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# Review of *Estadio Nacional*, dir. by Carmen Luz Parot

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*Estadio Nacional*. Dir. Carmen Luz Parot. Chile, 2002. Dur. 90 min.

*Estadio Nacional* (2002), a documentary film by Chilean director Carmen Luz Parot, depicts the horrors of the concentration and torture camp conducted by Augusto Pinochet's regime in Santiago, Chile's National Stadium from September to November of 1973. The events of this documentary directly follow Pinochet's September coup d'etat and subsequent overthrow of Salvador Allende's government. In this film, Parot—whose own family members were detained—effectively uses a technique of parallelism, alternating similar scenes

from the original video and still-image footage of the stadium with contemporary interviews and video of survivors. This technique lends an eerie tone, for example, to a modern soccer game with fans cheering in the stands when contrasted with emaciated prisoners sitting in those very stands during their detainment decades earlier. One scene stands out among the many empathy-evoking scenes; the camera follows a survivor to the top of the steps of the section where he was held. We watch him walk down the stairs and under the stadium yet, strikingly, the camera remains at the top and allows the man on screen to tread into the darkness alone, compounding our fears of the stadium's underbelly. Another remarkable scene comes toward the end of the film when the prisoners are released and we see family and friends waiting for them outside the stadium gates: the moving camera follows a woman hurriedly walking through the crowd while people pass between her and the camera, adding to the sense of confusion. The camera closes in on her eyes and we can tell that she is anxiously searching for someone among the released detainees; there is no resolution to this search either in the narrative or the images. These scenes—the man entering his former prison and the woman searching in the crowd—augment the viewers' sense of desperation at seeing such a senseless and hopeless situation.

Perhaps the most disorienting aspect of this documentary are the images of the contemporary survivors as everyday people you would see on the streets of Santiago. In one scene, a detainee discusses seeing the face of one of his interrogators years later and utters with surprise: "Era cara de una persona completamente normal." Although he was talking about a soldier, this sentiment is appropriate for the survivors as we the viewers see them on the screen. The interview that exemplifies this is with a woman who appears to be a typical mother and grandmother, wearing a red jacket and scarf; as the camera, at medium shot, focuses in on her she begins to describe how she was interrogated and did not think she had screamed until her friends later told her she had. In a tone that could only be maintained years after such an experience, she tells of how the soldiers administered electric shocks to several parts of her body. This scene is so startling precisely because she "has the face of a completely normal person." Many of the survivors also comment on the fact that the soldiers were young men from the provinces who were unsure of their duties at the stadium; one detainee reflects that the prisoners were "prisioneros de prisioneros." This exemplifies the idea that repression is a vicious cycle that traps repressor and repressed alike.

Parot's film gracefully carries the parallelism between past and present to the end of *Estadio Nacional* where the image turns from reunions between the original prisoners and their families—some exceedingly heart wrenching with crying children clinging to their parents—to a contemporary art exhibit on the soccer field in honor of the detainees. The documentary genre is prevalent among Chilean women film directors and Parot is adept at confronting a difficult reality on screen; her film won several awards at film festivals internationally. Though they are from different genres, *Estadio Nacional* is comparable to fictional films about the Holocaust such as Stefan Ruzowitzky *The Counterfeiters* (2007) in the way these films offer a glimpse of the darker side of humanity.