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The Semiotics of Solidarity: Reinterpreting Artefacts of Latin American Resistance in Contemporary Leeds

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Introduction

On September 9th, 2023, students from the University of Leeds attended the annual vigil and march to commemorate those who struggled for a better future under Chile's civil-military dictatorship of 1973-1990. The event, organised by first- and second-generation Chilean exiles, took place in Sheffield, recently recognised as a 'City of Sanctuary'.³ The day before the march, the students were invited to deliver one of their poster-making workshops with the third generation of Chilean exiles – children of those who either accompanied their parents in exile to the UK, or who were born there. Maria Vasquez Aguilar, organiser of this

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² Dr Richard G. Smith originally trained as a chemist before a career in consumer product innovation took him all over the world, including three years living in Buenos Aires and many more working and travelling across the length and breadth of Latin America. Subsequently, he studied Spanish, French and History at the Open University and obtained an MA in Latin American Studies from the University of Liverpool in 2016. His PhD, awarded in 2022 and also from Liverpool, concerned the student opposition to the Pinochet regime in Chile. He was a Visiting Fellow at CLACS, University of London (2022-23) and, as well as continuing his doctoral research interests, he is part of a project digitising a collection of political posters in Santiago, and one exploring music, migration and identity with Chilean exiles and other migrant communities in Liverpool. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5894-4600>.

³ *Sheffield City of Sanctuary*, <https://sheffield.cityofsanctuary.org/> [accessed 25 December 2023]

yearly gathering and co-founder of the Chile Solidarity Network, had seen the Leeds University students' poster-making workshops online, and saw an opportunity to encourage the younger generations to explore their own solidarities with the past.

This paper examines reinterpretations of solidarity with Latin America through a student-led project at the University of Leeds. The project, 'Thinking Inside the Box: 1973' (hereafter, TITB), was a collaboration between the University of London – specifically, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the London School of Economics – and the Universities of Leeds and Liverpool in 2023. The broader framework of TITB seeks to generate liberatory and transformative learning by approaching the educative process with students as co-creators and co-curators of knowledge. The approach draws from decolonial theory by seeking to challenge the hierarchical practices of mainstream education in which the teacher imposes knowledge on the student. In dialogue with Freirian concepts of collective interpretation and 'conscientisation' (Freire, 1968), scholars and students involved in the project used archives to run a series of events and public engagements. It connects students to each other and to a range of archival materials, broadly themed around 20th century Latin America, to inspire them in designing, developing and delivering an output of significant impact by engaging with local communities; in this case, the Chilean diaspora of the dictatorship. The project promotes the co-curation of knowledge, teaching and learning, and supports students to practice autonomy in their journeys of content and skills acquisition (Grimaldi, Carvalho and Natale, 2022; Grimaldi and Rofe, 2023).

The project's first iteration took place in 2021, at King's College London University, and focused on the Latin American Political Pamphlets Collection in the Senate House Library in London (Grimaldi, Carvalho and Natale, 2022). The next year, the project grew to involve collaborators across an additional four institutions, including other London institutions as well as the Universities of Leeds and Liverpool. The project also expanded to include two new archives: the Popular Music Archive in Liverpool, and 'Memories of Resistance', an archive of the graphic resistance to repression in Chile from the Centro Cultural Tallersol in Chile.⁴ Coinciding with the upcoming 50th commemorations of 1973, TITB became a timely opportunity for an appropriately themed student-led archival project. At the University of Leeds, students used their experiences in the archive to design and run a series of learning activities and public-facing events to explore

⁴ Hosted by the UCLA Library's Modern Endangered Archives Programme <https://meap.library.ucla.edu/projects/memories-of-resistance> [accessed 11 November 2023]

the themes of hope, struggle and solidarity, proposing their project as an act of solidarity with past struggles in the context of 1973.

Despite what the title suggests, TITB:1973 moved far beyond commemorating the fifty years that have passed since the Chilean military coup d'état of 1973. First, we acknowledge that 1973 was a pivotal year in many contexts across Latin America, particularly in the Southern Cone. In Chile, 1973 witnessed the overthrow of democratically elected President Salvador Allende, and the installation of a regime that tortured and killed tens of thousands. In Uruguay, the year was pivotal in the dismantling of parliament and the establishment of an authoritarian regime; in Paraguay military officer Alfredo Stroessner was suspiciously re-elected for the fourth of seven times; and in Argentina, 1973 saw the re-election of President Juan Domingo Perón, recently returned from a lengthy exile following the military overthrow of his own regime in 1955 (Patto Sá Motta, 2023).

Second, we understand 1973 to reflect a specific political moment in which, under the shadow of the Cold War, hopes for socially conscious models of development and a more equal future were met with state terror as it became the new politics of rule. In this sense, the pivotal year 1973, is not a fixed, chronological point in time, rather, it is the expression of a particular political tension with a recognisable series of implications. Constitutional politics were dismantled, and states of exception were declared and imposed; political rights were removed from those who might challenge those in power or legitimately question their authority. Cultural and artistic forms of resistance were repressed through censorship and the targeting of artists. Already-marginalised groups, such as the rural and urban poor and indigenous groups, bore the brunt of modernisation projects and economic failings, becoming further marginalised. The all-too-broadly-defined 'Left' was declared an internal enemy and became the main victim of state terror, political imprisonment, torture, disappearance and exile. The year 1973 thus also represents the repression of freedoms – freedoms to think, assemble, hope, dream, imagine, speak of and build a better future. In this sense, it can be said that Latin America of the 20th century suffered not one but multiple 1973s.

Archives, Performance Theory and Semiotic Multimodality

The international solidarity that emerged in response to these many '1973s' has been closely studied by following the activities of activists, exiles and their transnational advocacy networks (Sikkink, 1993). Although solidarity for Latin America began as early as 1964 with the Brazilian military coup (Grimaldi, 2023; Rollemberg, 1999), 1973 saw its significant expansion and intensification,

in particular in Chile, which catalysed a wave of new strategies and expressions of solidarity. Dedicated groups gathered data on human rights abuses, petitioned local political actors, rallied support from unions and other social justice organisations, and raised awareness through publications, press conferences, performances, public protests, and many more (Livingstone, 2018; 2019; 2020; Camacho Padilla, 2009; 2011; Quadrat, 2008; Christiaens, 2013; Green, 2010; Chirio, 2005; Schneider Marques, 2015; Rodio & Schmitz, 2010).

Almost everything we know about solidarity in the 1970s has been drawn from (or has since become) an archive. Historians have worked with correspondence, political ephemera, newspaper clippings, photos, posters, government documents, interviews and testimonies, and more to build up the rich narratives and fine-grained pictures we now have of the groups and individuals that made solidarity activism happen, the networks and alliances they forged and moved through over time, and the pivotal moments they experienced as they met challenges and overcame them.

These archives are a critical resource, particularly as the opportunities to gather new first-hand accounts are quickly disappearing. Over the past 30 years, multiple archives have been created from the testimonies of opposition activists in Latin America, as well as the perpetrators of human rights abuses themselves. To name but a few examples, in Brazil, the project titled ‘*resistir é preciso*’ has collected and digitised an archive of video testimonies, printed magazines, and posters of resistance to the Brazilian military regime of 1964-1985.⁵ In Chile, important sites where detainees were imprisoned, tortured and murdered, such as Villa Grimaldi⁶ and Londres 38⁷ are maintained as places of reflection and memory, while the Museum of Memory and Human Rights is curating an oral history archive⁸ of testimonies by cultural workers who resisted the Pinochet regime, and the evolution of the visual and sonic landscape of the 2019-20 social explosion has been captured in an audio-visual installation.⁹ ‘A Museum for Me’ is a virtual and physical focal point created by human rights researchers, museologists, NGOs, artists, and community-based activists in Colombia and the UK where “victims and survivors of the armed conflict take centre-stage; their representation (or

⁵ *Resistir é Preciso...*, <https://resistirepreciso.org.br/> [accessed 21 November 2023]

⁶ *Villa Grimaldi Corporación Parque por la Paz*, <http://villagrimaldi.cl/quienes-somos/directorio/> [accessed 11 November 2023]

⁷ *Londres 38: espacio de memorias*, <https://www.londres38.cl/> [accessed 11 November 2023]

⁸ *Resistencia Cultural en Dictadura: UNAC/ Coordinador Cultural*, <https://testimonios.museodelamemoria.cl/category/archivo-oral/coordinador-cultural/> [accessed 4 July 2024]

⁹ *Palimpsesto: Muros del Estallido*, <https://palimpsesto.info> [accessed 11 November 2023]

indeed, invisibility) is scrutinised and re-cast; gendered or identity-based forms of violence – and resistance – are revealed; and stories of the silenced are communicated gently or broadcast loudly, through myriad, life-affirming, cultural and social forms of truth-telling and creative peace-building.”¹⁰ Following the return to democracy, in 1983, the testimonies and stories of victims of the Argentine military dictatorship were collated during a truth and reconciliation commission and published as ‘Nunca Más’ – ‘Never Again’.¹¹ More recently, archives around the ‘Condor Trials’ (Lessa, 2022) have been created to examine the transnational dimensions of human rights abuses across multiple countries.

The collation of archives from above and below, and the way we deal with them is fundamental to how the past is interpreted, framed and understood. The creation, collection, organisation, and framing of archival materials can provide a detailed picture of a past that might otherwise have been lost. Many of the regimes in place explicitly targeted cultural production and intellectual debate by censoring content, destroying printed materials and artworks, and banning political ephemera. In many cases, these regimes have additionally sought to destroy and deny access to evidence of their own activities, particularly in relation to the torture, murder, and disappearance of citizens. While civil society has often been at the forefront of gathering, organising, collating, analysing, presenting and disseminating evidence and data in relation to past human rights violations, politically powerful elements of the former regimes continue to represent a threat:

“The different attempts to reactivate this disruptive power have been interrupted by the continual overlap of diverse mechanisms: the inoculation of collective memory from State systems; the defensive oblivion assimilated by civil society; the depoliticisation of subjectivities in restructuring neoliberal economies; the aestheticisation of counterculture, etc.” (Longoni, 2016, p. 26)”

The regrouping of fragmented and dispersed pieces of the puzzle through the archives and oral (micro)histories thus allows us to create more detailed and multidimensional pictures of repression, resistance and solidarity. Whether from

¹⁰ *Learning Space for Me*, <https://www.amuseumforme.org/learning-space-for-me/>, and *A Museum for Me*, <https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/transforming-conflict-and-displacement-through-the-arts-and-humanities-film-programme/a-museum-for-me/> [both accessed 11 November 2023]

¹¹ *Informe "nunca más" Comisión nacional sobre la desaparición de personas (CONADEP)* - Argentina. - <http://www.derechoshumanos.net/lesahumanidad/informes/argentina/informe-de-la-CONADEP-Nunca-mas.htm> [accessed 4 July 2024]

above or from below, activists and researchers, and some state actors, from Latin America and from all over the world, have worked to establish the ‘truth’, be that to produce a national collective history, prosecute some perpetrators, locate the disappeared, or devise reparation schemes. The establishment of a ‘truth’ by a state is a particularly complex process. Creating a collective narrative of the past requires some histories, truths, and memories to be omitted. In the context of truth and reconciliation commissions, the victim-perpetrator narrative implies that those who died or were silenced by a regime were somehow ‘defeated’. Likewise, and as pointed out by Torelly (2018), the militant Left is often portrayed as having been misguided, naively hopeful and too idealistic, despite having good intentions.

The establishment of hegemonic narratives by elites can deny the agency of grassroots activists, whose prefigurative political projects and social movements are often overlooked by such narratives, “forestalling any elaboration upon continuities with the socio-political struggles against structural violence today” (Grimaldi, forthcoming). In this context, a decolonial approach can help us to reconceptualise the archive, not only as a source of static collective memory and truth surrounding a time-bound historical event or experience, but of living resistance to ongoing struggles against authoritarianism and neoliberalism. It would mean rethinking the archive and its existence as something that actively resists as much as it passively evidences state violence (Cesar, 2016: 68). We can challenge the condemnation of resistance and solidarity to the past by approaching the archive in a way that reactivates, as opposed to compartmentalises, “the dialectic of revolutionary thought” (Traverso, 2017). Here, we engage with Diana Taylor’s concept of ‘repertoire’ to theorise a performance of the archive (Taylor, 2003) that “open[s] it up to acquiring new interpretive meaning and, perhaps, inspiring new political action” (Grimaldi, forthcoming).

Recent methodological approaches in the historiography of Cold War Latin America have highlighted the agential potential of visual artefacts of solidarity and resistance (see for example Esch, 2018; Stites Mor, 2018; 2022; Maasri, 2009), as well as the possibility of their reactivation as drivers of political thought and action in the present (Grimaldi & Gukelberger, 2024). In particular, posters and artworks have served as a distinct lens for re-examining the history of solidarity with Chile in countries such as Belgium, Sweden, France and Italy (Christiaens, 2018; de Kievd, 2013; Goff, 2007; Goñi and Cabranes, 2020; Camacho Padilla and Cristiá, 2021; Orzes, 2022). Generally speaking, in the context of the UK, comparable research has been far more sparse, and is largely focused on mapping out the key networks and actors through which solidarity with Chile was organised, such as students, the Left (Perry, 2020), the Labour Party and related workers’ movements (Hirsch, 2016; Livingstone, 2019), as well as the solidarity movement’s strategic engagement with the language of human rights

(Bowen, 2019), and the importance of music to the movement (Carrasco and Smith, forthcoming; Arredondo, forthcoming; Cohen, Shaw and Smith, forthcoming).

The decade preceding the fiftieth anniversary since the military coup of 1973 has undoubtedly seen rising scholarly interest in exile experiences and solidarity in the UK, which has emerged through doctoral research, memory work and community-facing projects being carried out by second generation exiles.^{12,13} Chilean exiles in the north of the UK have received particular attention from researchers (Reithof and Smith, 2023), but also in film, such as the 2018 film, *Nae Pasaran!* (Bustos, 2018), and the recent documentary *Chileans of the North* (Paul, 2023). Likewise, 2023 prompted a number of local explorations of the artefactual histories of solidarity, such as at the Manchester People’s Museum¹⁴ and Sheffield Museums.¹⁵ This research therefore contributes to highlighting the agency of UK-Chilean solidarity activists through reinterpreting how solidarity unfolds in the present in relation to artefacts of the past.

Attention has also turned to developing analytical frameworks for the production of political artworks and artefacts themselves (Vergara-Leyton, Garrido-Peña and Undurraga-Puelma, 2014; Osses and Vico, 2009; Valdebenito, 2010). Building on this direction of enquiry, Cristi and Araneda, in their work on Chilean graphic resistance, advocate a framework that incorporates their socio-political dimensions. Their approach to visual artefacts “focuses on the production process as a political practice, rather than only on the explicit political content of a graphic piece” (Cristi and Araneda, 2018, p.69; see also: Cristi and Araneda, 2016). These works have also pointed to the circular temporality of artistic practices, which have reemerged through more recent waves of student activism in Chile (Cristi and Araneda, 2018; Becerra and Stull, 2010).

This article contributes to expanding the application of semiotic analysis beyond the graphic image to also examine the sociological conditions from which the

¹² Vasquez-Aguilar, Maria. (2023). *You’re Practically British!*, <https://resistancerightsandrefuge.uk/maria-vasquez-aguilar> [accessed 4 July 2024]

¹³ *Your Testimonies*, <https://resistancerightsandrefuge.uk/testimonies> [accessed 4 July 2024]

¹⁴ *Chile Solidarity Campaign – 50th Anniversary Archive Open Day*, https://phm.org.uk/events_new/chile-solidarity-campaign-50th-anniversary-archive-open-day/ [accessed 4 July 2024]

¹⁵ *Chile: 50 years of Solidarity and Resistance*, <https://www.sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/chile-50-years-of-solidarity-and-resistance/> [accessed 4 July 2024]

artefacts and their visual language materialised. We incorporate the definition of graphic communication as a reiterative political practice, and seek out the reactivation of solidarity through a performative engagement with the archive. To guide our analysis, we draw from approaches of multimodality and semiotics. Multimodality “attends systematically to the social interpretation of a range of forms of making meaning” (Jewitt, 2015, p. 69). The multimodal lens can be used to conceptualise semiotic materials as configurations of “the actions, materials and artefacts we use for communicative purposes” (van Leuven, 2005, p. 285 cited in Jewitt, 2015, p.72). As an approach, it involves a close reading of the different modes available in an artefact, including visual, typographic and design elements, as well as bodily gestures, positions, postures and the use of objects (Jewitt, 2015, pp. 79-80). Complementarily, social semiotics examines “the production and dissemination of discourses across the variety of social and cultural contexts within which meaning is made” (Jewitt and Henriksen, 2016, p.145). It draws on visual and textual modes, but also works across them through things like composition, design, colour palette, style or genre, and gender. We bring together these approaches and concepts from decolonial interpretations of the archive, performance theory and semiotic multimodality through the pedagogical framework and projects of Thinking Inside the Box.

The present paper therefore has three aims. First, to expand on the historiography of UK-Chile solidarities in relation to visual and social semiotics; second, to evaluate collective, present-day reinterpretations of solidarity through material artefacts and archival collections; and, third, to reflect on the transformative potential of critical pedagogies. To do this, we reflect on TITB: 1973 as it manifested at the University of Leeds between October 2022 and September 2023. In this paper, we analyse three phases of the project: establishing the foundational principles and message of the project, researching and designing the project activities, and delivering the project outputs through exhibitions, workshops and online publications. Each of these phases engaged archival materials and (re)interpreted solidarity of the past in distinct ways, which we examine in relation to existing historiography, visual and semiotic analysis and pedagogy. We draw on the relationship between an archive and its performance and attempt to understand how memorialisation and/or the reactivation of past solidarities can take place. Drawing on elements of participant observation, ethnography and auto-ethnography, and understanding students and academic staff alike as learners, participants and co-researchers, we draw from fieldwork and meetings in both formal and informal settings, as well as collaborative documents and group chats to document the project.

Choosing Hope, Struggle and Solidarity

The first milestone took place in early January 2023, when students explored the books, pamphlets, posters, vinyl sleeves, and cassettes in the Robert Pring-Mill Collection of material linked with 20th century ‘protest’ music in Latin America and the Caribbean in the University of Liverpool’s Popular Music Archive (Riethof and Smith, 2023). Before this visit, the students’ background reading had largely been concerned with human rights abuses under military and authoritarian rule. The archive, however, was replete with brightly coloured images, celebrations of music and culture, and lyrics that transmitted hope.

Robert Pring-Mill (1924-2005) spent his academic career at the University of Oxford, researching and lecturing on Hispanic and Latin American literature. He first visited Argentina, Uruguay and Chile as an undergraduate in 1949 (Higgins, 2007). In Chile, he encountered the poetry of Pablo Neruda, a Communist Party senator who was then on the run. This sparked a life-long interest in socially committed poetry. In 1968-69, he took a sabbatical from Oxford and travelled from Mexico to Chile and back by Land Rover, at times accompanied by his young family. His intention was to study Neruda’s poetry, and especially his encyclopaedic paean to Latin America, *Canto General*. He thought he could not properly understand that work without fully understanding its political, social and cultural contexts (Cohen, Shaw, Waldock and Smith, 2022a).

He also wanted to explore the socially committed poetry of Latin America, and he met poets, critics and a broad cross-section of Latin American people, while acquiring over a thousand publications of all types, from books to unpublished manuscripts, leaflets and magazines. His studies extended to popular music and protest songs, and his acquisitions to LPs cassettes and his own recordings. His collection of *canciones de lucha y esperanza*, ‘songs of hope and struggle’, a term he preferred to ‘protest music’, because he considered one protested *against* something, yet these songs were always *in favour* of something: land reform, literacy, better housing, democracy, and so on. He donated his music archive to the University of Liverpool’s Institute of Popular Music at the behest of Jan Fairley, a journalist who researched and wrote about World Music; she had studied under Pring-Mill at Oxford and was a research fellow at the University of Liverpool’s Institute of Popular Music (Cohen, Shaw, Waldock and Smith, 2022a).

Pring-Mill’s conception of songs of hope and struggle shaped his collection which, while it covers much of Latin America and the Caribbean, is particularly strong on the music of Chile and Nicaragua. Chilean *Nueva Canción*, or New Song, was a style of folk music that was the soundtrack to the 1960s social unrest in Chile, in much the same way musicians like Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger and Joan Baez were in the USA. Inspired by folklorist, ethnomusicologist and visual artist, Violeta

Parra, who founded the movement, groups such as Inti-Illimani and Quilapayún, and singer-songwriters like Víctor Jara and Patricio Mann, were very close to Salvador Allende's Popular Unity movement; after the Chilean coup d'état in 1973, Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani played prominent roles in international Chilean Solidarity campaigns. Albums, recordings and lyric books of these artists strongly in the collection the students encountered.

There is a clear difference between the aesthetics of denunciation and those of hope. In the former, visual semiotic devices are designed to capture attention with bold images and colours and reveal experiences of violence, as well as communicating factual accuracy and legitimacy. This is evident in the imagery of denunciation and solidarity materials from the period, which are designed to shock or intimidate; resistance to oppression highlights violence, injustice, inequality, and identifies their perpetrators. Furthermore, transnational solidarity with victims needs to convince multinational publics and political actors of the veracity of claims of illegal imprisonment, torture, murder, and disappearances. Notably, these artefacts are often hand-made or designed to be cheaply produced en masse. This is a reflection not only on the grassroots nature of their production in the Chilean context, which meant working with limited resources, responding efficiently to urgent causes and ensuring effective dissemination. Figure 1 below evidences such a case, where striking, almost playful, lettering is used to cover almost half the frame to declare the purpose of the document: Chile Bulletin. It draws the spectator in, before revealing more detail. Below the title, a speech bubble encased in sharp, jagged lines holds text so small that it literally requires the viewer to move closer, where they will find an extract of President Salvador Allende's final speech, delivered to the nation moments before his death. To the left of these inspiring words, a man can be seen tethered to the nation of Chile with a rope, his hands behind his back and his head hung as if held up by a noose, mouth open as if speaking from beyond the grave – an image of the violence and suffering of Chileans. Below the drawing, we find the maker of this document, the Merseyside Solidarity Committee. The inclusion of an issue number reveals the publication is part of a series, while the charge of 5p (around 45p in today's money) indicates the organisation's need to cover the cost of printing. Figure 2 from the Merseyside Chile Committee For Human Rights presents a simpler and more professional-looking composition, with clear typed lettering at the top, and a wood-cut style printed image – evocative of folkloric art – in the bottom half of the frame. The highly contrasted black and white image shows a pile of fallen bodies interwoven on the floor, whose hands still clutch their flags, a homage to those who have died defending the right to a better future.

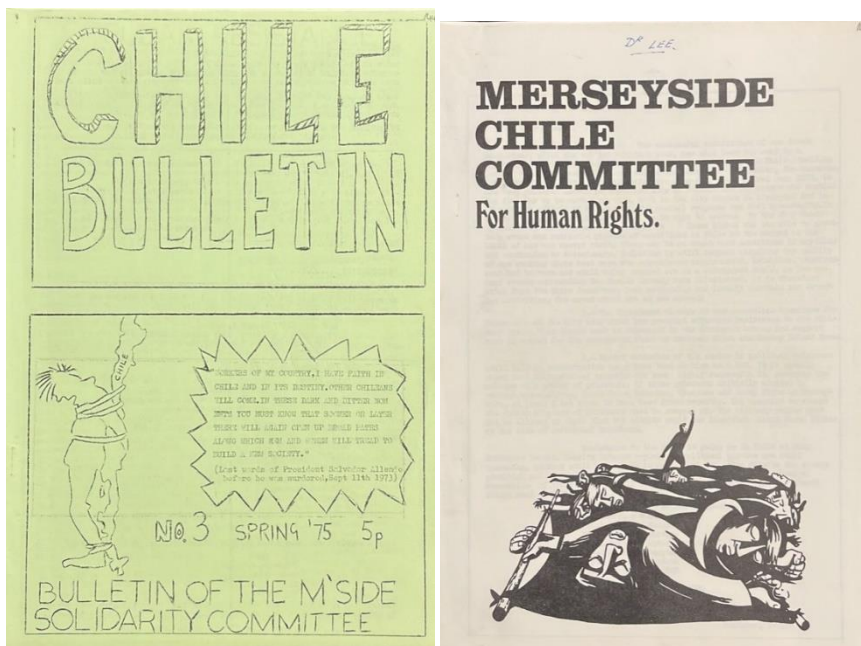


Figure 1 (left): *Bulletin of the Merseyside Solidarity Committee No. 3, 1975.* Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library; Figure 2 (right): *Merseyside Chile Committee For Human Rights, no date.* Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library.

Despite these images' dominantly dark overtones, they both present a slither of hope. In Figure 1, Allende's words provide solace: "Keep in mind that, much sooner than later, the great avenues will again be opened through which will pass free men to construct a better society". In Figure 2, a figure is seen standing defiantly in the background, emerging from the pile of bodies with a fist raised in the air, promising the struggle is not over.

In other images we encountered in the Pring-Mill collection, messages of hope were significantly more prominent, and it became clear that their purpose was not to horrify and denounce, but rather animate, uplift, and inspire, using images that portray empathy and solidarity. One student wrote:

All of us were amazed by the variety of colourful, striking visuals – certain artworks reminded me of cubism with their vivid primary colours and range of motifs. Some contained the iconic clenched fist, raised in the

air, while others depicted birds, their large wings spread wide as if trying to break free from their cage, the canvas, and fly towards freedom.¹⁶

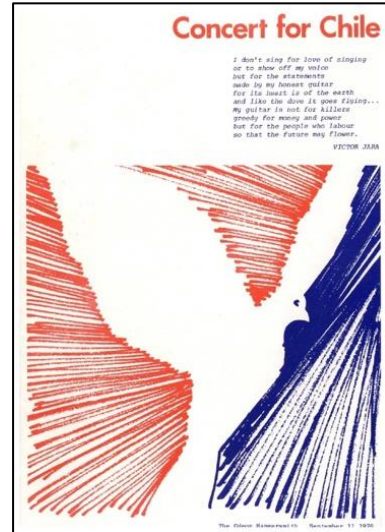
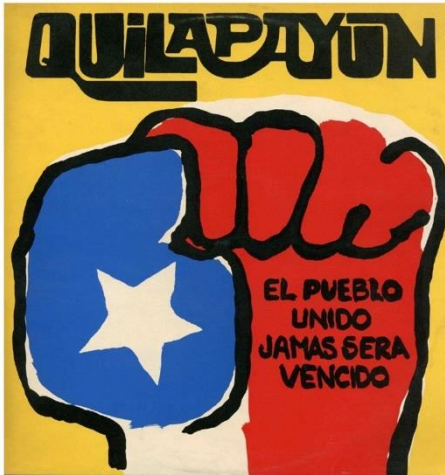


Figure 3 (left): Vinyl Sleeve for Quilapayún's "El Pueblo Unido Jamas sera Vencido". Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library; Figure 4 (right): Concert for Chile, event poster. Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library.

Figure 3, a vinyl sleeve for Quilapayún's famous "El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido" (The People United Will Never Be Defeated), contrasts the subtlety of Figure 2 as a raised, clenched fist, a symbol of defiance, takes up almost the entire frame. Figure 4 is a poster produced for a solidarity concert taking place on the 11 September 1976 at the Odeon Hammersmith, London. Once again, a message of hope dominates the page through the symbol of a white dove of peace. The poster also contains the lyrics of "Estadio de Chile", a song written by Víctor Jara, a famous singer murdered by the regime: "my guitar is not for killers; greedy for money and power; but for the people who labour; so that the future may flower." As well as the bright, joyful colours of the artworks, both of which are based on

¹⁶ Taniguchi, Mayu (2023) *A Visit to the Liverpool Music Archive*, <https://www.thinkinginsidethebox.co.uk/leeds-blog/thinking-inside-the-box-1973-a-visit-to-the-liverpool-music-archive> [accessed 12 March 2023]

the Chilean national flag, a social semiotic approach reveals more about their distinctive features. Both artefacts act as witnesses to the solidarity and freedom afforded by musicians outside of Chile; the ability to produce and disseminate revolutionary music and play concerts that bring people together in solidarity, a sharp contrast to the cultural censorship and necessarily understated use of music under the regime in Chile.

The Pring-Mill collection included a vast amount of music and materials associated with the Chilean singer Víctor Jara, his life and activism, understood in the context of the brutality of his death at the hands of the Chilean regime. His songs, and the hope and joy which with they were written, continue to be widely performed across the world in the name of freedom. While we sifted through the materials in the archive, we played a number of Víctor Jara's songs, whose image, lyrics, voice and musical composition accompanied our collective interpretation of the materials. One student was struck by a biography written by Jara's wife, Joan, which she eventually selected as a part of the project exhibition (Jara, 1984). It is through this experience that students decided that the themes of 'Hope, Struggle and Solidarity' - as opposed to the violence of oppression and 'Resistance' - as the guiding themes of their project. In this way, through the repertoire of the archive, students reactivated the hope and struggle of 1970s Chile, as well as its political power, to generate transnational solidarity.

Connecting with Kadima

The second milestone in the project concerned a unique collection of printed material that represents one of the largest and most important collections of graphic art recording resistance counterculture in Chile under authoritarian rule (Cristi and Araneda, 2018). In 1977, during the Pinochet civil-military dictatorship, the Tallersol Cultural Centre was founded in Santiago by a collective of artists, and cultural and political activists who resisted repression by creating space for cultural freedom. They produced posters, pamphlets and other graphic material for human rights, political, social, cultural, and religious organisations. The design, production and distribution of the printed works was done semi-clandestinely, and security forces repeatedly raided the print workshop, and its members were detained, tortured, and internally exiled. Recently, the University of Liverpool have been working with Tallersol to catalogue and digitise this original printed matter to make this remarkable asset available to the public and academia. The project is funded by the Modern Endangered Archives Program

(MEAP)¹⁷ and the first 150 items in Tallersol's 'Memories of Resistance' archive, can be studied online.¹⁸

Tallersol and its founder Antonio Cadima – Kadima – were and remain well connected, working with religious, cultural, and political activists, groups in Santiago's shantytowns, opposition cultural centres, and human rights organisations, such as the families of political prisoners and anti-torture campaigners. Kadima estimates that in the early 1980s they were responsible for 50-60% of the posters produced by the resistance in Santiago. The Tallersol archive is not only testament to a remarkable underground graphic workshop, but it also foregrounds the network of popular political, social, cultural and religious groups that resisted Pinochet, and chronicles their campaigns, perspectives and activities as the civil-military dictatorship unfolded.

The posters and other printed matter broadly represent the grassroots political, social, and cultural resistance to oppression in Chile. In contrast to the National Protests and democratic transition in the 1980s, the cultural dimensions of the resistance, their creative and political strategies, and social networks are less well understood. Chile's distinct tradition of mural and graphic art was a potent symbol of opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship and of the international solidarity campaigns. The Tallersol 'Memories of Resistance' archive includes posters and pamphlets created for specific campaigns, protests, events, and cultural and countercultural happenings involving themselves and fellow artists, writers and musicians.

In the months following the visit to the archive, students arranged a virtual encounter with Kadima himself, inspired by his past experiences as an activist, artist and educator. Kadima talked to students about his work, his visual inspirations and how to combine images to produce an impactful poster. He also counselled them on how to lead a workshop on poster-making, revealing the social and material conditions that shaped his work in terms of their production – quick and cheap to produce, easy to disseminate, highly replicable and ephemeral. This interaction inspired and shaped the project, adding the student's artistic perspective and their ability to draw on diverse semiotic configurations from both resistance within Chile and solidarity outside it.

What students found in Kadima's work was evidence and experiences of the cultural censorship that overshadowed the regime. Unlike the images and music

¹⁷ *Modern Endangered Archives Program*, <https://meap.library.ucla.edu> [accessed 20 December 2023]

¹⁸ *Memories of Resistance: A Digital Archive of Chile's Graphic Resistance*, <https://meap.library.ucla.edu/projects/memories-of-resistance> [accessed 20 December 2023]

produced and disseminated overseas, which drew from the pre-regime visual, textual and audio symbols of Nueva Canción Chilena, Kadima’s artworks were shaped by the ever-present need to evade capture and imprisonment. References to the raised fist, Allende and Víctor Jara were dangerous to use, and so Kadima brought elements of folkloric art to portray the struggle. Similar to Pring-Mill, Kadima acknowledged the important distinction between hope and struggle on the one hand and the victimhood associated with resistance on the other. While one reawakened the agency of social and political movements under the regime, the other, shaped by the dictatorship’s narrative as well as that of ensuing governments, understood those movements as a closed chapter, lost to state terror.

Contemplating these two sets of artefacts – those of Pring-Mill and Kadima – in dialogue with one another, with their interesting fonts, phrases, recurring symbolisms, and composition, two symbols emerged: the dove and the sun. Both represent hope and often appeared in the idealised form of the typical ‘folkloric’ style that characterised many of the posters. They were combined to produce the project’s logo (Figure 5), along with guitar strings, which are both a reference to music and the story of Víctor Jara, and a reminder of the dangers faced by those speaking out against injustice, the strings of the guitar also representing the bars of a prison cell.



Figure 5: Logo for *Thinking Inside the Box: 1973*.

Collectively (Re)Interpreting the Archives through Student-led Workshops

The third phase of reinterpretation appeared when students decided to develop and run a series of poster-making workshops. Students approached local organisations with their proposal, emphasising their chosen themes of Hope,

Struggle and Solidarity and their relevance to the fiftieth anniversary of the military coup in Chile. They prepared to deliver the workshops at the Hyde Park Book Club, a café and bar; Left Bank, an event space; and Leeds Art Gallery, part of the city's museums and galleries group. These spaces share a commitment to public engagement, with a focus on the local community. They are all regularly frequented by the public, but in particular by students, activists, and creatives who often also contribute creative and cultural outputs.

The students proactively collated their experiences and the specialist knowledge and skill they acquired into a design for the workshops themselves. They had consulted scholars, industry experts and fellow students from the arts to ensure the message and purpose of the workshops were clear; to develop a central method for their delivery; and to best allocate their limited resources. Inspired by Kadima's own practices, the workshops were designed to educate participants about the Chilean regime, and guide them to produce their own political posters by drawing inspiration from the graphic, symbolic, musical and material elements of the political posters and artworks from the archives of Pring-Mill and Kadima. They provided participants with prompts, inspired by Kadima, to think about how they would communicate the political messages and struggles of today with limited text and materials.

A reactivation of collective, arts-based practices from 1970s Chile and Europe-based solidarity networks took place in a decolonial performance of the archive comprising the images students had collected through their research and the new posters being produced in the workshops.¹⁹ Through the act of collectively interpreting images, reconfiguring symbols and messages, and producing new artefacts of hope, struggle and solidarity, the students and participants were engaging with the practices of the past to reactivate their discursive power in a new context. The new artefacts represent distinct historical conditions, shaped by students' access to the archives, their encounters with scholars and each other, their ability to photocopy and print posters, their engagement in community spaces of the city and most importantly their personal motivations and feelings of solidarity towards global activists and activism in the past and present.

Conclusions

¹⁹ *Inspired By The Works Of Antonio Kadima, Thinking Inside The Box: 1973 Has Created Its Own Archive Of Collaborative Political Artworks*, <https://www.thinkinginsidethebox.co.uk/poster-making-workshops> [accessed 25 December 2023]

Performative Memory-Making and Decolonisation

In this article, we have reflected on a decolonial and student-led pedagogical practice based on the performance of the archival materials pertaining to political resistance in Cold War Latin America. Borrowing concepts from sociological semiotics, multimodality and performance theory, we asked the question: can the practice of ‘Thinking Inside the Box’ generate new interpretations and practices of solidarity with the past? The project rested on students’ ability to dedicate time, allocate resources and develop knowledge together and with others as a means of memorialising Chile’s 1973 with the wider public, celebrating the key figures who lost their lives and livelihoods in the struggle for freedom, and resurrecting practices of political activism from the past. Students’ ability to collectively develop and engage in these activities was nurtured through a decolonial approach to the archive that awakened the agency of material artefacts of solidarity. By the time September 2023 came around, when the Chile Solidarity Campaign were preparing for their 50th commemorations, the Chilean exile and diaspora community had already worked with students to co-produce speaking events and invited them to delivery one last poster-making workshop, this time with the grandchildren of exiles. Through students’ engagement with artefacts of resistance in the 1970s, Thinking Inside the Box had come full circle: through archives, knowledge had been passed down from Kadima in Santiago to students in Leeds, and eventually contributed to memory and solidarity among the newest generation of Chileans in the UK.

Solidarity and Denunciation: Two Modes of Visual Communication

By introducing a social semiotic lens to our reflection, we have been able to interpret and conceptualise the students’ experience of the archive as an example of translocal and transgenerational solidarity. It also brings nuance to our understanding of how this takes place. After carrying out their first visits to the Robert Pring-Mill collection of Latin American Songs of Hope, students’ collective interpretation of visual materials evolved into a critical debate surrounding the aesthetics of hope and solidarity versus those of a more denunciatory and reactionary nature. Students identified in the artefacts two styles: on the one hand, the wider tradition of “monochrome, small formats and low-weight papers” (Cristi and Aranenda, 2018, p.84), characterised by the incorporation of folkloric art and employing limited resources such as coloured inks. This style was a reflection of wider social contexts: under the regime, artists faced censorship which limited their use of text and direct references to Allende’s Chile, widely described as a cultural blackout. This style was distinct from the

more colourful, hopeful compositions that marked the three short years of Allende's government (1970-1973). While in Chile, visual references to this period and artistic style were censored and destroyed (McSherry, 2019, p. 152), overseas they were not. This led to the re-emergence and re-iteration, in exile, of those graphic and lyrical communications through music, artworks, posters and performances produced by Chileans and solidarity activists all over the world. Ultimately, these were the visual languages that the students were drawn too, identified with and embodied.

Examining the reconfiguration of these artefacts in present-day Leeds reveals nuanced ideas about solidarity as a concept and praxis. Students involved in the project were not driven to activism in response to living under a military dictatorship. A comparison between the civil-military regime of 1970s and 1980s Chile and present-day Britain highlights a critical factor in the students' ability to identify with the past. The project depended entirely on the open-mindedness, intellectual curiosities and capacities of students, staff and all those involved; it relied on the academic and professional trajectories, practical knowledge, expertise and connections of staff members and how this was interpreted by the group. Unlike the political activism of 1970s and 1980s Chile, students and staff were not threatened by arrest, incarceration, torture, death or banishment, nor were they especially limited by a scarcity of resources. Instead, the archive activists of today benefitted from a socio-political climate that welcomed such interventions, as well as access to institutional resources, funding, physical space and digital tools. The ways that the artefacts were filtered, reinterpreted and given new meaning as students reconfigured symbols and messages incorporated their own situated realities, combining social movements, visual references and intersectional positionalities from past and present.

Reinterpreting the Archive

When understood as “a social practice of resistance, collective creation and regeneration of the social fabric” (Cristi and Araneda, p. 84), the reactivation of Tallersol and other activists' graphic communication practices of the 1970s and 1980s by students and publics in Leeds today demonstrates a circular temporality. The digital, intergenerational transmission of these practices through a video call between students in the UK and an artist-activist who resisted the Chilean military regime likewise demonstrates its trans-localisation. Connected across time and space, Tallersol and TITB's graphic practices not only promote social justice and collective action through visual representations, but through the very embodiment of “the collectivization of graphic production, the constitution of active networks of solidarity, technological innovation and the use of minimal resources” (Cristi and Araneda, p85). In this way the archive is no longer merely a container of static

facts, but a constellation of dormant semiotic devices, aspirations, prefigurative politics and solidarity that is awoken and transmitted through collective bodies and declarative memory.

Archives as Tools for Memory-Making and Transformative Justice

Thinking Inside the Box also made key contributions to collective memory. Typically, Latin America's mechanisms of transitional justice – often state-led and liberal in nature – promote a closure of the past by defining political activists as victims and focusing reparations and legal justice around victims of torture and families of the disappeared. By doing so, living histories of prefigurative political activism, struggle, hope and solidarity, which hold the potential to transform the lives of the communities they reach, are denied or overlooked. Incidentally, the UCLA Library, which is currently digitising Kadima's collection, recently published a page with suggestions as to how the artworks and posters might be used pedagogically.²⁰ We hope that with this contribution we can begin to construct an answer: in re-awakening this hope and solidarity, Thinking Inside the Box facilitated a transformative form of justice: the ability for Kadima's artworks activism to inspire new generations, and the ability of third-generation Chileans to connect with and embody the struggle of their parents and grandparents.

²⁰ *MEAP in the Classroom: Posters as Visual Data*, <https://meap.library.ucla.edu/about/news/meap-in-the-classroom-posters-as-visual-data/> [accessed 25 December 2023]

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