender focus, Randall and Viezzer's *testimonios* differ in style and format. Aside from subheadings, footnotes, the above interview between Viezzer and Domitila and a brief note entitled "Al Lector", Viezzer's presence throughout the *testimonio* is apparently minimal. In the single note Viezzer introduces Domitila as a member of the working class and presents the socialist feminist argument that women's liberation "está fundamentalmente ligada a la liberación socioeconómica, política y cultural del pueblo" and provides further details regarding how the *testimonio* was created:

No es un monólogo de Domitila consigo misma lo que presento aquí.
Es el resultado de numerosas entrevistas que tuve con ella en México y

²⁴ Jean Franco, "Si me permiten hablar: La lucha por el poder interpretativo." *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*. 36 (1992): 111 – 118. Amy Kaminsky, *Reading the Body Politic. Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 48.

en Bolivia, de sus intervenciones en la Tribuna, así como también de exposiciones, charlas y diálogos que desarrolló con grupos de obreros, estudiantes y empleados universitarios, habitantes de barrios populares, exilados latinoamericanos residentes en México y representantes de la prensa, radio y televisión. Toda esta material fue grabado, como también alguna correspondencia escrita, fue ordenado y posteriormente revisado con Domitila, dando lugar al presente testimonio.²⁵

As opposed to transcribing interviews with the *testimonialista*, Viezzer has incorporated a wide variety of sources and consulted the *testimonialista* with a draft prior to publication and in this way her approach varies considerably from those seen thus far. The reader is presented with a continuous chronological narration from which there is no evidence of Domitila addressing different audiences or being in different settings. Unlike the *testimonios* examined previously, the editor does not interrupt the first-person testimony or address the reader, and it is difficult to ascertain precisely how and to what extent the material has been edited. Viezzer's editing techniques at first appear less interfering; on further investigation however it becomes apparent that the narration of the *testimonialista* has been substantially adjusted.

The final example of paratextual framing is a short statement introduced under the titles "HABLA DOMITILA" and "TESTIMONIO", which gives the text a sense of immediacy and establishes Domitila's first-person narrative presence. Coupled with a map of Bolivia, it reads:

La historia que voy a relatar, no quiero en ningún momento que la interpreten solamente como un problema personal. Porque pienso que mi vida está relacionada con mi pueblo. Lo que me pasó a mí, le puede haber pasado a cientos de personas en mi país. Esto quiero esclarecer, porque reconozco que ha habido seres que han hecho mucho más que yo por el pueblo, pero han muerto o no han tenido la oportunidad de ser conocidos.²⁶

By foregrounding the importance of her "pueblo" and rejecting the notion of an individualist narrative, Domitila's statement addresses the critics, reviewed

²⁵ Ibid., 1 – 2.

²⁶ Ibid., 13.

in the Introduction to this thesis, who misunderstand the representative function and counter-hegemonic objectives of *testimonio*. Key themes present in all *testimonios* emerge here, namely collective identity, the glorification of martyrdom, and the interconnectedness of personal life stories and political contexts. Domitila makes confident use of the first person, repeating “mi”, “me” and “yo” for emphasis whilst underlining that this singular, personal testimony is in fact metonymical.

To further clarify her ideological position, Domitila explicitly identifies her target audience as “obreros, campesinos, amas de casa, todos, incluso la juventud e intelectuales que quieren estar con nosotros.”²⁷ Unlike *Don't be Afraid, Gringo*, which is aimed at a US audience, *Si me permiten hablar* seeks to assist and promote action and organisation among what is identified as oppressed people; Domitila hopes her *testimonio* will become a tool to “mejorar nuestra lucha para liberarnos definitivamente del imperialismo e implantar el socialismo en Bolivia.”²⁸ However, the text does not address a radical Bolivian readership with political or strategic guidance; rather it is primarily focused on Domitila's life as the personal sphere, her childhood and family, as well as the political realm, her experience with trade unions, repression and incarceration, are simultaneously explored. She maintains that her gynocentric autobiography is intended as a practical tool for other revolutionaries, suggesting that she sought to foreground the experiences of women on the Left to challenge sexism and promote an egalitarian revolutionary movement. It is also possible that Viezzer, as a feminist activist, encouraged, or emphasised, gynocentric material.

As stated, *Si me permiten hablar* constructs a counter-narrative which contests the logic of Cold War counter-insurgency by focusing on the lived consequences of US intervention. Domitila testifies to atrocities that occurred as a direct result of US policy in the region, such as the “masacres del 42, del 49, luego otras dos en el 65 y en el 67. Masacres bien feas, donde han perdido

²⁷ Ibid., 10.

²⁸ Ibid., 10.

la vida cientos y cientos de personas.”²⁹ The text is a counter-memory of these attacks which foregrounds civilian casualties. Memories of incarceration are included in vivid detail, using a variety of stylistic techniques, such as dialogue, varying pace and internal monologue. Domitila responded with resilience to torture and incarceration. The theme of martyrdom and treachery that surfaced in the Cuban texts is reprised, as those who side with the government are criticised, and those who “han preferido morir a traicionarnos” are commended.³⁰ Martyrdom and conflict with the US and US-funded security forces are situated in the context of US imperialism and militarism in the region. The US is reproached for intervening in Bolivian political life and forming fraudulent trade unions whose real objective is to defend business interests, a strategy which was reviewed in the Introduction to this thesis, with reference to organisations such as the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD).³¹ Domitila accuses the Bolivian government of carrying out misplaced reprisals, under the direction of the US, in the wake of Guevara’s failed guerrilla war of 1967. As with all the *testimonios* studied here, the text destabilises Cold War narratives that presented the Soviet Union as an expansionist aggressor suggesting instead that the US played this role. However, unlike the pro-Cuban texts examined previously, Domitila simultaneously takes issue with Guevara’s tactics and finds fault with the Communist Party of Bolivia. Both Soviet Communism and US capitalism are rejected in favour of the local organisation of Bolivian trade unions. Private sphere gendered issues such as the de-legitimisation of housework; the sexual double standard and domestic violence are also brought to the fore as the very notion of the political is negotiated and expanded.

²⁹ Ibid., 38. For more information on the Catavi massacre of December 1942 “where troops fired on striking miners, killing at least thirty-five” see James Siekmeier, *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1952 to the Present* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2011), 35. Details of the May massacre of 1949 see Guillermo Lora, *A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement 1848 – 1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 272.

³⁰ She continues: “Muchos dirigentes han sido deportados, torturados, muertos. Solamente para citar algunos, quisiera nombrar a Federico Escóbar Zapata, Rosendo García Maisman, César Lora, Isaac Camacho.” Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 39.

³¹ Ibid., 40.

Gynocentric Contextualisation: “Su Pueblo”

The first chapter, “SU PUEBLO”, begins with information regarding demographics and geography of Bolivia.³² However this factual tone soon gives way to Domitila’s more subjective description of her indigenous identity: “Yo me siento orgullosa de llevar sangre india en mi corazón.”³³ Nevertheless, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Domitila’s indigenous identity is not thoroughly explored and the first chapter is predominantly a factual account of the material conditions of the miners and their families, as Domitila provides political and economic context using statistics. Although the government nationalised the mines, multinational companies still controlled the country’s economy.³⁴ The miners’ impoverished living conditions and harsh working environments are portrayed in intricate detail highlighting the perceived injustice that the workers who produce Bolivia’s wealth do not benefit from it.³⁵ A subsection is dedicated to “un día de la mujer minera.”³⁶ Despite its impersonal title, the woman-centred account of domestic labour is presented in the first-person:

Mi jornada empieza a las 4 de la mañana especialmente cuando mi compañero está en la primera punta. Entonces le preparo su desayuno. Luego hay que preparar las salteñas, porque yo hago unas cien salteñas cada día y las vendo en la calle. [...] Luego hay que alistar a los que van a la escuela por la mañana. Luego lavar la ropa que dejé enjuagada en la víspera.³⁷

Women’s street vending is necessary as the miners do not receive a sufficient salary. Domitila’s working day is conveyed through repetition to reinforce the banality of routine drudgery; unlike women in the West she does not have access to modern appliances to assist her.³⁸ In addition to chores, she also

³² Ibid., 17.

³³ Ibid., 17.

³⁴ Ibid., 18.

³⁵ Ibid., 21 – 32.

³⁶ Ibid., 32.

³⁷ Moema Viezzer provides a footnote that explains that salteñas are an “Empanada típica boliviana, rellena con carne, papas, ají y otras especias.” Ibid., 33.

³⁸ Ibid., 33.

highlights her daily activities with the *Comité de Amas de Casa*, without providing further information about the organisation, as this appears in the section “Organización Obrera” below.³⁹ Other household tasks are completed in the evening, leaving her and other miners’ wives with four to five hours sleep, a fact she bitterly reiterates throughout. Domitila does not describe her situation uncritically; in more detail than any of the *testimonios* studied here, she laments the depreciation of work traditionally carried out by women, an issue of importance to socialist feminists as we saw at the start of this chapter: “Pero a pesar de todo lo que hacemos, todavía hay la idea de que las mujeres no realizan ningún trabajo, porque no aportan económicamente al hogar, solamente trabaja el esposo porque él sí percibe un salario.”⁴⁰ The emphatic use of “ningún” conveys the strength of her feelings; she does not passively accept the devaluation of women’s domestic labour, rather she demonstrates its worth to male *compañeros*:

Un día se me ocurrió la idea de hacer un cuadro. Pusimos como ejemplo el precio del lavado de ropa por docena y averiguamos cuántas docenas de ropa lavábamos por mes. Luego el sueldo de cocinera, de niñera, de sirvienta. Todo lo que hacemos cada día las esposas de los trabajadores, averiguamos. Total, que el sueldo necesario para pagar lo que hacemos en el hogar, comparando con los sueldos de cocinera, lavandera, niñera, sirvienta, era mucho más elevado que lo que ganaba el compañero en la mina durante el mes. Entonces en esa forma nosotras hicimos comprender a nuestros compañeros que sí, trabajamos y hasta más que ellos, en cierto sentido.⁴¹

Connecting this private work to the realm of the public, Domitila argues that the government benefits economically from women’s unpaid labour and, like the feminists calling for wages for housework above, she calculates the financial worth of domestic labour.⁴² The politicisation of the domestic sphere is consistently advocated to destabilise the patriarchal division between the two realms:

³⁹ Ibid., 33 – 34.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁴¹ Ibid., 36

⁴² Ibid., 36.

Por eso me parece tan importante que todos los revolucionarios ganemos la primera batalla en nuestro hogar. Y la primera batalla a ganar es la de dejar participar a la compañera, al compañero, a los hijos, en la lucha de la clase trabajadora, para que este hogar se convierta en una trinchera infranqueable para el enemigo. Porque si uno tiene el enemigo dentro de su propia casa, entonces es un arma más que puede utilizar nuestro enemigo común con un fin peligroso. Por esto es bien necesario que tengamos ideas claras de cómo es toda la situación y desechar siempre esta idea burguesa de que la mujer debe quedarse en el hogar y no meterse en otras cosas, en asuntos sindicales y políticos, por ejemplo.⁴³

The home is imagined as a political space and, in spite of her earlier rejection of feminism as “una arma del imperialismo”, Domitila subverts two of the main arguments historically levelled at feminists by some Marxists. Firstly she claims that it is female relegation to the domestic sphere, not feminism, which is divisive and therefore a tool of capitalism. She suggests that men who are violent or dominating towards women are enemies, akin to other political adversaries. Secondly, she argues that the exclusion of women from the political realm is a bourgeois idea, not the fight for female emancipation. This arguably feminist and indisputably gynocentric analysis of women’s domestic work is followed with the final subsection of “SU PUEBLO”, “Organización Obrera.”⁴⁴ The juxtaposition of women’s work with the highly exploitative but well organised tin-mining labour dominated by men encourages the reader to recognise the importance of female labour and to notice its comparative devaluation.

Domitila names five unions that operate in her local area, which belong to the national *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia* (FSTMB), in turn forming part of the *Central Obrera Boliviana* still operating in Bolivia today.⁴⁵ The COB has been described as the strongest trade union organisation in Latin America.⁴⁶ Domitila supports this description; she highlights the level of solidarity between the different sectors: “Cuando, por ejemplo, a los fabriles

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁶ Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 396.

les están atacando duro, les están liquidando, la Central Obrera Boliviana llama a una manifestación de todos los sectores y entonces, campesinos, mineros, todos apoyan a estas fábricas.”⁴⁷ She argues that Bolivian trade unions developed to address local exploitation, challenging attempts to equate labour movements with a Communist plot against US interests. The primary concerns of the workers’ organisations are the welfare and the rights of their members. If the US perceives these unions as a threat, according to Domitila, this is due to the erroneous assumptions of expansionist US capitalism. The *Comité de Amas de Casa* is introduced towards the end of the section on workers’ organisations to include, formalise and validate the women’s organisation:

Nosotras, las mujeres, fuimos criadas desde la cuna con la idea de que la mujer ha sido hecha solamente para la cocina y para cuidar de las wawas, que es incapaz de llevar tareas importantes y que no hay que permitirle meterse en política. Pero la necesidad nos hizo cambiar de vida. Hace quince años, en una época de muchos problemas para la clase trabajadora, un grupo de sesenta mujeres se organizaron para conseguir la libertad de sus compañeros, que eran dirigentes y que habían sido apresados por reclamar mejores condiciones de salario. Ellas consiguieron todo lo que pedían, después de someterse a una huelga de hambre durante diez días. Y a partir de esto decidieron organizarse en un frente que llamaron “Comité de Amas de Casa de Siglo XX”.⁴⁸

Traditional feminine subservience to and self-sacrifice for husbands paradoxically becomes the reason for female politicisation. Following the incarceration of their husbands, the wives took radical action and as a result their demands were met. Like the *testimonialistas* presented by Randall, Domitila argues that by means of political organisation the housewives overcame their patriarchal socialisation. However, the women involved in the Committee, like most of the women studied in this thesis, consequently became victims of governmental repression: “hemos sido apresadas, interrogadas, encarceladas, y hasta perdimos a nuestros hijos por estar en la

⁴⁷ Barrios de Chungara *Si me permiten hablar*, 37.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

lucha con nuestros compañeros.”⁴⁹ As we shall see, Domitila suggests that far from intimidating and silencing victims such repression can cause women to become increasingly committed to their cause.

In spite of the fact that the *Comité de Amas de Casa* organises separately from men, Domitila explains that they work in conjunction with the workers’ unions and she underscores the fact that they do not separate women’s liberation from anti-imperialism:

Porque nuestra posición no es una posición como la de las feministas. Nosotras consideramos que nuestra liberación consiste primeramente en llegar a que nuestro país sea liberado para siempre del yugo del imperialismo y que un obrero como nosotros esté en el poder y que las leyes, la educación, todo sea controlado por él.⁵⁰

Domitila consistently rejects a feminist approach to Bolivian politics and the first section of her *testimonio* ends with this call for a male leader.⁵¹ While her account is indisputably woman-oriented, and while she explores numerous issues of importance to socialist feminists, class is prioritised over gender with the suggestion that legislative and social advances, which will benefit women, will only come about once a worker has assumed power.⁵² This first section, “SU PUEBLO”, introduces the reader to Domitila’s involvement in local organisations and her ideological convictions regarding housework and capitalism to provide political economic context for the autobiographical *testimonio* that follows.

Female Politicisation, *Machismo* and Repression: “Su Vida”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

⁵² In 2005 an indigenous male president with a history of union activity came to power in Bolivia as mentioned above. For a detailed analysis of Morales and gendered discourse in Bolivia see Stéphanie Rousseau, “Populism from Above, Populism from Below. Gender Politics Under Alberto Fujimori and Evo Morales” in *Gender and Populism in Latin America*, Karen Kampwirth, ed., (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 140 – 161.

In spite of her endorsement of male leaders, in the second part of her *testimonio*, “SU VIDA”, Domitila returns repeatedly to issues of female political participation, sexist attitudes among *compañeros* and domestic violence. She censures *machismo*, and of the early stages of the Committee she states:

Claro, al principio no fue fácil la cosa. Por ejemplo, en la primera manifestación que hubo en Siglo XX [un pueblo] después que ellas volvieron de La Paz, las compañeras subieron al balcón del Sindicato para hablar. Los compañeros no estaban acostumbrados a escuchar a una mujer junto a ellos [sic]. Entonces gritaban: “¡Que se vayan a la casa...! ¡a cocinar! ¡a lavar!, ¡a hacer sus quehaceres! ...” Y les silbaban.⁵³

Women proved their political dedication using a variety of techniques, from writing letters and lobbying to going on hunger strike.⁵⁴ One woman died due to the hunger strike, leaving eight orphaned children.⁵⁵ Domitila notes a gradual improvement in men’s attitudes towards women’s political involvement following this; she contrasts the support and solidarity she received on being arrested with the mistreatment of women who had been politically active before her.⁵⁶ The delegitimisation of women’s political participation is connected to the relegation of women to the private sphere, as she explains that some husbands do not allow their wives to attend political events due to fear of malicious gossip, an issue highlighted by the Peruvian *testimonialistas* in the previous chapter. Both accounts underscore the role of concepts such as honour and shame in controlling women. Domitila observes that *machistas* denounce politically active women for transgressing patriarchal norms despite the fact that their behaviour otherwise conforms to traditional gender roles.⁵⁷ She argues that such sexist views enable and legitimise violence against women; describing a demonstration in which thousands of

⁵³ Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 80.

⁵⁴ For letter writing see *ibid.*, 80. For hunger striking see *ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 81 – 82.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

women participated she states: “Y cuando volvieron a sus casas, muchos trabajadores las pegaron y dijeron que ellas eran amas de casa y que no tenían nada que ver con la política y que su obligación era de estar en la casa.”⁵⁸ Punctuated by the repetition of “y que”, to demonstrate the imperious way in which these arguments are routinely aimed at politically active women, the men’s behaviour is reported with strong disapproval. Domitila describes these men as government spies posing the rhetorical question: why else would they be against women joining the workers’ struggle?⁵⁹ Male violence is equated with the violence and corruption of the government, as patriarchy is connected to capitalism, encouraging those on the Left to oppose violence against women and related sexist attitudes.

While *machismo* is a common theme throughout all the texts examined in this thesis, Domitila differs from *testimonios* seen thus far in this thesis when she critiques the strategy adopted by Guevara in Bolivia. She initially believed that the news of guerrillas fighting in Bolivia was a governmental pretext to justify increased repression.⁶⁰ A “comunicado” signed by known Bolivian revolutionaries “haciendo un análisis bien profundo de la situación en que vivíamos” convinced Domitila of the uprising’s veracity and she notes that spontaneous demonstrations were held in support of the guerrillas.⁶¹ However, her tone is transformed as she depicts harsh governmental reprisals. In sharp contrast to the way in which *Tania* idolised Guevara, contesting the view that all Latin American socialists were uncritically pro-Cuban or “communist inspired”, she states:

Es cierto que Che tenía esa idea de que lo habían engañado. Al menos él nota eso en su *Diario ¿no?*, que le hicieron ver otro panorama de Bolivia, otras posibilidades. Pero yo creo que ha cometido algunos errores el Che. Por ejemplo, confiar mucho en un partido político y no contactarse con organizaciones realmente del pueblo, de la clase

⁵⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁶¹ Ibid., 124 – 5. The workers’ organisations may have supported the *guerrilleros* but were not orchestrated by them, or the Soviet Union, according to Domitila.

trabajadora, para que le den su opinión sincera. Y entonces, los que se habían comprometido con él, ya no le dieron su apoyo.⁶²

Without naming the party directly, Domitila carefully criticises Guevara's dependence on the Bolivian Communist Party and this organisation's failure to support him, suggesting that the Party was out of touch with genuine workers' organisations. She further complicates the US's simplistic view of the Left in Bolivia, demonstrating the theoretical and practical distance between local Latin American labour movements and the Soviet-allied Communist Party. Underlining the fact that many Bolivians were killed during governmental reprisals, she expresses annoyance with those who see the situation merely in terms of Guevara's death. She reconstructs a scene consisting of dialogue, rather than relying on reported speech:

Por eso a mí me dolió mucho cuando un día, después de una intervención mía en la Tribuna del Año Internacional de la Mujer, en México, se me acercó un señor y me dijo:

- ¿Usted es boliviana?
- Sí – contesté
- ¡Ah! ... - me dijo él-, ustedes son los cobardes que dejaron morir impunemente al gran comandante Che Guevara!⁶³

Domitila's account of the conversation is spirited and engaging; it both entertains and persuades the reader. In response to the *señor*, Domitila details the "Masacre de San Juan", a governmental retaliation to Guevara's guerrilla war. This deliberate juxtaposition, disproving the notion that Bolivians are cowards who failed Guevara, presents them instead as having suffered due to government actions in the wake of his guerrilla war. While describing the massacre she focuses on female victims, testifying to a pregnant woman shot in the stomach.⁶⁴ She foregrounds the fact the incident took place during the traditional "fiesta de San Juan": "entró el ejército y mató a mucha gente. Y a todas las personas que, según ellos, habíamos apoyado a las guerrilleras, nos

⁶² Ibid., 125.

⁶³ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 127.

agarraron, nos apalearon, nos maltrataron y a varios les mataron.”⁶⁵ “Nos” is repeated to emphasise the notion that Bolivians were subjected to collective punishment. While creating a sense of collective identity, the verbs repeated in the third person also contrast strongly with the irreverent “según ellos”, which underscores the misinformed position of the government forces.

Domitila’s account serves as a counter-narrative to US Cold War propaganda as well as addressing misapprehensions among those who uncritically support Guevara’s actions. Bolivians who were not collaborating with Guevara suffered as a result of what she perceives as misinformed US foreign policy and many, including Domitila, were arrested, detained and tortured. The subsection “De nuevo en la cárcel” presents these experiences in further detail. Her emotions are conveyed with honesty and clarity using dramatic dialogue and first-person *testimonio* intermittently, encouraging the reader to empathise with her memory of the experience. She employs other literary techniques to vividly recount her emotional and physical responses to her capture, such as the following powerful simile:

- Detengan a esa mujer, por favor.
De hecho, por primera vez tuve yo un terror. Mis rodillas me temblaban, rodilla con rodilla se me chocaban. Yo quería desaparecer en aquel momento. Y sinceramente, parece que mi cuerpo adivinaba lo que me iba a pasar. Temblaba... y era como si mi corazón lo estuviera estrujando una mano de hierro.⁶⁶

Domitila’s interrogation centred on her gender, Guevara’s guerrilla war and accusations that she was a communist working for him.⁶⁷ As we saw in the previous chapter, torture is often gendered and women’s subordinate position in society can exacerbate their experience of such violence. However, women with a highly developed political consciousness and a collective sense of identity are more likely to exhibit resilience during such difficult experiences. Indeed, as the prison guards became violent, Domitila attempted to physically fight back:

⁶⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁷ One sexist insult from an interrogator is reported as “la mujer estaba hecha solamente para dar placer al hombre.” Ibid., 157.

Entonces él comenzó a ponerse más brusco, gritoneándome, poniéndome en la desolación. Y de ratos en ratos me jaloneaba, me daba sopapos y quería agarrarme a la fuerza. Pero yo no me dejaba y no me dejaba. Me escupió en la cara. Después me dio una patada. Yo no aguanté y le di un sopapo. Él me volvió a dar un puñete. Yo le rasqué en la cara. Entonces comenzó a agarrarme a golpes. Yo, hasta donde pude, me defendí.⁶⁸

In this dramatic passage, short sentences and numerous verbs convey a sense of action, creating a fast pace. “Yo” is repeated to emphasise her sense of agency and resilience as she describes biting the hand of one of her torturers and spitting his blood in his face.⁶⁹ She testifies to aborting her child due to being beaten by prison guards.⁷⁰ Throughout her intensely emotive seventeen-page account of incarceration and torture, Domitila continually engages the reader through a variety of stylistic and rhetorical devices. She conveys her extreme responses through exclamations: “¡Estaba tan desesperada!” and “¡Ay!... ¡Qué temor me daba!”⁷¹ Regularly punctuating her account with the rhetorical question “no?” she also engages the reader seeking confirmation that her story is being listened to and understood.⁷² She describes in harrowing detail the physical injuries sustained as well as her psychological responses. Her perplexed thought processes are communicated through internal monologue, repetition and rhetorical questions: “– Dónde estoy? Dónde estoy? [...] sí, me di cuenta: – ah, sí, estoy presa.”⁷³ Eventually she loses consciousness and wakes up in a hospital from where she was released.⁷⁴ Like Adamaris in *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*, Domitila recounts her experiences in detail. She constructs a coherent narrative in which she demonstrates physical endurance and psychological strength. In addition, her

⁶⁸ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 159 – 160.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 163 – 164.

⁷¹ Ibid., 159, 160.

⁷² Ibid., 155, 156, 159.

⁷³ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 167.

account plays the political role of testifying to unjust governmental retaliations.

Critique of US Feminism: UN Tribunal

Domitila constructs a candid counter-narrative to US propaganda and she is even critical of the Tribunal that led to the creation of her *testimonio*. The penultimate subsection of “SU VIDA”, “En la Tribuna del Año Internacional de la Mujer”, details her experience of the Tribunal using comedy and sarcasm. She criticises the way in which *gringas* set the agenda, discussing issues such as prostitution, lesbianism and birth control. Having described in detail her journey to and arrival in Mexico City, she adds:

Era mi primera experiencia y yo me imaginaba escuchar un cierto número de cosas que me harían progresar en la vida en la lucha, en mi trabajo ¿no?

Bueno, ese momento se acercó al micrófono una gringa con su cabellera bien rubia y con unas cosas por aquí por el cuello, las manos al bolsillo, y dijo a la asamblea:

- Simplemente he pedido el micrófono para decirles mi experiencia. Que a nosotras, los hombres nos deben dar mil y una medallas porque nosotras, las prostitutas, tenemos el coraje de acostarnos con tantos hombres.
- ¡Bravo!... – gritaron muchas. Y palmas.

Bueno, con mi compañera nos salimos de allí, porque allí estaban reunidas cientos de prostitutas para tratar de sus problemas.⁷⁵

Domitila employs comedic exaggeration to contrast her political expectations with the surprising reality of Western feminists’ concerns. She details the hair colour, jewellery and body language of the “gringa” to construct a vivid image of the Tribunal from her perspective. Despite this critical stance, she asserts that the issues discussed by the feminists are “problemas reales, pero no los fundamentales.”⁷⁶ Domitila and a group of like-minded Latin American

⁷⁵ Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 220.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

women made various “intervenciones” to express to the Tribunal that for them, the most important issues facing women are inextricably linked to a broader anti-capitalist struggle.⁷⁷

The liberal, middle-class feminism that Domitila opposes is personified by Betty Friedan.⁷⁸ Domitila relates her disagreement with Friedan, whom she sarcastically describes as “la gran líder feminista de los Estados Unidos”, dismissing her as bourgeois and disengaged from the lived reality of the masses.⁷⁹ Friedan is quoted as describing Domitila and the Bolivian delegation to the conference as “manejadas por los hombres” because of their insistence on the importance of class politics.⁸⁰ Clearly offended, Domitila rejects the “plan mundial de acción” written by Friedan, on the basis that it did not address the needs of the majority of Latin Americans.⁸¹ The example of contraception is employed to further explore her ideological differences with Western feminists. It is not high natality that causes poverty in Bolivia, but rather governmental corruption and the exploitation of natural resources.⁸² She suggests that *gringas* are misinformed as to the social, economic and political realities of her native country.

While at the Tribunal, Domitila was also confronted by opposition from fellow Latin Americans. The president of the Mexican delegation, who is described as bourgeois, attempted to dissuade Domitila from engaging with wider political concerns: “Hablaemos de nosotras, señora... Nosotras somos mujeres. Mire, señora, olvídense usted del sufrimiento de su pueblo. Por un momento, olvídense

⁷⁷ For the Latin American group of women, see *ibid.*, 221. For broader anti-capitalism, see *ibid.*, 223.

⁷⁸ Author of *The Feminine Mystique*, a comprehensive account of the negative psychological effects of marriage and domesticity for middle-class white women in the US based on extensive interviews and research. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001). The text was first published in 1963.

⁷⁹ Barrios de Chungara, *Si me permiten hablar*, 224.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 221– 222.

de los masacres.”⁸³ Domitila mockingly reconstructs the dialogue using the repetition of “nosotras” to underscore the exclusion of men, showing the feminists as self-centred, in contrast to the use of this personal pronoun to convey female solidarity in the texts edited by Randall. In response to the political opposition she faced Domitila relates:

Me subí y hablé. Les hice ver que ellas no viven en el mundo que es el nuestro. [...] que aquellas damas que se organizan para jugar canasta y aplauden el gobierno tienen toda su garantía, todo su respaldo. Pero a las mujeres como nosotras, amas de casa, que nos organizamos para alzar a nuestros pueblos, nos apalean, nos persiguen. Todas esas cosas ellas no veían.⁸⁴

Domitila unequivocally rejects the notion of cross-class female solidarity with white Western feminists, concluding that female members of the bourgeoisie and indigenous peasant women have little in common. Here “nosotras” is employed to refer not to all women but to the Bolivian housewives who have faced political persecution and violence. Domitila consistently refuses to separate opposition to sexism from her wider socialist beliefs.

The third and final section of *Si me permiten hablar*, “1976”, describes Domitila’s life in that year, focusing on her political activism and re-election as General Secretary of the Housewives’ Committee.⁸⁵ The personal continues to interlace with the political as she describes giving birth to a daughter and having a miscarriage.⁸⁶ This section, and the *testimonio*, ends with a discussion regarding communism; Domitila reports that she initially became interested in Marxism when she was described as a communist, having been arrested. Ironically, opposition to communism from the authorities led her to it:

Yo solamente he pedido que se haga justicia al pueblo, yo solamente he pedido que todos tengan que comer, yo he pedido que la educación sea

⁸³ Ibid., 225.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 226.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 234.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 250.

mejor, he pedido que no haya más masacres como esa terrible, de San Juan. ¿Será eso socialismo? ¿Será eso comunismo?⁸⁷

Domitila highlights two of the principal concerns of *testimonio*: poverty, “tengan que comer”, and state violence. She poses rhetorical questions regarding the nature of socialism and communism before concluding that in socialist countries workers enjoy a better quality of life, women are able to enter the workforce and are less worried for the wellbeing of their husbands and children.⁸⁸ However, she rejects the idea of turning to Russia, China or Cuba for inspiration, stating: “El marxismo, según entiendo yo, se lo debe aplicar a la realidad de cada país.”⁸⁹ Domitila ends her *testimonio* by reiterating the need for Bolivia to become a socialist country on its own terms. Nevertheless, whilst at the beginning and ending of *Si me permiten hablar* there is a paratextual emphasis on socialism, the text does more to underline the conditions and experiences of women married to Bolivian miners than it does to promote a specific leftist political ideology. Like all selected *testimonios*, the ostensibly political objective is complicated by a gendered focus and interpretation.

Si me permiten hablar reiterates themes found in all the *testimonios* studied here: martyrdom, collective identity and the promotion of political organisation and action, especially among women. Massacres, torture and incarceration are portrayed as an unjust result of US interference and consequential counter-insurgency strategies. Domitila exposes sexism within the labour movement, suggesting that, with revolutionary organisation and increased political consciousness, male violence and patriarchal oppression weakens. While politicising marriage, she also challenges normative gender roles and the devaluation of domestic labour. Her text can be situated within debates on socialist feminism as she critiques the androcentricity and *machismo* of the Left whilst also rejecting the lack of class analysis amongst US feminists.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 255.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 256.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 256.

Unlike the texts examined thus far, Domitila criticises Guevara's actions in Bolivia and reproaches the Bolivian Communist Party. She presents Bolivian unions and her own women's organisation as reasonable responses to local disputes over living standards, working conditions and the exploitation of women, employing a wide variety of stylistic devices to engage and entertain the reader. She makes use of comedy, sarcasm and exaggeration, alongside scenic techniques which contain lively dialogue and candid internal monologue.

The following text also explores women's political participation, sexism amongst men of the Left, US intervention in Latin America and incarceration. However, there are significant differences in target audience and style of delivery, and the setting is changed to that of militarised Honduras. Although the second *testimonialista* examined here is not part of a separate women's organisation, her account is perhaps the most thoroughly gynocentric of all. The paratext will be examined before resistance to *machismo* and the construction of a counter-narrative in the account are considered in more detail.

Elvia Alvarado and Medea Benjamin, *Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart*, 1987

Don't be Afraid, Gringo was not originally intended for Spanish-speaking audiences; the title directly addresses an assumed North American Anglophone readership.⁹⁰ Like *Si me permiten hablar*, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* comprises first-person chronological homodiegetic narration, presented and edited by a feminist activist; it too could be described as extensively autobiographical. It is also free from the presence of an intrusive third-person narrator and does not include letters, poems or material from other sources, but

⁹⁰ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*. In email correspondence with the author of this thesis, Medea Benjamin explained that at the time of the first English publication, Elvia was worried about the potentially dangerous repercussions of a Spanish version; Benjamin also stated that a Spanish translation is forthcoming. "Don't be Afraid, Gringo." Email from Medea Benjamin to Sofia Mason. 12th of February 2010.

does include photography. As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, the function of the images is that of documentary photography. Typical daily life for the Honduran community represented in the text is photographically reproduced for the reader, to afford them a glimpse into this reality. The photography is analysed more closely below.

Medea Benjamin edited and translated the text and, like Randall and Viezzer, Benjamin is a political campaigner known for her left-wing, feminist views.⁹¹ She founded CODEPINK a female-led anti-war organisation, and Global Exchange, an organisation “dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice around the world.”⁹² As with Randall and Viezzer, Benjamin’s political convictions may have affected the paratext and content of the *testimonio*.

Don't be Afraid, Gringo is divided into fourteen chapters, seven Appendices and a Foreword, written by Elvia Alvarado, as well as Acknowledgements and an Introduction, authored by Benjamin. The *Congreso Nacional de Trabajadores de Campo* (CNTC) and Food First are thanked in the Acknowledgements.⁹³ *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* does not directly promote Food First; it is not mentioned in the *testimonio*, but the text is in keeping with the organisation’s aims of promoting social change, food security and opposing neo-liberal economic restructuring.⁹⁴ Elvia mentions the CNTC on several occasions, outlining the fact that she is a member.⁹⁵ While its objectives and paratext may be partially influenced by these two organisations, like *Si me*

⁹¹ In the above email correspondence with the author of this thesis, Benjamin explains that she was familiar with the *testimonios* of Menchú and Randall and was working for Food First (see note 92) when she produced the *testimonio*.

⁹² “CODEPINK: Founders and Staff.” Codepink4peace. 31st August 2011. “About Global Exchange.” Global Exchange. Date accessed 31st August, 2011.

⁹³ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, xi. The appendices include a Honduras “fact sheet” and chronology, as well as several documents regarding “U.S. Economic and Military aid to Honduras”, underscoring the factual nature of the paratext. *Ibid.*, 149 – 168.

⁹⁴ The Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as Food First, is a non-profit organisation based in California that aims “to eliminate the injustices that cause hunger.” “Food First Mission Statement.” Foodfirst. <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/node/149> Date accessed: 31st August 2012.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

permiten hablar, the *testimonio* is politically autonomous. Untied to any government, the text is primarily concerned with presenting the plight of Honduran women through an autobiographical depiction of Elvia as a strong and determined protagonist.

In the Acknowledgements, Benjamin also thanks the photographer Susan Meiselas. Meiselas is a relatively well-known documentary photographer, Franco describes Meiseles's unforgettable photographs "of bodies in San Salvador" confirming that Meiselas was committed to promoting justice in Central America through her depictions of massacres denied by the state perpetrators.⁹⁶ *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* includes fourteen of Meiselas's photographs in black and white and a relevant photograph is placed at the start of each chapter, with a significant quote from the chapter italicised underneath. Needless to say, as a professional photographer, Meiselas selects and presents particular messages with her photographic images, and those presented in this collection are no exception. Her images can again be placed in the context of the aforementioned observations of Edmundo Desnoes.⁹⁷ In stark contrast to the stereotypical representations of Latin Americans analysed by Desnoes, Meiselas's photographs present quotidian scenes of rural Honduran life; indigenous women, men and children are shown at home and working the land, with two notable exceptions. The chapter "Gringos and Contras on Our Land" is accompanied by a photograph of two Americans soldiers, whose pale skin and dark green uniforms contrast strongly with the rural scenes presented throughout the rest of the text. The men stand aggressively with guns on their shoulders and they stare into the camera. At least three military helicopters are visible in the background. While the photograph of US involvement in Honduras is associated with masculine belligerence, the second exception presents Benjamin and Elvia walking, with their arms around each other, through a rural terrain with their backs to the camera. The assumed "gringo" reader is presented with two models of Western involvement in Honduras; the former is bellicose and based on confrontation, the latter is presented as a

⁹⁶ Franco, *Decline and Fall*, 15.

⁹⁷ "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo", Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista* (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

relationship of equality founded on female solidarity.⁹⁸ Aside from this, the photography in *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* serves the photo-journalistic or documentary photography purpose of adding authenticity to the account by presenting rural indigenous daily life in Honduras as mentioned above.

Elvia's Foreword candidly describes her first impressions of the Western woman who would compile her *testimonio*. Whereas Randall did not mention her US citizenship, here the relationship between the Latin American *testimonialista* and the Western editor is rendered potentially problematic. The Anglophone reader may identify with the *gringa* editor, and be comforted by Elvia's development from initial antagonism to acceptance, as she addresses Benjamin with a familiar tone:

When you first came to my house, I was afraid to talk to you. "What is this *gringa* doing here in my house, the house of a poor campesina?" I wondered. Because when you said you were from the United States I thought you were from the U.S. military base, from Palmerola. And since I thought all gringos were the same, I thought you had come here to do me harm. [...] But then I decided that I couldn't pass up a chance to tell the world our story. Because our struggle is not a secret one, it's an open one. The more people who know our story the better. Even if you are a *gringa*, I thought, once you understand why we are fighting, if you have any sense of humanity, you'll have to be on our side.⁹⁹

Benjamin's translation of Elvia's Spanish into informal, conversational American English is an important strategy through which Benjamin hopes to elicit the support of US readers. Randall and Benjamin's presence as facilitators/editors from the US differentiates their texts from the rest of the *testimonios* studied here that have Latin American editors. Nonetheless, common themes recur. Reiterating the notion of the revolutionary collective and the metonymical function of her account, Elvia does not wish to tell her individual life story to the *gringa* visitor, but rather "our" story – that of the poor in Honduras. Indeed "our" is repeated four times. Once informed of her

⁹⁸ This feminised model of peaceful coexistence is compatible with CODEPINK's objectives and reflects the historical feminisation of the peace movement as explored by Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 42.

⁹⁹ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, xiii.

life experiences, Elvia is sure that the US audience will be sympathetic, suggesting that political opposition to Latin American social movements is caused by misunderstanding or misinformation, perhaps as a result of US propaganda.

Like all texts studied in this thesis, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* denounces US military intervention in Latin America and details detainment and torture that occurred as a result of this interference. In response to US Cold War propaganda, the text promotes a leftist ideology as we shall see below. Elvia provides a detailed gynocentric account of issues such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, the sexual double standard and contraception.¹⁰⁰ She politicises motherhood and the domestic sphere while challenging the normalisation of the nuclear family unit. She does not describe herself as a feminist and is not a member of a separate women's organisation. Yet her *testimonio* contests traditional gender roles and unequivocally condemns male violence. The paratext and content of the *testimonio* reject the notion of a communist conspiracy in Central America as US Cold War justifications for military intervention in Honduras are consistently undermined. The paratext will now be examined in more detail.

Unlike Randall, who employed *testimonio* in her introductions, Benjamin uses only formal, impersonal language and statistical information to present a detailed political and historical contextualisation of Honduras.¹⁰¹ The question is posed "How is it that Honduras has managed to escape the violent confrontations that have engulfed neighbouring El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala?" She answers that economic inequality in Honduras was less severe; gains made by workers' organisations and governmental land reforms resulted in a sense that "the poor had a stake in the system" and that the military had not used violence to put down peaceful social movements.¹⁰² This

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., menstruation, 3, child birth, 5, sexual double standard, 46, contraception, 48.

¹⁰¹ Unlike Randall, Benjamin supplies references in sixteen footnotes citing Charles Taylor and Michael C. Hudson, *World Manual of Social and Political Indicators* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), as well as several newspapers. Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, xxiv–xxv.

¹⁰² Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, xv. Nicaraguan *testimonios* were examined in the previous chapter and *testimonio* from El Salvador is analysed in the following and final chapter. Guatemala was of course the setting for Menchú's famous testimonial narrative referred to in

relatively stable political situation was to change in the 1980s when US intervention undermined the country's political independence and stability. The Reagan administration placed Honduras at the centre of the covert anti-Sandinista Contra War, explored in Chapter Three.¹⁰³ Writing in May 1987, Benjamin states:

To fulfill its regional military role, the United States turned Honduras into an armed camp. Since 1980, the U.S. military has built or improved eleven airstrips, two sophisticated radar stations, several base camps and training facilities, combat-ready helicopter refuelling pads, and a large-scale command and logistics center at Palmerola Air Base.¹⁰⁴

As a result of this militarisation, democracy and “civilian power” were undermined, as the military was granted veto powers and control over foreign policy, regardless of the result of elections.¹⁰⁵ There was a sharp increase in torture, arbitrary political executions and secret graves.¹⁰⁶ Journalists were also targeted and the office of the Honduran Human Rights Committee was petrol-bombed.¹⁰⁷ In addition, she writes: “The head of the armed forces in 1986, General Regalado Hernández, charged that anyone who defamed the contras, protested U.S. presence in Honduras, or brought up the question of disappeared persons was part of a communist conspiracy.”¹⁰⁸ *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* functions as counter-propaganda, defying the attempt to silence opposition to US militarisation with accusations of a communist plot. Benjamin concludes that US intervention overturned the factors that made

the Introduction to this thesis. Central American political conflicts, profoundly affected by the Cold War, were accompanied by women's participation, and female-authored *testimonio*. Ibid., xvi – xvii.

¹⁰³ See Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 477 – 478. Also Harris and Vilas, *Revolution under Siege*.

¹⁰⁴ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, xviii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., xix.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., xix.

¹⁰⁷ “Journalist Rodrigo Wong Arévalo, a critic of Honduran foreign policy, narrowly missed being killed when a bomb exploded in his car. Gasoline bombs were thrown into the office of the Honduran Human Rights Committee.” Ibid., xix – xx.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., xx.

Honduras more stable and peaceful than its neighbours; a corrupt political elite emerged, poverty became more severe and repression of peaceful protest and political dissent became increasingly widespread.¹⁰⁹

The *testimonialista*, Elvia Alvarado, is introduced as a mother, grandmother and activist with the CNTC. Benjamin describes constructing the text from thirty hours of taped interviews carried out during Elvia's work with *campesino* organisations. The reader is encouraged to believe that, having accompanied Elvia, Benjamin could verify her story, a technique employed to provide credibility. As with Randall's *testimonios*, there is evidence that *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* is aimed at a female audience, despite the masculine "gringo" of the title, Benjamin encourages the discussion of issues of particular interest for feminists, creating a strong gynocentric focus. Whilst she does not mention her interviewing techniques in the Introduction, in a private correspondence with the author of this thesis Benjamin responded to a question regarding the feminist nature of the *testimonio*, by stating that she had "encouraged" the discussion of particular topics through the questions she asked, but that Elvia was entirely responsible for the answers.¹¹⁰

Resisting *Machismo*

While *Si me permiten hablar* begins with a chapter detailing the miners' working conditions, the first chapter of *Don't be Afraid, Gringo*, "Childhood to Motherhood", opens with an account of domestic violence:

By the time I was six years old, I knew my parents didn't get along. One of the problems was that there wasn't much work for my father. He'd go looking for work every day, but most of the time didn't find anything. So he'd go out and get drunk instead. Then he'd come home and pick fights with my mother and hit her with his machete.¹¹¹

In this early description of domestic violence as a result of unemployment, Elvia does not present her mother as a helpless victim; rather she informs us

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., xxi.

¹¹⁰ Email correspondence with the author of this thesis. "Don't be Afraid, Gringo." Email from Medea Benjamin to Sofia Mason. 12th of February 2010.

¹¹¹ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, 1.

that her mother left the violent relationship when Elvia was seven years old. The situation is not dramatised, she does not use many adverbs or adjectives and she neglects to comment on her emotional responses. As we shall see, she presents herself as an independent, brave woman, contesting the equation of femininity with debility and reaffirming the notion that increased resilience is a possible response to violence.

Elvia describes becoming pregnant at a young age due to lack of sexual education, blaming adults for deliberately withholding information from teenagers.¹¹² She does not idealise the experience and had no feelings of love for the father of her child.¹¹³ Her brother forced her to leave home on becoming pregnant and she found a job as a cook for a wealthy woman who, with connotations of cross-class female solidarity, took pity on her destitution and heavy pregnancy.¹¹⁴ Elvia proudly asserts that she was able to work until she began to feel contractions and, in a seemingly deliberately playful way, describes giving birth on her own while the nurse was out of the room.¹¹⁵ She does not complain about being made homeless while pregnant; rather she boasts about her ability to work. Two years later when pregnant for a second time, again reaffirming her vigour and bravery, she “didn’t bother going to a hospital” and gave birth at home.¹¹⁶ Without detailing emotional responses to giving birth, the name or any other description of her son, Elvia merely notes the inadequacies of the fathers of her children:

The father of my second child didn’t have a job, and he wasn’t faithful to me either. On top of that he tried to boss me around. So I decided to raise the child by myself. The father of my third child was no better. As soon as he found out I was pregnant, he left. So many men in Honduras are like that. They stay with a woman just long enough to have a child,

¹¹² Ibid., 3.

¹¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

then they disappear and don't do anything to help support the children.¹¹⁷

Much like the Peruvian *testimonialistas* in *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*, Elvia criticises absentee, promiscuous fathers whilst challenging patriarchal conceptions of motherhood, presenting herself as a hardworking and capable woman undeterred by pregnancy. The traditional nuclear family unit is continually disregarded; when describing her own childhood, she explains that her mother left her and her siblings to live with a man who did not want them.¹¹⁸ Elvia's acceptance of her mother's departure is significant, as the traditional feminine gender role of the self-sacrificing mother dictates that it is "unnatural" for a mother to leave her young children to cohabit with a lover: "Mothers who leave their children in the care of others are vulnerable to the charge of generating 'maternal deprivation.'"¹¹⁹ Elvia's *testimonio* presents a challenge to the supposed ubiquity of the nuclear family under patriarchy and European models, and contests associated essentialist doctrines that assume that childrearing is women's primary role in society. Indeed, Elvia goes on to make the same decision herself, she leaves her children with her mother to work in the capital city as a maid.¹²⁰ Having returned to her village, she explains:

It was there that I met Alberto and we started living together. I left my children with my mother because she wanted to keep them. But a few months after Alberto and I started living together, the children told me they wanted to come live with us.

I was delighted. But a few days after they arrived, Alberto started fighting with them. He wouldn't give them food. "Let them go back to your mother's house" he told me, "because I'm not about to feed another man's children." What could I do? I had to send them back.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁹ Erica Burman, "Motherhood", in *Encyclopaedia of Feminist Theories*, Loraine Code, ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 351.

¹²⁰ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, 6.

¹²¹ Ibid., 7.

Elvia recounts that her children would regularly visit her during the day when Alberto was working, justifying her decision to live with him by explaining that she had nowhere else to go and that he fathered three of her children. Like her father, he had an addiction to alcohol: “But at least he didn’t hit me like my father hit my mother, and he was good to his own children. That’s why I stayed with him.”¹²² Elvia maintains a pragmatic approach to her relationship, renouncing any notion of romantic love, a concept identified as instrumental in obscuring female oppression by some feminists.¹²³ She presents a challenge to traditional norms surrounding motherhood and the family, reinscribing women’s historically submissive role as one of agency and strength.

In the sixth chapter “Taming Macho Ways”, Elvia denounces the fact that women are solely responsible for child rearing and domestic labour.¹²⁴ Much like Domitila above, she describes a woman’s day as an incessant set of chores. Whereas men return home and rest after work, women’s labour continues through the night as they are up at night breast feeding.¹²⁵ The chapter again discusses domestic violence and also the sexual double standard.¹²⁶ Neighbours, family members and the police are hesitant to get involved in instances of domestic violence because “They say it’s something for the man and wife to figure out by themselves.”¹²⁷ Highlighting the wider issue of patriarchy, Elvia describes *machismo* as “a historical problem”

¹²² Ibid., 8.

¹²³ An analysis of romantic love in the *testimonios* falls beyond the remit of this thesis but it is noteworthy that the traditional, patriarchal concept was also reconfigured in *Tania*. It has been observed that: “Feminists from Wollstonecraft to the Third Wave on have objected to romance as purveying escapist fantasies that distract women from acting to change their real circumstances.” Harriet E. Margolis, “Romance” in *Encyclopaedia of Feminist Literary Theory*, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, ed., (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 352. In addition, “the ideology of ‘romantic love’ [...] has been regarded by a number of feminist theorists as a key agent in women’s continued oppression.” Lynne Pearce, “romance as genre” [sic] in *Encyclopaedia*, Code, ed., 427.

¹²⁴ Alvarado, *Don’t be Afraid*, 52 – 53.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 52.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 53.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 54.

suggesting alcoholism exacerbates the situation.¹²⁸ When *campesinos* are organised politically, she reasons, they do not have time to become inebriated, while unemployment and disempowerment lead to an increase in alcohol consumption and violence against women.¹²⁹ She ends the chapter by reiterating the need for the politicisation of the domestic sphere, seen in Randall and Domitila's *testimonios*.¹³⁰

For Elvia, this politicisation encompasses the need to address the sexual double standard, which she consistently relates to violence against women explaining that while men have the liberty to indulge in numerous infidelities, women are beaten or killed for doing the same.¹³¹ Perhaps to address this imbalance, she is in favour of contraception stating that she has had her "tubes tied".¹³² The population control issue, highlighted by Randall and Domitila above, which was given as a reason for opposition to contraception by the latter, is also addressed by Elvia:

The United States gives millions of dollars to stop Hondurans from having children. I don't understand why they're so interested in our personal lives. Some say gringos just want to get rid of poor people. Other say the United States sees poor people as potential guerrillas. I don't know, but that's what they say.¹³³

Unlike Domitila, Elvia promotes family planning, reasoning that some cannot afford to feed a large family.¹³⁴ Yet in spite of the increased availability of contraception, female sexuality is still controlled by social mores and male leaders are criticised for being sexist and polygamous. Explaining that she does not enter into relations with *compañeros*, she protests: "I think a leader who has a wife at home and goes with other women is violating our principles.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 55.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 56.

¹³¹ Ibid., 46.

¹³² Ibid., 48.

¹³³ Ibid., 48.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 48.

Because within this struggle we're waging we have to be honest, we can't be corrupt. And honesty begins in the home.¹³⁵ To strengthen this argument and politicise the mistreatment of women, like Domitila, Elvia equates dishonesty and extra-marital affairs with political corruption. She explicitly criticises the hypocrisy of *machismo*:

Another thing about the male leaders is that they often don't want their own wives to participate. They talk a good line about "the role of women," but when it comes to their women- well that's a different story. I've never even seen the wives of some of the leaders, they're so well hidden. So I tell them, "Hey, you big talkers, why don't you unlock your wives and let them out of the cage? Bring them around sometime so we can make sure they really exist."¹³⁶

Elvia employs sarcasm and comedy to address the sexist men in her movement, using the deliberately exaggerated image of a cage. To provide balance, she notes that the CNTC organised women: "Our organization's principles are very clear: they say that women must be integrated into the agrarian reform process."¹³⁷ Land projects managed by women, female co-operatives and childcare initiatives are described to demonstrate the capabilities and achievements of politically organised women.¹³⁸

Despite these advances, Elvia consistently reiterates the fact that many women were too intimidated by their husbands to become politically active.¹³⁹ However, like Randall and Domitila, she also describes the process of empowerment experienced by women who are organised.¹⁴⁰ Once politically engaged, these women no longer tolerate abuse from men, a fact that Elvia reasons is one of the causes of men's opposition to women's political participation.¹⁴¹ While she may not describe herself as a feminist, the way in

¹³⁵ Ibid., 90.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 90.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 87.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 87 – 88.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 88.

which she addresses a wide variety of issues that specifically relate to women, from domestic violence in intimate relationships to the sexual double standard, results in a *testimonio* that is particularly significant for a feminist analysis of testimonial literature.

Constructing a Counter-narrative

In addition to the strong focus on gender, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* directly addresses the three of the principal recurrent themes found in all the *testimonios* studied so far: US intervention, counter-insurgency and resistance or resilience thereof. The twelfth chapter “What’s Democracy? What’s Communism?” questions the authenticity of the two party political system in the US, and that country’s attitude towards the revolutionary Left in Latin America. Elvia challenges the model of Western democracy asserting, “In a democracy we’re all supposed to be equal before the law, but in Honduras the rich are more equal than the poor.”¹⁴² Political corruption, the lack of freedom of speech, the militarisation of Honduras and the superficiality of party politics are denounced, reinforcing the information provided in Benjamin’s introduction outlined above.¹⁴³ Having directly criticised the political system the US was keen to export, Elvia commends the achievements of the Cuban Revolution:

They say Cubans are communists, that the Cuban people don’t have any freedom, that the country is run by this dictator Fidel Castro. But I also hear that in Cuba people have food, clothing, education and medicine. So I think if my family has food, clothing, education, and medicine, what else would I want?¹⁴⁴

Like the texts studied in the first three chapters of this thesis, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* exonerates the Cuban Revolution in the face of US opposition, by foregrounding its humanitarian achievements. The text operates as an example

¹⁴² Ibid., 118.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 119 – 121.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 123.

of counter-propaganda, challenging both the demonisation of Cuba and the notion of aggressive Soviet communism:

They try to scare us about the threat of communism so we won't do anything, so we'll be so terrified of communism that we won't do anything about the terror we face today. [...] If someone doesn't like what you're doing, they label you a communist. But we campesinos aren't afraid of the Soviet Union. I've never seen a Soviet person in my life. But I've seen lots of gringos, almost all of them soldiers. So that's who we're afraid of- the United States.¹⁴⁵

Anti-communist US propaganda is undermined as the accusations levelled at the Soviet Union are reversed and applied to the accuser. The supposed moral superiority of her North American neighbour is challenged through techniques similar to those adopted by Domitila, differences in political understanding are highlighted while she also testifies to wrongful incarceration.

In the following chapter "Facing Repression and Prison" Elvia describes how political activism led to her detention, interrogation and torture.¹⁴⁶ She was arrested six times and describes in detail the most recent incident in which she was apprehended for working with *campesino* organisations that begun cultivating and living on land while waiting for the government to process their applications. In the same way that Domitila protested at being wrongfully targeted for supporting Guevara's guerrilla war in Bolivia, Elvia repeatedly highlights the way in which she was questioned about supporting the Nicaraguan *Sandinistas*:

One thing that's new is that ever since the Sandinistas came to power in Nicaragua, the military has started accusing us of being Sandinistas, of working for the Sandinistas, of being Sandinista terrorists. I don't really know anything about Nicaragua. I've never been there. I've never met a Sandinista in my life. So where do they get this idea that we're Sandinistas?¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 124.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 127.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 132 – 133.

By using her own experiences as a persuasive example, Elvia suggests that the Reagan administration's foreign policy grossly simplified Latin American political developments. Contesting US propaganda that equated Honduran organisations like the CNTC with other Central American *guerrilleros* and a "communist plot" as we saw above, she goes on to state that she has also been accused of working with the Salvadoran Farabundo Martí *guerrilleros*, examined in the final chapter of this thesis. She concludes:

They always try to say that we're part of some big conspiracy, when we're just a handful of poor campesinos. But let me tell you, when they keep asking you these things about other countries, it sure makes you curious about what's going on in those countries that they're so afraid of.¹⁴⁸

Like Domitila, Elvia suggests that far from preventing or reversing radicalisation, repression can perversely have the effect of strengthening the anti-US convictions of the victims, introducing them to guerrilla movements and political ideologies they had not previously considered.

Unlike Adamaris and Domitila, Elvia does not construct a highly emotive narrative, nevertheless, *Don't be Afraid, Gringo* coincides with the *testimonios* studied above in that the emphasis is on resilience following torture and imprisonment: "I was prepared for the worst but was determined to be strong. I said to myself, "What can these goons do to me? If they kill me, let them kill me. At least I know I will have died for a just cause, I will have died for struggling on the side of the poor."¹⁴⁹ By asserting that she was prepared to die, Elvia echoes the theme of martyrdom as resistance which surfaced in the Cuban texts as well as reaffirming the strength of her political convictions.

In spite of the relative lack of emotional detail, Elvia dramatises her incarceration through a combination of dialogue and internal monologue to present herself actively resisting torture. She was able to prevent the use of a *capucha* during interrogation by reminding her interrogators that it was an

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 133.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 131.

illegal violation of her human rights.¹⁵⁰ While Domitila focused more on her physical and psychological experience of incarceration, Elvia's account is less detailed, less personal and consequently potentially less engaging than Domitila's. Instead of constructing an emotionally detailed narrative, Elvia adopts a legal framework to contextualise her experiences. She provides information about "anti-terror" legislation asserting that it has been used to criminalise land recuperations and to label those involved terrorists. The narrative that equates political disputes over landownership with terrorism is contested with the assertion that *campesinos* have no weapons and are not violent. She again reverses the accusation asserting that landowners are in fact terrorists: "They're the ones who have us tortured, disappeared."¹⁵¹ The chapter ends with a reaffirmation of the notion of revolutionary martyrdom:

But since I'm not willing to stop my organizing work, I'm sure someday I'll be captured again. If I'm lucky, they'll set me free. If I'm not lucky they'll kill me. Every time I leave my house I'm not sure whether I'll come back or not.

I'm ready to die for anything, and I'm not afraid to die. Because I know the *campesinos* will continue the struggle, and that my death will be part of that struggle. The only way they can stop me from what I'm doing is by killing me. But that won't stop the others from following my path. In that sense, I'm stronger than they are.¹⁵²

The argument that state violence can lead to increased resistance is reiterated as Elvia calls upon the recurring notions of martyrdom and the revolutionary collective. The final chapter, "Turn Your Tears into Strength" further develops these themes. Unlike the texts seen previously, rather than a call to revolutionary patriotism, the objective here is to encourage the *gringo* reader to actively oppose US imperialism and to reject Cold War propaganda and related counter-insurgency tactics. Challenging leftist Western academics who detach theory from practice, Elvia argues that "we won't get anywhere by just

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 131. As above, for more on the illegal use of the *capucha*, or asphyxiation, during Operation Condor see McSherry, *Predatory States*, 207.

¹⁵¹ Alvarado, *Don't be Afraid*, 133.

¹⁵² Ibid., 137 – 138.

writing and reading books.”¹⁵³ She directly addresses the US reader, rejecting notions of charity in favour of revolutionary solidarity:

We’re not asking for food or clothing or money. We want you with us in the struggle. We want you to educate your people. We want you to organize your people. We want you to denounce what your government is doing in Central America.

From those of you who feel the pain of the poor, who feel the pain of the murdered, the disappeared, the tortured, we need more than sympathy. We need you to join the struggle. Don’t be afraid, gringos. Keep your spirits high. And remember we’re right there with you!¹⁵⁴

Elvia employs persuasive techniques such as repetition and lists of threes to appeal to the reader and elicit empathy through informal conversational American English. As we have seen, Benjamin’s translation strategy attempts to appeal to a wide Anglophone audience through this casual tone. In light of the above description of her interrogation and the fact that she fears for her life, it might seem ironic or sarcastic when she reassures US readers, who are much less likely to face such violent repression, that they should not be afraid and that she will stand in solidarity with them. Elvia ends her account by encouraging the *gringo* reader to acknowledge their relatively privileged position and to take political action on this basis.

Conclusions

Whereas the first three chapters of this thesis examined *testimonios* which explored women’s experiences of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions, *Si me permiten hablar* and *Don’t be Afraid, Gringo* are politically more autonomous, focusing on local organisations rather than national revolutionary governments. Both texts demonstrate a dedication to women’s issues while also defending trade union and land movements from accusations of communism and connections to Central American *guerrilleros* and the Soviet Union. An explicitly woman-centred approach explores a range of feminist issues such as domestic violence and alternative family structures, politically

¹⁵³ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 146.

active models of motherhood, women's domestic labour, contraception, sexism of male *compañeros* as well as female politicisation and consequential empowerment. While these thematic similarities are pronounced, Domitila's account adopts a more personal and emotive tone while employing literary techniques such as repetition, internal monologue, dialogue and dramatic imagery. In contrast Elvia's *testimonio* has been translated into highly accessible, conversational American English.

The two texts directly reproach US foreign policy in Central America and its implications for innocent civilians using descriptions of massacres, detainment and torture. While there are ideological similarities with the Cuban and Randall's *testimonios*, stark structural, paratextual and political differences also become apparent. Domitila disapproves of the actions of Guevara, accusing the Communist Party of Bolivia of being out of touch with workers' organisations and trade unions, leading to governmental reprisals of these groups. The text is an example of counter-propaganda which disputes the narratives constructed by both sides of the Cold War. Structurally and paratextually, the two texts differ from those seen previously in that the heterodiegetic narrator does not interrupt, although she still shapes and informs the text. As a result, the *testimonialista* communicates more directly with the reader and a detailed and comprehensively autobiographical narrative is presented. Unlike the Cuban texts, the paratext is not in conflict with this first-person account rather it affirms its veracity while providing historical, political context. As with Randall, these contextualisations are not impartial; rather they denounce inequality and imperialism and promote local leftist movements. Nevertheless, the paratextual emphasis on political organisations and ideologies belies the gynocentric content of the women's *testimonios*. In light of their dedication to issues specifically affecting women and their criticism of the US Cold War narrative, the two *testimonios* studied in this chapter are categorised as fully autobiographical gynocentric counter-propaganda.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on the recurring themes of politically motivated incarceration and the use of gendered torture. Two homodiegetic *testimonialistas* present memories of their incarceration without a

heterodiegetic editor. The Cold War context continues to have relevance as the countries, El Salvador and Argentina, are profoundly affected by counter-insurgency tactics and Operation Condor. Literary techniques enable the exploration of resilience while disturbing entrenched gendered binaries.

Chapter Five

Memories of Freedom: *Testimonio* of Incarceration In El Salvador and Argentina

While most *testimonios* studied in this thesis include some reference to incarceration, the two texts examined in this final chapter, Nidia Díaz's *Nunca Estuve Sola* (1988) and *The Little School* (1986) by Alicia Partnoy, consist predominantly of depictions of imprisonment.¹ The first is explicitly ideological and the other highly literary. Yet, Díaz's ostensibly political text also employs literary techniques and Partnoy's fictionalised account conveys factual information.

Despite a shift from the comprehensively autobiographical accounts of the preceding chapter to those which focus on detention here, there are again strong thematic similarities; Cold War counter-insurgency discourse is challenged, and gendered issues such as the politicisation of motherhood and female solidarity remain pertinent. Detention is conveyed in diverse ways; defiance and resilience are presented alongside evidence of psychological distress. Reference to the work of Herman enables a more precise analysis of these responses.² Henke's notion of "scriptotherapy" as "the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment" can also be applied.³ Memory forms a central part of the leitmotif of both narratives as they contrast memories of incarceration written while freed with memories of freedom experienced whilst incarcerated. The paratext differs significantly from those seen in previous chapters; there is no heterodiegetic narrator/editor attempting to shape the text and inform readers' responses. Rather the *testimonialistas* communicate directly with the reader

¹ From more on this subgenre see: Mary Jane Treacy, "Double Binds: Latin American Women's Prison Memories" *Hypatia*, 11, no. 4 (1996); 130–145.

² Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

³ Henke, *Shattered Subjects*, xii.

through literary techniques such as homodiegetic analepsis, gendered natural imagery, dialogue and characterisation, to construct more immediate and intimate accounts.

Coinciding with the *testimonios* studied in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis, *Nunca Estuve Sola* denounces US military intervention in Central America with a sharply counter-propagandic tone.⁴ While critics such as Shaw have described the *testimonio* as “propagandist”, this chapter argues that a gendered analysis, incorporating an acknowledgement of the psychological realm, reveals a multifaceted account.⁵ The final *testimonio*, *The Little School*, written in the context of the “Dirty War” in Argentina, is the most fictionalised and literary *testimonio* studied here.⁶ Nevertheless, it presents factual information by means of the paratext, while psychological experiences of incarceration are recreated for the reader through literary techniques. This fictionalised account completes the typology of the testimonial genre mapped throughout this thesis.

Reference to some of the potential psychological effects of captivity forms a part of the analysis of incarceration *testimonios* presented here. In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman makes a number of observations regarding the psychology of prisoners; the *testimonios* below will be examined as literary manifestations of these clinical findings. As members of Latin American political movements that faced militarised repression, mass disappearances and widespread torture, both *testimonialistas* match Herman’s description of “prisoners of conscience”:

Of all prisoners, this group is the most prepared to withstand the corrosive psychological effects of captivity. They have chosen a course

⁴ Nidia Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1988). Translated into English by Deborah Shnookal as *I Was Never Alone. A Prison Diary from El Salvador* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1992).

⁵ Donald Shaw, “Referentiality and Fabulation,” 103.

⁶ Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School. Tales of Disappearance and Survival*, trans. Alicia Partnoy, Lois Athey and Sandra Braunstein (San Francisco: Midnight Editions, 1986).

in life with full knowledge of its dangers, they have a clear definition of their own principles, and they have a strong faith in their allies.⁷

As we shall see, the *testimonialistas*' principles are leftist and their allies are often other politically active women. In the chapter "Captivity", Herman outlines common psychological coping mechanisms employed by prisoners of conscience which are arguably demonstrated, in literary ways, throughout the testimonial texts:

As tenaciously as their captors seek to destroy their relationships, these prisoners tenaciously seek to maintain communication with a world outside the one in which they are confined. They deliberately practice evoking mental images of the people they love, in order to preserve their sense of connection.⁸

Through their *testimonios*, Díaz and Partnoy, both homodiegetic authors, attempt to remember their families and maintain a sense of connection with the outside world. Indeed, as Mary Jane Treacy argues, "these prison memoirs provide the explicit lesson that collective identity is the only way to survive in jail."⁹ Needless to say, collective identity has been identified as an important theme in women's *testimonio*. However, this chapter takes issue with Treacy's assertion that: "Díaz particularly would discourage or even reject outright the use of gender as a category of analysis for studying [her memoir], for [she is] intent upon building or reflecting solidarity among all prisoners and their supporters."¹⁰ Similarly, Joanna O'Connell's contention that the text "[does] not challenge gender norms directly" is contested.¹¹ As we shall see below, Díaz renegotiates traditional gender roles and family arrangements, as well as promoting female solidarity in such a way as to explicitly encourage a

⁷ "Captivity" in Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 81.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 80 – 1.

⁹ Treacy, "Double Binds", 134.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹ Joanna O'Connell, "Rereading Salvadoran testimonio after the Cease-Fire" (Conference paper, University of Minnesota.) CLASCO Red de Bibliotecas Virtuales de Ciencias Sociales de América Latina y el Caribe. <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/ar/libros/lasa98/OConnell.pdf>. Date accessed: 31st August 2012.

gendered reading; her attempts to promote more general solidarity do not negate the gendered aspects of her *testimonio*.

Herman discusses Partnoy directly, but this chapter disagrees with her argument that Partnoy's use of the third person illustrates "the degree to which she succeeded in dissociating her experience" – a common strategy to cope with trauma.¹² This chapter maintains that while Partnoy's account certainly documents the coping mechanisms she developed during her incarceration, overall, the text suggests that her attempts at resistance were relentlessly punished and continually interrupted.

Notably, both Díaz and Partnoy make use of gendered natural imagery to explore the psychological effects of their incarceration. Male-dominated security forces are portrayed as irrational, destructive and unnatural, while political resistance is feminised, shown as morally superior and equated with the natural environment. In this way, the gendered national security discourses, examined in the Introduction to this thesis, are critically reconfigured.¹³ The political context of the Salvadoran civil war will now be briefly highlighted before the literary techniques Díaz employs, and her exploration of gendered issues and trauma, are examined more closely.

El Salvador

In April 1980, at the beginning of a civil war that would last for over a decade, the *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR) was formed in El Salvador.¹⁴ The FDR, formed by leftist groups and trade unions, advocated agrarian reform and nationalisation through popular democracy. Not dissimilar to the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua, the FDR promoted the notion of a mixed economy, allowing for small and medium-sized land and business owners. Following failed strikes in the summer of 1980 and a rise in violent repression

¹² Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 88.

¹³ The gendered national security discourse we saw in the Introduction with reference to Carol Cohn "Wars, Wimps and Women," 227 – 246.

¹⁴ Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 492 – 493.

particularly in rural areas, the organisation became more militant and took up arms to achieve its objectives.¹⁵ It was joined by several prominent guerrilla organisations, unified under the banner of the *Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional* (FMLN). The FMLN fought the Duarte government forces, who were recipients of substantial aid and military assistance from the US.¹⁶ While the Reagan administration projected Cold War grievances on to Central America, alleging that the guerrilla movement was armed by communist governments, the *guerrilleros* of El Salvador were in fact capturing firearms supplied by the US to the Salvadoran military.¹⁷ Specific examples of US intervention in El Salvador and related counter-insurgency propaganda campaigns have been provided Marilyn Thomson in *Women of El Salvador: The Price of Freedom*.¹⁸

The rise in revolutionary organisation that had led to the formation of the guerrilla movement was coupled with an increase in female politicisation, and women “constituted a significant proportion of the guerrillas and other revolutionary activists” in El Salvador.¹⁹ Salvadoran women formed CO-MADRES in 1977 to demand information on “disappeared” family members.²⁰ Despite heavy repression, the organisation had significant successes, raising awareness about human rights violations in El Salvador on

¹⁵ In the year 1980, there were 8,000 extrajudicial executions of civilians. In 1981, the figure increased to 13,000. Carlos Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes: Market, State and Revolutions in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), 85.

¹⁶ Dirk Kruijt, *Guerrillas. War and Peace in Central America* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2008), 37.

¹⁷ Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 493. US policy sought to prevent the FMLN-FDR from coming to power by, on the one hand, promoting the social reformer Duarte whilst on the other supporting and arming aggressive military assaults on guerrilla strongholds. *Ibid.*, 494. For more on US intervention in El Salvador see, Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (London: W.W. Norton, 1993). Also William LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977 – 1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Marilyn Thomson, *Women of El Salvador. The Price of Freedom* (London: Zed Books, 1986), 158 – 159.

¹⁹ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 45.

²⁰ Lynn Stephen, *Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from Below* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 67. The aims of CO-MADRES are similar to those of the Argentinean *Madres de La Plaza de Mayo*.

an international scale.²¹ Other women became members of trade unions, *campesino* and student groups and many were subsequently radicalised by the way in which the government repressed these civilian organisations.²² The *Asociación de Mujeres de El Salvador* (AMES) was founded in 1979 to organise domestic servants and women working as street vendors and to support the FDR-FMLN.²³ Indeed:

FDR-FMLN [had] a deliberate policy of recruiting women. In part, of course, stemming from the need to maximise resources, this [was] also a principled position based on the firm belief that a popular democracy cannot be formed without taking into account the marginalized position of women and the need to work towards ending this situation.²⁴

Much like the high level of female participation in *Sandinista* Nicaragua, this commitment to female equality and recruitment resulted in women accounting for thirty per cent of FMLN guerrilla fighters, occupying twenty per cent of leadership positions.²⁵ While the critics above downplayed its gendered nature, this chapter argues that Díaz's *testimonio* supports Kampwirth's assertion that participation in guerrilla movements influenced the development of feminist consciousness among women in El Salvador.²⁶ Whereas the paratext of the Cuban *testimonios* examined in the first chapter of this thesis contained this heightened awareness within the parameters of male-dominated revolutionary ideology, the homodiegetic texts examined presently are without an ideological paratextual steer. The paratext primarily functions to assert the factual basis of the *testimonios*. Free from editorial control, the *testimonialistas* articulate their gendered experiences of incarceration to

²¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

²² Thomson, *Women of El Salvador*, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵ Keen and Hayes, *Latin America*, 499.

²⁶ Karen Kampwirth, "Feminists Break Away in El Salvador" in *Feminism and Legacy of Revolution*, 75 – 111, and "Feminine Challenges to Military Rule in El Salvador" in *Women and Guerrilla Movements*, 45 – 81.

disprove US Cold War narratives while contesting the legitimacy of national government counter-insurgency tactics.

Nidia Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 1988

At a young age Nidia Díaz became involved in Christian humanitarian work among the poor in El Salvador. Radicalised by her incorporation into student politics, she later became a high-ranking guerrilla fighter, *comandante* and member of the FMLN-FDR. *Nunca estuve sola* recounts her capture by a US military advisor, her imprisonment and eventual release. Once again, the *testimonio* functions as counter-propaganda, seeking to disprove the government's denial of human rights violations, such as torture and detention without trial. The Cold War discourse underpinning the civil war in El Salvador is undermined, as themes such as martyrdom, bravery and revolutionary loyalty, are promoted.

This chapter disputes Donald Shaw's claim that "*Nunca estuve sola* belongs to a pattern of militant, left-wing, propagandist writing" but it concurs with his acknowledgement that Díaz's text, along with most testimonial writing, was "designed to contradict the propaganda put out by the government."²⁷ Indeed, the paratext explicitly foregrounds the objective of counter-propaganda. In the prologue Díaz affirms "quise denunciar la injerencia de Estados Unidos de Norteamérica en la vida de los salvadoreños", and she provides more information regarding the reception of her account and the role of her political convictions during her time in prison:²⁸ "Me dicen que en el libro puse más mi ideología revolucionaria que mis emociones personales. Pero es que en la cárcel, si no te agarrás a tus convicciones, a tu ideología, te perdés [sic]."²⁹ As Herman argues, a strong political identity enables the psychological survival of traumatic incarceration. In the Introduction, author María López Vigil writes: "*Nunca estuve sola* es la narración ordenada, sobria, precisa y contenida que hace una mujer joven, militante del movimiento popular Salvadoreño, de una

²⁷ Shaw, "Referentiality and Fabulation," 103.

²⁸ "Prólogo." Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, no page number.

²⁹ "Presentación." Ibid. No page number.

experiencia traumática.”³⁰ López Vigil highlights the importance of trauma, while asserting the veracity of the testimony through a list of adjectives. However, despite the often didactic tone, the text also includes personal emotions that are not triumphant. Memories of Díaz’s family and female friends are presented alongside her earlier life as a *guerrillera*. The politicisation of motherhood, recurrent in all the texts studied here, is explored by Díaz who has a close relationship with her mother and also has a son. The expression of gendered issues is seen to complicate the ideological purpose. One critical study has acknowledged the gendered themes present in the text; Vicki Román-Lagunas compares Díaz’s narrative to that of Ana Guadalupe Martínez and finds that both accounts “associate the spirit of individualism, capitalism, and ‘Yankee imperialism’ with machismo and patriarchy in their indictment of the enemy” personified by the prison guards.³¹ The analysis presented below largely concurs with Román-Lagunas’s conclusions; it differs only in its analysis of the counter-propaganda objective and the paratext.

As stated, *Nunca estuve sola* differs from the texts examined in the preceding chapters in that Díaz’s narrative is not mediated; the paratext is not incongruous and there is no intrusive third person editor. Whereas the autobiographical *testimonios* of the previous chapters comprised interviews or speeches transcribed by a heterodiegetic narrator, Díaz describes her account thus:

Fue difícil escribirlo. La Cruz Roja Internacional me regaló una agenda y en ella escribía por medio de símbolos, para que no lo leyera mi enemigo: los cuerpos de seguridad y de inteligencia. Escribía lo más relevante. Cuando pretendí sacar la agenda de la cárcel intentaron

³⁰ “Presentación.” Ibid. No page number. María López Vigil has written widely on the subject of Latin American politics, her publications include: *Cuban Women’s History. Jottings and Voices* (Managua: Envío, 1998), *Cuba neither Heaven nor Hell* (Washington, DC: EPICA Task Force, 1999), and *Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic* (Washington, DC: EPICA Task Force, 2000).

³¹ Vicki Román-Lagunas, “Oppositional Discourse and the Notion of Feminism in Testimonial Narratives by Nidia Díaz and Ana Guadalupe Martínez” in *Woman as Witness. Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women*, Linda Maier and Isabel Dulfano, eds (New York: Peter Lang) 2004), 113 – 122, this quote 117.

quitármela; para prevenirme decidí quemarla, pero logré escamotear los jeroglíficos que había hecho durante mi cautiverio.³²

As opposed to recorded oral testimony, Díaz relies on her memory and encrypted notes written while incarcerated. This distinctive methodology results in her detention becoming a major textual structuring device. *Nunca estuve sola* begins with a dramatic scene in which she is captured during combat; repetitive experiences of incarceration and interrogation are then intertwined with memories of her earlier life. Shaw asserts that the frequent dialogues with interrogators are fictionalised: “the author creates a series of imaginary dialogues based on her memories of the actual ones, but which she is able to manipulate in order to get important political statements across to the reader.”³³ While Shaw focuses on the role of Díaz’s political beliefs and the fictionalised nature of her account, this chapter focuses more on the significance of gender and her apparent emotional responses to incarceration. As stated above, this chapter also refers to Henke’s notion of “scriptotherapy.”³⁴ Díaz may have found keeping notes during, and constructing a narrative regarding, her incarceration beneficial; she is able to present herself as a defiant protagonist who resisted interrogation and torture due to the strength of her political convictions.³⁵

With an authoritative tone due to her high rank, Díaz condemns the Reagan administration’s relationship with the Duarte regime and rejects the rationale for counter-insurgency tactics:

El presidente tuvo que hacer concesiones económicas y políticas. Se comprometió con los militares a conseguir más ayuda de Estados Unidos. [...] Estados Unidos tenía una posición contradictoria, por un lado, se oponía a negociar, pero por otro lado, debía rescatar la imagen

³² “Prólogo”, Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, no page number.

³³ Shaw, “Referentiality and Fabulation,” 107.

³⁴ Henke, *Shattered Subjects*, xii.

³⁵ It could be argued that Díaz developed a “survivor mission” as she became involved in negotiations on behalf of the guerrillas on her release. This chapter also finds Herman’s notion of a “survivor mission” relevant to Partnoy, as explained below. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*. 207.

de Duarte. Este se comprometió entonces a impulsar la línea de
contrainsurgencia con más ahínco.³⁶

The Cold War discourse regarding the “communist influence” on the civil war in El Salvador is contested as it is argued that the US had a larger impact on the conflict. As shall become apparent, Díaz accuses her political opposition of collusion with the US, to the detriment of the civilian population, who are shown to suffer from poverty, inequality and militarised repression as a consequence.

A variety of literary techniques such as dialogue, characterisation, internal monologue and imagery are employed throughout fifty-eight brief chapters. The Spanish edition of the text also includes five drawings by Díaz, three photographs of her as a *guerrillera* and one of her arrival in Cuba on release from prison. A map locating her capture is provided to add to the paratextual construction of a sense of veracity. The English publication includes extra photographs of Díaz as a *guerrillera* and, following her release, as a political activist during human rights negotiations.³⁷ As with the images in the previous chapter, this is documentary photography which seeks to assure the reader of the veracity of Díaz’s account. As discussed in the Introduction, documentary photography often seeks to reveal an overlooked issue or attest to a denied event or occurrence.³⁸ Díaz confirms her involvement in the guerrilla conflict in El Salvador, as well as her contribution to peace negotiations following this period serving to legitimise her *testimonio*.

In addition to photographs, adding to the reportage and collage effect, *Nunca estuve sola* includes thirteen poems, five of which appear next to the drawings

³⁶ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 224.

³⁷ The photographs appear between page 88 and page 89. The English addition has a preface authored by Deborah Shnookal, an Australian socialist and editor of the *Fidel Castro Reader* (New York and Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2007). Shnookal highlights US intervention and widespread human rights violations in El Salvador before providing a brief overview of Salvadorian political history. Díaz, *I Was Never Alone*, 3 – 7. In order to give the numerous chapters a more coherent structure, the English edition is divided into six parts, “Wounded, captured in combat by a Yankee”, “Inhuman interrogation...never yielding”, “I survive and reencounter the sun”, “Fears, hopes, and memories”, “La Palma: The negotiations and the Church” and lastly “Freedom and a new battlefield.” “Contents”. Díaz, *I Was Never Alone*. The present chapter refers to the Spanish original.

³⁸ Kerry Tremain, “Introduction: Seeing and Believing”, in *Witness in our Time*, Sebastião Salgado, ed., (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2000), 4.

separated from the first-person narrative, as well as nine letters and thirteen excerpts from songs. The poems and songs articulate personal emotions which complicate the overall triumphant tone of the text. The letters are official and addressed to the heads of the police force and army contrasting with those seen previously which were almost exclusively personal and written to close family members. Nevertheless, through this more formal epistolary writing Díaz reveals that her imprisonment damaged her “aspecto psicológico.”³⁹ As we shall see below with further reference to Herman, Díaz reveals her emotional experience of incarceration throughout her account. *Nunca estuve sola* is the most overtly partisan text examined in this thesis, as it explicitly promotes the FMLN. Yet, as we have seen, this political tone is both a response to challenging emotional experiences and also a form of counter-propaganda. The recurrence of analepsis, memory narratives, literary techniques and gendered themes enrich and complicate the political function of the text.

The most prevalent literary technique employed throughout *Nunca estuve sola* is dramatic dialogue. As with Domitila’s account, Díaz often recreates engaging and lively scenes. She relates her capture in such a way as to portray herself as brave and defiant:

- ¡Soy prisionera de guerra! Quiero que me apliquen los convenios de Ginebra. Quiero ver a la Cruz Roja Internacional. Ustedes saben quién soy. ¡Soy prisionera de guerra! herida en combate. Quiero exijo, que me apliquen los convenios de... ¡No me pongan suero, quiero morir!
- ¿Quién sos, pues? – me repiten
- ¿Qué te importa? ¡Preguntáale al yanqui! ¡Por qué me capturó un yanqui y no vos! ¿No te da vergüenza?
- Este pez parece gordo – avisa uno de ellos por *walkie-talkie* a su jefe.
- ¿No tenés dignidad? ¡Un yanqui y no un salvadoreño!⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., 157.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

Refusing to submit to the authority of the captors, she employs emotive appeals to patriotism and the legal framework of human rights to undermine their actions and beliefs. She presents herself, and by extension the FMLN-FDR, as acting in defence of the Salvadoran people, capable of “counterinterrogation strategy” rather than passively accepting detention.⁴¹ Her capture becomes an analogy of the civil war. Subverting anti-communist accusations of Soviet influence, the blond “yanqui” soldier represents US intervention in El Salvador, Díaz personifies the FMLN, and the Salvadoran soldiers represent the military acting in the interests of political elites under the control of foreign interests. As we have seen with the Cuban Revolution’s ideology, patriotism is here reconfigured and equated with anti-imperialism.

Characterisation, both direct definition and indirect presentation, is employed to present the interrogators, and the Salvadoran state they represent, as corrupt and immoral.⁴² Lieutenant Serpas, described in a footnote as “jefe de la policía política de la Policía Nacional” is consistently presented as crude and vindictive.⁴³ He is proud of his ability to torture people during interrogation.⁴⁴ Díaz presents him as an immature, sadistic bully remarking:

Este infeliz siempre se me acercaba a la celda cuando tomaba el sol, tratando de aparentar ser el bueno de la película.⁴⁵

The assertion that Serpas tries to present himself as “the goodie of the movie” implies that his political understanding, and that of the military in whose interests he serves, is influenced by Manichean Hollywood film narratives that are detached from the social-economic realities of Latin America.⁴⁶ In contrast

⁴¹ Lois Ann Lorentzen, “Writing for Liberation. Prison Testimonials from El Salvador” in *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas*. David Bastone, Eduardo Mendieta, Lois Ann Lorentzen, Dwight N. Hopkins, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 135.

⁴² Rimmon-Kenan. *Narrative Fiction*, direct definition, 60.

⁴³ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 108, 133.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 134 – 135.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴⁶ For more on the relationship between Hollywood and US Cold War narratives see Cyndy Hendershot, *Anti-Communism and Popular Culture in Mid-Century America* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2003).

to this simplistic dichotomising world view, Díaz avoids demonising others, reporting that some prison guards were respectful and others admired and supported her.⁴⁷

Political radicalisation is conveyed through characterisation and analepsis, as earlier memories are juxtaposed against her time in prison. Recounting her first visit to the countryside, she remembers a *campesino*'s explanation for his political involvement:

Entonces me contó que cuando él trabajaba de mozo de una hacienda, en la que su mujer y sus 6 hijos también vivían y trabajaban, había un par de perros grandes. Uno de ellos tenía un colmillo de oro. Este compañero no tenía dientes y eso le indignaba. A él le tocaba darle de comer carne a los perros. El patrón se enojaba cada vez que encontraba a la familia de Manuel comiendo carne robada.⁴⁸

Employing the literary technique of indirect presentation, Díaz's characterisation focuses on external appearance encouraging the reader to draw conclusions about the *campesino*'s quality of life on this basis.⁴⁹ Much like the character Mayor in Dora Alonso's *El Año de 61*, the *campesino* is described in such a way as to underscore the dehumanisation of rural poverty. In stark contrast to Serpas, who personified the immoral status quo, the peasant is representative of the impoverished masses. Díaz contrasts the favourable treatment of the rich landowner's dogs with that of the workers and their families. Challenging US versions of "Soviet-inspired communism", she affirms that people organised politically due to local experiences of economic disparity. Such earlier memories appear in the prison narrative to suggest that these life experiences fortified her political resolve, especially during times of psychological difficulty during incarceration. The memories reminded her of

⁴⁷ Of her ability to bear pain under interrogation one guard remarks: "Vos si tenés huevos, Nidia." Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 119. Twice she reports on a sympathetic guard who stated: "Mírame, mírame, nunca te olvidés de mí. ¡Ustedes van a triunfar! ¡Ustedes van a triunfar! Nunca te olvidés de mí." *Ibid.*, 27, repeated *ibid.*, 95 – 96. While high-ranking officers are criticised, Díaz approaches a notion of class solidarity among lower ranks.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁹ "Text: Characterisation." Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 59 – 70. External Appearance, *ibid.*, 65.

the reasons for her involvement – namely the wider socio-economic context that the FMLN sought to address.

In addition to preserving her sense of connectivity through memories, poetry can be identified as another coping mechanism employed in the text. Díaz incorporates ten poems which simultaneously articulate her psychological experience and political beliefs. The first, “Tierra heroica”, reinforces a strong sense of patriotism while promoting martyrdom.⁵⁰ As with Olga Alonso’s *Testimonios*, there is evidence that Díaz employs poetry as a form of emotional catharsis as well as political inspiration; the later poem, “Del dolor terrible”, presents the pain and sadness of incarceration “del presente” alongside the “nostalgia dulce” of the past and “fe en el futuro.”⁵¹ Díaz juxtaposes memories of freedom with the realities of her detention which are in turn contrasted with an optimistic vision of the future. These three different temporal realms are united in the final two lines as Díaz experiences them simultaneously: “Todo es un ayer, un hoy y un mañana.”⁵²

In addition to poetry, *Nunca estuve sola* employs natural imagery and symbolism in prose, to recount memories of Díaz’s life as a *guerrillera*. While bathing in a river in the mountains, she remembers how butterflies would follow her to the water: “Cuando me bañaba en los ríos, esos que ahora para mi tienen una belleza impresionante, por muy pequeños o sencillos que fueran, ellas se bañaban conmigo.”⁵³ This idyllic scene is contrasted with her cell as she affirms that her incarceration has enabled her to understand how a captured butterfly feels.⁵⁴ The natural imagery of the butterflies and the river creates the sense of a Salvadoran rural idyll to represent both personal freedom

⁵⁰ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 24.

⁵¹ The poem reads: “Detrás de estas 32 rejas/ y Frente a un muro/ tengo nostalgia/ dulce y triste/ del pasado./ ¡Lo amo fuertemente/ y no lloro!/ Tengo añoranza/ y fe en el futuro/ no busco y / lo encuentro./ Tengo dolor terrible/ y alegría natural/ del presente/ lo lloro y le canto./ Tengo la rebeldía y Resistencia de los/ siglos, los llevo/ en mi pueblo y/ su lucha, que es/ la nuestra./ Todo es tan humano/ nada me es ajeno./ Todo es un ayer, un hoy y/ un mañana.” Ibid., 136.

⁵² Ibid., 136.

⁵³ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 185.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 185.

and the political belief in utopia. In the same way that Dora Alonso sought to naturalise the Cuban Revolution in *El Año de 61*, Díaz presents her time in the countryside in such a way as to idealise it and promote revolutionary patriotism. However, the symbolic memory of pastoral tranquillity is interrupted by the harsh reality of her cell. Díaz attempts to preserve a sense of connection to memories of natural beauty and freedom.⁵⁵ But her incarceration affects her, as if her imagination were also imprisoned, so that these attempts at escapism are frustrated.

Nunca estuve sola also makes use of internal monologue to further explore more personal feelings, relationships and memories. In the sixteenth chapter, Díaz employs analepsis once again to contrast earlier childhood memories with her experience of incarceration:

Creo que hoy es 30 de abril, cumpleaños de mi padre. Pobre viejo mío, siempre deseé que fuera mejor. A los 7 años me rebelé contra él, después de una paliza que le dio a mi madre. La hizo sufrir mucho. La pobre trabajaba en el día como secretaria y, en la noche, cosía en su taller de costura, pues el sueldo no alcanzaba. Mi padre se lo bebía y jugaba.⁵⁶

Much like the *testimonialistas* from the previous chapter, Díaz recounts experiences of domestic violence. She laments the failures of her father, revealing a dysfunctional nuclear family and questions the ubiquity of this structure under Eurocentric, patriarchal social structures. Returning to the mother/daughter relationship which is prevalent in all women's *testimonios* examined here, Díaz candidly reflects on her close and at times fraught relationship with her hardworking mother:

Mi madre siempre vivía pendiente de mí, de mi presentación, de mi salud, aunque no estuviera cerca; parecía que nunca había terminado su obra protectora. A veces ésta su forma de ser me exasperaba, se contradecía con mi forma de ser. Sin embargo, yo admiraba su calidad

⁵⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 80 - 81.

⁵⁶ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 76.

humana. Era extremadamente optimista y paciente. [...] Siempre ha sido un apoyo moral para mí.⁵⁷

Her mother fulfils her traditional duty, that of protective parent, and she also plays a political role, guiding the formation of Díaz's attitude and moral values, despite the fact that they have differing perspectives. Díaz has a son, and like the women studied in the previous chapter, she continued her political activities in spite of this responsibility, entrusting her mother to care for her child. Her son does not feature prominently in the work, but Díaz does explain that living clandestinely almost caused her to abort and describes giving birth prematurely.⁵⁸ She does not idealise her experiences as a guerrilla fighter and mother, rather she stresses the difficulty she faced on leaving her infant child:

La primera vez que me separé de él, cuando tenía 6 meses, aún lo amamantaba. Era de madrugada. Mi madre me echó la bendición y me dijo:

- Vete sin preocupación, hija. Yo tengo ahora un amor mucho más inmenso, es doble. Este niño es fruto de tu vientre y tú eres del mío. ¡Cómo no voy a protegerlo!

Las dos llorábamos. Al salir, sentí que algo se desgarraba dentro de mí. Cada vez que me separaba de él, me angustiaba el reencuentro, pues creía que no me reconocería y que me rechazaría.⁵⁹

As Díaz relates the anxiety she felt, her fear of rejection speaks of a general feeling of guilt. She is honest about the complications she faced as a politically active mother, however, she rejects the traditional maternal characteristics of self-sacrifice, passivity and domesticity. Her mother's reassurance is in keeping with the *testimonios* from the previous chapter which also foregrounded the child-caring role of the maternal grandmother and the importance of the extended family. Poetry is employed, again as catharsis, to further explore her feelings for and relationship with her son:

*Alejandrino, recuerda
que tenemos que jugar*

⁵⁷ Ibid., 103 – 104.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 123 – 124.

*que platicar,
derramar nuestra ternura,
Espérame con los brazos abiertos
en la gloria o en la inmortalidad
de la historia de este pueblo.*⁶⁰

The idea that she will see her son again either in victory or in death affords Díaz some comfort as notions of martyrdom, victory and immortality merge with her maternal concerns. As Herman observed above, Díaz evokes mental images of loved ones to preserve her sense of connection to the outside world.⁶¹ Personal experiences of motherhood are explicitly politicised, as notions of female domesticity are disregarded and new norms, priorities and relationships are formed.

While reconfiguring traditional notions of motherhood, Díaz also reveals the primarily political nature of her relationship with the father of her child: “Lo amé sin fronteras en lo profundo de mi raíz y, aunque quizá nunca lo volveré a ver, lo amaré en el fruto de mi vientre. Con él mis sentimientos se desbordaron, se rompieron las cadenas. Antes de unirnos, durante 2 años fuimos compañeros de trabajo político.”⁶² Challenging normative patriarchal relations, Díaz had a progressive relationship, in which domestic labour and childcare was shared, as the private sphere was politicised: “Cuando tuvimos oportunidad de compartir un hogar, nos repartíamos el quehacer doméstico y el cuidado del niño.”⁶³ In keeping with Kampwirth’s findings, Díaz demonstrates a belief in female equality and reveals how these political ideals affected her intimate relationships and family arrangements. She also presents a revolutionary new model of fatherhood and familial gender equality, contrasting strongly with her own parents’ relationship.

In addition to egalitarian family arrangements, Díaz explores female solidarity and the FMLN’s commitment to gender equality, delineated at the start of this

⁶⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁶¹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 81.

⁶² Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 50.

⁶³ Ibid., 50.

chapter. She remembers her friendship with Ruth, a member of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación leadership:

Recuerdo que después de regresar del diálogo de La Palma, fui a dar una charla a una escuela de formación político-ideológica y ella me dijo, muy quedito:

- Te felicito por haber ido al diálogo; has representado a las mujeres. Vos fuiste no sólo en nombre de nuestra vanguardia; sino que evidenciaste el nivel de participación de todas nosotras, nos representaste. Gracias.⁶⁴

Ruth employs “nosotras” to represent and re-enforce the notion of the revolutionary female collective, as we saw in Randall’s *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras*. As a woman in an FMLN leadership position, Díaz is congratulated for representing the overall level of female participation. Her presence and actions demonstrate women’s political agency as well as their moral and physical strength, challenging sexism among men on the left and the systematic devaluation of the feminine realm which underpins Cold War counter-insurgency discourse.⁶⁵ Díaz’s personal relationships with other women, and the significance of women’s participation overall, are included to demonstrate that far from a one dimensional “propagandist” account, along with all the *testimonios* studied in this thesis, *Nunca estuve sola*’s political message is nuanced and gendered. Through her rejection of her father’s violence, her insistence on gender equality in the domestic sphere, her depiction of politicised motherhood and her discussion of female politicisation, Díaz challenges patriarchal institutions, contests normative gender roles and promotes female solidarity. Kampwirth’s findings regarding the higher level of feminist consciousness among *guerrilleras* in El Salvador is thus supported by the text. The arguments that Díaz would oppose a gendered reading, and that she does not challenge gender roles, are invalidated.

As well as being complicated by gender, Díaz’s *testimonio* demonstrates some signs of distress caused by her incarceration and involvement in guerrilla

⁶⁴ Ibid., 175 – 176.

⁶⁵ As we saw in the Introduction with reference to Cohn “Wars, Wimps and Women.”

war.⁶⁶ A superficial overview of her *testimonio* might not detect this, but despite the triumphant tone, while Díaz glorifies martyrdom, she is also apprehensive about death. As a member of a guerrilla movement involved in a bloody civil war, she inevitably witnessed the death of friends. During an interrogation, Díaz communicates with deceased *compañeros* to raise her morale. This communication might be an attempt to alleviate her difficult emotions and quieten her fears: “Conversé con uno de nuestros muertos: La verdad es que no saben, esperan que te quebrés en cualquier momento o que te murás, enloquezcás, que barajustés, salgás gritando. Esperan que te demoronés de alguna forma. [...] Saben que antes de traicionarlos, nos morimos.”⁶⁷ “Te” is repeated thrice before giving way to the “nos” of the final sentence, as the individual is connected to a collective sense of identity, a key strategy identified above. By conversing with the dead about resistance to psychological counter-insurgency strategies, Díaz attempts to come to terms with her incarceration and mortality. During the course of the Salvadoran civil war thousands of activists “disappeared” and Díaz was aware that her life was in danger.⁶⁸ On this occasion the dead person is not named but later in the text, having received the news that a female friend, *comandante* Arlen Siu Guazapa, had died, Díaz reminisces by addressing the deceased directly:

Camarada, amiga, hermana del alma, la muerte te sorprendió en junio. [...] Tu rocío caerá en las tardes combativas y tu frágil figura estará en la vanguardia de las columnas guerrillas. Tu coraje y valentía en el fusil de cada combatiente. [...] Tu sangre es el abono para la tierra liberada y tu alegría será mi triste compañía. Arlen, Celia, *¡hasta la victoria siempre!*⁶⁹

The image of Arlen’s blood fertilising revolution can be seen as an attempt to justify loss of life, whilst exonerating the political cause as themes of sisterhood and martyrdom resurface. The inclusion of the refrain popularised

⁶⁶ Her *testimonio* begins with a fast paced account of the shooting. Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 13 – 14.

⁶⁷ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 58 – 59.

⁶⁸ Over 20,000 people were killed in two years, as we saw above with reference to Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes*, 85.

⁶⁹ Díaz, *Nunca estuve sola*, 138.

by the Cuban Revolution confirms the extent to which Díaz was inspired by the Cuban model. However, this apparently triumphant tone is immediately undermined by the paragraph that follows: “Tenía una obsesión con los seres queridos que ya no estaban físicamente con nosotros [...] Ya no debo seguir pensando en ellos, estoy torturándome. Me levanto y comienzo a hacer ejercicios. Me gustan. Hoy hago casi hora y media.”⁷⁰ Díaz is honest about feelings that are incompatible with the exultant tone of other sections of the text. An exercise regime is presented as a coping mechanism. The reader is provided with an intimate insight into the experience of incarceration and the strategies Díaz developed to manage it.

Nunca estuve sola shares several features with the other *testimonios* studied in this thesis; like the Cuban texts, martyrdom and the patriotic revolutionary movement are glorified. As with the other Central American texts, the US Cold War narrative is undermined and US involvement in national counter-insurgency tactics is challenged. However, the overtly ideological intentions of the text are complicated by its psychological content and gendered perspective; private, personal information is included alongside depictions of difficult emotional experiences. The model of politically active motherhood presented here is prominent in testimonial literature authored by women.

Unlike the other *testimonios*, Díaz’s narration is not subjected to editing or interference from a third person narrator or editor; she communicates directly with the reader and there is no paradoxical or didactic paratext leading the reader to particular conclusions. Nevertheless, the paratext does add a sense of veracity while foregrounding the counter-propaganda function. In contrast to the two *testimonios* studied in the previous chapter, Díaz does not provide a full autobiographical account; she begins with her capture and ends with her release. All other memories are presented in juxtaposition to her time in prison. Various techniques such as dialogue, with both living and imagined figures, characterisation, poetry and imagery are deployed to underscore the political message, but also to convey a sense of Díaz’s emotional experiences. Despite critics downplaying the significance of gender, and labelling the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 138 – 139.

account “propagandist”, the reading presented above reveals the importance of gendered themes and psychological experiences.

As we shall see in the following section, Alicia Partnoy’s account of her imprisonment during the “Dirty War” in Argentina makes similar use of literary techniques to articulate the psychological effects of incarceration. However, hers differs from Díaz’s significantly as the overtly ideological and political tone is replaced by a fictionalised and fragmented, highly literary narrative. This chapter will now review the “Dirty War”, examining how this conflict was exacerbated by US Cold War narratives. Following this, the paratext of *The Little School* will be assessed before the text itself is considered in more detail.

Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School. Tales of Disappearance and Survival*, 1986

The Little School. Tales of Disappearance and Survival was published exactly ten years after a military junta headed by General Videla took power in Argentina. The “Dirty War” was a seven year period of violent political repression and widespread civilian disappearances. Like the civil war in El Salvador, the conflict was underpinned by Cold War discourse as the military declared war on those labelled as political “subversives.”⁷¹ Initially, resistance to the junta flourished among human rights activists, trade unionists, students, community groups and women.⁷² Argentinean women “campaign[ed] for the abolition of compulsory military service, joint child custody, reproductive rights, sex education and legal rights for children born to unmarried mothers.”⁷³ During the dictatorship, the well-known *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, like the CO-MADREs from El Salvador, demanded information regarding missing family members, as their identity as mothers became their

⁷¹ As we have seen with reference to Livingstone and McSherry, the term “subversives” was used to refer to peaceful dissenters and those who advocated any reform or social progress. Livingstone, *America’s Backyard*, 41. McSherry, *Predatory States*, 1.

⁷² Keen and Hayes, *History of Latin America*, 331.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 331 – 2.

primary motivation for political activity.⁷⁴ *The Little School* forms part of these attempts to challenge the military, testifying to officially denied, politically motivated, mass incarceration.

In spite of these forms of political and cultural resistance, approximately 30,000 people were kidnapped, tortured and “disappeared” during the conflict, one third of whom were women.⁷⁵ “Union activists, leaders of community aid groups, even student activists who petitioned authorities for paper and pencils for use in school, became targets.”⁷⁶ When put to trial in 1985 the junta leaders denied that human rights abuses had taken place; in addition to this retrospective denial, during their regime severe censorship ensured that reference to or criticism of the war was prohibited, whilst propaganda that promoted the values of the military, the Church and the quasi-fascist ideology of *nacionalismo* was widely disseminated. Taylor sums up the difference between fascism and *nacionalismo* in Argentina succinctly: “*nacionalismo* does not rely on a charismatic leader or related notions of popularism but instead upholds the ideology of the Catholic church and the elite rule of the military.”⁷⁷ She describes *nacionalismo* as “an ultraconservative, antirevolutionary, Catholic, and ‘macho’ form of authoritarianism.”⁷⁸

Alicia Partnoy became politically active at university and was angered and radicalised by the coup.⁷⁹ *The Little School* was smuggled out of Argentina and published in the US to popularise a counter-narrative to the military’s propaganda. Originally written by Partnoy in Spanish, the *testimonio* was translated into English by Partnoy, with the assistance of Lois Athey and Sandra Braunstein. Amy Kaminsky underscores the fact that Partnoy was first

⁷⁴ For an analysis of the significance of the *Madres*’ protests and their performance of motherhood see Diana Taylor. “Trapped in Bad Scripts: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” in *Disappearing Acts*, 183 – 222.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁷⁶ Daniel Lewis. *The History of Argentina* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 144.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 274

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁷⁹ Partnoy, *The Little School*, 12 – 13

published by the feminist Cleis Press and Nance notes that Feministas Unidas launched a successful campaign for a second edition of the text.⁸⁰ The women's movement is relevant here as Partnoy has contributed to and edited anthologies of women's writing, as well as two collections of poetry.⁸¹ While not as explicitly gynocentric as the socialist feminist collections examined in the last two chapters, Partnoy's account is woman-centred and she employs abundant natural imagery and literary techniques to challenge the gendered dichotomies of the Cold War and counter-insurgency.

Julia Alvarez describes *The Little School* as a "fictionalised account" of Partnoy's time in prison.⁸² The title comes from the guards' euphemism for the prison: "La Escuelita." The subtitle of the *testimonio*, *Tales of Disappearance and Survival*, highlights the fact that the account is a representative story or tale, about the survivors' endurance. Critics agree that *The Little School* is an example of *testimonio*; it conforms to definitions of the genre as metonymical, and has also been labelled "memoir and testimonial literary writing."⁸³ It aims to disprove the government's denial of human rights abuses through a depiction of memories of the lived experience of incarceration. However, the style and composition of the text distinguish it from all other testimonial texts studied here. *The Little School* is the most literary example of *testimonio* in this thesis, making extensive use of shifting narrative perspective, characterisation, imagery and symbolism to present an aesthetic account of detention. It is the only *testimonio* that does not include photography; rather pictures drawn by Partnoy's mother present a blindfolded woman at the

⁸⁰ Amy Kaminsky, *Reading the Body Politic. Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 47 – 49. Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice*, 176.

⁸¹ For anthologies see: Alicia Partnoy, ed., *You Can't Drown the Fire. Latin American Women Writing in Exile* (Pennsylvania and San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998). Jennifer Browdy de Hernández, ed., *Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin America and the Caribbean* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2003). For poetry see: Alicia Partnoy, *Revenge of the Apple-Venganza de la manzana* (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1992) and *Volando bajito-Little Low Flying*, trans. Gail Wronsky (California: Red Hen Press, 2005).

⁸² Partnoy, *The Little School*, 7. The verb to fictionalise is understood as the act of presenting real, lived events using stylistic techniques usually employed in works of fiction.

⁸³ Louise Detwiler, "The Blindfolded (Eye)Witness in Alicia Partnoy's "The Little School." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 33 (2000): 60 – 72.

beginning of each chapter.⁸⁴ As opposed to the apparently factual photojournalism or documentary photography of the previous *testimonios*, a more creative tone is struck with this female-authored art work. In keeping with Henke's notion of "scriptotherapy", Partnoy produces a stylised narrative of incarceration. Herman's study makes direct reference to Partnoy's *The Little School* when discussing psychological coping mechanisms, such as perception alternation and dissociation, claiming these techniques were employed successfully. However, unlike the *testimonialistas* studied above who showed signs of resilience and defiance, Partnoy's text does not inscribe a triumphant tone. Rather, the prisoners' attempts at survival are limited, continually interrupted and precarious.

The "Dirty War" in the Context of the Cold War

As stated, Cold War narratives arguably intensified the "Dirty War":

Tensions in Argentina were exacerbated by the United States' intervention. Under Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, the United States strengthened the armed forces in their war against "subversion" – that is, dissension of all kinds. The military leaders and torturers had been trained in the US School of the Americas, and they continued to receive financial support from the United States for their brutal implementation of the Doctrine of National Security. The US government aligned its "interests" with the military's. These economic factors, combined with a long tradition of the antiliberal, misogynist ideology known as *nacionalismo*, coalesced to bring about the Dirty War.⁸⁵

Paul Lewis argues that "By spreading a vision of Cold War bipolarity, the United States also encouraged a rigid polarization that easily confused communist subversion with popular reform" - a confusion that was arguably rife in Videla's Argentina.⁸⁶ Further examples of US propaganda in Argentina

⁸⁴ For an analysis of these drawings and the wider significance of the blindfold please see Detwiler, "Blindfolded (Eye)Witness," 64.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 57 – 58.

⁸⁶ Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: the "Dirty War" in Argentina* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 137.

have been provided in *El poder militar en la Argentina (1976 – 1981)*.⁸⁷ It is clear that the “Dirty War” was informed and intensified by Cold War narratives, as for Catholics and nationalists in the Argentinean military the Cold War was seen as “a struggle between Western Christianity and atheistic communism, in which secular liberalism was but an opening wedge for subversion to enter.”⁸⁸ By presenting a harrowing first-person account of the violent counter-insurgency policies that resulted from these political simplifications, Partnoy encourages the reader to question the Argentine military’s “Cold War crusaderism [which] allied to extralegal tactics taught that morality could be suspended in the ‘higher cause’ of defending the nation, the West, or Christianity.”⁸⁹ Her fictionalised account undermines this Cold War rhetoric, and the logic of militarised counter-insurgency, by humanising the “disappeared” victim, whilst recreating their inhumane treatment.

Diane Taylor has demonstrated that “Dirty War” governmental narratives were profoundly gendered. She foregrounds the misogyny and homophobia of the military to argue that:

Individual and collective fantasies of control and domination, played out against castrated, feminized and penetrable bodies (literally and/or metaphorically), meshed into a highly organized system of terror in which hatred of the feminine was not only the consequence but simultaneously, its very reason for being.⁹⁰

In the context of a gendered conflict in which the military attempted to erase evidence of the corporal and psychological damage they inflicted on women and feminised “subversives”, Partnoy’s gynocentric account and use of gendered imagery makes visible this damage and forms part of a wider counter-narrative of resistance, challenging the military’s ideological

⁸⁷ Peter Waldmann and Ernesto Garzón Valdés, eds., *El poder militar en la Argentina (1976 – 1981)* (Frankfurt: Verlag Klaus Dieter Vervuert, 1982), 157 – 162.

⁸⁸ Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals*, 142.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 89.

commitment to, or dependency on, a particularly bellicose form of patriarchy.⁹¹

In keeping with these objectives, Partnoy's "tales" are framed by a factual paratext. The first of two appendices, "Cases of the Disappeared at the Little School" lists the names, details and dates of thirty-four prisoners and a group of high school students. Several of these prisoners appear and then disappear in the *testimonio*.⁹² Between the appendices, a map of the prison is also included to add a further sense of veracity and to enable the reader to visualise accurately the setting of the text.⁹³ The final appendix, "Descriptions of the Guards at the Little School", provides sufficient detail of the guards' appearances and names to aid future prosecution.⁹⁴ The inclusion of such detail at the end of a literary work emphasises that the *testimonio* also has a documentary and counter-propaganda function. Partnoy's principal purpose was to faithfully represent the reality of the "Dirty War" as it was experienced by the "disappeared", and especially women. She explains: "The voices of my friends at the Little School grew stronger in my memory. By publishing these stories I feel those voices will not pass unheard."⁹⁵ Her "survivor mission" also took the form of testifying to Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People or CONADEP.⁹⁶ As well as producing a literary *testimonio*, Partnoy provided formal testimony. In both cases her objective was to prevent the erasure and denial of the military coup's "Dirty War" narratives, ensuring that its victims were not forgotten.

⁹¹ For more on the variety of counter-narratives that emerged following the "Dirty War" see Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 141.

⁹² Partnoy, *The Little School*, 123.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17. See "Finding a Survivor Mission" in Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 207. *Nunca Más (Never Again). A Report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986). The Spanish original is online <http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/conadep/nuncamas/> Partnoy appears twice in the CONADEP report, the English translation of which was published the same year as *The Little School*. Both of Partnoy's accounts in *Nunca Más. Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparación de Personas* testify to the mistreatment of other prisoners. *Nunca Más*, 208, 319 – 320.

Like *Nunca estuve sola*, Partnoy's *testimonio* is not mediated through an editor/facilitator. With the exception of the chapters examined below, *The Little School* is narrated in the first person. Although the text begins with her capture, her account differs from the chronological structures seen thus far in that the remaining twenty chapters each focus on a single theme; eight chapters are titled with a noun, 'Birthday', 'Latrine', 'Telepathy', 'Religion', 'Bread', 'Toothbrush', 'Poetry' and 'Nativity.' Other chapters are accounts of a singular event, such as 'Benja's First Night' or 'A Conversation Under the Rain'. The chapters combine explorations of the mundane, brutal daily life in the Little School with often stifled attempts at escapism and resistance. The account is highly stylised yet, as above, it also conveys factual information, as well as recreating psychological experiences of incarceration.

The significance of small objects, such as pieces of bread or toothbrushes, in *The Little School* is explained by Herman. Prisoners "may risk their lives for the sake of [...] some small memento of attachment." She explains: "Such risks, which may appear heroic or foolish to outsiders, are undertaken for supremely pragmatic reasons. Under conditions of prolonged isolation, prisoners need 'transitional objects' to preserve their sense of connectivity to others."⁹⁷ Partnoy often explores her sense of connectivity with other prisoners. In the chapter 'Bread', she describes how prisoners would save pieces of bread in order to offer them to others: "Bread is also a means of communicating, a way of telling the person next to me: 'I'm here. I care for you. I want to share the only possession I have.'"⁹⁸ While articulating her personal experience of incarceration and the political objectives highlighted above, Partnoy also expresses psychological responses to incarceration.

"A Conversation Under the Rain", details another attempt at connectivity between prisoners. Due to heavy rain, Partnoy and another female prisoner, María Elena, were able to break the rule forbidding communication between prisoners, as the guards could not hear them. María Elena is one of the characters Partnoy introduces to the reader who then, in an effective literary

⁹⁷ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 81.

⁹⁸ Partnoy, *The Little School*, 84– 85.

sleight of hand, disappears later in the text suddenly and without explanation. The fragmented, sparse, third-person narrative recreates for the reader the sensory deprivation, loss and confusion of the prisoners. Unlike the other chapters, this chapter is narrated in the past tense third person to create the sense of a singular event, “This day had been different: the rain had made it different.”⁹⁹ As we saw above, for Herman the use of the third person in this chapter illustrates that Partnoy “succeeded in dissociating her experience.”¹⁰⁰ Partnoy attempts to be uplifted by the rain and there are implications of both literal and metaphorical cleansing as she washes her hands in the rain water: “The smell of damp earth made her come to grips with the fact that she was still alive. She inhaled deeply and a rare memory of freedom ticked her cheekbones.”¹⁰¹ The moist earth, with connotations of a feminised, fertile natural environment, is presented as synonymous with life and freedom. Partnoy’s account focuses on the feel, smell and sound of the rain as her vision was severely impaired by a blindfold. Playful use of onomatopoeia conveys her enjoyment of the sound made by the rain drops:

When almost as many drops had fallen as the days she had spent there, they placed cans under the leaks. The first four cans were making the sweetest music she had heard in a very long time. For a while she concentrated on figuring out the frequency of the drops: *link... clonk... plunkplunk... clink... clonkpluck... plunk... clink... clonk... plop... plop.*¹⁰²

Soothed by the melody, she is able to sleep and she dreams of freedom and traditional food and drink, subtly reflecting the leftist reconfiguration of patriotism seen more explicitly in the texts examined previously.¹⁰³ Dialogue between prisoners is rare in *The Little School* and the women are happy and excited that the rain disguises their voices. They discuss corporal issues, such

⁹⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁰ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 88

¹⁰¹ Partnoy, *The Little School*, 67.

¹⁰² Ibid., 68.

¹⁰³ *Mate* and *tortas fritas* are described in a footnote for the North American audience. Ibid., 68.

as yoga techniques to assist in relaxation and sleep, as well as menstruation and María Elena's lover, Benja. María Elena informs Partnoy that she believes she is pregnant. The brief conversation is cut short when a guard takes Partnoy outside to be punished; she is beaten, stripped and humiliated. While being made to stand naked in the rain, Partnoy takes comfort in memories of her relationship with María Elena, their first meeting, her first pregnancy and their involvement in political organisations.¹⁰⁴ Although she never directly mentions it in the *testimonio*, in the first appendix Partnoy explains the fate of her friends: "Both María Elena and Benja were taken from the Little School the night of the 12th of April and shot."¹⁰⁵ During the chapter, despite her humiliation, she remains defiant and calm in the knowledge that "in spite of the blows and restraints, in spite of the filth and the torture, both women had that long and warm conversation under the rain."¹⁰⁶ This ending represents the triumph of nature, water, purity and freedom, associated with the feminine, over militarism, society, brutality and enclosure, here associated with the masculine. However, an alternative reading to Herman's interpretation of "successful" disassociation suggests that attempts at escapism and female solidarity are in fact thwarted by male prison guards. Partnoy suggests that the realm of the feminine is that of morality and freedom; yet the masculine sphere is dominant and able to rule unchallenged.

Feminine versus masculine gendered symbolism is reiterated in a poem placed before the final chapter, which describes the "fight" between "Life: the power of childbirth" and "Death: the sound of firearms" as a pregnant woman gives birth at the prison.¹⁰⁷ Unlike the *testimonialistas* above, who politicised motherhood and promoted notions of martyrdom, Partnoy struggles to come to terms with the mistreatment of pregnant women and rejects the notion of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 73.

¹⁰⁷ The poem reads: Outside it's April, it's nighttime. [sic]/ Two fierce shadows in a fight./ Life: the power of childbirth./ Death: the sound of firearms./ Two unmeasurable [sic] shadows/ are fighting inside your womb./ Life: the child is pushing out./ Death: the fear is taking over./ Do you think both of these shadows could win this hard battle?/ "Yes, they could", the echo answers,/ echo of bullets just waiting/ to ravage the mother's womb/ as soon as the new life is born./ Outside it's April, it's nighttime. [sic]/ Two fierce shadows in a fight. Ibid., 118.

celebrating death. In the poem, women's ability to give birth is a force capable of engaging in combat with male-dominated political violence. The inherently female experience of childbirth is presented as an alternative to war and conflict in keeping with some feminists' notions of an inherent female understanding of peace.¹⁰⁸ Violence and death are equated with phallic firearms and male-dominated institutions, such as the military, while the power of giving life belongs solely to women. In the context of the gendered discourse of the "Dirty War" highlighted above, Partnoy's poetry introduces a new binary that proposes that women are not merely victims to be penetrated, but rather the source of life itself; simultaneously, male authority is portrayed as destructive and irrational.

Continuing the theme of motherhood and her daughter, Partnoy narrates dramatic scenes in the first-person from the perspective of two other characters, her husband and a heavily pregnant woman, Graciela. The chapter "Ruth's Father" vividly conveys the pain felt by the husband, while undergoing torture, and his memories of their daughter. This dramatic chapter has received considerably more attention from critics than the chapters that focus on women's issues and gendered themes.¹⁰⁹ While the husband focuses on memories of his daughter through internal monologue, in "Graciela: Around the Table" torture methods aimed at attacking the character's identity as an expectant mother are described:

They knew I was pregnant. It hadn't occurred to me that they could torture me while we were travelling. They did it during the whole trip: the electric prod on my abdomen because they knew about the

¹⁰⁸ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking Towards a Politics of Peace* (London: The Women's Press, 1990). See also Goldstein on difference feminism and the notion of male violence and female pacificism, and also the history women's peace activism, Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 42, 322.

¹⁰⁹ See for example Nance, *Can Literature Promote Justice*, 45, and Debra A. Castillo, *Talking Back. Towards a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 121. Also Jean Franco, "Gender, Death, and Resistance. Facing the Ethical Vacuum." in *Fear at the Edge. State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*. Juan E. Corradi, Patricia Weiss Fagen and Manuel Antonio Garretón, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 111. Franco, *Decline and Fall*, 242. In both of these publications Franco misreads the chapter and attributes the husband's narrative voice to that of Partnoy.

pregnancy... Each shock brought that terrible fear of miscarriage ... and that pain, my pain, my baby's pain.¹¹⁰

The pain of torture is made more immediate and direct through repetition and the use of the first-person. Partnoy was deeply affected by the mistreatment of pregnant women and maintains that, during the “Dirty War”, the military “attacked us as mothers, in our motherhood.”¹¹¹ The abuse of pregnant women frames the text as it is mentioned in the Introduction, and the final chapter, “Nativity”, is written from the perspective of a woman giving birth.¹¹² In her aforementioned CONADEP appearance Partnoy testified to the military’s practice of separating the prisoners from their children.¹¹³ In the first appendix she explains that the military claimed Graciela was killed during a battle, a common propaganda strategy to cover up extra-judicial military executions.¹¹⁴ *The Little School* therefore challenges governmental “Dirty War” narratives. While Partnoy does not explore the wider significance of the torture and execution of mothers in her *testimonio*, Taylor explains that the Argentine military imagined the Patria as a “purely symbolic, virginal mother figure” and that real mothers “had to be eliminated so that the image of the Patria as a unifying maternal body might work.”¹¹⁵ Partnoy contests the military’s patriarchal narratives as her *testimonio* makes real mothers reappear.

Aside from these exceptions, *The Little School* is narrated in the first person from the perspective of the author Alicia Partnoy, which adheres to the traditional format of *testimonio* and offers a more intimate insight into her personal experiences. Like Díaz, Partnoy presents poems which combine political concerns with the potentially cathartic expression of difficult

¹¹⁰ Partnoy, *The Little School*, 53.

¹¹¹ Alicia Partnoy quoted in Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 85.

¹¹² Partnoy, *The Little School*, 119 – 121.

¹¹³ *Nunca Más*, 208. Taylor notes the practice of removing infants from their biological parents and giving them to military families. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 84, 276.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 89.

emotional states. She shares one such poem, about the destruction of an anthropomorphised stream, with new prisoners:¹¹⁶

Our stream was killed,
torn away by its roots,
what remains is just a hole,
half dirt and half mud.
The trees were riddled with shot,
and all that was green was murdered,
a thin trace of water runs
lonely in the desolate channel.
Every forest is mourning
the death of her half-brother,
who died just because he was
too much light and too much song.¹¹⁷

Partnoy equates the destruction of nature, trees and greenery with militarised political repression reflecting the concerns of eco-criticism while demonstrating an environmental consciousness.¹¹⁸ Like Dora Alonso and Díaz, she employs natural imagery to encourage a particular political understanding. As with the rain in the chapter examined above, the stream symbolises purity and the beauty of nature confronted with malevolent forces of death and violence, representing the military coup. However, the murder of the stream and “all that was green” is not attributed to a perpetrator as the passive voice is employed throughout the poem, leaving the reader to ascertain the cause of death by drawing on the context of the “Dirty War”. The chapter ends with the guards’ violence making Partnoy regret sharing her poetry: “I feel guilty. Instead of reciting poems I should have explained to the new prisoners...I should have told them that at the little school we are beaten whenever our blindfolds are loose.”¹¹⁹ Mirroring the end of “A Conversation Under the

¹¹⁶ Partnoy informs it is the Naposta stream that she and another prisoner, Vasca, used to visit together. Partnoy, *The Little School*, 105.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹¹⁸ Eco-criticism is used to refer to the interdisciplinary study of literature and the environment and the exploration of environmental issues through literature.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

Rain,” Partnoy’s solidarity with other prisoners is punished; creative resistance results in remorse.

In much the same way as Díaz, Partnoy contrasts descriptions of the everyday physical experiences of incarceration with intimate memories of her daughter and thoughts of her husband as the narration explores the psychological effects of imprisonment. In the chapter “A Puzzle” Partnoy reveals difficult feelings regarding her daughter repeating “I just can’t remember my daughter’s face.”¹²⁰ The repetition creates a sense of unease and panic as, like Díaz, Partnoy is honest about the difficulty of being an incarcerated mother separated from her child. In the context of Herman’s observations regarding psychological coping mechanisms, it becomes clear that Partnoy struggles to remain connected to those she loved. *Testimonios* examined in previous chapters have politicised motherhood, but Partnoy produces a narrative which is clearly troubled by the mistreatment of mothers during the “Dirty War”. Whereas Díaz consoled herself with a poem affirming that she would reunite with her son, Partnoy finds no such solution to her emotional pain.

Partnoy’s psychological state is further explored in the chapter “Telepathy” in which she attempts “to control my mind, make it travel, escape, leave.”¹²¹ Again seeking to visualise and communicate with her family, she imagines her mother and repeats “I’m alive. I’m alive. I’m still alive.”¹²² Despite exploring the notion of psychological escape and exemplifying Herman’s observations regarding connectivity with the outside world, the chapter soon returns to the physical reality of incarceration. Just as the guards interrupted her conversation with María Elena and ruined her poetic solidarity, her attempt at telepathy is thwarted when a male prisoner is forced to wear a woman’s nightgown, as the prison guards employ feminisation as a form of humiliation. Partnoy fails to escape the reality of the Little School: “Anyway it was probably better that my mind didn’t obey me. Had it followed my orders, I would have sent my mind to find out what my future held, and when it

¹²⁰ Ibid., 77.

¹²¹ Ibid., 50.

¹²² Ibid., 50.

returned to inform me of the number of bullets it had found in my corpse, I would not have had any peace.”¹²³ She personifies her own mind, affording it a personality and separate identity suggesting she felt she had lost control, communicating her fragile psychological state. She also imagines her own death, another sign of existential angst triggered by incarceration. Partnoy’s account also conveys emotional difficulty structurally as the chapters are fragmented and brief in keeping with the notion that memories of traumatic experiences are sometimes disjointed and by their very nature difficult to articulate. Herman cites Partnoy’s “Telepathy” chapter as an example of altered mental states that can occur as a result of prolonged trauma.¹²⁴ While most other *testimonialistas* seem to have constructed a narrative which demonstrates resilience, Partnoy’s account expresses distress as a result of incarceration without suggesting it was easily overcome.

As stated, Partnoy’s *testimonio* is fictionalised and less explicitly political than those studied above. However, themes such as female resilience to military violence and motherhood re-surface. A focus on gender is provided through descriptions of the incarceration of mothers separated from their children, and the torture of pregnant women which is highlighted structurally as it frames the text. Gendered symbolism and imagery celebrates women’s ability to give birth and relates violence and death to a particularly belligerent type of masculinity enacted by the military. Despite the prevalence of literary techniques, the paratext provides factual information regarding her incarceration, in keeping with the political objective of counter-propaganda. Whereas the military government attempted to eradicate all political dissent by “disappearing” feminised subversives and mothers who did not conform, Partnoy revives the victims, vividly reconstructing their experiences. Thus she presents her own personal, creative, life-affirming response to the terror she witnessed and experienced.

¹²³ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁴ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 88.

Conclusions

While in previous chapters we have seen paratexts and editors controlling or contradicting, or at least affecting and influencing, the first-person narration of the *testimonialista*, here factual paratexts provided maps, appendices, photographs and prefatorial texts, which seek to authenticate the *testimonio*, underscoring its veracity to the reader without an ideological steer. As a result of the lack of a heterodiegetic narrator, the texts present more directly their gendered message of counter-propaganda and defiance. Much like Olga Alonso, both Díaz and Partnoy make use of poetry as a form of emotional catharsis, as they retreat into the realm of the imaginary and the creative to escape the adverse conditions of their detention.

Memories serve a similar function; relationships, with other women as well as female family members, are remembered as part of strategies of escapism and disassociation. Memories of freedom, presented in juxtaposition to memories of prison, are associated with the natural world and equated with the feminine, while incarceration, death and violence are all masculinised. However, when the *testimonialistas* try to remember freedom, they inevitably return to the reality of their imprisonment, as if their imagination was also contained or curtailed due to their physical captivity.

Partnoy's *testimonio* navigates the psychological effects of incarceration differently from *Nunca estuve sola*. Partnoy was blindfolded and her account focuses on auditory and olfactory experiences. She experiments with narrative perspective perhaps conveying her traumatic state to the reader and communicating from the point of view of other characters. Whereas Díaz presents herself as a defiant protagonist with a strong political identity, Partnoy does not rely on or reiterate political beliefs; rather she survives due to acts of compassion and solidarity with fellow prisoners. As Díaz was held in solitary confinement and subject to frequent interrogation, dialogue with prison guards emerges as one of the main literary strategies through which she demonstrates resilience. Nevertheless, her account is also honest about emotional difficulties. A decontextualised approach, that fails to acknowledge counter-insurgency and US intervention in El Salvador, may only perceive a

“propagandist” text. This chapter has argued for a reading that recognises the significance of gender, psychological experiences and the context of the Cold War.

As we have seen, both texts examined in this chapter were written during conflicts profoundly affected by the Latin American Cold War. Gendered imagery and a range of literary devices present female experiences of incarceration to question the logic of counter-insurgency, a common military strategy employed during this conflict. With reference to Henke’s theory of scriptotherapy, this chapter argues that constructing a narrative regarding their experience may have been cathartic for the *testimonialistas*; their *testimonios* might perform a dual function, providing a therapeutic outlet on a personal level while fulfilling the political function of testifying to torture and incarceration denied by the military government. Reference to Herman’s work on captivity enabled a new insight into the psychological realm in both *testimonios*. Failure to recognise this psychological context has arguably led some critics to overlook the nuances and complexities of the texts.

Despite her often political tone and counter-propaganda objectives, Díaz communicates honest information about difficulties faced during her time in prison. She makes use of poetry, dialogue and imagery to explore her emotional experiences which reveal signs of distress. Contradicting the assertions of Treacy and O’Connell, her account also benefits from, and certainly does not resist, a gendered analysis, as it becomes apparent that she rejects conventional gender roles, asserts a strong sense of female solidarity and radically reconfigures traditional, European, nuclear family arrangements. The portrayal of motherhood in the two texts studied here is contrastive: whereas Díaz is consoled by memories of her mother and is able to connect emotionally with her son through poetry, Partnoy’s attempts to connect with her mother are unsuccessful and she is unable to remember her daughter’s face. The failure of these coping mechanisms in *The Little School* is echoed by the failure of other forms of resistance and solidarity, which are interrupted by the male prison guards. Partnoy explores gender more subtly than previous *testimonialistas*; primarily through gendered imagery she contests the equation of masculinity with reason and authority. A feminised natural environment is

presented as synonymous with fertility and life, while the male-dominated security forces are portrayed as immoral and destructive.

Partnoy conveys her detention through brief, fragmented, highly literary episodes with little dialogue. Her tone is less defiant; she does not find easy solace in notions of martyrdom and her attempts at escapism are quickly stifled. Nevertheless, throughout both their accounts, the *testimonialistas* draw strength from personal and political relationships with other women, as female solidarity is put forward as a strategy of survival. Memories of, and connections to, female *compañeras*, and feminised images of nature, are called upon during times of difficulty to empower and encourage the *testimonialistas*. The gendered binaries of patriarchy, the Cold War and counter-insurgency are reconfigured, as the feminine is equated with nature, freedom and morality.

Conclusion

Towards a New Understanding of Latin American Women's *Testimonio*

This thesis addressed criticism which overlooked the political objectives and metonymical function of *testimonio*, as well as that which described the genre as propagandist and impersonal.¹ Exclusively women's texts were examined to reveal recurrent gynocentric concerns as the development of the genre was traced across Latin America, beginning, as *testimonio* did, in Cuba. An inductive methodological approach was adopted to analyse the *testimonios* on their own terms highlighting common themes and stylistic traits. Gendered paradoxes and discursive complexities were discovered, often occluded behind didactic, partial or factual paratextual facades. Starting from the premise that insufficient critical attention had been paid to the political and psychological context of women's *testimonio*, a gendered typology which acknowledged the significance of both the Cold War and the psychological realm was created.

Women's *testimonio* began in Cuba as a heterogeneous, multifarious, often contentious and highly creative form of testimonial narrative. It is not simplistic propaganda. Specifically female experiences of, and responses to, significant revolutionary events are inscribed, often with a critical approach, and in opposition to US anti-Castro propaganda. As the genre expanded and developed across the Latin American subcontinent, the counter-propaganda objective remained while a range of forms and styles were adopted.

Testimonio adapted to diverse political contexts; while Cuban and Nicaraguan texts belonged to ultimately successful revolutionary movements that became institutionalised as leftist governments, the remaining *testimonios* collected

¹ In the Introduction to this thesis I argued that Stoll misunderstood the political objectives and metonymical function of *testimonio*, see Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú*. Also Stoll, "The Battle for Rigoberta," 392 – 410. Shaw referred to *testimonio* as "propagandist", as we saw in Chapter Five. Shaw "Referentiality and Fabulation," 101, 105. Mohanty, Stoner and Craft described the genre, or women's writing in Cuba in the case of Stoner, as "impersonal." See Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*, 81. Stoner, "Militant Heroines," 89. Craft, *Novels of Testimony*, 25.

here formed part of more politically autonomous, frustrated attempts at radical political change, nevertheless equally affected by the Cold War.

The often overlooked historical context of the Latin American Cold War and related counter-insurgency policies was brought to the fore to argue that *testimonio* primarily functions as defensive counter-propaganda in a variety of different ways. I maintain that women's autobiographical narratives contest US assumptions regarding the ideological motivations and political convictions of militant Latin Americans as well as the organisations to which they belong, also contesting patriarchal assumptions and those of national governments. The selected *testimonios* replace US Cold War propaganda and that of Latin American governments with local, plural, diverse, gynocentric and dialogic accounts. Anti-communist propaganda was widespread during the Cold War, both in the US and in Latin America, as we saw with reference to Livingstone, Pearce, Grandin, Franco and others.² I argue that Ellul's categories of propaganda are more applicable to US Cold War narratives than to the diverse, hybrid and accommodating genre of *testimonio*.³ Political movements identified with the Soviet Union by neo-conservatives in Washington ranged from students in Argentina to workers' syndicates in Bolivia and peasant land co-operatives in Honduras. A wide array of political positions was equated with, and accused of being orchestrated by, Soviet Communism. The *testimonialistas* argue that this crass political simplification fuelled counter-insurgency tactics which led to the incarceration and torture of innocent civilians, the Dirty War in Argentina being a clear example of this. In response, the *testimonios* assert the political agency of the female protagonists and the wider communities they metonymically represent by articulating personal justifications for political involvement and demonstrating psychological resistance to these brutal political tactics.

² Livingstone, *America's Backyard*. Pearce, *Under the Eagle*. Grandin, *Last Colonial Massacre*. Franco, *Decline and Fall*.

³ Ellul, *Propaganda*.

US-funded security forces that operated across Central America and the Southern Cone, during “Operation Condor”, are strongly criticised in the *testimonios* for the seemingly widespread use of torture. Military and other government forces are shown to act irrationally, vindictively and ineffectually, contesting the notion that they were reasonable defenders of the nation state. The state’s monopolisation of violence is in this way thrown into question. Civilian, and especially female, casualties of counter-insurgency conflicts are witnessed in the texts to disprove official governmental narratives which denied the use of political repression, while maintaining that drastic measures were necessary to combat expansionist communism. The lived experiences of torture, incarceration and even massacres that occurred as a result of these policies are related in such a way as to elicit sympathy, and ultimately political action, from an international audience.

The *testimonios* all promote female resistance to male-dominated state violence. A gendered reading of these rarely studied texts reveals a range of gynocentric issues and the ways in which the *testimonios* challenge androcentric dichotomies. All the texts inscribe the process of women’s *concientización*. Female politicisation, *guerrilleras* and patriarchy are studied concurrently to argue that increased political consciousness among women inevitably led to heightened concern for female equality, in keeping with Kampwirth’s findings.⁴ All the *testimonialistas* include reference to close, both personal and political, relationships with other women, often their own mothers. Female politicisation and solidarity are presented as practical strategies through which women can overcome their socialisation under patriarchy. Through political activity and the development of collective consciousness, women are able to take steps towards challenging their own oppression and that of their wider community, organising political alternatives to US capitalism, national totalitarianism and male dominance in the home and in public life. Politically active women are shown to conflict with sexist family members and disapproving husbands while also experiencing *machismo* from

⁴ Kampwirth, *Women and Guerrilla Movements*. Kampwirth, *Feminism and Legacy of Revolution*. See also Molyneux, *Women’s Movements*.

compañeros. Several *testimonialistas* depicted domestic violence as perpetrated by their fathers. Such male attitudes and behaviours arguably had the effect of fuelling the desire for women's equality by demonstrating the endemic and widespread nature of inequitable gender roles, patriarchal norms and resultant violence. However, suggestions of a separate movement for women's liberation are firmly rejected as the *testimonialistas* repeatedly assert that sexism must be fought alongside and as part of the wider struggle against capitalism and imperialism, as they seem to propose a specifically Latin American type of socialist feminism.

Despite refusing to be categorised as feminist, collectively the *testimonios* reject the founding patriarchal institution of the nuclear family unit, common amongst elites and Europeans, and instead they present extended family models based on close relationships between female relatives. The notion of the benevolent patriarch who provides sustenance and protection is undone by the texts that criticise absent, alcoholic and abusive fathers. In contrast, the social, economic and political contribution of mothers and grandmothers is underscored as family structures are renegotiated. Female militants often left their children to pursue utopian goals, in the interests of future generations, as even conventional care-giving and childrearing roles are politicised. As well as rejecting passive, domesticated conceptions of motherhood, the *testimonialistas* politicised their relationships with their own mothers. Traditional ideas regarding self-sacrifice and domesticity during motherhood are transformed as mothers engage with the political/public sphere.

Sexist attitudes and behaviours are challenged for their hypocrisy and double standards at international, national, local and personal levels. Patriarchal oppression is repeatedly equated with capitalist hierarchies and political corruption; domestic violence is denounced alongside gender-specific torture by security forces. The commitment to egalitarianism by men who opposed female incorporation into leftist movements is seriously questioned. However, *machismo* is not perceived as the fault of individual men but rather as symptomatic of the all-encompassing nature of patriarchy and the *testimonialistas* advocate the re-education of men. Several *testimonialistas*

extend a similar sense of understanding and compassion towards political adversaries, humanising them and reasoning that they too were victims of social circumstances and misinformation.

Patriarchal dichotomies and the gendered discourses of war, as outlined by Cohn, Dean, Goldstein and Taylor, reviewed here in the Introduction, are discredited by the *testimonios* which present empowered female agents who complicate such simplistic narratives and disturb the equation of the female/femininity with passivity, submission, subversion and debility.⁵ The Cuban texts untie the US Cold War narrative, uncovered by Dean, which equated communism with the complete destruction of patriarchy and associated European institutions such as the nuclear family unit. Many of the *testimonialistas* are women who have escaped the feminised confines of the home front, identified by Goldstein's revealing account into the gendered nature of war. However, rather than simply reversing the gendered binaries underpinning conflict, the women complicate reductionist dualisms by demonstrating their ability to manifest simultaneously both sets of characteristics; they are belligerent and determined guerrilla fighters who are nevertheless also attractive to men, at times deliberately displaying typically feminine attributes. Women's historical exclusion from armed combat is in this way undermined while gendered counter-insurgency narratives, as outlined by Taylor, that posited that the feminised nation state needed protecting from feminised "subversives" by the masculinised military, are undone. While mentally and physically strong enough to contribute to guerrilla armies and to resist political violence and torture, the *testimonialistas* also continue to occupy more traditional roles as wives, mothers and carers.

Patriarchal divisions between the political and the personal are consistently undermined as the two spheres are shown throughout to be entirely interdependent. Political actions are shown to have personal motivations and consequences. To return to the gendered dualisms highlighted by Cohn's investigation into the sexist conceptualisations of the US "defence

⁵ Cohn, "Wars, Wimps and Women." Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*. Goldstein, *War and Gender*. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*.

community”, the corporeal is not separated from the cerebral but rather bodily experiences, of torture, motherhood and adolescence, are brought to the fore. Similarly, nature is not divided from culture and society; rather political ideas are disseminated and reinforced through natural imagery and reference to the local natural environment. Real life experiences of *machismo* are exposed and confronted while the underlying justifications for and logic of male dominance in all spheres of life are also unravelled.

In sharp contrast to the multi-layered perspectives of the female protagonists, male perpetrators of state violence, and the political philosophies they uphold, are presented as irrational and illogical, operating within limited and limiting reductionist parameters. The vindictive, gendered, Cold War rationale is portrayed as an inaccurate worldview rather than a universal truth. Normative gender roles, and other gendered assumptions which underpin ideologies that advocate war and patriarchy, are unanimously rejected by all the *testimonialistas*, who challenge norms of female behaviour by transgressing established physical and cultural boundaries. As opposed to objects of passive male desire, or victims of male violence, the *testimonialistas* articulate gynocentric, autobiographical counter-narratives in which they appear defiant, challenging women’s historical exclusion from conventional politics and the literary canon. The realm of the political is expanded as the texts incorporate the family, the private and the personal, the natural environment and the body alongside revolutionary beliefs and activities in order to discredit male-dominated systems of thought that systematically obscure, overlook and undervalue these women-centred realms.⁶

Through their position as *indígena, campesina*, working-class and/or revolutionary Latin American women, the *testimonialistas* are afforded critical epistemological insights into and a particular situated knowledge of imperialist, capitalist metanarratives as well as those of war and patriarchy. Traditional understandings of motherhood, birth, the family and a woman’s life purpose are transformed by the idea of collective identity and the supremacy of the political purpose. Conventional interpretations of death are

⁶ Cohn, “Wars, Wimps and Women.”

also reconfigured as the recurring theme of martyrdom attempts to celebrate the widespread loss of life during revolutionary struggle. The conceptualisation of death during political violence as a form of courageous defiance can be seen as an attempt to cope with desperate situations of prolonged political conflict, as several of the *testimonialistas* assert they would prefer a morally virtuous death to treachery and defeat. The texts respond to the existential concerns posed by warfare by discarding the importance of the individual, underscoring instead the greater importance of the collective moral victory of their revolutionary movement. The female protagonists also re-evaluate the use of political violence from a gynocentric perspective. The brutality of counter-insurgency strategies is denounced along with male abuse in the home, but violence is not rejected altogether. The *testimonialistas* are not pacifists; they believe in the retaliatory aggression of leftist movements which they equate with self-defence. Armed conflict undertaken in the interests of future generations, who will supposedly benefit from the movement for progressive social change, is therefore interpreted as legitimate and justified.

In addition to arguing for a gendered interpretation of women's *testimonio*, the importance of the psychological realm was demonstrated with reference to trauma studies and memory studies. Memory is unsurprisingly a recurrent motif; the *testimonialistas* present autobiographical memories of lived experiences and are themselves memorialised through their testimonies. Halbwachian distinctions are contested as *testimonio* simultaneously functions as autobiographical and historical, collective and individual memory. As we have seen, the *testimonialistas* underwent gendered potentially traumatic experiences as a direct, and apparently intentional, result of the violence of male-dominated counter-insurgency forces, as substantiated by Klein, Leslie and Hollander.⁷ Counter-narratives of resistance, testifying to incarceration, interrogation and torture, are constructed in which female protagonists present themselves as resilient and defiant in the face of this violence, often denied by

⁷ Klein, *Shock Doctrine*. Leslie, "Healing Psychological Wounds," 50–59. Hollander, "Gendering of Human Rights," 41–79.

the perpetrators. In the case of governmental denial, for example during the “Dirty War” in Argentina, the Contra War in Nicaragua and Honduras, and Operation Condor across the subcontinent, the act of testifying performed a significant political function, contesting official narratives by witnessing and making visible the “disappeared” victims.⁸ The counter-memories presented in the texts are, for the *testimonialistas*, both politically imperative and historically significant.

Most of the *testimonialistas* are resilient in the face of challenging circumstances of conflict and incarceration arguably due to their strong sense of a collective political identity and their connection to a broader community. Herman, Joseph and Linley have observed the resilience demonstrated by many in the face of such extreme adversity.⁹ Those who are able to depersonalise the violence, perceiving it as a counter-insurgency strategy to discourage revolutionary movements in Latin America, are more likely to manifest renewed determination and courage as a result of their harrowing experiences.

As well as presenting a gendered reading of women’s *testimonios* and foregrounding political and psychological contexts, this thesis also examines photography, paratexts and stylistic techniques. The photography incorporated into the *testimonios* is placed within the documentary photography tradition – one which has historically documented social inequality in an attempt to affect political change.¹⁰ Reference was also made to the work of Edmundo Desnoes who analysed the photography of several US magazines which was employed as a means of propagating stereotypical representations of Latin Americans, originally promoted by Europeans during colonialism.¹¹ The photographic

⁸ For Operation Condor see McSherry, *Predatory States*.

⁹ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*. Joseph and Linley, *Trauma, Recovery and Growth*.

¹⁰ Liz Wells, “Documentary and Photojournalism”, in *The Photography Reader*, Liz Wells, ed., (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 253 – 254.

¹¹ “La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo”, Edmundo Desnoes, *Punta de Vista*, (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967), 59 – 102.

images in the *testimonios* studied here stand in stark contrast to the images dissected by Desnoes. Quotidian scenes are presented in order to add veracity to the accounts but also as a means of familiarising the reader with the *testimonialistas*' life experiences. Images of workers' demonstrations, human rights negotiations, and even guerrilla involvement, are also put forward in order to replace the outdated, Eurocentric image of the "docile native", as identified by Desnoes, with a new representation of Latin Americans as empowered and active, political agents.

Paratextual strategies outlined by Genette were identified in all of the texts and played a significant role in how the first person narratives were presented to the reader.¹² Across the typology presented here, paratextual techniques vary from intrusive, controlling, heterodiegetic narrators who perhaps unwittingly create paradoxical paratexts to homodiegetic narrators accompanied by paratexts that merely seek to reaffirm the veracity of their accounts. In the Cuban texts, the paratext and editorial voice often seem incongruous with the first-person narrative voice, while Randall's heavy editorial presence enabled her to present a more coherent socialist feminist message. The editors of Domitila and Elvia's autobiographical accounts emphasise historical context in their paratexts, to strengthen the political message. In the final chapter, the *testimonialistas* were free from editorial control and in this case the paratexts serves again to affirm the factual basis of the accounts.

In contrast to common criticisms of the genre as lacking in literariness, this thesis identified stylistic and literary techniques, usually associated with literary fiction, employed extensively and to great effect throughout the *testimonios*: changing narrative perspective, dramatic dialogue, analepsis, characterisation, pace and imagery engage the reader and uphold the ideological message.¹³ Even in the polyphonic, but apparently factual, *Tania*, editing techniques, such as deceleration, control the pace of the account, emphasising the importance of Tamara's time in Cuba. Haydée conveys her

¹² Genette, *Narrative Discourse*.

¹³ For *testimonio* as lacking in literariness see Craft, *Novels of Testimony*, 6. For more on techniques of narrative fiction see Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*.

emotive, specifically female, experiences of the revolutionary political process by drawing an analogy with motherhood; she also describes the night of the Moncada attack with sombre and melancholic natural imagery. While Dora Alonso's career in fiction writing is notable in her long, descriptive, poetic passages that romanticise the Cuban countryside, Olga Alonso's unorthodox, highly creative poetry, diary and epistolary writing enable her to cathartically express troubled adolescent emotions through an unusual and highly original testimonial collage. The *testimonios* collected by Randall made innovative use of personal pronouns to convey some sense of a politicised female collective as well as communicating the psychological isolation of incarceration. Domitila employs comedy, sarcasm, exaggeration and scenic recreations of dialogue to produce an engaging and personal account. Elvia's testimony also makes use of some of these techniques but is translated into conversational American English, to appeal to an Anglophone audience, and is less emotional, for example when detailing experiences of torture. Nidia Díaz recreates dialogue, utilises characterisation and makes effective use of imagery to communicate her psychological experience of incarceration. Alicia Partnoy's *testimonio* is the most fictionalised testimonial narrative studied here as her powerful, fragmented, literary "tales of survival" aesthetically recreates the emotional experience of incarceration, torture and "disappearance." These creative techniques communicate and recreate the subjective and personal experiences of the *testimonialistas*, enriching their narratives aesthetically, while simultaneously strengthening their political objectives and persuading the reader of the worthiness of their cause, encouraging the reader to identify and sympathise with the protagonist.

Towards a New Typology

This thesis has examined *testimonios* ranging from the overtly political and more counter-propagandic in tone to the literary, poetic and fictionalised, from polyphonic and multiregional, to chronological and autobiographical. Yet, although this is a diverse, highly varied and hybrid genre, the *testimonios* have much in common. A new typology is suggested, beginning with *guerrillera testimonios* that, despite their political function to promote the Cuban

Revolution in response to US opposition, contained surprising contradictions. While glorifying the exemplary female heroines' contribution to armed combat, the Cuban editors unwittingly raised a series of questions regarding the protagonists' true level of participation and their conformity to traditional gender roles. Despite paratextual attempts to contain the more potentially subversive aspects of their narratives, both Cuban *testimonialistas* were able to affirm their abilities in the male-dominated spheres of armed conflict and revolutionary political organisation and their texts demonstrate that they sometimes conformed to, but were also able to challenge, traditional confines placed on women.

The Cuban *testimonios* examined in the second chapter were no less unorthodox; *testimonios* of volunteering continued to demonstrate the hybridity and diversity of the genre. Dora Alonso's glorification of volunteering and the rural population was almost completely undone by the most unorthodox Cuban account studied here, that of Olga Alonso.

Testimonios is a passionate, exceptionally varied and literary record of the teenager's years working as a *Brigadista*. Far from monolithic propaganda for an authoritarian socialist regime, these early Cuban *testimonios* in fact inscribed a variety of female experiences of the revolutionary process, expressed through diary entries, epistolary writing and even erotic poetry, in ways that were at times paradoxical and often nonconformist rather than uncritical and compliant.

The Cuban Revolution was also promoted in *No se puede hacer la revolución*, examined in the third chapter of this thesis. Randall commended the steps Cuba had taken towards female equality through her multi-regional, polyphonic collection of socialist feminist *testimonies*. However, the residual nature of *machista* attitudes was also noted. The Nicaraguan *Sandinista* revolution was more thoroughly explored in *Todas estamos despiertas/Sandino's Daughters* which justified the socialist movement in response to the US-orchestrated Contra War. Gender roles were also critically examined as the text revealed reluctance among male *compañeros* to politicise the private sphere. The themes of incarceration and the use of gendered torture

were explored by the female militants who responded to such violence with defiance. Instead of downplaying the feminist consciousness of the *testimonialistas*, as in the Cuban paratexts, Randall actively encouraged a gynocentric analysis.

Race does not arise as a notable issue in the Cuban texts, or those of Randall, and this is accounted for with reference to de la Fuente's observations regarding the taboo surrounding race in Cuba during the period in which these texts were produced.¹⁴ As a white feminist from the US, Randall seems to have chosen to overlook issues of race, even when interviewing women who are indigenous, members of the African diaspora or of mixed race. Issues of class and gender are prioritised by Randall, whose questions provide the framework from within which the *testimonios* are produced, so that her texts support her socialist feminist agenda. The indigenous identity of the *testimonialistas* presented in the fourth chapter did not emerge as a significant aspect of their testimonies. This was explained with reference to the guidance and influence of the facilitators who were prioritising gender. The nature of the political environment within which the texts were created was also suggested as a possible explanation. Whereas identifying as indigenous has in the past been used as a pre-text for repression and reprisals, more recently the political landscape in Central and Latin America has transformed, as we saw with reference to Webber.¹⁵

Women's political organisation, incarceration and torture did feature in the more thoroughly autobiographical and chronological *testimonios* of the fourth chapter. While Domitila was more politically autonomous than Randall and the Cuban *testimonialistas*, *Si me permiten hablar* nevertheless owed its existence to the women's movement. Yet just as the previous *testimonialistas* were critical of residual sexism under their socialist regimes, so Domitila rejected the Eurocentricity and liberalism of Western feminists. She also criticised the Communist Party of Bolivia and Guevara. In *Don't be Afraid*,

¹⁴ De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 5, 6, 18, 275.

¹⁵ Webber, *Red October*, 22.

Gringo, Elvia presents a more contained narrative; she relies on legal discourse to condemn her interrogators. However, Elvia provides a compelling autobiographical narrative through which she emerges as a defiant female protagonist. Both indigenous women reject the assumptions of US Cold War narratives and assert instead their own political agency.

The final chapter examined *testimonio* of incarceration more closely. Free from editorial control, Nidia Díaz and Alicia Partnoy recreate their psychological experience of detention for the reader. The paratexts merely reaffirm the veracity of the accounts, rather than presenting a particular interpretation. Díaz is honest about her emotional difficulties, but she repeatedly reiterates the FMLN's ideological position. Conversely, Partnoy's attempts at resistance were punished and thwarted; she finds no easy ideological answers to the difficulties caused by her prolonged incarceration. Both women find some solace through memories of other politically active women, including their mothers, as female solidarity again surfaces as a powerful form of resistance.

Needless to say, this typology is not exhaustive and it could be expanded to incorporate other subtypes of the testimonial genre. New theories on the performative nature of gender roles and the relationship between heteronormativity and patriarchy could fruitfully be applied to women's testimonial literature in future studies.¹⁶ Race and religion are areas clearly relevant to *testimonio* which could be more thoroughly explored.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the intention is that this thesis should serve as a new starting

¹⁶ For example Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge Press, 1999). As we saw in Chapter One the term "heteronormative" is often cited as originating in Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). In fact the concept has been traced back to a much earlier article. See Purple September Staff, "The Normative Status of Heterosexuality." Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975), 80.

¹⁷ In the first chapter of this thesis brief reference was made to the concept of martyrdom (which has powerful Christian connotations). While the concept was found to be most prevalent in Cuban *testimonios*, martyrdom nevertheless recurred as a significant theme throughout; its relationship to *testimonio* might be investigated further. Exclusively indigenous *testimonialistas* could be studied in a separate investigation, in order to reveal recurring themes, traditions, existential beliefs etc.

point from which critical discussion of women-authored *testimonio* might recommence, moving beyond the fact/fiction debates promoted by Stoll's attacks on the genre. The wide-ranging scope of the thesis is justified in that it purports to be an interdisciplinary comparative analysis which traces the development of the genre across the subcontinent foregrounding gender, the Cold War and the emotional realm, thus providing political and psychological contextualisation and a new way of reading this contentious genre.

This thesis has argued that Latin American women's testimonial literature should be read and analysed on its own terms, rather than through the prism of theoretical presuppositions divorced from the disturbing context in which these counter-narratives emerged. The popularisation of *testimonio* has enabled women from previously marginalised social sectors to disseminate their memories and experiences to a broader, international audience. In so doing, these women present themselves as courageous political agents who reject sexist violence and patriarchal oppression in both public and private spheres. Their defiant narratives present female solidarity and politicisation as practical strategies through which political repression, state violence and expansionist US capitalism, as well as patriarchal norms, institutions and violence, can be resisted and overcome.

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Appendix 1: List of Acronyms

AMES – Asociación de Mujeres de El Salvador

AMNLAE – Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa
Amanda Espinoza

AMPRONAC – Asociación de Mujeres Ante la Problemática
Nacional (Nicaragua)

CDR – Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Cuba)

COB – Central Obrera Boliviana

CNTC – Congreso Nacional de Trabajadores de Campo
(Honduras)

FDR – Frente Democrático Revolucionario (El Salvador)

FMC – Federación de Mujeres Cubanas

FMLN – Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (El
Salvador)

FSLN – Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Nicaragua)

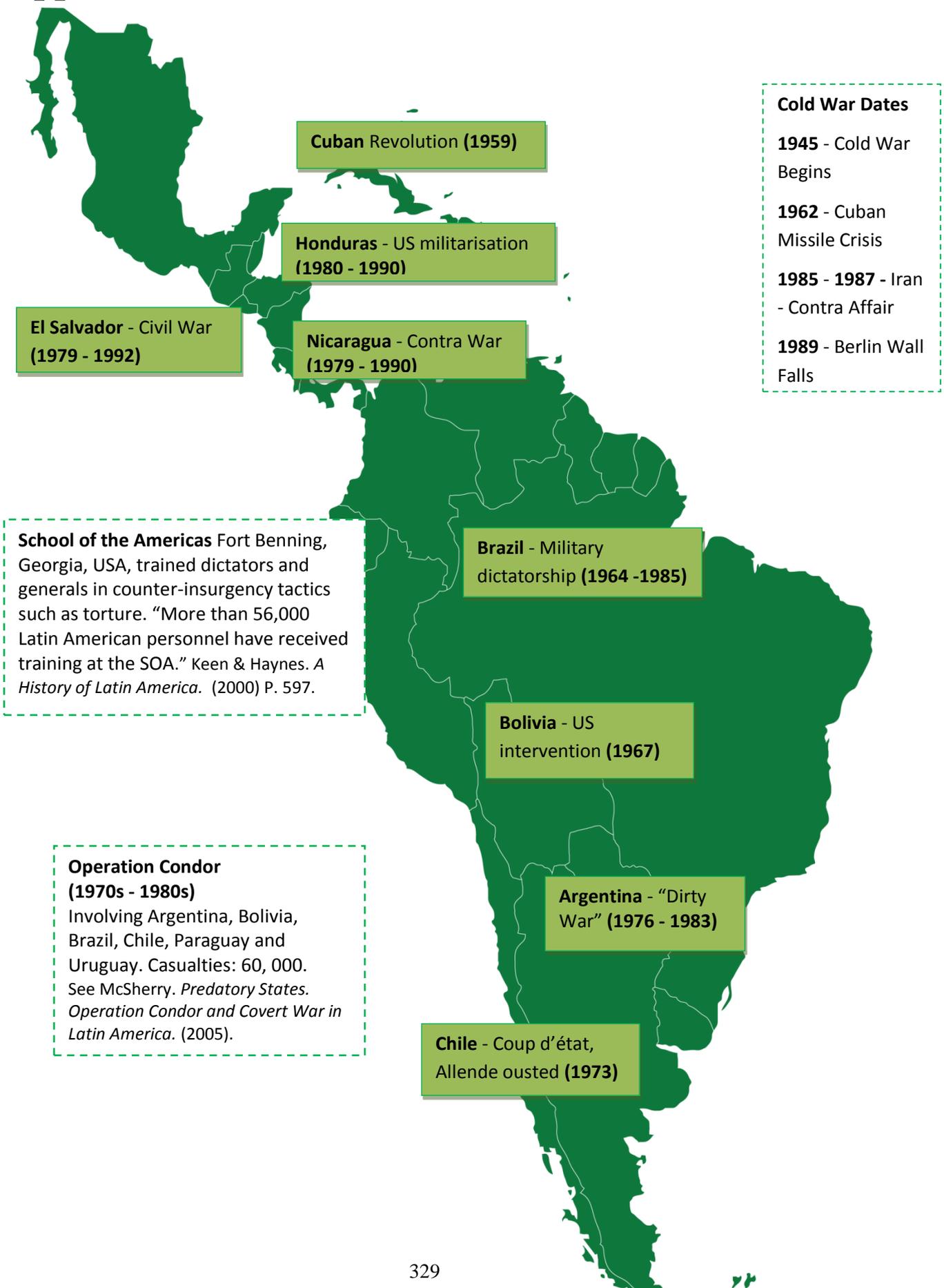
FSTMB – Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de
Bolivia

MNR – Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Bolivia)

UNO – Unión Nacional Opositora (Nicaragua)

VPR – Vanguardia Popular Revolucionaria (Brazil)

Appendix 2: Latin American Cold War (1945-1990s)



Appendix 3: Chronology

1952 – MNR takes power in Bolivia

1953 – Moncada attack on Cuban army barracks.

1959 – Cuban Revolution

1961 – Playa Girón invasion

1964 – Olga Alonso dies in tractor accident

1967 – *Haydée Habla del Moncada* (Cuba) published in “Ediciones, el Orientador Revolucionario”

----- Tania dies in Bolivarian guerrilla war

1970 – *Tania* (Cuba) published

1973 – *Testimonios* (Cuba) published – 20th anniversary of Moncada

1976 – General Videla military coup in Argentina begins “Dirty War”

----- Beginning of Operation Condor.

1977 – *Si me permiten hablar* (Bolivia) published

1978 – *No se puede hacer la revolución sin nosotras* (Cuba) published

1979 – *Sandinistas* come to power in Nicaragua. Beginning of Contra War

1980 – *Moncada. Memories of the Attack that Launched the Cuban Revolution* and *Todas estamos despiertas* published

----- Haydée Santamaría commits suicide

----- FMLN formed in El Salvador – beginning of Civil War in that country

1981 – *El Año de 61* (Cuba) and *Sandino’s Daughters* (Nicaragua) published. 20th Anniversary of Playa Girón.

1983 – *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* first published

1984 – End of Argentinean “Dirty War”

1986 – *The Little School* (Argentina) published

1987 – *Don’t be afraid, Gringo* (Honduras) published

1988 – *Nunca estuve sola* (El Salvador) published

1990 – Contra War ends

1992 – El Salvadorian Civil War ends

2005 – New edition of *Haydée Habla del Moncada* published