

DYNAMIC MEMORIES AND MEANINGS: MEMORY DISCOURSES IN  
POSTDICTATORIAL LITERARY AND VISUAL CULTURE IN BRAZIL AND  
ARGENTINA

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines memory discourses about the most recent military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina produced in two photography exhibitions (the Brazilian government sponsored *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* and Marcelo Brodsky's *Los compañeros*) and two novels (Beatriz Bracher's *Não falei* and Sergio Chejfec's *Los planetas*). My research focuses on the capacity of postdictatorial cultural production to explore the negotiated spaces of meaning in both individual memories and collective discourses about the past. Drawing from interdisciplinary theoretical considerations on such themes as memory, representation, discourse, and subjectivity, I argue that cultural production that accentuates the impossibility to fully represent the past creates the conditions of possibility for spaces of dynamic memory about the military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina. These cultural spaces of representation offer the opportunity to destabilize the discursive logic that typically guides postdictatorial memory narratives through the reiteration of the same (counter)hegemonic political ideologies that dominated these eras of dictatorship. While I critique the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit for its presentation of an idealized counter-narrative about this time period, I contend that the memory discourses offered by Brodsky, Bracher, and Chejfec create spaces for a more meaningful engagement with the dictatorial past, particularly for those who did not directly experience the authoritarian governments in Brazil and Argentina. I maintain that instead of attempting to articulate a narrative "truth" about dictatorship, these works lay bare the negotiated processes of memory and meaning for the readers and spectators, which offers an opportunity to activate memory for new uses

within different socio-political contexts in the present. Through this dissertation project, I seek to contribute to recent critical work calling for a new language to articulate the memory of dictatorship and innovative ways to engage traumatic experiences of the past through both literary and visual culture expressions. The continued consideration of memory discourses produced in postdictatorial cultural production is an essential component within the ongoing debates on the transmission of social memory about dictatorship in Brazil and Argentina, and for other populations attempting to engage the violence of an authoritarian past and its residual effects on the present.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on the memory discourses offered in recent cultural production in postdictatorial Brazil and Argentina. I am specifically interested in examining examples of literary and visual culture that explore the inherent fissures in the representation of experience and the constantly negotiated spaces of meaning in both individual memories and collective discourses about the past. My hypothesis is that postdictatorial cultural production that accentuates these representational gaps and the impossibility to articulate a "narrative truth" about the past has the capacity to create spaces of *dynamic memory and meaning* about dictatorship. These spaces can allow for multiple ways for readers and spectators to engage the dictatorial past from within different socio-political contexts, providing the opportunity to critically consider the effects of dictatorship on present-day society. This also creates the conditions of possibility to engage "residual" experiences that are often excluded from the dominant memory narratives about this time period. This is particularly important in considering the transmission of cultural memory about dictatorship to those who did not personally experience the military regimes. The questions of younger generations or readers and spectators in transnational contexts can lead to a critical dialogue about the dictatorial experience that can serve to break from the political or ideological discourses typically used to describe this time period. In this way, cultural production that recognizes and takes advantage of the inherent fissures in meaning and memory resists producing a static narrative about dictatorship, and instead creates the opportunity for a shared, dynamic

interaction with the past and the possibility to activate memory for new social uses in the present and in the future.

### **Brief Historical and Critical Context**

While I provide an in-depth discussion of the critical work on which my dissertation seeks to build upon in Chapter One, here I would like to offer a brief overview of the historical context of the military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina. I will also outline the critical response to cultural production about dictatorship in both countries, particularly in the years immediately following the "transition"<sup>1</sup> to democratic governments. The most recent military dictatorship in Brazil began with a military coup against president João Goulart in 1964 and ended with indirect presidential elections in 1985. In Argentina, there was a military government from 1966-1973, but the period with the most violence and repression, the so-called "Dirty War," took place between 1976 and 1983. A major piece of the transition from military governments in both of these countries were amnesty laws that not only released political prisoners and absolved them from their supposed acts of "subversion" against the "nation," but also granted amnesty to military personnel who had murdered, tortured, or "disappeared" thousands of people during this time period. In Brazil, the *Lei de Anistia* was enacted on August 28, 1979, granting release to political prisoners and allowing those who were in exile to return to the country, though the military government remained in power and some clandestine groups connected to the military continued to place bombs and commit other

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<sup>1</sup> This term "transition" has been problematized by many authors, given that that members of the military governments in the Southern Cone were very involved in creating the "democratic" governments that appeared at the end of the military regimes, as well as establishing the way that this past would be "remembered" in the present. I discuss this in more detail in Chapters One and Two.

violent acts against those who were in opposition of the military regime. As of this writing, no military personnel have been put on trial for crimes committed during the dictatorship in Brazil, exemplifying the power that the military held during the "transition" to democracy and still maintains today.<sup>2</sup> In Argentina, there were two such amnesty laws enacted, both utilized to *stop* the trials of military leaders which began in the years following the transition from the dictatorial government. These laws, the 1986 *Ley de Punto Final* and the 1987 *Ley de Obediencia Debida* sought to limit both the number of trials against military personnel for acts committed during the dictatorship, and the timeline in which these juridical processes could be carried out. In 1990, President Carlos Menem pardoned the rest of the military personnel awaiting trial within the limits set by these laws, and declared that no more trials were to occur, in the name of "national reconciliation."<sup>3</sup>

For the families and friends of those who were tortured, killed, and "disappeared" during the dictatorships, these amnesty laws constituted an "institutionalized forgetting" of the atrocities committed by the military regimes. Groups that supported these laws, such as those that backed Menem's declaration for "national reconciliation," argued for a need to "leave the past in the past" in order to look ahead towards the future "promise" of democratic governments and the "guaranteed" benefits of a neoliberal economic system. Left with an inability to pursue action against military personnel through juridical means, groups seeking justice for crimes committed during the dictatorship turned to

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<sup>2</sup> I discuss this further in Chapter Two.

<sup>3</sup> In 2003, President Nestor Kirchner rescinded these laws, and trials against military personnel have once again been pursued, with varying levels of success.

testimonials, films, novels, and other cultural production as a way to "rescue" memory that was prevented at the juridical level. One of the initial ways of denouncing the violence of the military regimes was through testimony about human rights abuses reproduced in books such as *Nunca más* (1984) in Argentina and *Nunca mais* (1985) in Brazil, both of which were published at the moment of transition in both countries. It is interesting to note that in Argentina, the investigation into the crimes of the military regime was led by a government appointed commission, whereas in Brazil, the investigation was funded and conducted by the Archdiocese of São Paulo - again marking the influence that the military regime had in the transition to democracy in Brazil. Yet, after the laws preventing further trials against military personnel in Argentina (and the continued prohibition of this in Brazil), the focus turned to cultural production as a way to articulate the memory of this time period - leading to increased critical work analyzing these cultural manifestations.

In the years following the transition to political democracies in the countries of the Southern Cone (mid 1980's to early 1990's), the critical work by such authors as Fernando Reati, Adriana Bergero, and Saúl Sosnowski<sup>4</sup> made important contributions to examining ways that cultural production could intervene on the official policies of "forgetting," "amnesty," and reconciliation" instituted by the initial postdictatorial governments in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. A major component of their work appeared within the dialectic of memory and forgetting - exploring ways that cultural objects such as art, novels, *(tele)novelas*, films, short-stories, and testimonials of those

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<sup>4</sup> See for example: Sosnowski, Saúl. Ed. *Represión y reconstrucción de una cultura: el caso argentino*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1988.

who suffered from state violence during the dictatorship could contribute to circulating memories about this time period in a social climate dominated by an "official" discourse of oblivion regarding the dictatorial past. For example, in articulating the goals of a collection of essays about memory and postdictatorship, *Memoria colectiva y políticas del olvido* (edited by Bergero and Reati), the authors argue that " [...] esperamos que este libro [...] además de ser un homenaje a todos aquellos que llevan a cabo actos cotidianos de resistencia contra el olvido, sea también un monumento simbólico a las víctimas del terror de estado [...] " (MC 27). Acknowledging that the term "monument" can be problematic if used to represent a "static" memory about the past, Bergero and Reati continue by describing their work as a "monumento más bien como un espacio físico-simbólico en el cual se presta reconocimiento social a la existencia de la víctima" (MC 27). While within the work of these authors we can also note some critical concern for the memories being produced,<sup>5</sup> for the most part their work sought to reflect upon ways to recuperate the memories of those who were tortured, killed, and "disappeared" through cultural production in the face of an institutionalized erasure of the past in the years immediately following the dictatorship.

In the 1990s there was an "explosion" of memory about the military dictatorships offered in novels, films, testimonial accounts, television programs, photography, etc. This led to further critical work being done on the memory narratives being produced by or about those who suffered from the violence of the military regimes. While many

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Reati's analysis of testimonials of ex-political prisoners in Argentina in "De falsas culpas y confesiones: avatares de la memoria en los testimonios carcelarios de la guerra sucia," explores how the narratives were often articulated within the collective discourse of guilt/innocence and the conflation between confession and "truth" at this historical moment in Argentina.

authors engaged in this work (including Sosnowski, Bergero, and Reati<sup>6</sup>), the critical contributions on cultural production in postdictatorial Chile by such authors as Nelly Richard, Alberto Moreiras, and Idelber Avelar were particularly influential to think about new ways to represent the experiences of dictatorships without being appropriated within the established system of representation in the postdictatorship.<sup>7</sup> One of the important contributions of these authors was to critically examine testimonial narratives that offered a counter-memory to the official policy of "forgetting" the past that was institutionalized during the transition to democratic governments. They noted that many of these narratives often used the same language or drew from the same militant political ideology of the dictatorial period to articulate memories of their experience, leaving little room to critically reflect on the past, explore voices that are often left out of narratives about this time period, and consider the effects of the dictatorship on present-day society. The approach of these authors created a space for cultural critics to maintain a political or moral solidarity with those who suffered from the violent repression of the military regime, without idealizing their experiences or appropriating the tortured, killed, and "disappeared" as symbols within a (counter)hegemonic political project of memory. This allows us to critically examine the memory narratives being produced about the dictatorship and explore the multiple ways that these representations of the past are being activated and used for different social or political purposes today.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example: Sosnowski, Saúl and Roxana Patiño Eds. *Una cultura para la democracia en América Latina*. México D.F.: Ediciones UNESCO, 1999 or Reati, Fernando. *Postales del porvenir: La literatura de anticipación en la Argentina neoliberal (1985-1999)*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> I dialogue extensively with the contributions of these authors throughout my dissertation, so I will not review their work here.

So in this sense, what we can observe in postdictatorial Brazil and Argentina is not so-much a battle between "memory" and "forgetting,"<sup>8</sup> but rather the construction and transmission of different interpretations of the past through cultural production. As Elizabeth Jelin argues:

There is an active political struggle not only over the meaning of what took place in the past but over the meaning of memory itself. The space of memory is thus an arena of political struggle that is frequently conceived in terms of a struggle "against oblivion": *remember so as not to repeat*. These slogans, however, can be tricky. Slogans such as "memory against oblivion" or "against silence" hide an opposition between distinct and rival memories (each one with its own forgetfulness). In truth, what is at stake is an opposition of "memory against memory." (*SRLM* xviii)

For any project (such as my own) seeking to examine the possibilities of creating shared, dynamic cultural memories about the military dictatorship, it is imperative to interrogate the competing memory discourses being activated to narrate the past in the postdictatorship. We must consider the social actors involved, the discursive register in which the memory is articulated, its reception, what is being excluded from these narratives and why, and what attempts are being made to connect the dictatorial past to new social contexts in the present.

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<sup>8</sup> Though, as I mentioned above, the juridical battle about acknowledgment and justice for the crimes of the past is still very much alive in Brazil, as no military personnel has ever been placed on trial for crimes committed during the military dictatorship. This is in fact the impetus behind the *Direito à memória e à Verdade* project and the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit that I examine in chapter 2. Yet, as I explain in my analysis, the exhibit moves away from this initial goal of the project by articulating an idealized narrative of "united resistance" to the dictatorship through the lens of the same militant political ideology of this time period - which I find to be problematic.

### **Contributions to the Field**

I am particularly interested in cultural production that provides a space to engage the "residual" experiences of military dictatorship, those left out of what I call the discursive logic of memory of the postdictatorship. I argue that this "logic" is constituted by the (counter)hegemonic memories about the dictatorship typically articulated by the "official" perspective of supporters of the military regime and the counter-narratives of ex-militants of the political left. As I explain in the theoretical chapter, these two discourse still guide the way that this time period is often discussed today, drawing from the same system of meaning (albeit from opposite ideological perspectives) to explain the dictatorial past. Building on the contributions of authors such as Richard, Avelar, and Moreiras, I maintain that in order engage the "remnant" experiences of the past, memories of this time period need to be articulated in a language that resists appropriation within the dominant discursive system of the postdictatorship. While much of the work of these authors privilege cultural production that engages the traumatic experience of the dictatorship through "allegorical mourning" as a way to articulate the "unnaratable" memories of the dictatorship in new ways, I am interested in exploring other ways that cultural production can contribute to the production and transmission of cultural memory about this time period while eliding the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship.

This is especially important as more time passes between the dictatorship and newer generations who did not personally experience this trauma are interacting with memory narratives produced about this time period. For these individuals, cultural

production that focuses on the individual and collective trauma of dictatorship may not provide the same strong connection to the past as those who lived through this time period. For this reason, I believe that it is important to not solely "collapse memory onto trauma" (Andreas Huyssen) and instead critically examine other techniques employed within cultural production that may offer a way to actively engage the experiences of dictatorship and the effects that it has on diverse social and political contexts in the present and for future generations. In this dissertation, I examine two photography exhibits and two novels that engage with the memory of the military dictatorships in Argentina and Brazil in different ways. While I am critical of the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit for its presentation of a static, idealized counter-narrative about the past, I argue that the "dynamic" memory narrative presented in Marcelo Brodsky's *Los compañeros*, the "allogical" discourse about the dictatorship offered in Beatriz Bracher's *Não falei*, and the innovative articulation of the "remnants" of this time period in Sergio Chejfec's *Los planetas* comprise three examples of postdictatorial cultural production that, while acknowledging the trauma of the past, do not use it to displace other factors involved in the construction and transmission of memory. I maintain that the dynamic memory narratives presented in these works offer spaces that actively participate in the continuously negotiated processes of representing the past and contribute new ways to engage the experiences of dictatorship within the ongoing debates about the construction and transmission of memory about this time period in Brazil and Argentina.

## Overview of Chapters

In Chapter One I lay out the theoretical base for my dissertation and review the relevant literature that contributes to my critical approach to studying memory discourses in postdictatorial Brazil and Argentina. I begin with an explanation of the concept of *cultural memory*, drawing from the work of authors such as Andreas Huyssen, Mieke Bal, and Elizabeth Jelin, and argue that considering all memory as a cultural construct allows us to place multiple theoretical concepts in dialogue with one another to examine the ways that memory functions as a site of constant negotiation. I then draw from theoretical contributions of figures such as Stuart Hall and Michel Foucault to reflect upon the ways that the constantly negotiated spaces of memory and meaning are often attempted to be "fixed" through dominant ideological discourses. I also examine Gayatri Spivak's notion of the "subaltern" and its "unrepresentability" within established discursive systems of meaning, and explore Giorgio Agamben's concept of "remnant" as a way to engage the "unrepresentable" experiences of the dictatorship, without narrativizing them within the established discourses of postdictatorial memory. I close by arguing that when cultural production maintains the inherent fissures in representation open, it creates the opportunity for a dynamic engagement with the dictatorial past and the possibility for new uses of the "residual" experiences in different social contexts in the present.

Within this chapter I also dialogue extensively with the critical work on postdictatorial cultural production in the Southern Cone by Avelar and Richard, whose perceptive critiques of the idealized discourses and hegemonic language often found in

testimonial counter-narratives about dictatorship are instrumental to my critical examination of what I call the postdictatorial "discursive logic of memory." The work of these authors (highly influenced by Walter Benjamin) has contributed immensely to the study of memory in the postdictatorship beyond the memory/forgetting, hero/subversive, victim/justice binaries that often guide critical engagement with the dictatorial past. In building upon their work, I also draw from the contributions of Moreiras, Gareth Williams, and Brett Levinson, whose recent work on the "limits" of representation and current disciplinary approaches to the study of Latin America offer fertile ground for the study of ways that cultural production can contribute to a shared, dynamic memory of the dictatorial past in Argentina and Brazil.

In Chapter Two I examine the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibition, which serves as a theoretical foil for the rest of my dissertation. I argue that the exhibit, which is part of a larger project sponsored by the Brazilian government entitled *Direito à Memória e à Verdade*, offers an idealized vision of "resistance" to the military regime that does not provide space for spectators to think critically about the experiences of the dictatorship and the effects that it has had on Brazilian society in the present. I maintain that the exhibit produces mythic symbols of students, workers, artists, and armed-revolutionaries in the construction of a "united left" that fought against the repression of the dictatorship in the name of democracy, a discourse that "forgets" the ideological differences between these iconic figures of "resistance" to the military regime. This is particularly problematic in the exhibit's appropriation of the "disappeared" and those who were tortured and killed during the military regime as symbols of "hero" or "victim" in

their narrative of militant mobilization against the military, which displaces the suffering experienced by these individuals and their families both during and after the dictatorship. I conclude that this static representation of the past fills in the inherent fissures in representation with the same political ideology as during the dictatorship, which dulls meaningful engagement with the experiences of this time period from within different socio-political contexts in the present and precludes new uses for "residual" memories about the dictatorship in the future.

My examination of Marcelo Brodsky's photographic "memory art," *Los compañeros*, in Chapter Three is guided by both the theoretical precepts that I review in Chapter One, as well as the critical lens of spectatorship and the social uses of photography by authors such as Rosalind Krass, Roland Barthes, and Ella Shohat. I argue that Brodsky's "aesthetic intervention" onto his 8th grade class photograph at the *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* creates a space of *dynamic memory* for the viewers, where multiple connections and interpretations can be made as spectators engage the notes that Brodsky wrote about the lives of each of his classmates in the image. Key to the dynamic nature of the image are both the explicit and implicit references to the military dictatorship and the effects that it had on the lives of each of his classmates. Another important component of the constant negotiation of meaning presented in *Los compañeros* is that it has been presented in multiple spaces both in Argentina and throughout the world, and I discuss the different ways that this work is framed for spectators within these social contexts. I also examine the strategies used by Brodsky to refuse appropriating the "disappeared" within an ideological counter-narrative about the

dictatorship, choosing instead to focus on the human elements associated with the "absent-presence" of these individuals. For these reasons, I maintain that *Los compañeros* creates a space for a dynamic interaction with viewers that connects the dictatorial past to lived-experience in the present, while resisting the articulation of a memory narrative within the dominant discursive register of memory in the postdictatorship.

Beatriz Bracher's novel *Não falei* also rejects participating within the discursive logic of memory in postdictatorial Brazil, which is the focus of my analysis in Chapter Four. Bracher presents a fragmented memory narrative about the dictatorship articulated by a teacher, Gustavo, who was tortured by the military regime. In my analysis of the novel, I examine the way that Bracher problematizes the concept of "betrayal" to "de-mythify" the status of "hero" often bestowed upon members of armed-revolutionaries, while at the same time presenting a striking condemnation of the violence used by the military regime. I also discuss the presence of other narrative voices in the novel that contradict Gustavo's memories, which creates a space to dislocate and problematize the idea of "truth" about the past. I conclude my study of the novel by arguing that Gustavo's memory narrative is "allogical" - as it does not enter into the "accepted" ways to discuss the dictatorial past. For this reason, it creates the opportunity to critique the formation and continuation of this (counter)hegemonic system of representation in the postdictatorship, and offers an alternative way to articulate the memory of the dictatorship in Brazil.

In Chapter 5, I examine Sergio Chejfec's novel *Los planetas*, which focuses on the "traces" of those who were "disappeared" by the military regime in Argentina. The novel is narrated by S, who evokes childhood memories of his friend M, who was "disappeared" during the military dictatorship. S perceives traces of M in the present in physical objects such as photographs, through interactions with "others" who knew M, and by walking through the urban spaces of Buenos Aires. My analysis of the novel focuses on the impossibility to fully represent the experience of the "disappeared," as the narrator alludes to the incapacity to portray "truth" about any experience multiple times in the novel, even in stories that seemingly have nothing to do with M's disappearance. Drawing from Giorgio Agamben's concept of "remnant," and theoretical considerations regarding the possibility of a "shared" relationship to "limit-experiences" by Gareth Williams and Brett Levinson, I explore the ways that Chejfec's narrative engages with the memory of the "disappeared" without appropriating them as symbols within an ideological discourse about the dictatorship. I close by examining the ways that this "de-mythification" of the "disappeared" provides a space for an intersubjective dialogue about the *effects* of their absence in the present.

In the conclusion of my dissertation, I review the main arguments of my project and the ways that the photography exhibitions and the novels that I examine contribute to the construction of memory discourses about the military dictatorship. I then outline the trajectory of my future research on memory in the postdictatorial Southern Cone, which seeks to examine the connections between space, memory, and the dynamic interaction

with the dictatorial past within the urban landscapes of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.

## CHAPTER I

### THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I develop the theoretical base for my examination of memory discourses produced in postdictatorial cultural production in Argentina and Brazil, and explain how I seek to build upon recent critical work done on postdictatorial memory in the Southern Cone. I begin with a discussion of the concept of *cultural memory* and how it enables us to think critically about representations of the past offered in cultural production from multiple theoretical perspectives, drawing primarily from the contributions of Andreas Huyssen, Mieke Bal, and Elizabeth Jelin. Within this discussion I also review the activation of Walter Benjamin's concept of "allegorical mourning" by Nelly Richard, Idelber Avelar, and Alberto Moreiras to engage the dictatorial past through cultural production, and lay out the ways that my project seeks to build upon the analytical contributions of these authors. Then, drawing from theoretical discussions on identity offered by Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Stuart Hall, I explain that while memory and meaning are constantly being constructed and interpreted in different ways, there are always attempts to "fix" them through ideological discourses that seek to frame interpretations of the past. This leads me to review Michel Foucault's theories on discourse and the *régime of truth*, while problematizing his arguments for the "cultural critic" to insert "subjugated knowledges" into social discourse through Gayatri Spivak's conceptualization of the "subaltern."

I then draw from these theoretical contributions to critique what I call the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorial Southern Cone, in dialogue with calls to

articulate the memory of the dictatorship in a new language by Avelar and Richard. Building on the ideas of Moreiras and Gareth Williams, I continue by discussing how we can elide this (counter)hegemonic discursive logic of memory, and I offer Giorgio Agamben's concept of "remnant" as a way to articulate the "unrepresentable" experiences of the dictatorships in the Southern Cone. I conclude by connecting this impossibility to fully represent experience through language to the capacity of cultural production to maintain this fissure in representation open, creating a space for readers and spectators to actively engage these gaps in order to produce meaning. I argue that this creates the conditions of possibility for a dynamic interaction with the memory of the dictatorship that allows for multiple ways to connect with and interpret the meanings of the past in different social contexts in the present, without participating in the dominant discursive system of memory in the postdictatorship.

### **The Negotiated Spaces of Cultural Memory**

I take as starting point for my analysis of memory discourses produced in postdictatorial cultural production in Argentina and Brazil the idea that all memories, be they individual or collective, are constructions that inherently contain gaps in the representation of the past from the present. These representations may include a purposeful exclusion of aspects of the past in order to accentuate certain events in the construction of a "collective" memory (or counter-memory) - as a nation or as any other "imagined community" of individuals. At the individual level, the inability to fully recall the past may be an (un)conscious attempt to avoid confronting a past trauma, could be an individual choice to remember certain moments of the past while ignoring others, or may

be a result of the natural tendency of memories to fade over time. In any case, forgetting is an essential part of memory - it is impossible to remember *everything*, particularly when one needs space to reflect on the experiences of the past and their influence on the present. Memory also inherently connects the past and the present - all acts of remembrance, regardless of whether it is testimony about a personal experience or a monument to commemorate a public event, is a representation of the past articulated in the present for a particular purpose. As Andreas Huyssen argues in *Twilight Memories*:

It does not require much theoretical sophistication to see that all representation-whether in language, narrative, image, or recorded sound - is based on memory. *Re*-presentation always comes after [...] But rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the real, memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity. (*TM* 2-3)

This "fissure" between a past event and its articulation in the present reflects the Lacanian notion of the constitutive gap between representation and experience, of the impossibility to fully represent the Real through a symbolic system of meaning. Considering all memory as a representation of the past allows us to tease out the ways that this

constitutive gap is often "filled in" with political or ideological discourses that attempt to present memory as a "truth" about the past. At the same time, it also provides the opportunity to explore these "unrepresentable" spaces through cultural production and offer new ways to communicate the experiences of the past in the present and for the future.

This leads to the second basic tenet to my approach in studying postdictatorial memory narratives: memory is a cultural phenomenon that involves an intersubjective relationship to an event in the past that is constantly constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed from the present in and against discursive structures of meaning. Memory is continuously negotiated through the interaction of multiple individual (private) and collective (public) experiences being represented at local, regional, national, and transnational levels. Even memories of the most intimate or traumatic individual experience will be informed in some way through interactions with others (e.g. family, friends, therapist), by engaging the representation of similar experiences in books or films, or through the "accepted" responses to these situations under the social structures in which the individual lives (either by adhering to or rejecting these norms). In the same vein, collective memories (and counter-memories) are never stable and do not inherently provide a fixed "social framework" for all individual interpretations of meaning, as public remembrance is just as susceptible to influences of both individual articulations of the past and "other" collective representations of experience. Considering memory as a site of constant interaction and negotiation allows us to examine the multiple *uses* of memory,

the way that the past is activated within different socio-political projects in the present that attempt to shape the future in diverse ways.

I consider my approach to studying representations of the past as *cultural memory*<sup>9</sup>, which allows us to examine the processes of the production of meaning through the diverse discursive spheres, social actors, and cultural objects that contribute to the constantly negotiated site of memory. Considering memory in this way permits us to explore the interaction of different theoretical approaches from multiple disciplines to study the uses of memory in the present. In *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Mieke Bal argues that:

Cultural memory has become an important topic in the emergent field of cultural studies, where it has displaced and subsumed the discourses of individual (psychological) memory and of social memory. In other words, the term *cultural memory* signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one [...] We also view cultural memorization as an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future. (vii)

Bal's comment about the capacity of cultural memory to subsume "the discourses of individual and social memory" is important, as this does not mean that these disciplinary approaches to studying memory are eliminated by engaging memory within cultural

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<sup>9</sup> For Jan Assmann, considered the first to use the term *cultural memory*, this means "the transmission of meanings from the past". Marita Sturkin, another figure cited as one of the first to use the term, considers cultural memory to be "memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning" (Olick and Robbins 111-112).

studies, but rather, that they can be placed into dialogue with one another. Using cultural memory as a point of entry allows us to consider the limits of approaching memory purely from the psychic or social perspective, or applying the precepts of one to the other, and instead draw from both approaches to study how memory is enacted in different registers and activated to communicate past experiences in the present.

The second part of Bal's comments presents cultural memory as an active reshaping of the past from the present, with an eye towards the future - "something that you actually *perform*, even if, in many instances, such acts are not consciously and willfully contrived" (Bal vii). While noting that the "performance" of cultural memory may be the result of an unconscious ritual or habitual act,<sup>10</sup> recognizing that memory is always enacted from the present immediately connects the past to current lived-experience, preventing it from becoming a static representation of a moment in time. Considering memory as part of a larger cultural environment in the present allows us to critically engage the diverse uses of memory in different social contexts, which necessitates the use of broader methodological practices in order to understand the different roles that these representations of the past can have. This creates the opportunity to examine innovative social uses of memory that intervene upon dominant interpretations of the past and offer alternative possibilities for the future by engaging "forgotten" memories, both for the individual and for any societal "collective." This

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<sup>10</sup> Many authors have developed this concept of "performing" memory through rituals or habitual acts (or by consciously transgressing these social norms), such as Pierre Bourdieu and his concept of "habitus" and Richard Schechner and his theoretical contribution of "restored behavior." In the Latin American context, the work of Diana Taylor has been especially influential in the study of performance and memory. See for example: *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.

capacity to intervene on the past augments the dynamic nature of cultural memory, as multiple connections to and interpretations of the past can be made from the present, depending upon the socio-political contexts in which memory is activated. As Elizabeth Jelin maintains, "memories are the object of disputes, conflicts, and struggles. This premise involves the need to focus attention on the active and productive role of participants in these struggles. It is they who generate meanings of the past, framed by power relations in which their actions are embedded in the present" (xv).

The concept of "rescuing" events that have been "forgotten" in dominant representations of the past and rearticulating them in new ways in the present is the cornerstone of the critical approach to postdictatorial memory in the Southern Cone taken by Nelly Richard, Idelber Avelar, and Alberto Moreiras. The theoretical contributions of Walter Benjamin are particularly important here, as they are associated with engaging the "oppressed" experiences of the past as a way to challenge dominant social discourses in the present. In his oft-cited essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin offers a blueprint for "historical materialists" to "brush history against the grain" (257) and embrace "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past" (263) by engaging the forgotten experiences of history from the present. For Benjamin this means:

to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger [...] The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it [...] Only that historian will have

the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious. (255)

These ideas connect to the capacity of cultural memory to intervene upon the past and re-articulate "forgotten" experiences that "flash up" momentarily in the present, which offers the possibility for alternative futures. They also place the role of the "critical historian" as integral to activating these memories for new uses in the present, which is an important element of Benjamin's theories that influence the approaches of the above-named authors (especially Richard). At the same time, the role of the "critical historian" can be problematized in relation to the representation of an excluded "other," which I explain later in this chapter in relation to the "subaltern."

However, it is Benjamin's ninth thesis on the "angel of history" and his subsequent work on mourning the "ruins" of the past through allegory that has had the most influence on the approaches of Avelar, Richard, and Moreiras in the study of postdictatorial cultural production in the Southern Cone. Using a painting entitled "Angelus Novus," Benjamin describes how the "angel of history" engages the past:

His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm [...] irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned,

while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (257-58)

For Avelar, Richard, and Moreiras this "catastrophe" is the "golpe de estado" and the military dictatorship, which they also consider to be a "golpe" of meaning - the impossibility to represent this catastrophe through the "accepted" discursive language available in the postdictatorship. This "traumatic" event left "wreckage upon wreckage" in the name of "progress," which for these authors means the installation of neoliberal capitalism as an economic system as a result of the military regime. Those who survived this catastrophe want to "awaken the dead" (those who were killed or "disappeared" by the military regimes) and want to repair the damages of the past (torture, socialist ideals). Yet looking back on the past while being blown towards the future by a postdictatorial wind of neoliberal capitalism and its inherent "passive" forgetting of the past, these authors maintain that all that can be done is to "mourn" the "defeat" of the catastrophic past and the ruins that it has left behind. It is in these ruins, both physical and discursive, where the opportunity to articulate the residuals of the past in new ways exists for Avelar, Richard, and Moreiras, offering the possibility for an alternative future than the path currently taken in the postdictatorial Southern Cone.

In *Pensar en/la postdictadura*, edited by Richard and Moreiras, Richard offers a general definition to this approach of "mourning" the "ruins" of the dictatorship through allegory:

Las figuras del trauma, del duelo y de la melancolía pasaron a ser las figuras emblemáticas de un cierto pensamiento crítico de la postdictadura

[...] Esa reflexión crítica sobre el estado de melancolización del pensamiento en/la postdictadura encontró uno de sus más finos motivos de productividad filosófico-estética en la alegoría benjaminiana: devastación histórica, arruinamiento del sentido y trabajo sobre las ruinas de una totalidad desfigurada que contiene la promesa redentora de una historicidad rota que sigue vibrando en cada pliegue de su caída. (*PELP* 104)

A major component of the focus on "allegorical mourning" of the ruins or "residuals" of the past for these authors is the "need and the impossibility" to name the "traumatic object" of the "golpe" within the established discursive structures of the postdictatorship. Avelar in particular (who focuses primarily on literature) maintains that allegory is the "trope of the impossible," that allows for the articulation of memory narratives about the "ruins" of the dictatorship without incorporating them within totalizing discourses (i.e. without "naming" them) because it "thrives on breaks and discontinuities" (*TUP* 11). Since "mourning lies at the very origin of allegory" (*TUP* 3), these authors call for cultural production that offers a type of "unfinished mourning" (what Moreiras calls "el duelo del duelo") through allegory as way to confront the trauma of the dictatorship by engaging the residuals of the past without "representing" them within any established discursive system. As Richard concludes:

Aplicado a las narrativas de postdictadura el recurso alegórico exhibiría el agrietamiento de la historia y de sus relatos, [...] sin rellenar aquellos vacíos de inteligibilidad, dejados por los huecos de una memoria residual

con los artificios compensatorios de una discursividad del recuerdo unificadamente comprensiva. (*PELP* 104-105)

Following the idea articulated by Bal that cultural memory allows us to place different theoretical approaches in dialogue with one another in studying representations of the past, I seek to build upon the work done by Richard, Avelar, and Moreiras by exploring the possibilities to engage and transmit the "residual" memories of dictatorship (those experiences that are typically excluded from or appropriated within typical narratives about this time period) in ways other than "allegorical mourning." I am particularly interested in the transmission of memory about the dictatorship to those who did not personally experience this time period (e.g. younger generations, spectators/readers outside of the Southern Cone) in ways that create a meaningful engagement with the dictatorial past in different social contexts in the present. Drawing from the contributions of these authors, it is important to consider the *form* through which the "ruins" of the past are activated in the present, keeping in mind the need to elide the established discursive structures of postdictatorship in order to prevent the appropriation of these "residual" experiences within dominant representations of the dictatorship. Since memory is transmitted through many forms of cultural production (art, photography, television, media, literature, music, film, etc.), this allows us to consider multiple aesthetic and discursive techniques that can provide ways for the spectators or readers to engage with dictatorship in new ways. Reception is important here, as the meanings produced by these memory narratives are not only related to the *form* of the representation (or the way that the past is framed), but also the way that these narratives

are *interpreted* in relation to social, historical, and political discourses in multiple geographical contexts. The interaction between production/reception of memory within these different analytical spheres allow us to connect the contributions of approaching the traumatic past through "allegorical mourning" to cultural production that seeks to communicate this "need and impossibility" to engage the residuals of the past in different ways.

The critical work on cultural memory by Andreas Huyssen is especially influential in my approach to studying postdictatorial memory in the Southern Cone. In *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Huyssen argues that we should think of memory "as a mode of re-presentation and as belonging ever more to the present. After all, the act of remembering is always in and of the present, while its referent is of the past, and thus absent. Inevitably, every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting, and absence" (PP 4). This exemplifies the two major precepts that I outlined above as the theoretical base for my study of memory: all memory is a representation of the past articulated in the present, and, just like with any representation of experience, any individual or collective "act of memory" inherently includes a gap - "forgetting." Like other theorists such as Marc Augé, who argues that "oblivion is the life force of memory, and remembrance is its product" (Augé 21), Huyssen's contention that "forgetting" is an inherent component to memory reinforces the contributions of previous scholars that allow us to deconstruct the dialectical opposition of remembering vs. forgetting that was often invoked in the study of memory in the past. Instead, we can shift the focus of cultural memory from solely attempting to "rescue" a

past experience from "oblivion" to the *ways* that this memory is evoked in the present and how it interacts with the inherent fissures in representation, which, as Huyssen argues, may provide a "powerful stimulant" for a critical intervention on accepted representations of the past.

Huyssen focuses his analysis in *Present Pasts...* on what he calls the "media of critical cultural memory" (*PP* 6), which includes literary texts, visual culture, monuments, architecture, and sculptures, and the ways that these objects are employed to represent the past and its influence on the present in multiple manifestations, what he deems the "political layers of memory discourse" (*PP* 9). The importance of the media of cultural memory is unquestionable for Huyssen, who maintains that:

[...] we can not discuss personal, generational, or public memory separately from the enormous influence of the new media as carriers of all forms of memory. Thus, it is no longer possible for instance to think of the Holocaust or of any other historical trauma as a serious ethical and political issue apart from the multiple ways it is now linked to commodification and spectacularization in films, museums, docudramas, Internet sites, photography, books, comics, fictions, even fairy tales [...] and pop songs. (*PP* 18)

The recognition of the ability of cultural production to not only represent the past but also influence the interpretation of historical events for viewers or readers and contribute to the shared social discourse about "historical trauma" is an important contribution to the study of cultural memory. For example, the debates about memory of the most recent

military dictatorships in the postdictatorial Southern Cone do not only occur in juridical form through official inquiries or truth commissions about human rights violations (or in the case of Brazil, the *lack* of these juridical mechanisms to investigate the state violence committed during the military dictatorships). Representations of the dictatorial past primarily appear in countless novels, testimonial "tell alls," films, television programs, art, photography, and songs which influence the way that people interpret the past in the postdictatorship. As Huyssen (among many others) maintains, this represents a saturation of memory, an explosion of memory discourses about the past that are commodified and subsumed within the global capitalist system, which ironically leads to an "amnesia" about the past by portraying it as an object that has no connection to lived experiences in the present.

Yet, just because all cultural production is commodified does not mean that all cultural memory media can not contribute to critically revisiting the past. As Huyssen argues:

Memory as re-presentation, as making present, is always in danger of collapsing the constitutive tension between past and present, especially when the imagined past is sucked into the timeless present of the all-pervasive virtual space of consumer culture. Thus we need to discriminate among memory practices in order to strengthen those that counteract the tendencies in our culture to foster uncreative forgetting, the bliss of amnesia [...] (PP10).

Here, Huyssen again maintains that the practice of memory from the present allows for human agency in engaging the meanings of the past, despite the fact that objects that embody these practices (books, films, monuments, etc.) are all produced as a part of commodity culture. In other words, cultural production has the capacity to interrogate the past in new ways and offer alternative memory discourses through which the readers or spectators can engage the past and connect it to their lives in the present, depending on the *form* or the *purpose* of these commodified memory practices (and, of course, the cultural knowledge and critical vision of the readers or viewers). This argument differs from the perspective maintained by Avelar, who argues for cultural production that resists commodification by neoliberal capital and the inherent "passive forgetting" of the past that accompanies the "creative destructive" forces of capitalism, and offers "allegorical mourning" as a narrative trope that can not be commodified. While I understand the argument that he is making, that mourning an unfinished, "allegorically charged ruin" has no "exchange value" and thus resists appropriation by capitalism (Avelar *TUP* 4-5), the novels that he uses as examples of this are still cultural products that are bought and sold within the capitalist system of production. They are still commodified, yet have the capacity to evoke new uses for the residuals of the past through the *form* of allegorical mourning.

Another contribution that Huyssen makes in *Present Pasts* is the consideration of the transnational nature of memory discourses, augmented through the global exchange of the "media of cultural memory", which interacts with individual, local, regional, and national constructions of memory. In developing his argument, Huyssen engages in a

critical dialogue with two of the most important figures of theoretical considerations on "collective" memory, Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora. In his classic work *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (first published in 1925), Halbwachs argues that all individual memories are activated within social frameworks that influence the way that we interpret the past:

Yet it is in society that people normally acquire memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories [...] most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us [...] we place ourselves in their perspective and we consider ourselves as being part of the same group or groups as they [...] It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection. (38)

Here, Halbwachs makes an important contribution to the study of memory as a social construction, outside of the purely psychological approaches that had previously dominated the study of memory. He also notes the interaction *between* individual and collective memory and the existence of multiple collective memories: "[...] just as people are members of many different groups at the same time, so the memory of the same fact can be placed within many frameworks, which result from distinct collective memories" (52). Although Halbwachs does point to the role of the individual in evoking memory and the possibility of multiple collective memories, many authors critique Halbwachs for

privileging the "collective" and not providing space for the agency of the individual to accept or reject these collective narratives, leading to the creation of terms such as "cultural memory" or "social memory" to emphasize the "constructedness" of collective narratives about the past (Olick and Robbins 111).

Huyssen's engagement with Halbwachs' extends from a common critique of the notion of relatively stable "collective" social frameworks that appears in his work, noting that social frameworks themselves are just as volatile and malleable as individual memories:

it seems clear that older sociological approaches to collective memory - approaches (such as Maurice Halbwachs') that posit relatively stable formations of social and group memories- are not adequate to grasp the current dynamic of media and temporality, memory, lived time, and forgetting. The clashing and ever more fragmented memory politics of specific social and ethnic groups raises the question whether forms of collective consensual memory are even still possible today, and, if not, whether and in what form social and cultural cohesion can be guaranteed without them. (Huyssen 17)

Huyssen's comments here are an attempt to bring Halbwachs' contributions in dialogue with the global aspects of the formation of social and group memories associated with increased technology and globalization. Huyssen notes that this notion of "collective" is much more fragmented and fleeting today than when Halbwachs wrote, as transnational social groups are able to constantly interact with one another and further multiply

identitarian connections through these relationships. Huyssen offers a similar critique of Pierre Nora, while acknowledging the important contributions that he makes to the study of collective memory in *Lieux de mémoire*.<sup>11</sup> Huyssen notes that Nora's investigation is tied to a "romantic sense of loss" of "nation" and maintains that "[...] Nora's notion of *lieux de mémoire* [...] acknowledges a loss of national or communal identity, but trusts in our ability to make up for it" (PP 23). Huyssen characterizes this as a "conservative belief" in the ability to reify national identity as a response to an increasingly interconnected world, an approach that he considers "too simple and too ideological" (PP 24). In these critiques, Huyssen points to the globalized tenor of contemporary memory discourses in such places as the postdictatorial Southern Cone, which interact with one another through the transnational proliferation of the "media of cultural memory" that cuts across and interacts with individual, local, regional, and national representations of the past.

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<sup>11</sup> While I do not have space to fully engage Nora here, I find some of his presuppositions about memory to be problematic. For instance, he refers to "real" memory - "the kind of inviolate social memory that primitive and archaic societies embodied, and whose secret died with them" (2); and "true" memory - "which today subsists only in gestures and habits, unspoken craft traditions, intimate physical knowledge, ingrained reminiscences, and spontaneous reflexes" (8). Here, Nora seems to argue that the "real" memory of "primitive and archaic societies" did not have social structures that guided the production and transmission of these "secrets of the past", which I find hard to believe. In describing "true" memory, he ignores the fact that these examples are also learned and reproduced in some manner - that which might appear "spontaneous" or "unspoken" is in fact a "performance" of a socially constructed behavior, even if it is unconsciously being produced, as Bourdieu and Schechner maintain. I also do not agree with the way that Nora builds his opposition between history and memory. For example, he argues that "Memory is always a phenomenon of the present, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past [...] Memory is rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object. History dwells exclusively on temporal continuities, on changes in things and in the relations among things. Memory is absolute, while history is always relative" (3). Memory is *not* absolute, and it is also a representation of the past. As Nora himself alludes to, physical spaces themselves do not inherently contain the "realms of memory", it is how humans interact with and interpret meanings *represented* in these spaces that construct memory.

A final element of Huyssen's approach to the study of cultural memory that is important for my work is his contention that recent work with memory has been too concerned with trauma "in a poststructuralist psychoanalytical perspective", which contributed to a "network of master signifiers of the 1990's, [trauma,] the abject, and the uncanny, all of which have to do with repression, specters, and a present repetitively haunted by the past" (*PP* 8). As I mentioned previously, this is the approach that guides much of the critical work of individuals such as Idelber Avelar, Nelly Richard, and Alberto Moreiras. Huyssen, meanwhile, argues that:

[...] trauma cannot be the central category in addressing the larger memory discourse. It has been all too tempting to some to think of trauma as the hidden core of all memory. After all, both memory and trauma are predicated on the absence of that which is negotiated in memory or in the traumatic symptom. Both are marked by instability, transitoriness, and the structures of repetition. But to collapse memory into trauma, I think, would unduly confine our understanding of memory, marking it too exclusively in terms of pain, suffering, and loss. It would deny human agency and lock us into compulsive repetition. Memory, whether individual or generational, political or public, is always more than only the prison house of the past. (*PP* 8)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Avelar recognizes this as well in *The Untimely Present*, using similar language as Huyssen, albeit from the psychoanalytical perspective: "the accomplishment of mourning work demands above all a desubjectifying gesture, an escape from the prison house of the proper name, an act that ultimately displaces mourning away from egological boundaries into the realm of collective memory" (*TUP* 135).

This "turn" from the traumatic as a way to engage the memory discourses produced in places such as postdictatorial Brazil and Argentina is not intended to negate the trauma associated with torture, murder, and "disappearance" during the military dictatorships, nor the need to overcome the effects of these traumatic experiences on the present. It is the application of psychoanalysis to the notion of "historical trauma" that Huyssen finds problematic:

the cult status of Benjamin's angel of history, and the trauma work of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and others all raise the suspicion that we are simply rearticulating Freudian phylogenetic fantasies in a different, significantly darker key [...] This approach to history as trauma, I would suggest, does not help much to understand the political layers of memory discourse in our time, although it may well represent one of its articulations. (*PP* 9)

These comments by Huyssen exemplify Bal's contention of the capacity of cultural memory to explore the past by placing the limits of different disciplinary approaches in dialogue with one another to examine multiple articulations of memory discourses in the present. Reminding us that "trauma" is not the only way to approach studying the memory of events such as the Holocaust or the military dictatorships in the Southern Cone allows us to consider the limits of trauma theory in analyzing the representations of these events in spaces of cultural production, particularly in the transmission of meanings of the past to those who did not personally experience trauma and the activation of these meanings within different socio-political contexts in the present. At the same time,

psychoanalysis and trauma theory are critically important components of overcoming past traumas and "narrativizing" these experiences for victims of torture or the families and friends of the "disappeared". Examining the past as cultural memory allows us to explore the limits of both the psychic and the collective approaches of engaging the past and reflect upon the possible social *uses* of these memories in the present that may provide an alternative trajectory for the future.

Within the Southern Cone, the contributions on the construction of memory discourses in the postdictatorship by Elizabeth Jelin and Hugo Vezzetti also inform my approach in the present study. In *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, Jelin provides a type of historiography of the study of memory, reviewing all of the major contributions from multiple fields of analysis (psychology, sociology, cultural studies, history, etc.). While I am unable to do justice to her expansive contribution here, her comments on the transmission of memory about a "traumatic" event are particularly important:

In the many places that have experienced war, violent political conflicts, genocide, and repression-situations of social catastrophe and collective trauma -the processes of expressing and making public the interpretations and meanings of those pasts are extremely dynamic, as these interpretations and meanings are never fixed once and for all. They change over time, following a complex logic that combines the temporality of the expression and of the working through and acting out of trauma (be it as symptoms or as "breakthroughs," as silences or as regaining lost

memories), the explicit political strategies of various actors, and the questions, answers, and conversations introduced in the public sphere by younger generations. (51)

The idea that the interpretations and meanings of a past collective trauma are "dynamic" and "never fixed" due to the interactions of various social actors over time is key. As she alludes at the end of this citation, Jelin considers the interactions of younger generations to these discourses as important to the dynamic nature of cultural memory, as their inquiries about the past may provoke new interpretations of this experience or "re-signify" them for activation within new social contexts. This is an essential piece to any study of postdictatorial memory, as representations of a traumatic past through cultural production will be interpreted and activated in different ways by those who did not personally experience the "trauma", and do not solely depend upon the way that these experiences are "narrativized" in order to confront the past.<sup>13</sup>

Hugo Vezzetti also notes the negotiated space of meaning of postdictatorial cultural memory in *Pasado Presente: Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina*:

Quiero insistir sobre esto: si la memoria pública sobre la violencia, el terrorismo de Estado y la tragedia de los *desaparecidos* es el objeto de una lucha por las significaciones del pasado que permanece vigente, activo, en

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<sup>13</sup> In the transmission of memory to the next generation, authors such as Marianne Hirsch have evoked the idea of "post-memory" to describe the engagement with a collective traumatic memory by those who did not experience an event first hand. But, by considering all memory to be a constructed representation of the past, as I have argued, then this concept seems almost redundant, as Beatriz Sarlo maintains in her critique of the idea of "post-memory" "Se dice como novedad algo que pertenece al orden de lo evidente: si el pasado no fue vivido, su relato no puede sino provenir de lo conocido a través de mediaciones; e, incluso, si fue vivido, las mediaciones forman parte de ese relato" (Sarlo *TP* 128)

el presente, es importante considerar su capacidad para mantener una relación de indagación, que reúna la rememoración y la intelección con vistas a un futuro diferente. Me interesa situar la memoria en un espacio de problemas, que se abren en la medida en que no se trata solo de la recuperación testimonial ni de las construcciones fijadas del pasado sino de una dimensión abierta a una práctica de la inteligencia. (34)

While reaffirming that the "battle" for meanings about the past is an activity enacted from within the present, Vezzetti also points to the need to think critically about the representations of the past. His argument that memory does not entail the recuperation of facts about the past through testimony nor a "fixed" construction of a past event is crucial, as it brings us back to the discussion of the "constructedness" of memory and the way that is used in the present, as well as the possibility for new social uses for the "remnants" of the past "with our eyes towards the future."

### **Memory and the Construction of "Unifying" Identities**

In examining the social uses of memory, the classic works about the formation of national identity by Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*) and Eric Hobsbawm (*The Invention of Tradition*) can provide a point of entry to the analysis of representations of the past produced for specific uses in the present. Both Anderson and Hobsbawm maintain that "collective memory" is a construction of a social power (e.g. the State, the elite, academia, etc.) that actively "remembers" or "forgets" certain aspects of the past, often "invents" their own version of history, in order to articulate an "official" historical narrative of "nation." This "collective" narrative seeks to eliminate conflicting identities

of social difference through the creation of common myths, traditions, histories, and practices, and by establishing national "heroes" and other symbols to unite diverse groups under the notion of what Anderson calls an "imagined community." An important aspect of these narratives is their "atemporality," which seeks to hide the "constructedness" of this collective memory and present it as a natural "truth" about the nation. As Hobsbawn argues, "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1). While these practices are taught in institutions such as schools, religious ceremonies, or family relationships, both Hobsbawn and Anderson contend that cultural production such as literature, films, newspapers, or music make important contributions to the transmission of this "official" narrative and the construction of a national identity through "shared memory."<sup>14</sup>

Stuart Hall's contribution in *The Question of Cultural Identity* offers a type of historiography of subjectivity and identity construction that engages and then builds upon the arguments about memory, identity, and nation offered by Hobsbawn and Anderson. Hall maintains that:

national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to *representation* [...] It follows that a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings - *a system of cultural representation*. People are not only legal

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<sup>14</sup> Hobsbawn, Anderson, and Stuart Hall also note that cultural production can also serve as a challenge to dominant narratives about the past, which I examine in the following section.

citizens of a nation; they participate in the *idea* for the nation as represented in its national culture [...] National cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions, but of symbols and representations. A national culture is a *discourse*- a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves. (CI 612)

Here, in the same way that we can consider cultural memory as a representation of the past for specific purposes in the present, Hall argues that national identity is also formed by a "system of representation" that seeks to produce a "unified" identity through a constructed discourse of specific meanings. Hall proceeds to review the arguments of both Hobsbawn and Anderson in his discussion of the five main elements that he believes contribute to the representation of the past in narratives of "national" culture (narrative of the nation; origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness; the invention of tradition; foundational myth; and a pure, original people or "folk"). Hall then reiterates the critiques of Hobsbawn and Anderson about the attempt to unify disparate cultural identities under the idea of "nation," arguing that, "National identities do not subsume all other forms of difference into themselves and are not free of the play of power, internal divisions and contradictions, cross-cutting allegiances and difference" (CI 618).

Hall, like Huyssen, also moves away from considering cultural identity solely in terms of the nation and introduces the transnational element of identity formation, of different possible "imagined communities" at either the local, regional, or international level that appear as a response to globalization.

The more social life becomes mediated by the global marketing of styles, places, and images, by international travel, and by globally networked media images and communications systems, the more *identities* become detached - disembedded - from specific times, places, histories, and traditions, and appear 'free-floating.' (CI 622)

In some cases this could create transnational connections between groups that have been traditionally "excluded" from participating in national discourse, such as women, indigenous populations, or ethnic minorities, while reactionary responses are just as common, resulting in a type of fundamentalist retreat into local, regional, or national conceptualizations of cultural identity.

While an in-depth review of theoretical discussions about global/local interaction, agency, and the subsumption of cultural difference within global capitalism is beyond the focus of my current project, the references to the transnational aspects of cultural memory and cultural identity by Huyssen and Hall are important to the study of postdictatorial cultural production. The memory discourses produced about the military dictatorships in Argentina and Brazil interact with each other and with similar discourses produced throughout the Southern Cone. These representations of a traumatic past are informed by cultural production dealing with other traumatic events around the world, such as the Holocaust or genocide in Darfur. While not ignoring the different historical, political, social, and geographical contexts of these events, the transnational connections that may be made between victims of torture in the Southern Cone, or even in the production of memory narratives about these events in dialogue with international Human Rights

discourses, allow us to consider memory not only within the national contexts of Argentina and Brazil, but in dialogue with other "imagined communities" at a global scale. In this way, we can examine the different ways that these memories are circulated globally, interact with one another, and influence the representation of the past in different socio-political contexts.

### **Representation and Meaning**

"[...] the question about memory is concerned with the nexus between memory, language, and fissures of representation" (Richard CR 6).

Both Hall and Huysen use similar language to describe cultural memory and cultural identity, presenting them as representations within certain discursive registers that attempt to convey specific meanings about the past. As I have mentioned throughout the first part of this chapter, memories are never fixed, they are constantly undergoing simultaneous processes of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction based upon intersubjective interactions with representations of the past. As Hall explains:

[...] if meaning is the result, not of something fixed out there, in nature, but of our social, cultural, and linguistic conventions, then meaning can never be *finally* fixed [...] The main point is that meaning does not inhere *in* things, in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice - a practice that *produces* meaning, that *makes things mean*. (TWR 23)

This creates a situation where multiple meanings may be produced about the same historical event through cultural production, and the spectators or readers will have

different interpretations of these meanings based on how they interact with and connect to these memory discourses.

Nelly Richard echoes this argument in the Benjaminian vein that guides her approach to attributing new meanings to the "residual" memories of the postdictatorial Southern Cone in *Cultural Residues*:

Memory is an open process of reinterpretation that unties and reties its knots so that events and understandings can again be undertaken. Memory stirs up the static fact of the past with new unclosed meanings that put recollections to work, causing both beginnings and endings to rewrite new hypotheses and conjectures and thereby dismantle the explanatory closures of totalities that are too sure of themselves. And it is the laboriousness of that unsatisfied memory that never admits defeat, that perturbs the official burial of that memory seen simply as a fixed deposit of inactive meanings.

(CR 17)

Richard maintains that the inherent fissures in the representation of experience provide the capacity to think critically about the past and re-articulate memory for new uses in different socio-political contexts. Huyssen agrees, "Once we acknowledge the constitutive gap between reality and its representation in language or image, we must in principle be open to many different possibilities of representing the real and its memories" (PP 19). Yet, while cultural memory and meaning can never be "finally fixed," entities competing for social power often seek to insert ideology into the gaps of

representation in order to establish a dominant discourse about the past, such as mythic (counter)narratives to "invent" the nation.

Drawing from these arguments, we can consider the memory narratives produced in the postdictatorial Southern Cone as representations of the past that seek to produce specific meanings about the dictatorship in the present. Novels, films, documentaries, articles, television shows, and even testimonials about torture victims, the "disappeared," and the "heroic" exploits of urban guerrilla movements or the military regimes "in defense of the nation" are all representations of experiences that inherently contain a lacuna, regardless of the juridical facts contained within these memory narratives. This is why I contend that postdictatorial cultural production in Brazil and Argentina has the potential to create a *dynamic* cultural memory about military dictatorship, as the negotiated space of meaning inherent in any representation of the past creates the possibility for multiple ways to connect to experiences during the military regimes and the effects that they have on the present. I use the words "potential" and "possibility" because the way that cultural production engages this gap in representation is important in producing a dynamic interaction with the readers or spectators. While some may take advantage of this fissure to explore new ways to critically reflect upon the experiences of dictatorship and enact memories for new uses in the present, others may attempt to "fill in" this gap in representation with ideology in order to "fix" meaning within a static "myth" about the past, which merely serves to reify established memory narratives about this time period. In order to determine what pasts are "usable" (Huysen), we need to consider the discourses within which the memory narratives about dictatorship are

commonly constructed and the meanings about the past that they are attempting to disseminate in the present.

### **Discourse, Subjectivity, and the Re-presentation of Memory**

The theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault are an essential starting point to consider the discourses that guide the different memory narratives produced in the postdictatorship. Among his many theoretical contributions, Foucault contends that it is the discourse of power, and not the power authority itself, that produces knowledge, subjects, and behavior in a given society. For Foucault power and knowledge are always imbricated with one another, "We should admit rather that power produces knowledge [...]; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (*D&P* 27). The dominant discourse, or *régime of truth* according to Foucault, attempts to regulate the way that we talk about and perceive things, the way we take meaning, establishing a "correct" way and an "abnormal" way to approach "truth" and knowledge in any given social context:

[...] truth isn't outside of power, or lacking power [...] Truth is a thing of this world [...] And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has a régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in

the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (*PK* 131)

This normalizing discourse disseminated through institutions and day-to-day human interaction produces subjects, such as the madman or the criminal in Foucault's research, whose "abnormal" behavior is identified and excluded by the *régime of truth*. Yet, Foucault also argues that this discourse *subjects* individuals to its message, forcing them to accept the dominant production of knowledge and meaning in order to be 'understood' from the so-called ideal subject position. As Stuart Hall maintains in his interpretation of Foucault, regardless of individual differences such as class, race, gender, political affiliation, or ethnicity, individuals "will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, *subjected* themselves to its rules, and hence become the *subjects of its power/knowledge*" (*TWR* 56). In this way, we observe a double subject in Foucault's theory, one that is produced by the normalizing discourse itself, and the other, the necessary subjection to the tenets of the dominant discourse in order to interpret meaning *and* be understood as a producer of knowledge. The implications of Foucault's theoretical contributions on power and discursive regimes to the study of the meanings produced by memory discourses are important, and I will make these connections later in the chapter. But first, it is also necessary to consider the ways that Foucault proposes to *challenge* a dominant discourse about the past, and then place his propositions in dialogue with Gayatri Spivak's concept of the "subaltern," and her critique of Foucault (and Gilles Deleuze) for ignoring "the

question of ideology and their own implication in intellectual and economic history" (Spivak *CTSS* 272).

In first of "Two Lectures" included in *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault proposes that it is the role of criticism to "reveal" or to aid in the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" as a way to challenge dominant discursive systems of meaning. Foucault maintains that there are two types of "subjugated knowledges," the first being "buried" historical knowledges that "were present but disguised" within dominant systems of representation and knowledge. The second type of "subjugated knowledge" that he presents are "disqualified" knowledges, or those that do not enter into the discursive regime at all, not even as an "abnormal" perspective that needed to be "trained." Foucault maintains that by activating this second type of "subjugated knowledge," critics (like himself) may be able to contribute to challenging the structures of meaning of the dominant discursive system:

I also believe that it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges [...], and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge [...] a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it - that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. (*PK* 82).

We can connect these comments by Foucault to Benjamin's call to rescue the "oppressed" experiences of the past in order to challenge a hegemonic discourse within society in the present. This idea of recuperating "popular" or "local" knowledges and appropriating them to either challenge or strengthen social power structures is also reflected in the work of Anderson, Hobsbawn, and Hall, who note the "invention" or appropriation of popular cultural forms (such as rituals, music, or other cultural activities) to establish both "official" and "alternative" versions of national identity or any other "imagined community" of individuals.<sup>15</sup> So this begs the question, in appropriating these "subjugated" knowledges and using them to represent particular discourses about the past or identity, are these "forgotten" histories truly given a voice?

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Gayatri Spivak critiques the arguments regarding "subjugated knowledges" laid out by both Foucault and Gilles Deleuze for conflating the concepts of political representation and subjective re-presentation. In doing so, Spivak argues that they ignore their own implication in creating these "subjugated knowledges" and maintaining them as a subaltern "other" in their position as intellectuals within the same dominant discursive regime that they seek to challenge:

Two senses of representation are being run together: representation as "speaking for," as in politics, and representation as "re-presentation," as in art or philosophy [...] These two senses of representation [...] are related but irreducibly discontinuous [...] The critique of ideological subject-

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<sup>15</sup> The critical work of Marilena Chauí has made important contributions to exposing this appropriation of "popular" culture within (counter)hegemonic battles to construct national identity in Brazil. See for example: Chauí, Marilena. "Ainda nacional o popular." In: *Conformismo e resistência: aspectos da cultura popular no Brasil*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1986. 87-120.

constitution within state formations and systems of political economy can now be effaced, as can the active theoretical practice of the "transformation of consciousness." The banality of leftist intellectuals' lists of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed: representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent. (CTSS 275)

Spivak continues by drawing from the work of both Marx and Derrida to demonstrate that while the attempt by Foucault and Deleuze to allow "the subaltern to speak" through their criticism may be well intentioned, they in fact are projecting themselves in the "other" - subsuming the "subaltern" within their own discursive regime as a way to combat a dominant hegemonic narrative. The reference to Derrida is important because, drawing from his theoretical contributions associated with deconstruction (particularly *différance* and constitutive binaries of meaning), we can consider Foucault's argument for critical intellectuals to help subjugated knowledges to "re-appear" as participating in the same system of meaning as the "dominant" discourse that he proposes to challenge. In this way, he in fact reinforces the *regime of truth* by incorporating the "subjugated knowledge" within its system of meaning as a counter-hegemonic discourse, instead of trying to displace the established rules of representation and meaning. It is for this reason that Spivak argues that "The subaltern can not speak" (CTSS 308), and that you can only perceive "traces" of the subaltern, located "at the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" (SSDH 16), because at the moment that any "subjugated

knowledge" is incorporated within the logic of a dominant system of representation, it ceases to be "subaltern."

### **The Discursive Logic of Postdictatorial Memory**

The theoretical contributions of Foucault and Spivak allow me to critique what I call the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorial Southern Cone, or the "accepted" ways that the experiences of the military regime are often represented in memory narratives about this time period. As I mentioned previously, the battle for meaning about the military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina is not only being waged at the juridical level, but also through memory discourses about this time period presented in cultural production such as novels, films, testimonial autobiographies, photography and art exhibits, street performances, pop music, school texts, etc. The conflict is not memory vs. forgetting, but instead, what meanings are being produced within memory discourses, what experiences are being "left out" of these representations of the past, and how are they being transmitted and received in postdictatorial society.

As Jelin maintains:

[N]ot everyone shares the same memories. There are conflicting narratives based on ideological clashes. Furthermore, there are intercohort differences among those who experienced the repression or war at different stages of their lives, and between them and the very young, who have no personal memories of repression. This multiplicity of memories and narratives of the past generates a peculiar dynamics in the social circulation of memories. (37)

Jelin's comments that these narratives are based on "ideological" clashes is crucial, as the representations of the dictatorial past offered in postdictatorial cultural production is often articulated within the same political ideology as this time period. In this way, we observe a continuation of the social and political disputes of the era of the dictatorship in the present, reiterated in memory narratives that often produced idealized visions of the past that do not provide the space to critically reflect on the experience of dictatorship and the effects that it has had on the present.

During the dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina, both the military regime and the militant left<sup>16</sup> used language associated with "war" to describe their activities, and both needed the other as "adversary" in order to legitimize their narrative and garner support for their activities "in defense of the nation." While the military regimes in Brazil and Argentina justified their violent actions as "defending the nation" from the "subversion" of members of the militant left, the participants in armed "revolutionary" actions, political activism, mass protests, or student and worker organizations associated with traditional Marxist political ideology maintained that they were fighting against the military regime in the name of the "povo/pueblo."<sup>17</sup> Drawing from the arguments articulated by Anderson, Hobsbawn, and Hall, we can consider these competing discourses as

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<sup>16</sup> By "militant left", what some would call the "traditional left", I am referring to those who supported the idea of a "social revolution" within a Marxist/Socialist ideology. These individuals could include urban guerrillas, students, politicians, workers, or anyone else associated with "militant" activities that either directly or tacitly supported the goals of "social revolution" in the Marxist/Socialist vein.

<sup>17</sup> Prior to the dictatorships, the "enemy" of the militant left was often some form of "imperialism" (economic, cultural etc.) generally directed at the United States, with the goal of fighting for a more just/equal society. This narrative changes during the dictatorship, as the "revolution" is given a specific enemy -the military regime- while the same goals of installing an egalitarian socialist government remained the same. As I demonstrate in chapter two, this narrative completely changes in the memory discourses about this time period, as the militant-left is often presented as fighting the repression of the government in the name of democracy.

(counter)hegemonic visions for what "nation" meant, with both sides appropriating "tradition" and the "authentic people" in their constructions of an "imagined" Brazilian or Argentine community. As the military governments began to use more force to impose their vision of nation, both the political activities and armed-actions of those associated with the militant left were eventually eliminated, and many of these individuals were imprisoned, tortured, killed, or "disappeared" by the military governments.

As I outlined previously, in the years since the transition to democracy, there has been an explosion of testimonial cultural production by those who suffered from the violence of military personnel in an attempt to reconstitute the experiences of these individuals and as way to denounce the crimes committed by military personnel during the dictatorship. Many of these testimonials were offered as way to combat the institutionalized "forgetting" that accompanied the social consensus during the transition to democracy in both Brazil and Argentina. The main goal was to rescue the "subjugated" memories of those who defied the military regimes and of those who were tortured or killed during the dictatorship and place them within social discourse. However, in their attempt to produce a counter-memory and expose the truth about the violence committed by the military, these testimonials often create an idealized narrative of "resistance" to the dictatorship that can be just as problematic as the military's version of the past. These testimonial memory narratives are often embedded within or appropriated by the same ideological arguments that were articulated by the militant left during the dictatorship, offering a static representation of the past that provides no space to critically reflect upon the experiences of this time period and reactivate these

memories for new uses today. This is especially true for readers or spectators who did not experience this time period directly and are engaging the experiences of dictatorship through representations of the past. The work on postdictatorial cultural production in the Southern Cone by Avelar and Richard in particular has made an important contribution to problematizing these idealized testimonial counter-narratives and their participation in what I am calling the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship.

In his seminal work about postdictatorial literature, *The Untimely Present*, Avelar calls for the critical reconsideration of testimonial novels and films about revolutionary actions or torture experiences during the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. While noting that these narratives have unquestionable juridical value in exposing the state violence perpetrated during the dictatorship, Avelar argues that they often employ the same language used by the military regime and its supporters to talk about the past. In his analysis of testimonial novels by ex-members of the armed-left, such as Miguel Bonasso's *Recuerdo de la muerte* and Fernando Gabeira's *O que é isso companheiro?*, Avelar notes the use of the same language associated with "war" and "Christianity" to describe the "heroic" adventures of urban guerrilla groups, the need to "resist" torture, and "pity and forgiveness" for those who "betrayed" the "revolution" by "talking" to military personnel while in captivity. He maintains that the presence of this type of language in testimonial counter-memories reflects the fact that, "the dictatorship achieved a fundamental victory, for the language in which its atrocities were narrated was, in its essence, the very same language that it cultivated and promoted: macho militarism seasoned with pious Catholicism" (Avelar *TUP* 67).

Avelar continues his critique of testimonial literature by ex-members of the militant left in the Southern Cone and its appropriation as a "subaltern" voice by leftist intellectuals (primarily in the US) in solidarity with those seeking justice in the postdictatorship.<sup>18</sup>

[...] it is all too comforting to imagine that redemption is just around the corner, being announced by a subaltern voice transparently coincident with its experience and supplying the critical-oppositional intellectual with the golden opportunity to satisfy a good conscience. No assertion that testimonio leads us into "postliterature" or that now "the subaltern other *really* speaks" will elide the rhetorical questions left unanswered by Southern Cone testimonialism, namely that fact that a whole realm of experience was obliterated once the same victimized or heroic strategies [...] were summoned to narrate facts that the current doxa is eager to forget. Oblivion was all the more facilitated once those atrocities were piled up in a language that very rarely asked questions about its own status. (*TUP* 67)

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<sup>18</sup> This critique of testimonialism comes out of the debates about testimony, subalterneity, and criticism in/about Latin America after the publication of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*. While it is outside of the focus of my present project, I agree with Avelar that it is necessary to critique the ideological constructs that guide much testimonial production about the military dictatorships. At the same time, I concur with John Beverley's concern about what he calls "the neo-conservative turn" (directed primarily at Beatriz Sarlo) that seeks to reify "literature" over testimonial production for articulating the memory of the dictatorships. As I have argued throughout this chapter, multiple forms of cultural production contribute to the construction of meaning about the past, and we must examine all of them critically to explore new ways to transmit the memory of the dictatorships that allow for meaningful connections to be made to this experience in the present.

This critique of the belief by the "critical-oppositional intellectual" of the subaltern's capacity to speak in order to challenge a dominant discourse offers a direct connection to Spivak's critique of Foucault. In this way, we can consider the testimonial memory narratives of the "militant left" as the "subjugated knowledge" defined by Foucault, "hidden" from history by the dominant narrative of the past but "rescued" and given "voice" to challenge the hegemonic discourse of the present. By pointing out that the much of the testimonial literature that seeks to challenge the institutionalized "forgetting" of the dictatorship actually contains much of the same language used in the military's version of the past, Avelar demonstrates that these testimonials participate in the same *régime of truth* established by the military to discuss the dictatorship, albeit from the opposite ideological perspective. By accepting the same system of meaning to articulate a counter-hegemonic discourse, these testimonials ultimately reify the "logic" of the dominant version of the past offered by the military and the institutionalized "oblivion" of the postdictatorship.

Richard makes a similar argument in her analysis of Chilean postdictatorial cultural production in *The Insubordination of Signs*, arguing that "the predominant tendency of Chilean contestatory art utilized by the traditional left sought above all to take revenge on the dictatorial offense by plotting - in its symmetrical inverse - an epic of resistance that would be the photographic negative of the official 'take'" (*TIS* 4). In creating this totalizing narrative of "resistance," testimonial cultural production that attempted to produce a counter-memory of the dictatorship often participated in "the same linear duality of Manichean construction of meaning" (*TIS* 4-5), and in doing so,

accepted the dominant "discursive regime" for talking about the dictatorship. Richard offers Ariel Dorfman's play *La muerte y la doncella* as an example of this, arguing that his portrayal (and inversion) of the roles of torturer and "victim" in the post-dictatorship conformed to and reiterated the "logic" of the official discourse at that time:

No enunciative unsettling or significant rupture sought to disorganize the series of configurations by which history and memory were symbolized in accordance with the terms established by the dominant narrative. The play protected the *order* and *composition* of meanings negotiated - and granted - by the regime's official version during the democratic transition, safeguarding the hierarchy of certain overarching referents that remained fully intact, without a verbal trace of alteration or deterioration. (*TIS* 20)

Just as with Avelar's critique of the memory discourses produced in the novels by Bonasso and Gabeira, Richard argues that Dorfman's play, though intended as "testimonial" critique about torture during the dictatorship and the experience of victims and victimizers living in the same postdictatorial society, ends up using the same language consecrated by the military regime during the transition to represent the past.<sup>19</sup> While Richard's discussion focuses specifically on the Chilean case, her arguments are also applicable to memory discourses constructed in postdictatorial Brazil and Argentina, where many of the attempts to "rescue" the memory of those who suffered during the military dictatorships participate in the same (counter)hegemonic discursive system of representation established during this time period.

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<sup>19</sup> Avelar also offers a perceptive critique of *La muerte y la doncella* connected to the idea of collapsing "confession" into "truth" in *The Letter of Violence*.

In Argentina and Brazil, the explosion of novels, films, documentaries, testimonials, newspaper and magazine stories, and television programs that seek to "rescue" the memories of the dictatorship that were "silenced" by the institutionalized amnesty and "forgetting" of the transition often construct an idealized version of the past, producing mythic "heroes" and "victims" as symbolic foundational figures of resistance to dictatorship. This counter-narrative of resistance to the military regime draws from the same logic of "war" or "battle for the nation" that the military uses to describe this time period, which, ultimately serves to strengthen the discourse of the military regime because it merely inverts the roles while participating in the same dominant structure of meaning. Borrowing from Foucault, we can think of these narratives as constituting a *régime of truth* governing the production of knowledge in the postdictatorship, as memories about the dictatorship must be articulated from within this discursive logic in order to be "understood" - either from the perspective of "heroes" or "victims" who "resisted" the dictatorship or "defended" the nation from "communist subversion." These (counter)hegemonic discourses insert political ideologies of the past into the inherent gaps of representation, creating static memory narratives that do not permit a critical engagement with dictatorial past and instead offer timeless, narrative "truths" to explain the influence of the dictatorship on the present, in the vein discussed by Anderson, Hobsbawn, and Hall.

The most common symbol appropriated within this discourse of "resistance" to the dictatorship is the "disappeared," who are often presented as "hero" or "martyr" in the war against the military, or innocent "victim" of the human rights violations committed

during the dictatorship. Hugo Vezzetti notes this appropriation of the "disappeared" in the battle for meaning about the dictatorship in Argentina, "la figura moral de la víctima, que ha encontrado su cifra mayor en el *desaparecido*, viene a ser revisada por una evocación que busca exaltar o simplemente recuperar imágenes y sentidos de la militancia revolucionaria" (19). In the figure of the "disappeared", we can observe the perfect example of a "subaltern" subject as described by Spivak. The "disappeared" can not speak, the "true" nature of what happened to them can never be discovered, we can only see "traces" of them within hegemonic systems of representation. By appropriating the figure of the "disappeared" and inserting them as mythic heroes or victims of the resistance to the dictatorship, the counter-memory discourses articulated from the perspective of the militant-left engage in the same "ideological ignorance" that Spivak criticizes in Foucault and Deleuze. The "disappeared" do not speak, they are made to speak through the counter-hegemonic discourse of "resistance" to the dictatorship, representing their "subjugated experience" (which is impossible to know or represent) as a mythic anti-dictatorial symbol. So how *should* they be represented?

### **Beyond the Limits of the Discursive Logic of Memory in the Postdictatorship**

In thinking of the "disappeared" as the "subaltern" in postdictatorial memory narratives, I am struck by the definition that Alberto Moreiras offers for subalternism in *The Exhaustion of Difference*. "Subalternism finds its field of incidence in the study of the cultural or experiential formations that are excluded from any given hegemonic relation at any particular moment of its own history" (*TEOD* 280). While in this book Moreiras is focusing on ways to escape the local/global, national-popular/globalization

(counter)hegemonic relationships within both neoliberal capitalism and the interdisciplinary battles about studying Latin America, I believe that we can draw from this conceptualization of the subaltern to explore the limits of the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorial Southern Cone. In dialogue with Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism" and Homi Bhabha's concept of "savage hybridity," Moreiras conceives of the site of the subaltern as "the negation of what hegemony negates" (294) or an "atopian excessive region" (299) excluded from the "logic" of any (counter)hegemonic relationship. Drawing from this idea, we can consider the "official" policies of "forgetting and reconciliation" (as well as memory narratives idealizing the military's actions "in defense of the nation") as the hegemonic memory discourses of the postdictatorship; and the typical testimonial memory-narratives of idealized "resistance" against the military regime represent the counter-hegemonic challenge this dominant social narrative. I contend that we can consider narratives that are excluded from this (counter)hegemonic relationship as "subaltern" memories that are outside of the discursive logic memory of the post-dictatorship. These "allogical" remnants about the past, located "at the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" (*SSDH* 16) offer a space to articulate "the possibility of another history" (Moreiras 294) that critically engages the dictatorial past and the influence it has had on present-day society, while resisting appropriation by the totalizing memory narratives typically offered by both the military right and the militant left in the post-dictatorship.

Gareth Williams offers a similar discussion of the "residuals" left out of (counter)hegemonic discourses in *The Other Side of the Popular*, but he applies this

concept directly to postdictatorial Argentina, as envisioned by Argentine author Ricardo Piglia:

[...] it is a memory of narrative residues and of leftover fragments within narrative that might be capable (within Piglia's formation) of disrupting the suturing of history's traditional literature-politics/power-knowledge relations, be they hegemonic or counterhegemonic [...] Such a politics of memory allows us (Piglia suggests) to trace the possibility of a residual outside to the shameful history of hegemony/counterhegemony in Argentina - to think beyond imposed and historically accepted rationales and dominant models of representation - in order to redirect reflection toward the realm of an *other* historicity [...]. (157)

For Williams, this "residual outside" is "the other side of the popular," which he conceives of as the "trace" or the "negative articulation" of the subaltern - that which is excluded from any (counter)hegemonic system of meaning.<sup>20</sup> Like Moreiras' definition of the "subaltern," Williams makes a connection between postdictatorship and neoliberalism, and is seeking a way to escape (counter)hegemonic relationships of local/global, national-popular/globalization and think about ways to activate what is left out of these discourses to think about alternative possibilities for the future. Yet, with his explicit reference to postdictatorial memory, I believe that this conceptualization of "the

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<sup>20</sup> Williams offers the concept of "negative community" as the "forms of commonality that reside on the limit, and as the limit" (19) of the "other side," or the site of the "subaltern." I draw from this idea in chapter five, in dialogue with Giorgio Agamben's concept of "remnant" and Brett Levinson's theory of "pushing self towards other", to explore the ways that Sergio Chejfec explores the limits of representing the "disappeared" in the transmission of memory about dictatorship and the influences that it has on the present.

other side" also offers us a way to think about the memory discourses and experiences that are either excluded by or appropriated within the dominant discursive system of memory in the postdictatorship.

Faced with the limits of the discursive logic of postdictatorial memory and the need to engage the "remnants" of the past excluded by the (counter)hegemonic relationship, both Avelar and Richard call for the articulation of memory about the dictatorships in a new language that resists appropriation within the totalizing discourses of the militant left and the military regime.<sup>21</sup> As Avelar argues:

Compilation of data, however, is not yet the memory of the dictatorship. Memory far exceeds any factual recounting, however important the latter may turn out to be as an initial juridical or political step. The *memory* of the dictatorship [...] requires another language [...] testimonial literature has left a very meager legacy for the reinvention of memory after the dictatorships. In other words, the worst disservice criticism can do to these texts, to the truth they bear - a factual one - is to treat them as much testimonio criticism has: as epochal ushers of some revolution that has finally allowed the subaltern to speak freely. (*TUP* 64)

Here, Avelar recognizes the need to represent the violence committed by the military regime and the physical and mental suffering of those who were tortured, killed, or exiled

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<sup>21</sup> For these authors, the discourse of the military regime inherently includes the tenets of neoliberal capitalism in the postdictatorship. Following the ideas developed by Willie Thayer, they argue that the military dictatorships in the Southern Cone constituted an epochal transition "from the modern national state to the transnational post-state market", and that "the real transitions are the dictatorships themselves", and not the post-dictatorial process of re-democratization that is often referred to as the "transition" (Avelar 58-9) For this reason, any notion of eliding postdictatorial discourse automatically includes resisting being subsumed by neoliberal capital as well.

during the dictatorship. At the same time, he also perceives that the ideology of the militant left has filled-in the constitutive gap between representation and experience in much of the testimonial literature produced in the postdictatorship, leaving no space for readers (nor the social actors themselves) to think critically about the past and its connections to the present. As I explained previously, Avelar privileges the Benjaminian connection between allegory and mourning as a way to articulate the memory of the dictatorship in a new language that resists appropriation within the totalizing discourses of the postdictatorship, examining novels that "mourn" the "ruins" of the dictatorship allegorically - like Benjamin's "angel of history" - reminding us that "the present that it is the product of a past catastrophe" (*TUP* 3).

Richard, meanwhile, demonstrates how Benjamin's idea of a *refractory art* ("an art of negation and deviation" (*TIS* 5)) is particularly useful for a postdictatorial re-articulation of memory that not only challenges the official position of "forgetting" the individual and collective trauma of the dictatorship, but also resists participating in the dominant discursive system of representation, which often seeks to appropriate testimonial narratives as symbols of "hero" or "victim." For Richard (like Avelar and Moreiras), the "catastrophe" of the dictatorship was also a "catastrophe of meaning," leaving only the "fraudulent language spoken by the official power" and the "ideological mold of militant art" to explain the "fragments of experience" of the dictatorship (*TIS* 5). Like Avelar, she also calls for a new language to narrate the "blind spots," "traces," or the "residual" memories left out or appropriated by these discourses (the most important

example of which for Richard being the "disappeared"), offering a space to connect these experiences to the present without representing them as ideological symbols:

Part of the critical task incumbent on postdictatorial thought is to overcome the rigid dichotomy of values and representations imprisoning "the standpoint of the vanquished" by exploring more oblique forms, together with resolving the conflict between assimilating (incorporating) or expelling (rejecting) the past. Critically resolving this conflict means as much avoiding the nostalgia of an anti-dictatorial Symbol, as it does resisting any enterprise of forgetfulness that seeks to reunify history by forcibly appeasing those forces disputing its meaning. (*TIS* 21)

Richard offers the photography of Eugenio Dittborn, whose work with images of the "ruins" of the dictatorship is similar to the "memory art" of Marcelo Brodsky that I analyze in chapter 3, as an example of "de-ideologizing" the "victim" of the dictatorship and representing them outside of the counter-hegemonic narrative of the militant left. Like Avelar and Moreiras, Richard approaches the representation of these "residual" experiences through the Benjaminian perspective of allegorical mourning, which Huyssen warns often "collapses memory into trauma." So, how can we activate these "remnants" of the past without incorporating them within the dominant systems of meaning in the postdictatorship in ways other than allegorical mourning?

## Remnants, Culture, and Dynamic Memory

"Testimony thus guarantees not the factual truth of the statement safeguarded in the archive, but rather its unarchivability, its exteriority with respect to the archive - that is, the necessity by which, as the existence of language, it escapes both memory and forgetting" (Agamben 158).

The focus on exploring the "residuals," "ruins," "traces," "remains," "excess," "excrement," "trash," and "remnants"<sup>22</sup> of the dictatorship is an important element in the critical work on cultural production in the postdictatorial Southern Cone. As we have seen, these terms can have multiple meanings - such as physical objects from the past, the "ruins" left after catastrophe, or the "subaltern" voices left out of (counter)hegemonic discourses in the present. We can also connect the idea of "remnant" to the transmission of cultural memory through our understanding of the constitutive gap between experience and representation - the impossibility to fully represent experience through language. In fact, Slavoj Žižek utilizes these same terms in his description of this representational split (using Lacan's terminology of the Real in relation to symbolic systems of meaning): "But the Real is at the same time the product, remainder, leftover, scraps of this process of symbolization, the remnants, the excess which escapes symbolization and is as such produced by the symbolization itself" (191).

By equating the "Real" with the term "remnant," Žižek notes that there is always a "remainder" left when experience is represented in any system of meaning, just as Spivak, Moreiras, and Williams note the "excesses" left out of any (counter)hegemonic relationship. While Žižek calls this the "impossible-real" or "the sublime object" and Spivak, Moreiras, and Williams refer to it as the "subaltern," they all point to the impossibility of fully representing this "remnant" through language - the constitutive gap

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<sup>22</sup> These are all terms used by Avelar, Richard, and Moreiras.

in that Huyssen, Richard, and others maintain needs to be "left-open" in order to create a productive space for engaging the past from the present through cultural production. But, how do we engage and circulate the "remnants" of the military dictatorship without incorporating them within the discursive logic of postdictatorial memory, while at the same time avoiding collapsing memory into trauma? I believe that Giorgio Agamben's conceptualization of "remnant" and "testimony" may provide a theoretical approach to examine cultural production that attempts to represent the "unrepresentable" experiences of the military dictatorships in Argentina and Brazil in ways other than allegorical mourning.

In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Agamben argues that those who were isolated and killed in the concentration camps during the Holocaust (the Muselmann - who Primo Levi calls the "complete witness") constitute the "absolutely unwitnessable, invisible ark of bio-power [...] a bare, unassignable and unwitnessable life" because of the impossibility to fully convey the experience of their extermination through language (157). The Nazis counted upon the "impossibility" to bear witness to the horrors of the concentration camp, the "unsayability" of their violent acts in language, to prevent the world from believing the story of anyone that survived. The conceptual turn that Agamben contributes is to define "testimony" not as offering factual truth about Auschwitz, but as bearing witness to the "unspeakability" of the experience in the gas chambers. The testimony of those who survived is only possible because of the "impossibility of speaking" of those who were killed (the "complete witnesses") and the "unarchivability" of their experience within "logical" discourse (and thus, escaping both

memory and forgetting). It is for this reason that Agamben argues that the survivors of Auschwitz can not be separated from those who were killed, because it is the "disjunctive" space between them, what he terms the "remnant," where witness testimony is located. "[S]o the remnants of Auschwitz - the witnesses - are neither the dead nor the survivors, neither the drowned nor the saved. They are what remains between them" (164). In other words, those who survived can never fully represent the experiences of those who were killed, they can only articulate their relationship to the traces of the experiences of the dead that momentarily appear within the "remnant space" that both connects and separates them.

Agamben's use of "remnant" allows us to think about ways to represent the "unrepresentable" experiences of those who were "disappeared" during the military dictatorships without constructing them as an "anti-dictatorial" symbol (either as hero or victim) within a counter-narrative of "resistance." Since, following Agamben's argument, it is impossible to represent the experiences of the "true" witnesses of the violence committed by the military regimes, those that were killed or "disappeared," the "survivors" can only provide testimony to their relationship to the residual effects of the "disappeared" through the "remnant" space that binds them. As Brett Levinson contends in *The Ends of Literature*, "The border that binds two subjects [...] is also the limit of their respective discourses or realms of knowledge and understanding. Efforts to fabricate a new project through the teaming of the two subjective fields must *articulate* their relation, which is irreducible to any such field or any known discourse" (52). It is through this articulation of an individual or collective relationship to the "impossibility"

to fully represent experience that an opportunity for a shared cultural memory about dictatorship appears. Instead of solely "mourning" the "ruins" of the past and the impossibility of restituting the "lost object" of the traumatic experience, cultural production that articulates a relationship to the "remnants," or the residual effects of the dictatorial past creates the space for an intersubjective dialogue with others about that relationship - without appropriating the "disappeared" as a symbol within an ideological or political discourse.<sup>23</sup>

This brings us back to the intersubjective nature of the transmission of cultural memory that I outlined in the first section of this chapter. An important component of engaging the "remnants" of the dictatorship in new ways - be they narratives that are excluded from typical memory discourses about this time period or the impossibility to fully represent the experience of the "disappeared" - is to maintain the constitutive fissures of representation open. This can allow "receivers" in different social contexts to interact with these residual experiences in ways that are meaningful to their lives in the present, and contribute to a dynamic engagement with the dictatorial past. As Jelin argues, the meanings of the past offered in memory narratives will always be resignified and reinterpreted:

[...] the possibility that those who are on the receiving end will reinterpret and resignify whatever is being conveyed has to be left open. It will never be a process of simple repetition or memorizing. In fact, this [...] points to the need for new generations to learn how to approach the subjects and

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<sup>23</sup> I pursue this idea in my analysis of *Los compañeros* by Marcelo Brodsky in chapter 3 and *Los planetas* by Sergio Chejfec in chapter 5.

experiences of the past as "others," as different from their own, and to be willing to engage in a dialogue rather than simply re-present that past through a direct identification with it. [...] there is no way to prevent or block reinterpretations, resignifications, and new readings of the past, because the "same" history and the "same" truth inevitably acquire alternative meanings when the context has changed. And the succession of cohorts or generations necessarily implies the emergence of new contexts.

(96)

Jelin's call for younger generations to enter into a dialogue with past is key here, and could apply to anyone who is engaging the dictatorial past through memory discourses in cultural production. Merely memorizing the facts about the thousands who suffered during the military regimes or being expected to "directly identify" with their plight does not provide a meaningful connection to this experience. A space needs to be created where a dialogue can occur between the past experiences being represented and the present social contexts in which they are evoked, particularly if the goal is to "reinterpret" or "resignify" memories that have been traditionally excluded from narratives about the past.

Cultural production that *accentuates* the inherent fissures in representation as opposed to filling in the gap with an ideological or political discourse offers the possibility for a more meaningful engagement with the "remnants" of the dictatorial past for readers or viewers. Exposing the gaps in representations of the past and maintaining them open offers a space for those who interact with this type of cultural production to

actively engage these gaps in order to make meaning. This creates the opportunity for a dynamic relationship with the past, with multiple possible connections and interpretations that can open a critical dialogue about the dictatorship and the influences that it has had on present-day society. This is, in fact, the goal of cultural criticism for Richard:

Cultural criticism [...] would not only try to raise the reader's suspicion against the supposed false innocence of the forms and transparencies of language that hides the self-interested conventions that tacitly bind together value, meaning, and power. Additionally, it would try to excite the critical imagination concerning the fissures between reality and its others that art suggestively maintains open, so that the reader is motivated to break the mold of prefabricated meaning with an unmaking and remaking of a free subjectivity that lets itself be attracted by the categorical unknown and wandering words. (*CR* 12)

This attempt to "excite the critical imagination" of those who interact with the "remnant" memories of the military dictatorship can be augmented through all types of cultural production (e.g. films, novels, photography, art, comics, music, etc.) that maintain the inherent "fissures between reality and its others" open for multiple interpretations and resignifications of meaning and the activation of memory for new purposes the present.

### **Conclusion**

As I have argued throughout the theoretical discussion and literature review in this chapter, approaching the study of postdictatorial memory discourses in Argentina and Brazil as cultural memory allows us to place multiple theoretical concepts in dialogue

with one another, which is necessary given the numerous elements that can influence the creation, transmission, and reception of memory through cultural production. In considering all memory as a representation of the past, we need to consider the various meanings that can be constructed and interpreted within the inherent fissures between experience and representation. For this reason, it is essential to examine the ideological discourses that are being enacted to influence the reception of memory narratives, in both their hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forms. This allows us to deconstruct the symbols and myths employed in competing representations of the dictatorial past, "de-ideologizing" them in order to think critically about the experiences under dictatorship and the effects that they have on present-day society. Examining the past through cultural memory enables us to interrogate dominant representations of the past and enact "residual" experiences left out of these discourses for new uses in the present, which may lead to alternative futures than the present paths of postdictatorial Brazil and Argentina. At the same time, it allows us to be aware of the limits of representing the "irrepresentable" experiences of dictatorship and explore alternative possibilities, both within cultural production and our own critical practices, to engage the "remnants" of the past. In the following chapters, I apply these concepts to the study of two photography exhibitions and two novels that deal with memory in postdictatorial Argentina and Brazil. While I contend that the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit exemplifies the mythic counter-narrative of "resistance" often articulated by the militant left within the discursive logic of postdictatorial memory, I argue that the "dynamic" representations in the memory art of Marcelo Brodsky, the "allogical" memory narrative by Beatriz Bracher,

and the exploration of "remnant" spaces in Sergio Chejfec's novel all create the conditions of possibility of a shared, dynamic memory about the military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina, that offer the space to think critically about the past and activate memory for new social uses in the present and for the future.

## CHAPTER II

WHOSE MEMORY AND WHAT TRUTH? A STATIC MEMORY OF AN  
 IDEALIZED PAST IN *DIREITO À MEMÓRIA E À VERDADE: A DITADURA NO  
 BRASIL 1964-1985*

In this chapter I examine the memory discourses produced about the military dictatorship in Brazil in the photography exhibition *A Ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985*, which is part of a project sponsored by the Brazilian Federal Government called *Direito à Memória e à Verdade*. I argue that the exhibit participates in the discursive logic of memory in postdictatorial Brazil, articulating a totalizing historical counter-narrative from the perspective of the militant left that employs much of the same language used by supporters of the military regime. I begin by examining the mission of the *Direito à Memória e à Verdade* project, problematizing the stated goals of "rescuing" the "silenced" memories of those who suffered from state violence during the dictatorship in order to strengthen the present-day commitment to human rights in Brazil. I then turn my attention to the images and texts presented in the photography exhibition, which I argue construct mythic representations of students, artists, workers, armed revolutionaries, and the "disappeared" as the foundational figures of "democratic resistance" to the repression of the military regime. I am especially critical of the exhibit's appropriation of torture victims, the dead, and the "disappeared" within their narrative of militant "resistance," which displaces the real suffering of these individuals and their families by placing them as heroic/victimized symbols within a celebratory narrative of "popular" mobilization against the dictatorship. I conclude by arguing that the exhibit ultimately masks the constitutive gap between representation and experience with the same ideological

arguments of the era of the military regime, and that this nostalgic vision of the past fails to provide space to critically reflect upon experiences during the dictatorship and the influence that they have had on present day society.

### **The *Direito à memória e à verdade* Project and the Discourse on Human Rights**

The *A Ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* (ADNB) photography exhibit forms part of a larger project entitled *Direito à Memória e à Verdade*, developed by the Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos da Presidência da República (SDH/PRA) in conjunction with the Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos (CEDMP). Established during the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso through the Federal Law 9.140/95 (December 1995) and then expanded by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the CEDMP<sup>24</sup> was charged with investigating and recognizing each case of political prisoners who were either killed or "disappeared" during the military dictatorship; approving monetary reparations for the families of these victims of state violence; and searching for the remains of bodies of the "disappeared" so that families could perform the "direito milenar e sagrado de sepultar seus entes queridos" (SDH/PRA 8). In 2007, the SDH/PRA published a 502 page document explaining the work of the CEDMP and cataloging their investigation of 475 cases that were brought to them between 1996 and 2007, of which 356 of the "mortos e desaparecidos" were determined to qualify for reparations for family members under the Federal Law 9.140/95.

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<sup>24</sup> According to the SDH/PRA publication *Direito à memória e à verdade*, the CEDMP as instituted by the law was initially composed of "um deputado da Comissão de Direitos Humanos da Câmara, uma pessoa ligada às vítimas da ditadura, um representante das Forças Armadas, um membro do Ministério Público Federal e três pessoas livremente escolhidas pelo presidente da República" (SDH/PRA 37). The names of all the people who served on the committee between 1995 and 2007 are listed on pages 12-14 of the SDH/PRA publication.

The most interesting pieces of the document for my purposes are the "Apresentação" and the first chapter (entitled "Direito à Memória e à Verdade"), which articulate the overall purpose of the project, an explanation for the "Right to Memory and Truth" for the families of those who were "disappeared" by the military regime, and the contribution that the SDH/PRA seeks "Para que não esqueça. Para que nunca mais aconteça" (SDH/PRA 50). The "Apresentação" lays out the primary purpose of the book as contributing to the consolidation of the respect for Human Rights in Brazilian society by "shedding light" on the "dark" period of the most recent military dictatorship and exposing all possible information on the state violence committed by the military regime against its own citizens:

Este livro-relatório tem como objetivo contribuir para que o Brasil avance na consolidação do respeito aos Direitos Humanos, sem medo de conhecer a sua história recente. A violência, que ainda hoje assusta o País como ameaça ao impulso de crescimento e de inclusão social em curso deita raízes em nosso passado escravista e paga tributo às duas ditaduras do século 20. Jogar luz no período de sombras e abrir todas as informações sobre violações de Direitos Humanos ocorridas no último ciclo ditatorial são imperativos urgentes de uma nação que reivindica, com legitimidade, novo status no cenário internacional e nos mecanismos dirigentes da ONU. (SDH/PRA 8)

The mission of the project attempts to make a connection between the past and the present through the theme of "Human Rights", arguing that exposing the juridical truth

about torture, murder, and "disappearances" during the military dictatorship will contribute to the necessary recognition of Human Rights in Brazil that is reflective of the country's attempt to establish itself on the international stage as a leader in the projects of the United Nations. By framing the project as a way to "legitimize" their status as an important player in world affairs, the SDH/PRA actually places the exposure of the facts surrounding state violence during the dictatorship as secondary in importance to demonstrating their commitment to human rights to the international community. The mission also makes explicit references to "violence" in present-day Brazil, with roots in slavery and both the Vargas and military dictatorships of the 20th century, which "threatens" both the "growth" and "social inclusion" in present-day society. Here we also note a displacement of the "exceptionality" of the violence of the dictatorship, as it is presented as another in a long history of systemic violence in Brazil (colonialism, slavery, etc.), which actually minimizes the experiences of those who suffered during the dictatorship that the commission is supposedly attempting to recover.

The themes of "violence" and "human rights" are two of the most common buzz words associated with the postdictatorial Southern Cone, particularly within counter-memory narratives of resistance to the dictatorship that seek to "rescue" experiences that are "forgotten" by the official memory discourse. While juridical importance of exposing the torture, murder, and social repression committed by those associated with the military regime is unquestionable, I maintain that in order to connect these experiences to the present, "so that they never happen again," we must pay particular attention to the *form* through which the themes of "violence" and "human rights" are presented, and what

meanings are attached to these terms. The SDH/PRA primarily uses the term "human rights violations" in connection with political prisoners who endured physical and psychological violence for either outspoken political opposition or armed actions against the military government. The attempt to join this experience to current issues of human-rights violations, as articulated by the mission of the project, fails to provide a connection to the pervasive use of physical abuse, torture, and murder by both police and private security forces against those who are marginalized by the systemic violence in Brazil today for *non-political* reasons. The SDH/PRA's reference to the violence that "threatens" social inclusion in Brazil in an attempt to connect the violence of the dictatorship to current violations of human rights today ignores the different historical contexts and causes of this violence, which hinders its ability to interrogate the specific contexts of human rights violations against political dissidents during the dictatorship and against the poor and other marginalized groups in present-day society.

The "Apresentação" closes by outlining the overall goal of the commission as one of "agreement" and "reconciliation", reflecting the spirit of the 1979 Amnesty Law. "O lançamento deste livro na data que marca 28 anos da publicação da Lei de Anistia, em 1979, sinaliza a busca de concórdia, o sentimento de reconciliação e os objetivos humanitários que moveram os 11 anos de trabalho da Comissão Especial" (SDH/PRA 8). By citing and celebrating the Amnesty Law, and through placing "reconciliation" as one of the main purposes of the project, the SDH/PRA uses the same language consecrated during the negotiated process of transition to democracy<sup>25</sup> to talk about the past,

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<sup>25</sup> I discuss this process in more detail later in the chapter.

reproducing the same discourse of institutionalized amnesty and reconciliation that the families of the "mortos e desaparecidos" are attempting to overcome.

For example, the second section of the book, entitled "Direito à Memória e à Verdade", emphasizes that the "right to memory and truth" pertains specifically to the right of families of those that experienced prison, torture, or death at the hands of the military government, allowing the State to accept "historical and administrative" blame for the violence committed during the dictatorship and provide monetary reparations to the families of the victims. The final piece of this section is the most interesting, as it reifies the idea that these actions by the Brazilian State (accepting blame for the state violence committed during the dictatorship, validating the accusations of the families of the "disappeared" by providing them monetary reparations for what happened) allow the *State* to be the final arbiter (as well as the principal protagonist) in "rescuing" the "memory" and the "truth" about the past. "Redemocratizado, o Estado brasileiro cumpriu também um certo papel de juiz histórico ao fazer o resgate da memória e da verdade [...] Foram exigidos depoimentos que corroborassem as denúncias, apresentados documentos e realizadas perícias científicas para chegar à versão definitiva dos fatos" (SDH/PRA 17).

Here the "re-democratized" state attempts to dissociate itself from the "dictatorial" state, when in fact the transition to democracy was a negotiated process and the "democratic" government is composed of many ex-supporters of the military regime. By placing the State in the center as "juiz histórico" for the contradictory memory narratives offered by the families of the "disappeared" and the "official" version of events presented by supporters of the military regime, the SDH/PRA ignores the fact that it is continuing

the discourse of the military government, reifying the *State*, and not the victims or their families, as the rightful proprietors of "truth" about the past. This situation reflects an interesting paradox noted by Idelber Avelar in *The Letter of Violence*: while victims of state violence were tortured in order to obtain confessions ("truth") *during* military rule, in the postdictatorship it is the *torturer* who must confess to his actions in order for them to be considered juridically "true." While there have not yet been trials of military personnel in Brazil, the work of the State in "documenting" the juridical facts about the past functions in the same way. The testimonial accusations of victims and their families do not suffice in establishing the "truth" about torture and murder committed by military personnel during the dictatorship; instead it is the discourse of the State that determines the juridical "truth" about this traumatic past.

The above cited passage also argues that the use of "documents" and "scientific methods" of investigation to corroborate the accusations of the families of those killed or tortured during the dictatorship has allowed the present-day Brazilian State to establish a "definitive version of the facts" pertaining to the murder and torture of its own citizens during the dictatorship. While this "scientific" investigation ultimately confirmed the accusations of human rights abuses, it can also be perceived as a backhanded critique of the validity of testimonials in establishing juridical truth about the past, as the accusations of the family members of those who were killed during the dictatorship were only considered to be "truthful" after the "facts" had been established by the same State power responsible for their death. The connection that the SDH/PRA makes between juridical facts and "memory," and the repetition of the argument that knowing the atrocities of the

past will prevent these human rights abuses from happening again is also problematic.

"Este livro-relatório registra para a história o resgate dessa memória. Só conhecendo profundamente os porões e as atrocidades daquele lamentável período de nossa vida republicana, o País saberá construir instrumentos eficazes para garantir que semelhantes violações dos Direitos Humanos não se repitam nunca mais" (SDH/PRA 17). In these comments, the SDH/PRA fails to recognize that the narration of facts or the juridical truth about the torture, deaths, and repression waged by the military government during the military dictatorship does NOT constitute the *memory* of the dictatorship.

Here, we can draw from Avelar's argument that "compilation of data" does not constitute the memory of the dictatorship, and that "another language" is required in order to articulate memory in the postdictatorship. Merely recounting a counter-narrative of historical facts that challenges the "official" version of the past does not provide the space to critically reflect upon this experience, make connections to the present, and create the opportunity for an intersubjective use for this memory by future generations to ensure that the violations of human rights never happens again. The form of the memory narrative is extremely important, and as Avelar, Nelly Richard, and Alberto Moreiras maintain, the language used to "rescue" the residual elements of the past needs to reject the dominant discursive system of the postdictatorship in order to engage these residuals of the past and activate them in new ways within the socio-political situation in the present. One can argue that the "official" compilation of juridical facts by the SDH/PRA and the CEDMP about the human rights abuses committed by the military regime is an important first step in revisiting the dictatorship, particularly since Brazil is the only

country in the Southern Cone that has not placed military personnel on trial for their actions. However, a deeper analysis of the *Direito à Memória e à Verdade* project demonstrates that their attempt to rescue and transmit a "silenced" social memory about the dictatorship is articulated from the perspective of the "militant left" within the accepted discursive logic of memory the postdictatorship, exemplified through the *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibit.

### ***A Ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* Exhibition - São Paulo, Brazil**

"[...] esta mostra faz um resgate do passado que emociona a todos no presente. E que, aos mais jovens, coloca fatos muitas vezes desconhecidos, mas para a saúde política da nação, não podem permanecer ignorados" (From José Serra's (Governor of the State of São Paulo) introduction to the ADNB exhibit).

The *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibit, part of the SDH/PRA's *Direito à Memória e à Verdade* project, was first presented in the Câmara dos Deputados in Brasília in August 2006 to celebrate the 27th anniversary of the 1979 Amnesty Law, and has been installed in different spaces throughout Brazil over the past few years. The exhibition was installed in the bottom floor of the Estação Pinacoteca museum in São Paulo in 2008, a building which in the past was the primary detention center for the Departamento Estadual de Ordem Político e Social (DEOPS) during the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945). After functioning as a prison in the years after the Vargas regime, the building again became the "official" detention center of DEOPS during the most recent military dictatorship until its closure in 1983. The bottom floor of the ex-DEOPS headquarters, which contained the cells where thousands of political prisoners were interrogated and tortured, has recently been transformed into the *Memorial da Resistência* under the direction of Dr. Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, a historian at the

University of São Paulo (USP) who also directs the PROIN (Projeto Integrado do Arquivo do Estado e Universidade de São Paulo) archives that contain the documentation of all individuals that were detained or investigated by DEOPS.<sup>26</sup> The installation of the photography exhibition in the Estação Pinacoteca was a coordinated effort by the SDH/PRA (under the direction of Ministro Paulo de Tarso Vannuchi), the Secretaria de Estado da Cultura de São Paulo, the Fundação Luterana da Diaconia, and the Agência Livre para Informação, Cidadania e Educação (ALICE), and the images and accompanying texts contained in the exhibit were curated by Vera Rotta, Valéria Rabelo and Marília Andrade.

In Ministro Vanucchi's written introduction for the exhibit, presented in both the entrance to the *Memorial de Resistência* and on the inside cover of the museum booklet of the images, he explains that the exhibit is being displayed in multiple cities throughout Brazil beginning in 2008 in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This once again signals the intent by the SDH/PRA to connect the content of the exhibition to the theme of international human rights in the present-day. Ministro Vanucchi's describes the exhibit as taking the viewing public on a "visual trip through time" that places the spectator "within the events" of the military dictatorship through the large photographic panels displaying images that "recuperate" the memory of major events of this time period. He maintains that the exhibit "traz de volta a lembrança aos que viveram os fatos retratados e traduz aos jovens um pouco do

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<sup>26</sup> During my research for this dissertation project, the *Memorial da Resistência* had not yet been completed, and so my analysis will focus on the photography exhibit that was installed in this space. Professor Tucci Carneiro, who to the best of my knowledge was not involved in the SDH/PRA project nor the *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibition, shared some of her plans for the space in an interview with me in June 2008.

clima vivenciado nesse período tão importante na história social e política brasileira" (ADNB). While the goal of "recuperating" and disseminating information about the military dictatorship that has traditionally been ignored in by the "official" politics of forgetting and institutionalized amnesty is an important one, the idealized discourse of "resistance" that the exhibit draws from to "translate" the social and political climate of this time period for those who did not personally experience the dictatorship is problematic.

This goal also ignores the fact that many (if not most) Brazilians had a different experience during the military dictatorship than the memory narrative presented by the exhibit, which I will demonstrate in my analysis of the images throughout this chapter. Vanucchi closes his statement by arguing that "só de posse desse conhecimento o País saberá construir instrumentos eficazes para garantir que essas violações dos direitos humanos não se repitam nunca mais" (ADNB). As I mentioned above, while the goal of learning from the mistakes of the past to ensure that these human rights violations are never repeated is laudable, it is also important to consider how the photography exhibit constructs its meaning of the term "human rights" and in what way connections are made between the experiences of the past and the socio-political needs of the present. I argue that the memory discourse presented in the *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* exhibit repeats the same ideological constructs of the past in its attempt to construct a "social bridge" to the present. This fails to provide a space to think critically about the past and impedes the "translation" of the experiences of the dictatorship for younger generations and the capacity to connect them to current human rights issues in Brazil.

In visiting the exhibit, I found that it was installed on the bottom floor of the Estação Pinacoteca museum, within four "restored" cells which have been completely scrubbed of any vestiges of the dictatorship, repainted, given a new lighting and air conditioning systems, and portray an environment more suited for a museum showroom than ex-prison cells. Passing through the main entrance to the Estação Pinacoteca museum, the photography exhibit in the "restored" cells was not visible, and there were no signs indicating that the *Memorial de Resistência* was located anywhere in the building. After inquiring at the reception desk, I was directed outside to the back entrance of the museum, through the parking lot reserved primarily for employees, where there was a separate entrance for the *Memorial de Resistência*, which again did not contain any signage indicating its location. The separation between the memorial (and photography exhibit) and the rest of the displays in museum, which were located on the upper floors of the building, projected a feeling of division in both the aesthetic and social importance of the *Memorial de Resistência*. It was as if the curators and the museum directors intended to hide the exhibit's presence within the Estação Pinacoteca for both its political volatility and for not being considered a piece of "legitimate" art<sup>27</sup> along with the paintings and sculptures located on the other levels of the museum. This spatial and discursive separation of the photography exhibit reduces its ability to connect with visitors to the museum, who were perhaps unaware of the building's history as the ex-DEOPS headquarters and its role in the repression of Brazilians throughout the 20th

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<sup>27</sup> I use "legitimate art" here in the sense developed by Pierre Bourdieu, as something being consecrated as "art" within a discursive system of museums or specialists. I discuss this idea in more detail in the next chapter on the photography of Marcelo Brodsky.

century. In other words, if one did not know that the *Memorial de Resistência* was located within the building or did not take the initiative to inquire about its location, the "silenced" memories of the dictatorship that the memorial intended to "rescue" and place into collective knowledge in the present continued to be absent from the social interaction within the space of the museum.<sup>28</sup>

The entrance to the memorial is demarcated by an exterior brick wall that is separated from the main building, forming a type of entrance corridor which displayed the initial images and descriptions of the *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibit. The first panel of the exhibit contains an outline of a soldier juxtaposed with the title of the exhibition and the sponsors of the project, written in black and red lettering. The entire photography exhibit (as well as the accompanying museum booklet available for purchase) is presented in black and red, colors intended to evoke nostalgic visions of Che Guevara, social revolution, and resistance movements of the militant left during the 1960's and 1970's that are often appropriated as symbols by social movements associated with the left today, such as the *Zapatistas* in Mexico. The symbolic power of the presentation of the exhibit in black and red lettering and backdrops is important, as it marks the political tenor of the exhibit through visual cues that have already been established and reiterated in multiple social and political contexts today. As we will see shortly however, the reiterative power that these colors hold in representing revolution or social change are not fully enacted in this exhibit because it fails to leave the discourse of

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<sup>28</sup> Prof. Tucci Carneiro informed me that she intended to transform the entire bottom floor of the museum into the Memorial de Resistência, providing more visibility to the space as the ex-detention and torture center of DEOPS. I plan to return to the space in my future research to see the transformation and the visibility of the Memorial within the Museum.

the 1960's in order to make a connection to the themes of human rights and social violence in present-day Brazil.<sup>29</sup>

The title image provides a short statement that defines the overall goal of the exhibit, criticizing the Amnesty law for "forgiving" and "forgetting" the actions of "everyone" during the dictatorship, while reiterating "our" right to memory and truth about the past, though not explicitly articulating who "our" includes. "E nos lembramos, Temos o direito de lembrar, o direito à memória. Queremos saber mais, o direito à verdade" (ADNB). The initial image of the exhibition also includes the lyrics from Gonzaguinha's iconic protest song *Legião dos Esquecidos*, intended to frame the exhibition as rescuing the "histórias [...] de obscuros personagens [...] dos humilhados e ofendidos explorados e oprimidos que tentaram encontrar a solução" (ADNB). As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter however, the attempt to "rescue" the stories of the "obscured," "exploited," and the "oppressed" through the photography exhibit is underwhelming, as the images used are mostly iconic shots of famous social actors during the dictatorship that reify mythic heroes of this time period instead of pointing towards the subaltern voices of Gonzaguinha's "obscuros personagens."

Directly across from the title panel of the exhibition is what I find to be the most effective image / text combination presented in the display, a group of individual photos of identification of 16 people whose families received monetary reparations for being killed or "disappeared" during the dictatorship. Taking official, state-issued identification photos of individuals who suffered at the hands of the military regime during the

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<sup>29</sup> We can also take into account the fact that the colors themselves don't inherently construct meaning, they can have different significations in different social contexts.

dictatorship and using them to criticize the same government responsible for their death or disappearance has become a common tactic by family members seeking the juridical truth about the circumstances of the death or "disappearance" of their loved ones during the dictatorship. The most well known of examples of this are organizations such as the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and HIJOS in Argentina. What sets this panel apart from the others that I view more critically in the exhibit is that it does not attempt to construct a mythic discourse about these individuals, it does not hold them up as heroes "resisting" the repression of the dictatorship in the name of democracy (though many of the individuals included in this panel are well-known and are appropriated in this manner later in the exhibit). The reproduction of these images, some taken from state issued photo identification cards and others from the individual's detention by DEOPS, is juxtaposed with a piece of text offering many statistics about the state violence committed during the military dictatorship taken from Janaina Teles' book *Os Herdeiros da Memória. A Luta dos Familiares de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos por Verdade e Justiça no Brasil*. This is one of the only panels in the exhibit that focuses on the original mission of the CEMDP and the SDH/PRA, the investigation of the juridical truth behind the deaths or "disappearances" of thousands of Brazilians during the dictatorship:

Cerca de 50 mil pessoas foram presas somente durante os primeiros meses de ditadura; cerca de 20 mil pessoas [...] torturadas [...], 356 mortos e desaparecidos políticos indenizados [...] 7.367 acusados [...] em 707 processos judiciais por crimes contra a segurança nacional [...] 130 banidos; 4.862 cassados [...]. (ADNB)

The panel does not attempt to place these statistics within an idealized counter-memory narrative of "united resistance" to the military regime in the name of democracy, and instead provides statistical information about the detention, trial, imprisonment, torture, death, exile of thousands of Brazilian citizens during this time period. The intent here is to grab the attention of visitors to the exhibit with the "horror" of the sheer numbers of those who suffered during the military regime, acting as a primer for how they are to interpret the images presented in the rest of the exhibit. It is important to note, however, that the text focuses on political repression and political prisoners in its presentation of human rights abuses, which follows the general line of reasoning throughout the exhibit that hinders the ability to connect the state violence committed during the dictatorship to the physical and systemic human rights issues in present-day Brazil that are not based solely on political differences. Still, this panel of the exhibit focuses on the stated goal of the CEDMP in defending the right to memory and juridical truth about the "desaparecidos e mortos" during the dictatorship, a contribution that gets lost in the rest of the exhibit that intends to "rescue" the silenced "memory and truth" of all aspects of this time period through a totalizing counter-narrative.

### **Mythic Heroes of an Idealized Past**

The *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibit offers an idealized counter-narrative of resistance to the military dictatorship articulated from the perspective of the militant left that can be critiqued in much the same way as the version of the past offered by supporters of the military regime. The memory discourses offered by the exhibit participate in the same system of meaning as the "official" memory about the

dictatorship, albeit from the opposite political perspective, creating mythic heroes and victims in constructing a memory narrative of united "resistance" to the military regime. The texts accompanying the photographic displays use much of the same language as the military to talk about the past, and many of the images that are included in the exhibit either explicitly or implicitly reify the military's rhetoric by presenting a narrative about the time period as a "war" or a "battle" for the nation. As Andreas Huyssen argues (paralleling the arguments laid out by Richard and Avelar), the attempt to re-signify spaces by constructing a counter-narrative about the past risks reproducing the same "discursive totalitarianism" (Huyssen *PP* 35) about the past that, while rescuing certain elements left out of the "official" memory, ultimately serves to reify that dominant historical discourse by failing to provide a space for the critical evaluation of the past and its connections to lived experience in the present. This is evident in the *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibit, as the curators transform figures such as students, workers, musicians, and leaders of the armed-left, as well as events such as the *Passeata dos 100 mil* and the *Diretas Já* movement, into timeless symbols of "resistance" as part of their attempt to "rescue" the "silenced memory and truth" about the dictatorship. This idealized counter-narrative fails to provide a space to think critically about the dictatorship, and experiences that do not fit within the discursive logic of memory composed of the militant left and military right are once again excluded from the exhibit's attempt to construct an "imagined community" of "resistance" to the dictatorship.

Roland Barthes makes an important contribution to theoretical considerations between visual culture and the construction of mythic narratives of nation and identity in

his well known work from *Mythologies*, "Myth Today." He maintains that myth is a "form" or a "mode of signification" and that "since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse" (VC 51). Barthes builds upon Ferdinand de Saussure's work on signs to develop the idea of multiple levels of meaning in the construction of "myths", which he calls the language-object (form) and meta-language (concept) systems of meaning. Barthes argues that the sign produced at the language-object level of meaning (be it a word or an image) becomes a new signifier at the meta-language level, which combines with another signified to produce a new sign, or another level of meaning for the word or image. He maintains that this double-articulation of the signified constitutes a myth, which eliminates the initial meaning produced by a word or an image and replaces it with a new meaning, creating a paradox where the form of the signifier is "empty but present" and its meaning is "absent but full." Barthes uses the image of a young black soldier saluting the French flag on the cover of a magazine to demonstrate his definition of myth, arguing that the empty presence of the black youth serves to eliminate the brutal reality of French colonization of African countries and instead *naturalizes* French imperialism and presents a discourse of racial reconciliation and harmony in France through a common commitment to serving the "nation."

Barthes considers myths as "depoliticized speech" that eliminates human agency in the interaction within real social structures and instead presents historical events as "innocent" and "natural," occurring outside the realm of socio-political power structures

and thus denying the role that social actors played in constructing and maintaining a certain historical narrative:

[M]yth [...] abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful charity: things appear to mean something by themselves. (VC 58)

Barthes' use of an image to exemplify his definition of myth provides an excellent bridge between the discussions of the uses of myths and heroes within discourses of identity construction by cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm and the mythic counter-narrative of "resistance" to the military dictatorship that is presented in the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit. While Hall, Barthes, Anderson, and Hobsbawm primarily focus on the "invention" of myths, traditions, and heroic figures by the social power in order to symbolically eliminate social difference and establish a unified national or identitarian project, the use of mythic heroes in the formation of a counter-narrative to the official version of the past can be just as problematic, eliminating the "complexity of human acts" and presenting a view of the past that is without "contradictions" and "depth." The ADNB exhibit reflects this through idealized narratives of the activities of students, musicians, workers, and armed revolutionaries during the military regime within a totalizing narrative of "resistance" in the name of democracy, a mythic discourse that continues to conceal narrative fissures

about the experience of the dictatorship and fails to provide a space for spectators to critically reconsider the past and make connections to the socio-political concerns of the present.

### **Os Estudantes Unidos! (Unless you're not our kind of "student")**

Upon entering the ADNB exhibit, the first images that spectators encounter are multiple panels representing the student resistance to the military regime and the repressive consequences of their actions. One of the first images shows three, light-skinned male students jumping in the air and thrusting their arms in a celebratory motion with other people in the background, giving the spectator the impression of a successful student action against the military government. This image also graces the front cover of the museum booklet for the exhibit, which contains the complete title of the project *Direito à memória e à verdade: A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985*, presenting the idea that the "true memory" of the experience of the dictatorship can be found in the "adventure-like" visual narrative of student protestors battling the repression of the dictatorship. This is the first of many images in the exhibit that present an idealized representation of a male-dominated student movement and protests against the military government, primarily through iconic photographs presenting the students as "happy warriors" during both their violent and non-violent confrontations with the military regime and their sympathizers. This is even evident in some of the images of students being arrested by military personnel, such as the image of three students enjoying themselves while taunting soldiers through their prison cell window. While the importance of different student movements in articulating a critique of the repressive measures implemented by

the military regime in the late 1960's and calling for direct elections as part of the *Diretas Já* movement in the early 1980's is unquestionable, we must consider the way that these activities are presented in the construction and transmission of memory.

The ADNB photography exhibit presents these activities by creating a mythic meaning for "student" as a heroic figure that resisted the repression of dictatorship through images that do not provide a space for critical reflection on the failures and suffering of the student movement and the influence that it has had on the present-lives of those involved.<sup>30</sup> For example, the next panel in the exhibit superimposes a darkened outline of one of the three students in the first photograph on top of two aerial images of thousands of people in the streets - likely taken from one of the well-known *Passeatas* protesting the censorship and repression of the military regime. The following phrase is written in red within the blackened image of the protesting student: "Estudante era profissão perigosa. Em 64, 67, 68, 77, 78, 84 saíram em passeata, comícios-relâmpago, encontros clandestinos. Resistiram e gritaram por liberdade nos campus, e nas ruas" (ADNB). While the text notes that being a student was "dangerous profession" during this time period, the images that accompany this section of the exhibit do not reflect the "danger" or the violence suffered by the students who confronted the military regime. Instead, the images reiterate the mythic figure of "student" in the 1960's, visually representing them as participating in sit-ins and street manifestations and "heroically" battling the military police in resistance to the dictatorship. Interestingly, many of these photographs show individuals destroying physical property and throwing objects in the

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<sup>30</sup> We can observe a direct contrast to this in the *Buena memoria* photography exhibit by Marcelo Brodsky that I analyze in the next chapter.

street, and a few in particular present an overturned car ablaze and a smoke-filled "war zone" between students and the military police. While these images are intended to demonstrate the actions of students against the repression of the dictatorship, they also implicitly reify the military's argument that they were "defending" the nation from internal subversion by visually presenting a memory discourse of "war" between the militant left and military personnel.

The text that accompanies the images in this part of the exhibit includes a description of the March 1968 shooting of Edson Luís Lima Souto by military police in front of a restaurant that catered primarily to students, *Calabouço*, in Rio de Janeiro. The shooting of Souto, a high school student who is typically described as a poor migrant from Northeastern Brazil that did not participate in political militancy (Gaspari *ADE* 278), sparked multiple student protests and marches against the military regime throughout Brazil that resulted in hundreds of arrests and the deaths of three more students. At that moment, Souto's death was used as a symbol by various groups to criticize the repression of the military dictatorship, exemplifying the indiscriminant violence of the military police in killing a non-militant migrant from the Northeast that was merely "defending the restaurant where he ate" (Gaspari *ADE* 278). The day after his death, multiple newspapers ran a very powerful image of Souto's lifeless, shirtless body lying on a table in the *Assembléia Legislativa* in Rio, surrounded by a group of students who refused to give the body to the Military Police out of fear that they would falsify the coroner's report as to the cause of death.

While this image can also be interpreted as a mythic representation of the "inherent solidarity" in the face of repression by the figure of "student," the photograph of Lima Souto's dead body offers a much stronger sense of the violence of this time period than the images of the student movement presented in the *A ditadura no Brasil* exhibit. Instead of presenting the spectator with this image of Souto to accompany the text that presents his death as the impetus for multiple protests throughout Brazil, the exhibit visually displaces his figure and instead offers multiple images of "heroic" students fighting the repression of the dictatorship as the memory that needs to be "rescued" by the exhibit. This not only reproduces the typical idealized memory of "resistance" to the dictatorship that Avelar criticizes for inviting "specular, unreflective identification and precludes the possibility of asking questions about the nature of the experience" (Avelar *TUP* 65), it also exemplifies the appropriation of a non-militant victim of state violence as a symbol within the memory narrative of the militant student movement. As a result, the name Edson Luís Lima Souto mythically signifies (to use Barthes terminology) the "heroic" actions of middle and upper-class student protestors confronting the repression of the dictatorship, and not the life and death of a 17 year old poor migrant from Northeastern Brazil.

The *A ditadura no Brasil 1964-1985* photography exhibit constructs a particular version of "student" in its memory discourse, referring primarily to politically active individuals who participated in militant actions against the dictatorial government. This definition of "student" is exclusionary, as there were many students throughout Brazil who either openly supported the military regime, did not actively participate in student

protests and marches, or participated but not for the broad, ideological reasons articulated by members of the militant left. The exhibit's representation of the so-called "Batalha da rua Maria Antônia"<sup>31</sup> in São Paulo between students of the public Universidade de São Paulo and the private Universidade Mackenzie inadvertently demonstrates the constructedness of the figure of "student" presented in the exhibit, what Hayden White would call the "historical emplotment" of the event by its curators in the visual and textual narrative of the past. By framing this confrontation as a "battle," we also observe another example of the use of the discourse of "war" to describe the activities of "resistance" by the militant left, with ultimately reifies the "official" version of events offered by the military.

The textual description in the exhibit states, "Batalha na rua Maria Antônia, centro de São Paulo, entre *alunos* da USP e *grupos armados* da Universidade Mackenzie. A PM intervem, o secundarista José Guimarães é morto e a Faculdade de Filosofia da USP é fechada" (ADNB - *my emphasis*). The exhibit narrates the event as a confrontation between "students" from USP, a stronghold for the militant political activities of the left, and "armed groups" from the University of Mackenzie, a school with a conservative-minded student population that supported the military regime and was home to a faction of the *Comando Caça aos Comunistas* (CCC). By referring to the students of Mackenzie as "armed groups," the curators of the exhibit expose their vision of "student" as one who was politically active as part of the militant left, while others are excluded from this memory narrative of the student movement. The text also elides the

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<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the image used to represent this "battle" in the exhibition appears more like a friendly neighborhood gathering than the violent encounter that ensued on October 3, 1968.

fact that the precursor to the confrontation was that a group of USP students had closed off the street in front of both schools and was charging a toll to use the street to gather funds to support the *União Nacional dos Estudantes* (UNE), which prompted a Mackenzie student to throw an egg and trigger the initial confrontation between the two groups. While these actions are not equal to the violence of the Military Police and the members of the CCC at Mackenzie directed at USP students the following day, the narrative of this episode presented in the exhibit "forgets" certain elements of the past while accentuating others in the construction of an "imagined community" of "student resistance," as Benedict Anderson would argue. The students at Mackenzie do not fit into the exhibit's signification of "student," and thus are presented as "armed groups" who attacked the "innocent" USP victims, leaving no space to think critically about the ideological construction of "student" that occludes the diverse beliefs and levels of involvement of students during this era.

Another element of the figure of "student" represented in the exhibit is its conflation with the idea of "youth," as the two terms appear to be synonymous with one another in the typical memory narratives about the dictatorship articulated by the traditional left. This creates the notion that the images of students protesting and marching against the repression of the dictatorship serve to represent the ideological views and political involvement of all young Brazilians during this time period. This is especially problematic when one considers that the majority of images of students presented by the exhibit to represent "resistance" to the military regime portray them as a type of "anonymous mass," with no complexities or differences in political ideology,

merely serving as a symbol of "youth" for the ideological arguments of intellectuals who were the main protagonists of the traditional left during this time period. This implicitly reaffirms a common criticism of the militant left and their failure to instigate social revolution in Brazil (and throughout the Southern Cone) in the 1960's: that these groups were primarily composed of middle and upper-middle class intellectuals that purported to speak for and act on behalf of the "povo" without really experiencing and making a connection to daily lives of the majority of Brazilians. We can also observe this through the criticism of cultural production, such as *Cinema Novo* films, that proposed a *conscientização do povo* in order to instigate social revolution during this time period.<sup>32</sup> The *ADNB* photography exhibit repeats the same mistake as the directors associated with the *Cinema Novo* movement - the curators articulate a goal of "rescuing" the "repressed" experiences of the *povo* during the dictatorship for new generations of spectators, but they instead construct a nostalgic vision of the actions primarily carried out by members of the intellectual left while failing to make a connection to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of viewers of the exhibit.

For example, the exhibition presents multiple images of soldiers to represent both the repression of the dictatorship and the "enemy" against which the students were fighting. The most prominent photograph shows a group of soldiers, many of whom are of Afro-Brazilian descent, sitting on a transport vehicle with their rifles in front of a cinema under a marquee that reads "A NOITE DOS GENERAIS". The black outline of a

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<sup>32</sup> See for example: Rêgo, Cacilda M. "Cinema Novo and the Question of the Popular." *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 10, 1991: 59-73 or Ramos, Fernão Pessoa. "Má-consciência e a representação do popular no cinema brasileiro," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture, Issue 21* (2001): 149-64.

solider wielding a red baton is superimposed on the image and Chico Buarque's famous lyrics "Apesar de você amanhã há de ser outro dia..." are written in red within the outline of the soldier. In the photograph, six of the soldiers are staring directly into the camera, which evokes the themes of visibility, masculinity, and power that recall Diana Taylor's book, *Disappearing Acts*, on the performance of military power during the dictatorship in Argentina. The prominent placement of this image to portray the "enemy" of the students reflects the exclusion of young Brazilians who did not form part of the student movement from the construction of "youth" within the exhibit. The soldiers in the image appear to have the same age as the individuals chosen to represent "student/youth" in the exhibition, yet they are represented as "enemy" by the curators. These soldiers may have chosen to enter into military service because it was the best option available to them based on their socio-economic or educational background, and not necessarily because they agreed with the ideological tenets set forth by the dictatorial government. In other words, many soldiers who are constructed as "enemy" within the narrative discourse of the ADNB exhibit were often representative of the very same "povo" that the student movement was supposedly fighting to protect. Yet, the nostalgic representation of student "heroes" fighting against the repression of the dictatorship does not provide the space for the critical reconsideration of these complexities of the dictatorship, of the "residual" experiences that do not fit neatly into the discursive logic of "war" established by the militant left and the military regime reiterated in the exhibition.

**Artistas na frente! (and the "povo"?)**

A second mythic figure constructed within the exhibit are the musicians and artists who spoke out against the censorship and repression of the dictatorship, both through the lyrics and performances of their music, plays, and literature; and through their participation in public marches and events such as the *Passeata dos 100 mil*. The exhibit contains a large panel consisting of multiple images of iconic artists who represent "resistance" to the military dictatorship during the late 1960's, most notably Cinema Novo director Glauber Rocha, playwright Plínio Marcos, actress Cacilda Becker, and musicians Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil. The phrase written in red on top of the exhibit states, "Tempo de censura, de vozes caladas, de frases não ditas e, se escritas, não lidas" (ADNB). The panel also contains two images of groups of people marching arm-in arm in the street, one of which contains the Brazilian flag, giving further credence to the idea that the military left and the militant right were engaged in an ideological battle to define the "nation." The focus of this panel on the contribution of artists in speaking out against the censorship of the dictatorship is further accentuated by the inclusion of an image of the Teatro Ruth Escobar in the aftermath of a bombing by a right-wing group supporting the military regime, with a hand-written banner that reads "É assim que o FASCISMO trata a ARTE" (ADNB). While scholars have already noted the contributions of artists and musicians during this time period of speaking out against the dictatorship, the mythic representation of famous cultural figures within a photography exhibit with the supposed goal of "rescuing silenced memories and truth" about the past diminishes its capacity to do so. Can we really consider the activities of these famous

individuals as memory narratives that need to be "rescued" within the collective discourse about the past in the postdictatorship? Instead, this panel again produces a nostalgic memory narrative that does not allow for critical reflection about this experience nor focus on the "residual" memories that are not included in the (counter)hegemonic discourses about the past in the postdictatorship.<sup>33</sup>

The inclusion of images of cultural figures strongly connected to the militant political activities of the so-called "esquerda engajada" (engaged left), such as Glauber Rocha, Plínio Marcos, and Chico Buarque, reflect the curators' intention to evoke the established (and idealized) memory of these figures as an important element in combating the repression of the military dictatorship - a narrative that has been firmly established in the collective imaginary of those who did not support the military regime. Yet the static representation of these artists, rooted in youthful images from the late 1960's that celebrate and idealize this moment of "resistance" to censorship and repression, continues to exclude the memory remnant that this resistance *failed*. Rocha's Cinema Novo films earned great critical acclaim from the national and international intellectuals to whom his films were really directed, but he did not connect with the "povo" and instigate the social revolution that he intended. Militant artists such as Chico Buarque and Geraldo Vandré were often exiled (and in some cases tortured) by the military regime for their lyrics and

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<sup>33</sup> There is one image on this panel that is seemingly out of place in the idealized visual narrative about artists - that of a group of religious figures participating in a peaceful vigil in protest of censorship, representative of the role that some clergy members had in speaking out against human rights violations committed during the dictatorship. For an excellent history of the activities of the church during the dictatorship, see Serbin, Keith. *Secret Dialogues: Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.

actions criticizing the repression of the government.<sup>34</sup> The *Passeata dos 100 mil* and other mass marches speaking out against the repression of the dictatorships were followed by *Ato Institucional 5* and the most violent and repressive years of the dictatorship from 1970-1974. While other panels of the ADNB exhibit do describe the repression of these years, the images of these artists united in resisting the censorship of the military regime in this panel are presented as timeless myths, representative of the militant left's vision for the nation in 1968 that endures today as a "foundational fiction." As Hall, Hobsbawm, Anderson and others maintain, the invention of mythic heroes as foundations for a historical narrative serves to eliminate social difference and unite disparate groups under one common identity, in this case that of a united left confronting the repression of the military regime with the same goals in mind.

One example of the elimination of social difference produced by the idealized narrative of artists in this panel of the exhibit is the conflation of Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil as promoting the same type of social project through their music. The images of all three musicians presented on the panel are the canonized representation of youthful musicians performing the type of "protest" music "accepted" within the national-popular project of the militant left. This is the image that has been engrained within the collective consciousness of many Brazilians through the media and other cultural production about this time period - of MPB artists united in challenging the military dictatorship for the same reasons. Yet, as Christopher Dunn demonstrates in his

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, these "militant" artists were also criticized by some on the left at this time for talking about a "future" revolution as opposed to calling for action against the government at that moment (e.g. "Amanhã há de ser outro dia" (Chico Buarque))

excellent analysis of the *Tropicália* movement, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture*, musicians such as Gil, Veloso, Gal Costa and Tom Zê articulated a strong critique of the so-called *esquerda engajada* for being just as repressive and authoritarian as the military regime. In contrast to the overt political tenor of the lyrics and requisite use of "authentic" instruments such as an acoustic guitar by musicians associated with the "engaged left" (e.g. Chico Buarque and Geraldo Vandré), the *Tropicália* movement appropriated the concept of *antropofagia* from the Brazilian modernists to critique the authoritarian nature of militant artistic endeavors.

They incorporated electric guitars, musical influences from Europe and the United States, and Brazilian cultural production that was considered "apolitical" and in "poor taste" by members of the traditional left into their music, raising the ire of both the militant left and the military regime for their "hippie," "counter-culture" expressions.<sup>35</sup> The critique by *Tropicália* artists of all authoritarian structures, their transgression of traditional social roles of gender and sexuality in their performances, and Gil's militancy within the global Black movement and leadership of the *negritude* movement within Brazil are important contributions to the opening of freedom of expression and democratic participation within Brazil that are excluded by the narrative of the ADBN exhibit. This reflects the memory narrative of the entire exhibit, which solely highlights the activities of the militant left in resisting the military regime based on *political*

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<sup>35</sup> Veloso and Gil's performances at the 1967 *Festival de Música Popular Brasileira* in São Paulo televised by TV Record and TV Globo's 1968 *Festival Internacional de Canção* (FIC) in Rio de Janeiro are the key moments in marking the aesthetic and political break in the projects of the traditional MPB and *Tropicália*, particularly Veloso's diatribe criticizing the "esquerda egajada" for articulating an ideology that was just as repressive as the military regime's during his performance of "Proibido Proibir" at the FIC (Dunn 135-136).

ideology while ignoring the contributions of groups such as the Feminist and Afro-Brazilian movements to the social and political openings in Brazilian society in the early 1980's. The mythic reiteration of the contributions of politically-engaged "protest" artists to resisting the repression of the dictatorship continues to exclude the contributions of artists who challenged social structures in other ways, outside of the typical counter-narrative discourse articulated by the militant left in the postdictatorship.

### **Guerrilhas Idealizadas**

The ADNB exhibit also produces an idealized representation of the organizations of armed-left and their actions against the military regime that "forgets" the violence used by these organizations while including them within the narrative of "democratic resistance" to the dictatorship. In the museum pamphlet of the exhibit, the iconic image of members of the MR-8 and the ALN<sup>36</sup> (who kidnapped U.S. Ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick in early September 1969) in front of an airplane prior to their exile from Brazil is placed on the page directly opposite of the images of artists and musicians that I analyzed above.<sup>37</sup> The placement of these two images next to one another further conflates their meanings within the overall narrative of "resistance" to the dictatorship in the name of democracy, ignoring the fact that the goals of the armed organizations were

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<sup>36</sup> MR-8 -Movimento Revolucionario - 8 de Outubro (the date of Che Guevara's death) and ALN - Ação Libertadora Nacional

<sup>37</sup> This is the most famous action undertaken by armed organizations on the left during the dictatorship in Brazil, as it was the subject of ex-militant (and current congressman) Fernando Gabeira's novel *O que é isso companheiro*, which was subsequently transformed into a feature film with the same name. Avelar offers the novel as the primary example of idealized, testimonial fiction that offers no space for critical reflection on the experience of the dictatorship, arguing that it "reads like an adventure novel" and that its publication in 1979 helped the Brazilian middle class "to purge away its guilty complicity with the military regime [...] without major traumas, reworking of the past, or reelaboration of experience" (Avelar *TUP* 65-66).

to install socialist governments through *non-democratic means*, and therefore did not reflect the "democratic resistance" of other organizations on the left. The description under the image reads "Resistência Resistentes, Organizações de esquerda pegaram em armas para enfrentar a ditadura. Guerrilha urbana, Araguaia. Mortos e desaparecidos, exilados internos e externos, clandestinos. De ponto em ponto teciam as redes tão frágeis e tão fortes" (ADNB). Just as with Edson Luís Lima Souto, the image chosen to represent the armed organizations does not reflect the "death and disappearances" of those who took up arms against the military dictatorship nor a "forgotten" memory about these groups. The curators instead chose the most famous image typically used to represent the militant groups, prisoners freed by political kidnapping that were forced to leave Brazil in accordance with the new law of "banishment" under AI-12.

The text of the exhibit notes that the leader of the group that kidnapped the U.S. Ambassador, Virgílio Gomes da Silva, died under torture by Oban,<sup>38</sup> one of multiple parts of the text that offer factual information about the torture and death of those who opposed the military regime. Yet, the use of an image discursively representative of the "heroic" actions of the armed organizations who "picked up arms in order to combat the dictatorship" idealizes these actions and fails to provide a space for the spectator to reflect upon the reality of the violence, death, torture, and physical and psychological suffering of those who participated in the armed organizations.<sup>39</sup> Also, the suffering by

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<sup>38</sup> Oban - Operação Bandeirantes. Clandestine activities of military and police personnel who tortured and killed individuals who opposed the military government.

<sup>39</sup> In contrast to this idealized memory narrative about the armed-left during the dictatorship, Lúcia Murat's film *Que bom te ver viva* (1989) provides an excellent space for critical reflection on the effects of this experience for those who participated in the armed revolutionary groups during the dictatorship. Murat's film focuses entirely on women who participated in guerrilla groups who discuss the effects that these

members of these groups was not only at the hands of military personnel, but within their own organizations as well, as those who were perceived to have "betrayed" the revolutionary groups were often banned from further participation in the organization, physically or psychologically punished, and sometimes killed for their actions.<sup>40</sup> The realities of the goal of instilling a government through non-democratic means, the authoritarian organizational structure, and violent acts committed by members of armed revolutionary groups are eliminated from the narrative of the exhibit, and they are only presented as another piece of the "heroic democratic resistance" to the dictatorship.

For example, the description of the multiple kidnappings carried out by different groups of the armed-left within the exhibit's text are always presented as a response to the government's unjust imprisonment of individuals based on political actions, "para exigir a libertação de presos políticos" or "trocado por presos políticos" (ADNB). The kidnapping of international government officials is presented in a positive light, ignoring the fact that these actions can also be constituted as human rights violations, and that by using the same practices as the military, these groups accepted and participated in the same logic of "war" prescribed to by the military regime. Using the term "preso politico" to describe the individuals freed as a result of the kidnappings constructs them as "innocent victims" who were imprisoned based solely on their political opposition to the military government. While many of those who were tortured or killed by military and police personnel during the dictatorship were in fact non-violent political prisoners, the

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activities had on their lives, a residual experience that is typically excluded from the traditional memory narratives about these groups in the postdictatorship.

<sup>40</sup> This is one of the central elements of Beatriz Bracher's novel *Não falei* that I examine in detail in chapter 4.

narrative presented in the exhibit elides the violent activities of the militant-left, which increased the military's capacity to justify its own violent actions as necessary in order to "defend the nation" from "violent internal subversion." One example of this is the June 1968 bombing of the military headquarters of the II Exército in São Paulo by a group of armed-revolutionary militants in what Elio Gaspari calls a "terrorist act" that killed an 18-year old soldier, Mário Kozel Filho (Gaspari *ADE* 295). This and other events representative of the violence used by organizations such as the MR-8 and the ALN in an attempt to follow the Cuban model and instigate a social revolution through armed opposition to the dictatorship do not appear in the memory narrative of the ADNB exhibit.

Figures from these groups are instead represented as heroes or victims of state violence during the dictatorship while their own acts of violence are ignored, exemplified through the image of ALN leader Carlos Marighella's bloody, dead body with a text describing his death as an "execution" by DEOPS. It is well known that Marighella was assassinated by government forces led by Sérgio Fleury in a gruesome manner in São Paulo in November 1969. However, the description of Marighella's death as an "execution" and his portrayal as a "heroic victim" combating the repression of the dictatorship is disingenuous, as he was the leader of the ALN and its "guerra revolucionária" against the military government and participated in many armed actions during the escalation of violence by both sides at this time. Instead of questioning the violent acts of figures such as Marighella as representative of the same logic of "war" and "terrorism" used by the military regime, the exhibit instead idealizes the actions of the

armed-left as contributing to the eventual democratic opening in 1985. The curators miss an important opportunity to provide a space for the spectators of the exhibit to reflect upon the negative impact of the use of violence to combat violence, which is particularly pertinent to the present-day battles between military personnel, militias, and drug dealers in Brazil's favelas, which often creates more innocent victims in the form of favela residents who have nothing to do with drug trafficking. This idealized representation of the armed-left and their conflation with the activities of student, workers, and artists during the dictatorship is particularly disconcerting given the SDH/PRA's mission to establish a respect for human rights and democratic ideals through the exhibit, as it in fact reifies "violence" as a plausible avenue to achieve these goals in Brazilian society.

### **Lula, the Metalúrgicos, and the mythic figure of "worker"**

A third mythic figure constructed within the ADBN exhibit is that of the "worker," a term that is often idealized and appropriated by discourses of both governmental power and those seeking to challenge the government. The symbol of worker was important for both the military regime and the militant left during the dictatorship, and both sides constructed their own version of "worker" and what that figure meant within their competing narratives of the Brazilian "nation." The ADBN exhibit actually reproduces some of the military government's propaganda campaign that demonstrates its use of the figure of "worker" within its narrative of social and economic "progress" through the "milagre brasileiro" and development projects throughout the country. The words printed on top of each image, "Você constrói o Brasil," not only relate to the workers that appear within each image in different contexts, but also

constituted a direct appeal to the spectators during the time period to contribute to the government's project of constructing a "modern" Brazil (and accordingly rejecting the national-popular project articulated by the militant left).<sup>41</sup> One photograph portrays field hands working in rural Brazil, using manual labor to fill and carry bags of crops after they have been cut by a modern piece of farm machinery, juxtaposing a message of the work ethic inherent in the government's signification of "worker" with the idea that "progress" will also make their job easier. This message is repeated in the urban context through another image showing workers installing a support beam in the construction of what appears to be a new factory or refinery. A third image shows large "modern" equipment being used to clear an undeveloped section of forest to make way for the "transamazônica" highway, a symbol of the territorial integration of the "nation" and the modernizing projects of the Brazilian government. These images are all representative of the ideas of "progress" and "modernization" that were essential to the military regime's vision of national identity and served as a justification for its repressive measures, arguing that only an authoritarian government could effectively "construct" the Brazil of the future.

While the ADNB reproduces these examples of the propaganda used by the military regime in their attempt to appropriate the figure of "worker," the exhibit also *continues* the mythic representation of "worker" articulated by the militant left during the

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<sup>41</sup> This idea of "modernizing" Brazil, which has been a constant "national" goal, was undertaken once again by the government of Juscelino Kubitchek and the project of "50 years of progress in 5" during the 1950's. The military regime attempts to articulate a similar "nationalist" project during the dictatorship, at least discursively, while at the same time opening Brazil up to international investment and development by foreign companies, establishing the base for the neoliberal economic project that accompanied the transition to political democracy in 1985.

dictatorship. As with the figures of "student" and "artist," the curators construct a particular version of "worker" that corresponds to the ideology of the militant left, or those workers who actively participated in strikes primarily connected to the unions of the organized labor. The most common example of this definition of "worker" are the *metalúrgicos* (steel/metal workers), who appear numerous times in both the images and texts of the exhibit and are represented as heroes at the forefront of the battle against the repression of the dictatorship. An emblematic panel representing this iconic vision of the *metalúrgicos* is the large photograph of thousands of members of the metal workers unions inside of a stadium raising their hands to vote on an issue being raised by the most prominent figure in the photograph, Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva. The text superimposed on the image reads, "Metalúrgicos param em 68 [...] Veio AI-5, dez anos de silêncio nas fábricas, sem direito à greve, sem direito a reivindicar. Metalúrgicos param em 1978 anunciando o começo do fim da ditadura. Greves em todo o país desafiam as leis impostas pelo regime militar" (ADNB).

Lula was indeed the President of the powerful Metal Workers syndicate in the ABC region (in and around São Paulo) that played a major role in the political opening near the end of the dictatorship. However, placing him in the center of the visual representation of the many strikes of organized labor that signaled "the beginning of the end" of the dictatorship constitutes a not-so-subtle attempt to further establish his place as a "foundational figure" in Brazilian history. The entire *Direito à memória e à verdade* project (including the ADNB photography exhibit) was an initiative of a special human rights commission that Lula himself helped to establish. Yet, instead of including the

image of another leader of the syndicate or perhaps images focused on unknown *metalúrgicos* or other striking organizations in an attempt to "rescue" silenced experiences of the dictatorship, the curators offer a timeless, mythic image of Lula as "worker" and symbol of the contributions of organized labor to the political opening at the end of the dictatorship. This vision of "worker," rooted primarily in the syndicates in Southeastern Brazil, is exclusionary of other laborers who did not have the same political militancy and organizational power as the *metalúrgicos*, such as ranch hands or small farmers in rural Brazil. The exhibit also portrays all individuals in syndicates as having the same political or ideological goals as the union leaders, when perhaps many were only participating in the strikes to improve their working conditions, and not in the name of a "militant resistance" to the military regime.

### **The Dead and the "Disappeared" as Heroes and Victims**

In addition to the idealized visions of "student," "artist," "armed-revolutionary," and "worker" that the exhibit incorporates into its memory narrative, the juridical facts about the capture, torture, and death of many individuals by the military regime is also appropriated within the ideological counter-memory employed by the curators. The text of the exhibit offers factual information about the experiences of those that were killed, "disappeared," or falsely said to have committed suicide during the dictatorship, drawing from the CEDMP's work establishing the juridical truth of the experiences of "mortos e desaparecidos" that was the original goal of the SDH/PRA's project. The ADNB exhibit primarily focuses on the torture or murder of many individuals connected to the organized left, especially the UNE (*União Nacional dos Estudantes*), the PCB (*Partido*

*Comunista Brasileiro*) and the PCdoB (*Partido Comunista do Brasil*), within the textual narrative accompanying the photographs. One example is that of Manoel Fiel Filho, a *metalúrgico* and active member of the PCB who was tortured and killed in the Doi-Codi in São Paulo in 1976.<sup>42</sup> Just as with Edson Luís Lima Souto, Filho's death is presented by the curators in the text of the exhibit as an important event that provoked protests which caused the ouster of the commander at the II Exército (which controlled the Doi-Codi) in São Paulo (ADNB). Yet, again, the exhibit visually displaces the figure of Manoel Fiel Filho, the perfect example of "worker" within the militant left's ideological construct of this term,<sup>43</sup> in favor of creating a visual homage to Vladimir Herzog. Herzog was a journalist whose death under torture in the Doi-Codi a few months prior to Filho was the most publicized act of state violence committed during the dictatorship, which sparked multiple public protests throughout Brazil and gained international exposure.<sup>44</sup> Instead of visually "rescuing" the "remnant" memory of Filho's torture and death by including his image within the exhibit,<sup>45</sup> the curators reinforce the established discourse of the figure of Vladimir Herzog as *the* symbol of "victim" of the military regime. Placing the most famous instance of torture and death at the center of a photography exhibit aiming to

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<sup>42</sup> As with many incidents in the Doi-Codi or DEOPS during this time period, Filho's death was officially called a "suicide" by military personnel.

<sup>43</sup> Manoel Fiel Filho did not play a leadership role within the *metalúrgicos* union, was an immigrant from the interior of Alagoas, and worked in a bakery and as a fare collector on city buses before becoming a metal worker (Gaspari *ADEncurralda* 212). In this sense, he could be considered representative of the "common laborer" or the "povo" that the organized left sought to protect.

<sup>44</sup> As a well-known journalist, Herzog's torture and death was quickly communicated in various social circles, whereas, as Gaspari notes, Filho's death was hidden from both the public and within the chain of command in the military government. "a morte do metalúrgico Manoel Fiel foi encapsulada. O II Exército não emitiu nota oficial [...] Os serviços de informação do governo, [...] em nome de segurança nacional, mantiveram no escuro o presidente da República e o ministro do Exército" (Gaspari *ADEncurralda* 214).

<sup>45</sup> A film has been recently made on Manoel Fiel Filho (*Perdão Mister Fiel*), and a powerful image of his wife, Teresa, holding his identification photo, which evokes a sense of loss and creates a space to connect the past with its influence on the present, is circulating as well.

expose "silenced" memories about the dictatorship actually *maintains* the death of individuals such as Filho, as well as the torture of other victims not connected to the organizations of the militant left, as "subaltern" memories located at the limits of the established discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship.

The panel about Vladimir Herzog in the ADNB exhibit also exemplifies what Avelar and Richard critique as the creation of mythic heroes/victims of the military dictatorship and the appropriation these figures within a totalizing counter-memory discourse today. In the panel, the photograph taken of Herzog upon entering the Doi-Codi as a prisoner on September 22, 1975 is placed at the top of a large image of religious figures bowing their heads during a service for the journalist at the *Catedral da Sé* in São Paulo. Herzog's photo saintly appears above the scene, a martyr being invoked by the religious leaders as a timeless symbol of "victim" of the dictatorship. The text written in red on the image notes the immediate challenge of the official version of "Vlado's" death as a suicide, and explains that the service at the Catedral da Sé "transformou-se em ato público de protesto, com a participação de mais de 10 mil pessoas no 1º protesto de massas desde o AI-5" (ADNB). The first interesting detail in this text is the use of the term of endearment "Vlado" to refer to Herzog, giving off the impression that he was "one of us," which when considered within the overall discourse of the ADNB exhibit, equates this image of "victim" to the figures of "student," "worker," "artist," or "revolutionary" sympathetic to politics of the militant left.<sup>46</sup> The second part of the text guides the spectator to the next panel of the exhibit, the image of the "first

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<sup>46</sup> Herzog was an active militant in the PCB (Gaspari *ADEncurralada* 174).

mass protest since AI-5" in front of the *Catedral da Sé* in São Paulo. Through this move, the exhibit visual transforms the meaning of Herzog's image from torture, suffering, disappearance, etc. to a celebration of the power of public protest, barely pausing the narrative of "resistance" long enough for the spectator to reflect upon the reality of Herzog's death and the effect that it had on his family, nor question his involvement with the militant left. In this way, the exhibit constructs a mythic representation of "victim," giving it a "natural" and "evident" meaning without "contradictions" and "depth" to recall Barthes. The curators appropriate this figure within a totalizing counter-narrative of resistance in the name of democracy by the organized left that culminates with the *Diretas Já* movement and the open elections 1985 which signaled the end of the dictatorship.

### ***Diretas Já: Constructing a Genealogy of Democratic Resistance***

The final panel of the *A ditadura no Brasil* exhibit is dedicated to the *Diretas Já* movement, a visible call for direct elections (and consequently the end of military rule) through multiple marches and public manifestations beginning in the early 1980's. The curators present this as the culmination of the genealogical narrative of "resistance" to the military regime in the name of democracy that the exhibit develops through its mythical construction of the figures of "students," "artists," "revolutionaries," "workers," and "victims" during the dictatorship. The panel contains 3 images (an overhead shot of a *Diretas Já* event in the Praça da Sé in São Paulo; a close up shot of some of the banners at the event, and a smaller image of three political figures) with the words "Diretas Já" written in white lettering across the center of the photographs. While the first image

provides a view of the spectacle and scale of the event, showing thousands of people in the *Praça da Sé* with part of the São Paulo skyline in the background, the second image focused on the banners held up by a particular section of the crowd exposes the curators' intention of articulating a counter-history of the dictatorship from the perspective of the organized left. Central within this image are multiple banners of the PCdoB containing the iconic hammer and sickle and inscribed with such phrases as "Viva a unidade do povo" and "Diretas Já," and there is even a banner from MR-8 included in the photograph, which implicitly continues the idealized narrative about armed-revolutionary organizations that I previously examined.<sup>47</sup>

By choosing to amplify and prominently display this section of the crowd, the exhibit suggests that the militant left was the primary force behind the *Diretas Já* movement, and that their activism led to direct presidential elections and the end of the dictatorship. This occludes the fact that at this moment the influence of the two traditional communist parties (PC and PCdoB) had waned, and that the *Diretas Já* movement was primarily directed by the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB) and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), representative of what José Paulo Netto calls the "esquerda-movimento" that rejected the philosophy of the traditional communist party and rearticulated the concept of "revolution" as "social-democratic reforms."<sup>48</sup> The

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<sup>47</sup> Political parties were illegal during much of the dictatorship, and while many groups were able to engage in political activities beginning in the late 1970's, groups with Marxist influences such as the PCB and the PCdoB were not allowed to legally participate in political activity until later. For this reason, one can understand the desire to highlight the participation of these groups in the political opening within Brazil in the early 1980's.

<sup>48</sup>For an excellent discussion of the fragmentation of the Brazilian left during and after the military dictatorship, see Netto, José Paulo. "Em busca da contemporaneidade perdida: a esquerda brasileira pós-

activities of "worker" (again defined within the ideological construct of the organized left) are further accentuated in the text accompanying this section of the exhibit, which primarily focuses on the multiple strikes by various syndicates throughout Brazil in the early 1980's ("metalúrgicos," "canavieiros," "professores," "indústria de calçados," "ônibus," "sapateiros," "servidores federais," saúde pública, "greve nacional") without explaining what the purpose of these strikes were and if they were successful in achieving tangible improvement for workers (ADNB). In this way, the exhibit transforms the figures of "greve" and "Diretas Já" into foundational symbols of "democracy" and the power of the "povo" to instigate social change, the culmination of the resistance to the dictatorship by the other idealized figures constructed throughout the exhibit's narrative.

This narrative of the *Diretas Já* movement as a foundational figure of re-democratization in Brazil does not provide the space to think critically about the "transition" from the military regime to a democratically elected government, what Jorge Zaverucha calls "uma democracia tutelada."<sup>49</sup> While the mass participation in public events calling for direct democratic elections had an unquestionable influence on the end of the military dictatorship, the *Diretas Já* movement itself actually *failed*, as Tancredo Neves was elected president through *indirect* elections (electoral college) favored by the outgoing military government and other sectors of society, such as the conservative

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64". In: Carlos Guilherme Mota ed. *Viagem incompleta: A experiência brasileira*. A grande transação. São Paulo: Editora SENAC, 2000. 219-246.

<sup>49</sup> In "Relações civil-militares no primeiro governo da transição brasileira: uma democracia tutelada", Zavarucha demonstrates how the newly-elected civilian government headed by José Sarney (after the death of Neves) actually maintained the political autonomy of the military and "authoritarian enclaves" within the civilian government that make it impossible to consolidate a democratic government. We can observe the power of this autonomy today, as no military personnel have been successfully placed on trial by the civilian government for their actions during the military dictatorship in Brazil.

segment of the Church, in 1984. The assumption of Vice-President José Sarney (who was a member of the military government and had opposed the *Diretas Já* initiative as a senator) to the presidency after Neves' death soon after his election assured the "conciliatory" nature of the transition, where "as elites progressistas preferem conciliar-se com os conservadores de ontem (transmudados em democratas históricos), aliar-se a eles e conquistar o poder pela via menos arriscada" (Pinheiro 292). The idea of "conciliation" between the old and new power elites during political or social transition is a common analytical trope in Brazil, and many authors draw from this concept to argue that social "transitions" throughout Brazilian history have in fact maintained the same social divisions and power structures that existed prior to these supposed times of social change.<sup>50</sup> By portraying the *Diretas Já* movement as a mythic symbol of the consolidation of democracy and the end of the military dictatorship, the ADNB exhibit ignores the role of the military in controlling the transition. The curators also elide the fact that the new conciliatory political democracy ultimately served to affirm the neoliberal economic policies enacted during military rule and to guarantee the institutionalized "forgetting" of the state violence committed by military personnel during the dictatorship.

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<sup>50</sup> See for example: Faoro, Raymundo. *Os donos do poder*. 2a ed. São Paulo: Edusp, 1975; Chauí, Marilena. *Brasil: Mito Fundador e Sociedade Autoritária*. São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2000; Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio. "Transição política e não-estado de direito na república." In: Ignacy Sachs, Jorge Wilhelm, and Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro org. *Brasil: um século de transformações*. São Paulo: Companhia das letras, 2001; and Viera, Evaldo. Brasil: do golpe de 1964 à redemocratização. In: *Viagem incompleta: a experiência brasileira*. Carlos Guilherme Mota Ed. São Paulo: Editora SENAC, 2000. 187-217.

### **Language and the Discursive Logic of the ADNB Exhibit**

The totalizing, counter-memory narrative of "resistance" produced in the *A ditadura no Brasil* exhibit uses much of the same language as the military to talk about the dictatorship, and thus participates in the same discursive system as the military regime, which ultimately reifies their "official" version of the past. The exhibit portrays this time period as a "war" or "battle" for the nation, replete with the figures of "enemy," "hero," "terrorist," and "povo" - whose meanings are merely inverted to narrate the activities of the same, well-known social actors who have never been "forgotten" by history. In other words, the attempt to activate the "silenced" experiences of the past is articulated from within the established discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship, which prevents the exhibit from focusing on "residual" experiences that elide the accepted social engagement with the dictatorial past. This precludes the critical consideration of the dictatorial experience and the effects that it has had on present-day society. Instead it subjects viewers to the appropriation of testimonials about the "mortos e desaparecidos" within an ideological narrative that eliminates any chance of interrogating the conditions behind these experiences and re-articulating the memory of the dictatorship in a new language, as called for by Avelar.

The repetition of the same language used in the 1960's and 1970's to construct a memory narrative about the dictatorship in a photography exhibit displayed in 2008 is especially problematic, and exemplifies the pervasiveness of the discursive logic of "war" in the accepted ways to talk about the dictatorship today. For example, the curators use the same rhetoric of the militant left during the dictatorship to describe the activities of

armed revolutionaries: forced kidnappings of foreign ambassadors are presented as "heroic" acts to free political prisoners; bank robberies are portrayed as "expropriations" for the "democratic resistance", armed revolutionaries are always described as "picking up arms to combat the military regime." Many images show phrases such as "A hora do povo está chegando" and "Por um governo popular" written as graffiti in public places, reproducing the rhetoric of the militant left during the initial stages of the dictatorship and presenting the end of the dictatorship as "the time of the people" and "popular government." By reproducing the idealized terms of "povo" and "popular" in a photography exhibition presented in 2008, the curators merely reiterate a past ideology without providing a space to reflect upon the meaning of these terms, and whether the current democratic government can be described as "popular" and defending the rights of the "povo" within the signification assigned to this language by the traditional militant left.

Interestingly, statements written in the comment sections of online newspaper articles discussing the exhibit also demonstrate the pervasiveness of the same rhetoric of 1960's and 1970's today, primarily through readers who criticize the narrative produced by the ADNB exhibit by repeating the same arguments offered by the military regime. For example, one user commented:

Quando e onde houve ditadura neste País? [...] Ninguém pegou em armas para combater a "Ditadura"... Até porque isso já vinha acontecendo desde 1935... O período pós-1964 foi necessário e extremamente enriquecedor para o Brasil, está mais do que provado!!! Quem pegou em armas para

defender ideologias estrangeiras é que teve que responder por seus atos!!!<sup>51</sup>

While this comment is clearly a repetition of the "official" justification offered by the military regime for its actions during the dictatorship, the ADNB exhibit invites this type of response because it constructs an ideological counter-narrative that merely inverts the meanings of the past within the same discursive register sanctioned by the military regime. The ADNB exhibit accepts the established "rules of the game" for postdictatorial memory narratives, and in doing so engages in the same (counter)hegemonic hermeneutic circle as the 1960's, which ultimately serves to reify the military's version of the past as a "logical" possibility. It perpetuates the same narrative articulated by both the military regime and the militant left during the dictatorship that "fills-in" the inherent gaps between experience and representation with ideology, thus negating the opportunity to examine residual experiences of the past that may offer the possibility to re-articulate memory for new uses in the postdictatorship.

### **Static Memory of an Idealized Past**

The *ADNB* photography exhibit moves away from the original intent of the SDH/PRA and the CEDMP, which was to expose and divulge the factual truth behind the torture, death, and disappearance of 475 individuals (and counting) by the military regime, to constructing an ideological counter-history about the military dictatorship. As I have shown throughout this chapter, this counter-narrative is just as totalizing as the version of the past offered by supporters of the military regime - inventing mythic figures

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<sup>51</sup> Anonymous comment posted in response to the article: "Estação Pinacoteca inaugural mostra sobre Ditadura Militar." Estado de São Paulo - Edição Online. 1 May 2008. Electronic Media.

as a timeless connection between the experience of the dictatorship and the present without providing the opportunity to critically consider the narrative fissures of the past. The exhibit articulates a nostalgic memory about the past that provides no space to "rescue" residual experiences that fall outside of the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship. In this way, the ADN B exhibit does further injustice to those who were tortured and killed during the dictatorship by appropriating their testimonials within an ideological construct and displacing the individual experiences of those who suffered, which may have provided a stronger connection to the past for the spectators and contributed to the continuous, intersubjective (de)construction of collective memory about this time period.

As Avelar suggests in *The Untimely Present*, we need to move beyond the immediate acceptance of testimonial narratives of suffering based upon our own solidarity and position as "witnesses" to their plight in order to interrogate the conditions of possibility of this narrative. This is particularly true with a project such as the ADN B photography exhibition, which appropriates multiple testimonials of real suffering during the dictatorship within a celebratory narrative of "democratic resistance" to the repression of the military regime, reiterating the importance of famous social actors while continuing to exclude "other" experiences from its narrative logic. The testimonial memories offered by former and current militants in the traditional organizations of left (i.e. the traditional communist parties (PCB, PCdoB) and their revolutionary splinter groups (ALN, MR-8, etc.), organized labor (primarily connected with the PT), ex-student militants, famous musicians/artists of the "esquerda engajada", etc.) are NOT "forgotten"

or "silenced" experiences of the dictatorship. On the contrary, they form part of the explosion of memory about the military dictatorships that has occurred throughout the Southern Cone region in the postdictatorship, contributing to a commodification of memory that simplifies the past and eliminates complexities and social difference for mass consumption. The counter-narrative constructed by the exhibit as a response to the "official" politics of forgetting and institutionalized reconciliation in postdictatorial Brazil inadvertently contributes to the collective amnesia about the military dictatorship because it continues the saturation of the postdictatorial landscape with a narrative that presents a nostalgic vision of the past and no connection to lived-experience in the present.

The transmission of a "useful" cultural memory (to borrow Andreas Huyssen's term) has to involve a *dynamic* relationship between the past, present, and the future, as well as the continuous negotiation between individual and collective experiences mediated through cultural production in local, regional, national, and transnational contexts. An important component of these social processes is the inherent gap or excess that exists in any representation of experience through language (be it written, oral, visual, corporal, etc.), the impossibility to fully communicate an experience to others. As I discussed in the theoretical chapter, this impossibility is further accentuated in the case of those who were tortured and killed during the military dictatorship, leaving us only with Agamben's "remnant" space between the testimony of the survivors and the "real" experience of those who were killed as the true "witness" of this horror. The main problem with counter-memory narratives such as the one articulated by the ADNBB

exhibit is the attempt to close this constitutive gap between experience and representation with political ideology, in this case the vision of the militant left as constituting a united, "democratic resistance" to the repression of the military regime. The totalizing counter-history presented in the texts that accompany exhibit explicitly narrate how spectators are to interpret the images, constructing meaning for the unnarratable, "remnant" experiences of the tortured and the disappeared as symbolic "victims" of the "battle" against repression. The use of ideology to mask the fissures of meaning anchors the exhibit within the (counter)hegemonic discursive logic of memory in postdictatorial Brazil. This ideological suture dulls the dynamic interaction between past, present, and future, and between individual and collective experiences, that can contribute to the transmission of a "useful" cultural memory.

This leads us to consider the following: What are the possibilities for cultural production that *accentuates* the impossibility to fully represent experience through language, or at the very least "de-ideologizes" this space, to allow for a dynamic engagement with the past? What is the effect on spectators or readers when they are forced to engage and think through the gaps, make individual connections to the narrative, and draw their own conclusions about the experience? How can cultural production that recognizes the negotiated and constructed nature of memory, and consciously includes this process in both the form and content of its narrative, offer a way to contest institutionalized forgetting and reconciliation without participating in the same discursive system as the dominant discourse? In answering these questions in the following chapters I explore some ways in which cultural production can contribute to

the dynamic construction of social memory about dictatorship, providing a space where meaning is constantly negotiated, connections can be made between the past and the present, and future generations can enter into a more productive engagement with the "lessons of the past" within different social, political, and historical contexts.

## CHAPTER III

DYNAMIC MEMORIES AND MEANINGS: THE PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF POSTDICTATORIAL MEMORY NARRATIVES IN MARCELO BRODSKY'S *LOS COMPAÑEROS*

Upon returning to Argentina in 1992 (at the age of 40) after many years of exile in Spain during Argentina's military dictatorship, photographer Marcelo Brodsky began to look through old family photographs as a way to reflect upon his identity. When he encountered the picture of his 8th grade class at the prestigious *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires (CNBA)*, Brodsky was struck with the desire to find out what had happened with each of his 32 classmates and decided to invite everyone that he could locate to a 25th class reunion at his house. The photographer made a blown-up version of the original class photograph and snapped a portrait of each individual student who attended the gathering in front of the image holding an object that was representative of their present-day lives. In the following years, Brodsky was able to obtain portraits of most of his classmates with a version of the class image (some small, some large) within the context of their lives.

In 1996, Brodsky participated in an event called *Puente de la Memoria* at the *CNBA* officially recognizing the 98 students of the school that were "disappeared" during Argentina's military dictatorship from 1976-1985.<sup>52</sup> The centerpiece of Brodsky's exhibit was the enlarged image of his 8th grade class, on which he made what I call an "aesthetic intervention" by writing short phrases in different colored crayons about the lives of each

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<sup>52</sup> While 98 was the number of "disappeared" students that was included in the ceremony, that figure was later raised to 105. There were an estimated 30,000 people "disappeared" during military rule in Argentina, the vast majority during the strongest years of repression, the so-called "Dirty War" of 1976-1983.

of his classmates. The "gigantografia intervenida" (Brodsky's term), *Los compañeros*, has since been displayed in cultural centers and museums in Argentina, has participated in photography exhibitions throughout the world, and is also the focal point of the bilingual photographic essay book *Buena memoria / Good Memory* (1997). Brodsky's "aesthetic intervention" on his 8th grade class picture, coupled with the present-day portraits that accompany the enlarged image in the *Buena memoria* exhibit constitute what Andreas Huyssen calls "memory art"<sup>53</sup>, which I argue creates the conditions of possibility for a dynamic engagement with the experiences of the military dictatorship and the activation of these memories in different socio-political contexts in the present and for future generations.

My analysis of Brodsky's work in this chapter departs from the idea that the meanings and interpretations of images are constituted by the social uses of a photograph, both in the intent of the photographer or curator, and in the reception by the spectators. I focus primarily on three concepts that allow me to critically reflect on the ways that Brodsky's *Los compañeros* creates the space for construction of a dynamic cultural memory about the military dictatorship that provides a more meaningful engagement for the spectators than the static discourse offered in the *A ditadura no Brasil* exhibit. First, I

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<sup>53</sup> In his contribution to Brodsky's second photographic essay, *Nexo*, Huyssen writes: Projects such as *Nexo* by Marcelo Brodsky [...] belong to the surprising emergence in post-minimalist and post-performance art of what I would tentatively call *memory art*, a kind of artistic practice that draws increasingly on the long-standing complex tradition of the *art of memory* itself- its mixture of script and image, rhetoric and writing. It is a kind of mnemonic public art that is not centered on spatial configuration alone, but that powerfully inscribes a dimension of localizable, even corporal memory into the work. It is an artistic practice that crosses the boundaries between installation, photography, monument and memorial. Its place can be both in the museum or gallery and in public space. Its addressee is the individual beholder, but he or she is addressed both as an individual and as a member of the nation or the community facing the task of commemoration" (*Nexo* 9).

draw upon theoretical discussions by Rosalind Krauss, Simon Watney, and John Tagg to discuss the concepts of the "scientific use" of photography (i.e. the belief that images offer an "official" or "true" representation of a moment in the past) and the "aesthetic use" of images (i.e. photography used for artistic purposes that can produce multiple meanings and interpretations). I use these ideas to explore how Brodsky's "artistic intervention" onto an "official" school photograph transforms the use of the image from an archive of a specific moment in time to provoking a dynamic connection between the past and the present. Second, I use theoretical discussions on the institutionalization of photography and spectatorship by cultural critics such as Abigail Solomon Gordeau, Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam to explain how the exhibition of Brodsky's work in different social spaces produces multiple possible interpretations of photograph, both within Argentina and in transnational contexts. Finally, I build upon Giorgio Agamben's concept of "remnant" to explore the ways that Brodsky accentuates the impossibility to fully represent experience through language in *Los compañeros*, instead of attempting to fill in the gap with an ideological "narrative truth" about the past. This forces the viewer to actively engage the photograph in order to determine meaning, creating a dynamic space of cultural memory where multiple meanings and interpretations about the past interact and allow for momentary, individual connections to the experience of the dictatorship and the influence that it has had on present-day society.

## The Different Uses of Photography

"Photography is considered to be a perfectly realistic and objective recording of the visible world because (from its origin) it has been assigned *social uses* that are held to be 'realistic' and 'objective'" (Bourdieu *VC* 162)

This quote from Pierre Bourdieu's oft-cited essay "The Social Definition of Photography" aptly describes the social use of photographs enacted by the *A ditadura no Brasil 1965-1985* exhibit that I analyzed in the previous chapter. The images in the *ADNB* exhibit are presented as part of a totalizing counter-narrative "truth" about the past, produced within what Rosalind Krauss calls the "scientific discourse" of photography, or the social use of a photograph as a "truthful" representation of reality at a particular moment in time. The images of students, workers, soldiers, revolutionaries, and mass protests presented in the *ADNB* exhibit are enacted as a visual confirmation of the historical narrative of "united resistance" presented in the captions - they are meant as photographic evidence of the "truth" about the past that the curators seek to "rescue" from the dominant social discourse of "forgetting" and reconciliation. Echoing Bourdieu's critique of the conflation of photographic images with "truth," Simon Watney argues that:

If our major objection to contemporary photography only concerns its capacity for 'truthfulness', then we are merely colluding with the most powerful aspect of photographic culture, namely its association with 'the truth'. It is precisely that association which we need to deny, in all its forms and variations [...] Photographs are no more, and no less, than fragments of ideology, activated by the mechanisms of fantasy and desire within a fragmentary history of images.

(*VC* 159)

Watney's insistence that photographs are "fragments of ideology" is an important contribution, particularly in considering photography exhibits such as the *ADNB* that seek to articulate a historical narrative through imagery. The meanings produced by visual cultural production are constructed within social conventions that dictate the "appropriate" way to interpret photographs, and the images from the dictatorship chosen as "visual evidence" of the "truth" about this experience are reflective of the ideological premise of the exhibit's curators from the perspective of the militant-left. As I previously argued, this counter-narrative of the past participates in the same system of meaning as the military's version of events, which ultimately serves to reify the military's narrative as a "logical" discourse about the dictatorship. The "scientific" social use of photography enacted by the *ADNB* exhibit contributes to this (counter)hegemonic relationship within the same discursive logic, using images to present an "archival truth" about the past.

John Tagg provides an important contribution to the analysis of this "scientific" discourse of photography that allows us to theorize the scientific use of images as a form of documentation and social control by the military regimes in Brazil and Argentina in "Evidence, Truth, and Order: A Means of Surveillance." Tagg dialogues with the work of Michel Foucault, arguing that photographs are often deployed as "evidence" or "truth" related to the production of knowledge and meaning in order to produce subjects, and to subject them to disciplinary power. In this sense, photographs can function as documents in institutional archives, serving as mechanisms of vigilance, differentiation, and control of individuals within a *régime of truth* in a given society. While these ideas can be applied to the analysis of the use of photographic documentation (ID cards, security

cameras, etc.) within any form of social organization, the ideas of control through vigilance and the institutional production of subjects is particularly applicable to the analysis of authoritarian governments.

The military regimes throughout the Southern Cone kept meticulous documentation of the individuals that they imprisoned, often including a photograph of each prisoner, contributing to the "normalizing" discourse that each individual was subjected to within the military's *régime of truth*.<sup>54</sup> The ADNB photography exhibit, activates this same "scientific" use of images as "truth" in its historical counter-narrative, and thus fails to challenge the discursive system of meaning for photographs that was used during the dictatorship. As Tagg argues:

We must forget the claims of a discredited documentary tradition to fight 'for' 'truth' or 'in favour' of 'truth' and see that the battle is one that should be directed at the rules, operative in our society, according to which 'true' and 'false' representations are separated. It is a battle waged against those institutions privileged and empowered in our society to produce and transmit 'true' discourse. (*VC* 265)

These comments by Tagg are similar to the arguments laid out by Nelly Richard, drawing from the Benjaminian concept of a *refractory art* that challenges both the dominant version of the past *and* the accepted system of meaning in which the dominant discourse is produced. It is this capacity of artistic cultural production to question established

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<sup>54</sup> It is important to note that this concept of "surveillance" during the military regimes was just as important for controlling the behavior of those who were *not* disappeared during the dictatorship. As Diana Taylor points out in *Disappearing Acts*, the mere possibility that military personnel could be watching one's activities functioned to regulate social behavior.

structures of signification that may cause spectators or readers think critically about representations of "truth" about the past, evident in the work of Marcelo Brodsky.

Brodsky successfully leaves this so-called battle for "truth" within the scientific discourse of images through his artistic manipulation of the archival document of his 8th grade class picture, transforming it into a piece of "memory art," *Los compañeros*. We can consider the initial use of the school photograph, with a sign noting the school's name "Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires," the particular class "1 Año - 6a DIV," and the year "1967," as a document that formed part of the institutional archive that contributed to the production of subjects in the Argentine school system during this time period. This concept applies to any "official" school photograph, as the picture of a class of students becomes an archive that represents a specific moment in the past, in accordance with the use of images within the scientific discourse. The photograph documents the number of students in the class, the clothes that they wore during this time period, and contributes to the production of "difference" among the student population (based on race<sup>55</sup>, gender, class, behavior, etc.) within the normalizing ritual of posing for a class picture. Through the act of enlarging the school photograph 25 years later and writing notes about the present-day life of each student, Brodsky alters the original use of the school photo as a static archive of the past. His modification of the class picture creates what Krauss calls an "aesthetic use" for the image, converting the class image into a "work of art" that is not longer an instrument of "truth" associated with the scientific use of photographs.

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<sup>55</sup> Racial/Ethnic/Cultural difference is particularly important when considering the exiled and the "disappeared" during Argentina's military dictatorship, as a disproportionate number of these individuals were Jewish.

Although the "aesthetic use" of an image also provokes questions about power, knowledge, and the institutionalization of photography as so-called "legitimate art," Brodsky's "aesthetic intervention" onto the image connects the past with the present and creates a space to provoke multiple meanings and interpretations for those who view the photograph.

### **Brodsky's Intervention in *Los compañeros***

The amplified scale of the *Los compañeros* "gigantograph" marks an immediate departure from the typical use of a class picture, forcing the spectators to step back in order to consider the image in its entirety, while allowing them to move closer and examine each student in the class with more detail than is possible with the original size of the image. This offers an interesting dynamic between the "collective" representation of the class and the portrayal of each individual student, as spectators constantly move between both as they interpret the picture. The necessity of movement by the viewers to fully consider the meanings produced within the image immediately makes their engagement with the photograph more active than it would be with a standard-sized image, may cause initial interpretations of the class photograph to change as one examines Brodsky's intervention in more detail.<sup>56</sup> After enlarging the photograph, Brodsky used a crayon to write short notes about the lives of each of his classmates on or above their image. The use of a utensil associated with childhood to write about the

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<sup>56</sup> This change of scale is what the ADB exhibit also attempts to create with its large panels containing the images about the military dictatorship in Brazil. Yet, as I argue in the previous chapter, instead of using this change in scale to evoke a more active participation by the spectator, the texts and the photographs selected by the curators create a totalizing counter-narrative about the past that dictates how viewers are to interpret the images presented, leaving no space for critical engagement with the past and no connections to the influence of the dictatorship on present-day society.

current lives of the students immediately establishes a connection between the past and the present in the altered photograph, dislocating the notion that a photographic image is a static representation of a moment in the past.

Some notes provide direct information about the careers, location, and families of classmates, while other students simply have the word "vive" written on them, which causes the viewers to consider why the stories of these students are not included in the image, an aspect of *Los compañeros* that I analyze later in this chapter. Especially important to my analysis are the explicit and implicit references to disappearances, exile, torture, and suffering caused by the dictatorship, which are typically presented in an indirect language that forces the spectators to pause and consider the meaning of Brodsky's words within the context of the image. The photographer prepares the viewers to look for implicit references to the dictatorship through the message that he wrote at the bottom of the altered image, "En ocasión del postergado acto en homenaje a los desaparecidos del CNBA, Buenos Aires, Octubre, 1996" (BM 23). This message is particularly important to framing the political intent of Brodsky's work, as the reference to the "long overdue homage" to the "disappeared" marks the photographer's solidarity with those that suffered during the dictatorship, even as the implicit nature of many of his comments leave a space for multiple interpretations by the viewers.

### **The "Absent-Presence" of *Los desaparecidos***

Brodsky's "interventions" about two students who were killed during the military dictatorship, Claudio and Martín, have a particularly strong impact for the spectators. For these classmates, the notes are written in red, a symbol of blood and death, which

immediately grabs the attention of the viewers. Brodsky also drew a circle with a line going through the head of these two "disappeared" students to further emphasize their "absent-presence" in the image.<sup>57</sup> In "Imagen-recuerdo y borraduras," Nelly Richard draws from the work of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Susan Sontag to discuss the *phantasmal effect* of a photograph, which produces an *effect-of-presence* by being the representation of a moment in the past observed from the present. She argues that this "ambigüedad temporal de lo que *todavía es* y de lo que *ya no es* [...] se sobredramatiza en el caso del retrato fotográfico de seres desaparecidos" (*MIE* 166). Richard maintains that the aesthetic use of objects pertaining to the "disappeared" and associated with classification by the state, such as photo ID cards and written documentation of their detention, continually re-signifies memory according to multiple interpretations and contributes an "intensidad crítica a lo semiformulado, a lo residual e incompleto, a lo desgarrado [...] desde la dramaticidad de la huella, del resto y de la pérdida" (*MIE* 172).

If we apply Richard's ideas to the analysis of Brodsky's intervention in *Los compañeros*, we observe how the real "disappearance" of Claudio and Martín during the dictatorship is amplified by its confluence with a photograph that represents what "still is" and what "once was" at the same time. Claudio and Martín, like their classmates, still exist within the context of the class photo taken at a moment in the past that no longer exists. However, the present-day portraits of the classmates that accompany the image in the *Buena memoria* exhibit, and the notes about their current lives that Brodsky wrote on the enlarged version of the class photo signal that these students *still exist* today. In

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<sup>57</sup> A third student in the image, Pablo, also has a circle with a line going through his head drawn in white, with the note "Pablo murió de una enfermedad incurable" (Brodsky *BM* 23).

contrast, the "disappeared" students represented in the photograph only exist in the realm of what *once was*, amplifying the significance of their "absent-presence" in the photograph. In this way, Brodsky uses the trace of the "disappeared" contained in the class photo, the residual of their disappeared bodies, in order to produce a new critical meaning for these students in the class picture related to postdictatorial memory in Argentina. The representation of Claudio and Martín is intensified through the aesthetic use of archival documentation of "disappeared" individuals that was produced by the same state power responsible for their death, a common tactic used by groups such as the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* and HIJOS.<sup>58</sup>

The notes that Brodsky wrote in red about Martín and Claudio not only augment their "absent-presence" in the image, they also serve to accentuate the effects of their "disappearance" for those who "survived" the dictatorship. Next to the image of Claudio, Brodsky wrote, "A Claudio lo mataron en un enfrentamiento," explicitly informing the viewer that Claudio was killed and that it is impossible to connect the youthful face in the class photo with a mature adult in the present. Based solely on the *Los compañeros* image and this note, viewers can infer that Claudio was killed in an encounter with the military regime, and the use of the term "enfrentamiento" gives the impression that he participated in the activities of the militant-left in Argentina during the dictatorship. However, the altered image does not explicitly refer to Claudio as a "militant," nor does it attempt to appropriate Claudio's death within a larger ideological discourse of

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<sup>58</sup> Much of Brodsky's work transforms archival "remnants" about the dictatorship into a work of art that produces multiple possible meanings. See the photographic essay *Nexo* for example, where Brodsky includes many images of the "disappeared" taken by the military upon their detention that were smuggled out by a prisoner, as well as photographs of shelves upon shelves of archives and documentation from the military regime pertaining to "disappeared" individuals.

"resistance" to the dictatorship, leaving the spectators with a sense of "uneasiness" about how to interpret Brodsky's note. In this way, the representation of Claudio within the altered *Los compañeros* photograph hints at a criticism of the violence used by the military regime without completely revealing Brodsky's opinion about his death, which forces the viewer to think about "who" killed Claudio and "why" and "how" this happened, instead of explicitly narrating Claudio's death.<sup>59</sup>

Next to Martín, appears the following note: "Martín fue el primero que se llevaron. No llegó a conocer a su hijo, Pablo que hoy tiene 20 años. Era mi amigo, el mejor."<sup>60</sup> Here, spectators surmise that Martín was "disappeared" by the military regime and, taken in conjunction with the red circle with a line across his face, one begins to reflect upon the impossibility to connect Martín's image in the photograph with a life in the present. The impact of Martín's "disappearance" on the present is magnified with the reference to his son Pablo, one of thousands of Argentine children whose parents were killed by the military regime.<sup>61</sup> In this way, Brodsky articulates the *effects* of the

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<sup>59</sup> As I will discuss later on, the *Buena memoria* book *does* provide an explicit narration of Claudio's death, discussing his militancy as a "student leader" who confronted the "fachos" with his "fists" when they came to the school, and they "split his head open" (Brodsky *BM* 27). The language used in this description and the heroic image that it paints about Claudio are similar to techniques used in the ADN exhibit, which is one of the reasons why I argue that *Los compañeros* is a less powerful piece of memory art when it is placed within the narrative offered in the *Buena memoria* book. Interestingly, there is only one note that refers to political militancy in *Los compañeros*: "Alfredo es el único que milita activamente en los noventa en el Fre[paso]" (Brodsky *Los compañeros*). By describing Alfredo as "the only one" who is still a political militant, the spectator may infer a critique by Brodsky of Alfredo's continued belief in "political militancy" (related to the "disillusionment" felt by many towards the militant left), or a critique of all the other classmates for not maintaining their ideals of their youth.

<sup>60</sup> Again, further explanation is provided in the book about Martín's disappearance, and about the close friendship that Brodsky had with Martín, and the effect that his disappearance has had on the photographer's life.

<sup>61</sup> HIJOS (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio) was formed as an organized group of children of the disappeared who are very active politically today. Sadly, in Argentina there are still many individuals who may not know that their parents were disappeared, as many children who were born to parents in captivity were "adopted" by families supporting the military regime. While the famous

dictatorship on the present, which allows for a stronger connection to this experience for the spectators. This is an important difference between Brodsky's work and the *ADNB* exhibit, as the Argentine photographer does not attempt to articulate an ideological counter-narrative within his project, opting instead to:

comunicar a las nuevas generaciones las experiencias del terrorismo del Estado en la Argentina de una manera diferente, basada en la emoción y en la experiencia sensible, para que esa transmisión genere un conocimiento profundo y real, basado en el diálogo entre las distintas generaciones afectadas por las consecuencias de la dictadura militar.  
(Brodsky *MEC* 234)

While it is obvious that Brodsky intends his work as a critique of the torture, murder, and social repression committed by the military regime in Argentine, he recognizes the limits of using the same discursive system of the dictatorial period to transmit the *memory* of the dictatorship to new generations, opting instead to utilize the "emotional" or "sentimental" side of humanity to connect the experience of the dictatorship to the present. We can observe this in the last part of the comment that Brodsky wrote about Martín, "era mi amigo, el mejor," as well as the note that he wrote on his own childhood image, sitting next to Martín in the class picture, "Yo soy fotógrafo y extraño a Martín." These comments provide spectators with a glimpse into Brodsky's personal struggle to come to terms with his friend's disappearance, as well as his own exile during the dictatorship and the identity crisis sparked by his return to Argentina in

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1985 film *La historia oficial* dealt with this situation in the immediate aftermath of the dictatorship, Gustavo Biraben's 2005 film *Cautiva* explores this theme from the perspective of a teenager in the present.

1992. Brodsky refers to his emotional connection to his childhood friend in these notes and the sense of loss that he feels in the present as a result of Martín's "disappearance" in the past.<sup>62</sup>

Unlike the *ADNB* exhibit, Brodsky does not explicitly narrate Martín's kidnapping by military personnel, nor does he appropriate his image as "victim" within a politicized counter-narrative about the history of the dictatorship. The inability to narrate the circumstances of Martín's disappearance and the refusal to construct Martín as a mythic "victim" within an ideological discourse is what allows Brodsky's work to make connections with spectators in different social contexts, as he focuses on the "remnants" of the dictatorial past that have had an effect on individual and collective experiences in the present. While those who had similar experiences during the dictatorship are able to reflect upon their own personal connections with "disappearance," exile, or torture, the focus on the "emotional" aspects of this experience allow those who have no direct connection with the dictatorship in Argentina to connect to the experiences of the students in the class photograph in other ways. Viewers can draw from their own experiences with the loss of a loved-one, suffering, "exile" and "return," childhood memories, or experience at school, to make connections with the narratives produced in Brodsky's work, creating a space for a dynamic interaction of these experiences in the construction of a shared cultural memory about the dictatorship.

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<sup>62</sup> In *Buena memoria*, Brodsky writes, "Sigo soñando con él muchas noches, y ya hace veinte años que se lo llevaron" (Brodsky *BM* 43), further accentuating the effects that Martín's disappearance has had on Brodsky's lived experience in the present.

### **Spatial Context, Spectatorship, and Meaning in *Los compañeros***

The consideration of the various spaces and social contexts where *Los compañeros* is displayed is essential to the analysis of Brodsky's work, as the meanings produced by image continuously change depending upon the knowledge and expectations of the audience, and the spatial and social context in which the image appears. Recent work on spectatorship and visual culture from a transnational perspective by such critics as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam provide an effective theoretical base for the analysis of the reception of Brodsky's photography. Just like memory, we can consider spectatorship of visual cultural production (film, photography, tv ads, etc.) as a "negotiable site", where interpretation and meaning is affected by the multiple, and often contradictory identities and identifications of the spectators in relation to gender, race, class, sexual preference, national, local, regional, political affiliations, etc. As Shohat and Stam argue, "Spectators do not have single, monolithic identities [...] spectatorial positions are multiform, fissured, even schizophrenic" (160).

Considering spectatorship as "negotiable site" in the production and interpretation of meaning allows us to explore the ways that Brodsky's photography creates a space for dynamic memories and meanings that allow for multiple connections to be made to the experience of the dictatorship in Argentina and the effect that it has had on present-day society. The blown-up class picture has appeared at private gatherings, political events, in a mass-produced bilingual book, cultural centers, and museums both within Argentina and throughout the world, and these different social contexts create multiple scenarios for the interpretation of *Los compañeros*. It is important to examine the negotiated meanings

of Brodsky's work in these various social spaces, for as Shohat and Stam conclude, "The analysis of spectatorship must [...] explore the gaps and tensions among the different levels, the diverse ways that text, apparatus, history, and discourse construct the spectator and the ways that the spectator as subject/interlocutor shapes the encounter" (159-160).

As I mentioned previously, Brodsky's initial "re-encounter" with the class picture was very personal, as he came across it while looking through old photographs to help him to reflect upon his identity after returning from exile in Spain. The photographer used the image to evoke individual memories about his childhood, which sparked his curiosity about the lives of his classmates. After blowing up the image, Brodsky invited his classmates to a small gathering at his home in honor of the 25th reunion of the 8th grade class, and then took the first portraits of his classmates with objects that represented their present-day lives with the enlarged class photo. We can consider these first uses of the photograph as *private* interactions with the image used to evoke personal memories of those who appear within the picture. Brodsky invited his classmates to the house based upon a personal desire to find out about their lives, and those who attended the gathering did so for similar reasons. While spouses or children of the classmates may have been present at the gathering, the audience for the viewing of the image were primarily the same individuals in the photograph, seeking to connect the past represented in the group photo to their lives in the present. Many students did not come to the party, but those who did engaged in dialogue based upon private, individual memories of their shared experience in the same high-school class. Later, by writing notes about the lives of each student on the class picture and including the "gigantografía intervenida" in an

exhibition honoring the "disappeared" students of the *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires*, Brodsky amplified the audience for his work and transformed it into a *public* exhibition. This act blurs the lines between private and public spheres, and creates a space for the interaction of multiple individual experiences and collective discourses about the past, which creates the possibility for a dynamic cultural memory about the dictatorship and its residual influence on the present.

The *Puente de Memoria* event honoring the "disappeared" students of the *CNBA* held in October 1996 was organized by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora* and the *Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina*, in conjunction with the *Centro de Estudiantes del Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* and a group of alumni of the school. In addition to the ceremony where the names of all the *CNBA* students who were "disappeared" during the dictatorship were read out loud, the event included the placement of various images from this time period in the halls of the school. Brodsky's decision to install the *Buena memoria* exhibit at the politically-charged event, including the *Los compañeros* image accompanied by some of the current portraits of his classmates, amplified the political tenor of Brodsky's artistic intervention in the photograph. It also multiplied the possible interpretations of the photograph for the diverse spectators of the exhibit, depending on their individual knowledge and personal experience with the dictatorship. For example, those who had experienced (or knew someone who had suffered from) exile, torture, or "disappearance" during military rule were able to make a personal connection to Brodsky's work and reflect upon their past and its influence on their current lives. Adults may have been motivated to find their

own 8th grade class picture and investigate how the dictatorship has affected the lives of their classmates, repeating Brodsky's use of a class photo in different social contexts. Other adults who may not have had a direct connection to the dictatorship were able to connect to experiences represented in the exhibit through the class photograph, as nearly all spectators have had some experience with the ritual of posing for a group photo. This is one of the most powerful elements of *Los compañeros*, as it creates momentary connections of shared experiences within the tension between individual/private and collective/public memories about the dictatorship across different spectatorships, even if the viewer has had no direct experience with the military regime.

The exhibit also provided an opportunity for current students of the *CNBA* to engage the dictatorial past by making connections between their experiences at the school and those represented in the class picture. The enlarged photo was positioned within a glass case in front of a window in the exhibition hall, so that light shined on the faces of the spectators and created the illusion that the current students appeared within the 1967 class photo. Brodsky published some images in *Buena memoria* that illustrate this technique, and included various comments of the current students about engaging the past while seeing their own faces "reflected" in the exhibit. One student, Juan, commented that:

Estas fotos permitieron que me sintiera realmente identificado con los desaparecidos, me vi a mí mismo con mis compañeros y pensé que podría haber estado en este lugar. Pero además, se logró algo que jamás había

visto; durante el día del acto adultos y chicos compartían y se transmitían sentimientos y conocimientos. (BM 62)

The first part of Juan's comments show the effectiveness of Brodsky's use of a class photograph, a ritual that all students have participated in, to help the spectator to "really identify" with Brodsky's classmates and create a "real" connection to the dictatorial past for new generations of *argentinos*, or for anyone who did not directly experience the military regime. The second part of Juan's quote exemplifies the capacity of *Los compañeros* to create a space for an inter-generational dialogue about the dictatorship, where adults who lived through the dictatorship may be forced to critically reflect upon the experience in order to answer difficult questions about "disappearances", torture, violent revolutionary actions, exile, or human rights from the young students. The open interaction between generations has the capacity to cause adults to reconsider idealized or nostalgic memories about this time period in order to effectively connect their recollections of the past to the inquires of their children in a new socio-political context.

For example, one of the most striking comments published by Brodsky in *Buena memoria* came from a fourth year student (senior) named Camila, who refers to the "desaparecidos" as mythic figures:

En el homenaje, pude conocer a esos mitos [...] a los desaparecidos. Desaparecidos, esa palabra que fluctúa entre la generalización y el individuo, que pasó a representar muchas cosas, tantas que a muchos se les olvidó que eran personas, cada uno diferente del otro y con una vida armada e interrumpida bruscamente. Pude dejar de lado los símbolos y las

diferencias ideológicas para reconocerlos en lugares, ubicarlos en proyectos de vida, descubrirlos... demasiado parecidos a nosotros.

(*BM 61*)

These comments from Camila perfectly demonstrate the problems with the use of "mythic victims" of the dictatorship in the transmission of cultural memory that the curators of the *ADNB* exhibit employ. For Camila, the "desaparecidos" were always "myths" or "symbols", rarely separated from the ideological constructs of the era of the military dictatorship. The word "desaparecido" immediately evokes meanings such as murder, torture, repression, the dictatorship, the military, or the *Madres of the Plaza de Mayo* or *HIJOS*, transforming the term into a myth (in Barthes' sense) that displaces the actual human being that the term refers to and appropriates it within an ideological discourse. While this symbolic use of those who were "disappeared" during the dictatorship has unquestionable value in exposing the kidnapping, torture, and murder committed by the military regime in Argentina, the lives of these individuals and their affective relationships with families and friends are often given secondary consideration, or simply excluded. By "de-mythifying" the "disappeared," Brodsky creates the space for those who did not experience the dictatorship to make connections to those who were killed through the shared-experience of day-to-day realities, such as going to school. This also forces those who do hold the "desaparecidos" as symbols for "victim" of the dictatorship to critically engage this mythic representation and consider the human element of their death, outside of the ideological duality of the militant left and the military regime.

The power of the shared-experience of attending the *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* that allows younger alumni to connect to the experiences of the "disappeared" is echoed by the comments of another student, Sebastián:

Nunca había sentido tan íntimamente y en un ámbito así de cotidiano el recuerdo de los ausentes [...] lo que jamás había experimentado hasta ese momento era la sensación de revivir ese dolor en medio de un espacio propio: el Colegio [...] Esas fotos de los alumnos desaparecidos en los mismos claustros o patios que yo disfruté, esas cartas y expresiones de juventud me hicieron parte de esa historia. (BM 62)

Here, Sebastián notes the spatial aspect of the transfer of cultural memory, as his engagement with the past represented in the *Los compañeros* is intensified by its presentation in the physical space of the *CNBA* itself. By viewing the exhibit within his day-to-day environment, the hallways of the school, he was able to connect his lived-experience in the present to the lives of students who walked the same halls nearly 30 years earlier.

While the shared connection with the physical space of the school strengthened the viewing experience for the current students at *CNBA*, spectators who were not alumni of the school did not benefit from this connection and needed to draw upon other individual experiences to engage the notes about the classmates and interpret Brodsky's aesthetic intervention. The relationship between space and memory can be a very powerful tool in establishing connections between the past and the present, but it is also important to remember Henri Lefebvre's warning that physical spaces used to evoke

history and articulate discourses about the past have a “horizon of meaning: a specific or indefinite multiplicity of meanings” (Lefebvre 222) that are determined through social and political practice. It is the way that humans interact with space that determines the meanings produced within space; the mere physical presence of the *Buena memoria* exhibit in the *CNBA* did not automatically evoke a strong connection with all of the spectators, and its presentation in other social contexts can evoke different interpretations for the viewers.

It is this spatial aspect of spectatorship and the production of meaning that Nerea Arruti does not take into account in her analysis of the *Buena memoria* exhibit in "Tracing the Past: Marcelo Brodsky's Photography as Memory Art." Arruti focuses her analysis on the *Buena memoria* book and its discussion of the *Puente de la memoria* event at the *CNBA*, arguing that Brodsky's "conceptual art is framed by trauma theory and engages critically with an international network of memory projects" (Arruti 101). Arruti immediately frames her analysis within trauma theory, presenting *Buena memoria* as Brodsky's staging of "memory work" that attempts to overcome both the individual and collective trauma of the dictatorship within Argentina. While the trauma of the dictatorship does play an important part in *Los compañeros*, by arguing that Brodsky's work is "framed by trauma theory" and then analyzing the project from within this theoretical perspective, Arruti collapses memory into trauma. This excludes the socio-political factors involved in the production and reception of memory discourses, as Andreas Huyssen has argued. Arruti then draws from Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-

memory<sup>63</sup> to analyze the way that Brodsky "stages a situation where a younger generation of Argentineans will engage with collective traumatic despite the temporal distance" (Arruti 109). Despite mentioning the "international network of memory projects" in which Brodsky's work participates, Arruti's analysis of *Buena memoria* solely focuses on the transmission of traumatic memory to new generations *within* Argentina. This ignores the transnational nature of *Los compañeros*, which Arruti herself calls "the single image most widely reproduced in publicity and commentary" of Brodsky's work (Arruti 101). The different social spaces where the *Los compañeros* has appeared since the *Puente de memoria* event is an important element in considering the multiple meanings produced by the image, and the diverse interpretations and connections to the exhibit with regards to spectatorship. While Arruti examines the transnational aspects of Brodsky's second photographic essay, *Nexo*, she fails to consider how the installation of *Los compañeros* in cultural centers and museums throughout the world, as well as the mass production and distribution of the *Buena memoria / Good Memory* book within the global market, multiplies the possible spectatorial positions and meanings produced by Brodsky's work. It is this transnational component of *Los compañeros* that I examine in the following section.

### **The Institutionalization of *Los compañeros* as "Legitimate" Art**

Installing the *Los compañeros* image as part of exhibits in art galleries and museums, first in Argentina and then throughout the world, has multiplied the possible

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<sup>63</sup> As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, while Hirsch's concept of post-memory provides an interesting way to examine the transfer of cultural memory to new generations, I agree with Beatriz Sarlo's assessment that *all* memory is "post-memory" - all narration of experience is a mediated re-presentation of the past.

interpretations of the photograph in terms of transnational spectatorship, and has contributed to establishing Brodsky's work as so-called "legitimate" art within the institutional discourse of art critics and museums. The analysis of the transformation of the group photograph from a static archive of the past into an aesthetic work needs to be contextualized within the institutionalization of photography and its role as an object of "mass culture" or a "legitimate" piece of art. In "The Social Definition of Photography," Pierre Bourdieu develops his ideas regarding "legitimate" and "illegitimate" culture, arguing that cultural expressions become legitimate when they are "developed and inculcated by a school, an institution specifically responsible for communicating knowledge, organized into a hierarchy, through a methodical organization of training and practice" (Bourdieu *VC* 177). Bourdieu, writing in 1965, maintained that photography was in the sphere of "legitimizable" cultural production because, unlike "legitimate" art such as music, painting, and literature, there did not yet exist institutions such as photography museums or university photography departments to "legitimize" photography as a work of art. Without these institutions, Bourdieu argued that photography would maintain its utilitarian social role to represent the "truth" or "reality" at given moment in time.

With the increased institutionalization of photography as a "legitimate" work of art, centers for creative photography, museums, universities, and other institutions have contributed to establishing "norms" for what is to be considered aesthetic photography. Drawing from Foucault, Abigail Solomon-Gordeau argues that this institutionalization of aesthetic photography also produces a dominant discourse of knowledge production that

establishes the "correct" way to speak about artistic photography, and can transform the critical practices of some photographers, such as Brodsky's memory art, into a de-politicized marketable good within the "institutional precincts of art photography" (Solomon-Gordeau *VC* 232).<sup>64</sup> The inclusion of Brodsky's work within the established discursive system of "aesthetic photography" may dull the political impact that it would have outside of this institutionalized context, but it also expands the reach of his work and the possible meanings and interpretations of his "memory art."

The presentation of *Los compañeros* within a museum or art gallery automatically confers the "aura"<sup>65</sup> that surrounds art onto the image, and guides the spectators through the ritual of observing aesthetic production based on the socially "accepted" way of engaging works of art. Yet at the same time, Brodsky's "aesthetic intervention" onto his class photo is what creates the space for the political impact of his work. The *form* of *Los compañeros*, though given the "aura" of photographic art, is what enhances the critical content of the image and creates multiple possible interpretations for the viewers. It is important to consider how the meanings and interpretations ascribed to the exhibit change when it is placed in different social spaces, both within and outside of Argentina, since the image may lose the explicit political tenor within the Argentine context that it produced in the *Puente de memoria* event at the *CNBA*.

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<sup>64</sup> This is a critique that we can make of Bourdieu's work as well, who takes an "elitist" approach to studying culture, critical of cultural production that is "outside" of the institutions of art, or in his terms, "illegitimate."

<sup>65</sup> In his critique of institutionalized art in "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin maintains that works consecrated as "high art" confer a certain "aura" on them in the attempt to guide the way that these works are interpreted.

*Los compañeros* has been displayed on its own or as a part of different exhibitions over 100 times and in 20 different countries since Brodsky's intervention on the image in 1996. Its presentation at museums and cultural centers throughout the Southern Cone<sup>66</sup> establishes a transnational connection between the experiences of military dictatorships throughout the region, evoking personal memories of this time period for many spectators and creating the space for an inter-generational dialogue about the past within a similar experience across national borders. Displaying the exhibit in countries with similar experiences with authoritarian regimes, such as Spain and Perú,<sup>67</sup> allow spectators to connect their own experiences with violence, exile, trauma, and the transmission of cultural memory with those represented in Brodsky's "memory art" through transnational dialogue. The exhibition of *Los compañeros* in unlikely places with little "symbolic capital", such as Grand Forks, North Dakota and Laramie, Wyoming,<sup>68</sup> allow those with little or no cultural knowledge about the "disappeared," Argentina, or Latin America in general to critically engage the region for the first time and perhaps break down preconceived cultural stereotypes. Even though the socio-political impact of *Los compañeros* may be dulled by its appropriation as "aesthetic photography" displayed in museums and art galleries, it also opens up a space for a dynamic interaction of interpretation through transnational spectatorship that creates new meanings for

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<sup>66</sup> For example, the exhibit was displayed at El Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires, Argentina from September 8 to October 15 2006; the Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales in Montevideo, Uruguay from November 23, 2006 to January 21, 2007; and the Centro Cultural Matucana 100 in Santiago de Chile from March 8, 2008 to April 30, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> El Museo de la Universidad de Valladolid (Spain), January 29 to March 2003; Museo de Arte de San Marcos in Lima, Perú, July 15 to September 9, 2007.

<sup>68</sup> North Dakota Museum of Art, March 29 to June 5, 2005; University of Wyoming Art Museum, March 6 to May 9, 2008.

Brodsky's work, where parallels are made to different social contexts and historical events in other parts of the world.

The most interesting components of transnational spectatorship of *Los compañeros* for my present purposes are the connections that it creates with both transnational Jewish identity and what Andreas Huyssen calls the "globalization of Holocaust discourse" (PP 13). Huyssen maintains that events such as the torture and disappearance of political "subversives" during the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone and the state-sponsored genocide in places such as Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur have maintained the Holocaust memory discourse active and has transformed it into a "universal trope" or a type of global prism through which other mass atrocities in different historical and political contexts in the 20th century are considered. This "globalized Holocaust discourse" is particularly applicable to the analysis of the state violence committed by the military regime during the dictatorship in Argentina, both for the disproportionately large number of Jews killed by the Argentine military<sup>69</sup> and for the striking similarities between the "camps" of torture and murder in Argentina and in Nazi Germany. As Huyssen argues:

It is the discourse about the Holocaust and about Holocaust representations and memory that haunts or shadows the Argentinean debate [...] But the relationship to Holocaust discourse is not by way of comparison of the military dictatorship with Nazi Germany. It is rather by productive inscription of certain tropes and images, ethical and political

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<sup>69</sup> While Jews represented only 2% of the Argentine population during the dictatorship, they composed nearly 10% of the disappeared (Ruggiero 4).

evaluations. Here as in some other cases, Holocaust discourse functions like an international prism that helps focus the local discourse about the *desaparecidos* in both its legal and its commemorative aspects. (PP 98)

While the Holocaust discourse is activated within Argentina as a way to engage the traumatic memory of the violence of the dictatorship and the effects that it has had on the present, I believe that the international prism also works in the other direction: it allows spectators in other countries to connect to the experience of the military dictatorship in Argentina through the global discourse of the Holocaust.<sup>70</sup> This is particularly evident in the exhibition of *Los compañeros* in spaces associated with Jewish identity, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, and the Tucson Jewish Community Center.<sup>71</sup> The use of Jewish identity (in any of its forms) and the "global Holocaust discourse" in conjunction with the work of Brodsky (who is Jewish) offers new ways for spectators to draw from their own personal experience and cultural knowledge to have a more meaningful engagement with the dictatorial past in Argentina and connect it to their own lives in different social contexts.

For example, the *Los compañeros* image was included in an exhibit entitled *Marcelo Brodsky: Memory Works* installed in the Fine Art Gallery at the Tucson Jewish Community Center (TJCC) from March 16 to June 1, 2008.<sup>72</sup> A flyer promoting the

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<sup>70</sup> It is worth noting that Huysen also warns of the possibility of the Holocaust discourse functioning as a negative memory screen that blocks public reckoning with a traumatic past "by insisting on the absolute incommensurability of the Holocaust with any other historical case" (PP 98).

<sup>71</sup> Jewish Museum in Berlin, August 29, 2004 to November 30, 2004; Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, November 14, 2001 to January 31, 2002; Tucson Jewish Community Center, March 16 to June 1, 2008.

<sup>72</sup> I would like to thank Betsy Simon Cowan, Director of Arts & Culture at the Tucson Jewish Community Center, for providing me with brochures and other materials from Brodsky's *Memory Works* exhibit.

event of the "Argentine Jewish photographer" explains that the exhibit was sponsored by the TJCC, the Jewish Community Relations Council, Congressman Raúl Grijalva, and the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the proceeds of the exhibition were to go to the Jewish-Latino Teen Coalition, "a program that builds bridges between Jewish and Latino high school students and brings them to Washington, D.C. to engage together in political advocacy" (Event Flyer *Marcelo Brodsky: Memory Works*). From the information contained in this flyer, one immediately notes the multiple possible identifications that spectators can draw from to connect with the exhibit (Jewish, Latino, Youth, Student, Political Activist, etc.), which enables *Memory Works* to engage spectators in all their "fissured" and "schizophrenic" identities. The spectatorial framing of the exhibit through multiple identity markers is continued with the images chosen to be included on the flyer, the *Los compañeros* gigantograph, and two images from Brodsky's second photographic essay, *Nexo*, focusing on the "restos" in the wake of the 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), which killed 84 people and completely destroyed the building.

While *Los compañeros* serves as the primary way of connecting to spectators within Argentina (and especially at the *Puente de memoria* event) through identity markers such as "student," the *CNBA*, or "desaparecido," the enlarged class photo plays a secondary role to markers of Jewish identity and the Holocaust as a way to connect to the audience at the TJCC. In one of the images on the flyer, *Estrella explotada*, Brodsky takes multiple photographs of a fragment of the Star of David that was engraved on the AMIA that he found after the bombing and re-arranges the "restos" to remake a trace of

the star within the ruins of the building. The main image shown on the front of the flyer is *Vértice*, another fragment of the Star of David from the AIMA building that Brodsky found with the rest of the rubble on a section of land right next to the Rio de la Plata during the clean-up after the bombing. Ironically, this section of land was the exact place where the *Parque de la memoria*<sup>73</sup> was to be built in homage to the victims of state violence during the dictatorship, and Brodsky expertly conveys the "nexus" between the state terror during the dictatorship and the bombing of the AIMA through the international prism of Jewish identity and the Holocaust. The prominent display of these images on the promotional flyer for Brodsky's exhibition at the TJCC seeks to immediately establish a connection with the expected audience by evoking Jewish identity (Star of David) and the violence against Jews (Holocaust), while at the same time offering a way connect these spectatorial identifications with the experience of the military dictatorship in Argentine by the inclusion of *Los compañeros*.

In written remarks introducing Brodsky's work, curator Marilyn A. Zeitlin begins by comparing his "memory art" to the works of Goya and Caravaggio, establishing Brodsky's aesthetic photography as "legitimate" art within the institutionalized discourse of museums. She continues to explain his techniques of connecting different lives and subjectivities through the "familiar" things such as "family pictures and school photos," which are able to convey the effects of a traumatic experience without explicitly showing

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<sup>73</sup> Marcelo Brodsky played an important leadership role in the design and installation of the *Parque de la memoria* and the cultural center within the ex-torture center ESMA in Buenos Aires.

violence, maintaining that "the horror is present even when not visible."<sup>74</sup> She concludes by framing the exhibit within the globalized Holocaust discourse described by Huysen, and by evoking transnational Jewish identity as a way to connect to the Argentine experience:

It is a privilege to present this work in the context of the Tucson Jewish Community Center. The attempt by the Nazis to exterminate the Jews is mirrored in the Argentine experience. The Jewish community was targeted in Argentina as were intellectuals, psychiatrists and psychologists. Brodsky's work is about memory, about paranoia that drives leaders illegitimately given power to victimize the innocent. He reminds us of parallels not only in Germany but of the massacre of the innocents in our own time, in too many places in the world. (Zeitlin 2)

Zeitlin's comments serve as a spectatorial guide for viewers of Brodsky's work at the TJCC, accentuating the "deterritorialized" nature of the meanings produced in his photography, and the multiple ways that viewers can connect to the experiences represented in his work. Framing the exhibit within the globalized discourse of the Holocaust allows spectators (particularly those with "Jewish identity" - in all its reiterations) to connect the "disappearance," exile, and suffering represented in Brodsky's aesthetic intervention the *Los compañeros* to these same figures in different social and historical contexts. At the same time, however, framing spectatorship of the exhibit

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<sup>74</sup> This is what I argue is the most powerful element in Brodsky's work, the narrative silences produced in his work that evoke meanings without explicitly narrating experience. I examine this in detail in the next section.

within transnational Jewish identity also diminishes the photograph's *specificity* in context of the military dictatorship in Argentina, displacing this traumatic experience within the spectatorial prism of the Holocaust. Yet, despite the erasure of the political and social critique within the Argentine context, framing the exhibit in this way creates the opportunity for a transnational dialogue about the residual effects of violence and human massacre, both in the past *and* the present, which establishes momentary connections with the experience of "other" and creates a dynamic use for cultural memory.

### **Testimony and Narrative Silences in *Los compañeros***

So far, I have explored some of the ways that Marcelo Brodsky's "artistic intervention" onto an "official" class photograph, and its presentation in various spaces and appropriation within different social contexts, produces multiple possible meanings and interpretations for the viewer. This ability to engage the meanings produced in *Los compañeros* from multiple perspectives is facilitated by the narrative silences produced by Brodsky's intervention, which open spaces for critical reflection and interpretation by the viewers and further contribute to the dynamic nature of meaning in the photograph. While the "absent-presence" of the disappeared and the explicit references to exile and imprisonment in the image evoke powerful meanings for the spectators, I argue that it is the numerous phrases that do *not* explicitly articulate the past experience of a student that force the viewer to critically engage the exhibit in order to determine meaning. This aspect of Brodsky's work is particularly compelling, as it allows us to explore the limits of the representation of experience and the creation of a space where multiple, individual

connections can be made to the construction of a dynamic cultural memory about the dictatorship. As I developed in the theoretical chapter, many theorists such as Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, and Gayatri Spivak have explored the notion of the impossibility to fully represent an experience through language (be it written, oral, corporal, visual), of the problem of narrating the "unnarratable," which has become a key concept in the critical consideration of testimonial cultural production, particularly in the area of trauma studies. These authors maintain that there is always a remainder, or an "excess," in the attempt to represent an experience through language (the "Real" or the "sublime object" for Lacan/Žižek, the "remnant" for Agamben, the "subaltern" for Spivak), as any testimonial articulation of experience must be subjected within a discursive system in order to make meaning.

The diverse ways to employ the notion of "remnant" are particularly useful for the analysis of Brodsky's aesthetic intervention onto his 1967 class photo in *Los compañeros*. We can consider the image itself as a physical "remnant" of the past, an object from the time of the dictatorship that can either consciously or involuntarily evoke memories about this time period for the spectator. For the two students who were killed by the military regime, particularly Martín (whose body was never found), the photograph also represents the "remains" of their "disappeared" bodies, all that is left of these individuals in the present is the "remnant" image from the past. The notes that explicitly narrate the lives of these students explore the "residual" effects of the dictatorship on both their individual lives and on Argentinean society collectively, as the past experiences of

"disappearance," torture, and exile are brought into focus within present-day social contexts of both the classmates and the spectators.

Yet, it is the subtle language that Brodsky uses to write some of the notes, and his refusal or inability to explicitly narrate experience for many students in *Los compañeros* that allows us to activate Agamben's notion of "remnant" - as the "non-coincidence of the whole and the part" or the "lacuna" between the testimony of those that survived and the "disappeared." What is most striking about Brodsky's work is that it recognizes this impossibility to fully represent experience through language, and instead of attempting to fill in this gap with an ideological counter-narrative about the past (like the *ADNB* exhibit), he *accentuates* the "remnant" - which points to an experience without "narrativizing it into logic" (Spivak). While the different spaces where the image has been presented may offer a frame of interpretation, the spectators are forced to actively engage the inherent gaps in meaning that remain open in *Los compañeros*, creating the possibility for multiple interpretations and connections to the experiences represented in the image and the construction of a dynamic cultural memory about dictatorship.

We can observe the exploration of this gap in representation in many of the notes that Brodsky wrote about the students in the photograph that provide implicit references to the experience of the dictatorship and its influence on the present without explicitly narrating the past. While some of the comments openly narrate experiences that point towards the dictatorship, such as "Eduardo estuvo preso pero se salvó y hoy es analista", even these phrases do not fully explain what happened to each individual student. Spectators understand from this comment that Eduardo was imprisoned, and they infer

from the context of the exhibit that he was probably a political prisoner during the dictatorship, but Brodsky's comment doesn't explain when, why, or how Eduardo was imprisoned. The use of the term 'se salvó' also offers a conflictive meaning here, as it could mean "he was saved" or "he saved himself" depending on context. The viewers must pause and consider the meaning, and may return to the comment and reach a different interpretation after reading the other notes that Brodsky wrote on the image, which only augment the play of interpretation. Brodsky's complication of a seemingly straightforward comment is also seen in the following note: "Liliana es un bocho,<sup>75</sup> lo calcula todo bien. (pero lo que le pasó no se lo esperaba)" (Brodsky *Los compañeros*). With the first part of the comment, the viewer understands that Liliana is an intelligent person who is well prepared for whatever life throws at her, but the reference to something "unexpected" that happened in her life forces the viewer to read the comment again and reconsider the meaning. We do not know if the unexpected event happened during or as a result of the dictatorship, if it was an unrelated surprise, or if it was not a life changing event at all and merely refers to the way that her life turned out. While the *ADNB* exhibit includes a totalizing narrative that instructs spectators on how to interpret each image, *Los compañeros* forces viewers to reconsider their initial interpretations in dialogue with the other comments and the enlarged image taken as a whole because Brodsky maintains the constitutive "excess" between representation and experience, resisting the production of a "narrative truth" about the dictatorship.

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<sup>75</sup> In Argentina, "bocho" means smart, intelligent

The comments that Brodsky wrote for Jorge, Gustavo, and Patricia are important examples of providing a space for spectators to engage an "unnarratable" traumatic experience without explicitly explaining what happened to each student. For Jorge, Brodsky wrote "Jorge la pasó muy mal y eso lo jodió." The vagueness of this phrase points to a traumatic experience that has continued to influence the present life of Jorge, but does not explicitly narrate what happened and how it "messed him up." Brodsky offers a similar comment for Gustavo, "Gustavo prefiere no aparecer por el pasado." Just as with Jorge, Gustavo's past suffering continues to have a strong effect on his life, so much so that he refused to participate in Brodsky's project. The note about Patricia also refers to an event in the past that affected her life, "Patricia se sobrepuso, pero también le dolió," but he paints her in a more positive light than Jorge or Gustavo. By noting that Patricia "overcame" a difficult experience in the past, Brodsky creates a figure who had the strength to endure an event even though it caused her pain, and that she has come to terms with her traumatic experience in the present, whereas the current lives of Jorge and Gustavo are still strongly affected by the past.

In the context of the exhibit, the spectators initially assume that Jorge, Patricia, and Gustavo were tortured during the dictatorship, or that perhaps a family member was tortured or "disappeared," and that the physical and mental trauma greatly influenced their lives after the dictatorship. This may lead spectators within the Southern Cone to reflect upon their own traumatic experiences during the dictatorship and the ways in which it has influenced their present lives. Yet, while the initial reaction may be to connect the traumatic events that marked the lives of these students with the dictatorship,

the spectator may return to question this assumption after reading other comments on the image that do *not* refer to the dictatorship at all. This "uneasiness" in interpreting the comments is due to the fact that Brodsky doesn't explicitly narrate the experiences of these students, which allows spectators to interpret the phrases in different ways, and perhaps make connections with any traumatic experience that has influenced their lives, even those not having anything to do with the dictatorship. In this way, the photographer takes advantage of the impossibility to fully represent experience through language to create a space to provoke multiple, individual connections to the experiences of Jorge, Gustavo, and Patricia that enable a dynamic engagement with the memory of the dictatorship.

A second group of comments that deserves analysis are the explicit and implicit references to exile during the dictatorship, which further multiplies that possible interpretations of *Los compañeros* and connections that the viewers can make with the experiences of the students. The themes of "exile" and "return" are personally important to Brodsky, who began this project as a way to reflect upon his own experience and identity after returning to Buenos Aires from exile in Spain in 1992. While Brodsky does not refer to his own exile in the image, there are eight students whose comments contain references to either other places or "returning" to Buenos Aires, which when placed in the larger context of *Los compañeros* causes the viewers to speculate that these individuals left Argentine to escape the dictatorship. The comments written about Alvaro ("Alvaro es buenazo, tiene 5 hijos y vive en Madrid"), Ruth ("Ruth vive Viena"), and Alicia ("Alicia se fue a vivir a la costa Atlántica") offer direct information about the current

locations of these students, with no other explanation as to why these individuals no longer live in Buenos Aires. The note for Antonio ("Ambrossini volvió al Barrio") offers a similar lack of contextualization for the viewers, leaving one to wonder both why this student left the "neighborhood" and what caused him to return.

The notes for Erik ("Erik se hartó. Vive en Madrid") and Damián ("Damián labura con computas y volvió del Perú") also refer to "exile" and "return," but these comments include additional information that causes the spectator to reflect further upon the experiences of these students. The note for Erik in particular grabs the attention of the spectator, as it makes a direct connection between the past and its influence on the present. As with the other comments, Brodsky does not specifically explain what exactly Erik "got sick of" that caused him to move to Madrid, but within the overall context of the exhibit the spectators assume that it had to do with the dictatorship. Viewers may draw the same conclusion from the note about Damián, that he left Argentina to live in Perú during the dictatorship and returned after the military regime had ended, just as Brodsky had done. However, the lack of a direct explanation as to why these individuals left Argentina forces the viewers to actively engage the comments in order to make meaning, and one can just as easily draw the conclusion that these students left Argentina for work, family, or many other reasons that have nothing to do with the dictatorship.<sup>76</sup>

The comments that Brodsky included to describe the lives of Leonor and Ana are particularly significant in that he specifically marks their exile during the time period of

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<sup>76</sup> The *Buena Memoria / Good Memory* book provides some additional information for these students which confirms that the references to "exile" and "return" have nothing to do with the dictatorship. For example, Brodsky explains that Damián travels all over Latin America for work, and that he stayed in Perú because "encontró a su compañera. Allí se quedó cinco años y volvió con una limeña para casarse en Buenos Aires" (Brodsky *BM* 25).

the dictatorship, and, perhaps more importantly, both students went to live in Israel. For Ana Brodsky wrote, "Ana se fue a vivir a Israel hace 20 años. Su primer hijo habla castellano bien. El segundo a medias. El tercero solo habla hebreo." While not explicitly stating why Ana left Argentina for Israel, the temporal marker of "20 years ago" from the 1996 *Puente de la memoria* event at the *CNBA* means that she left Argentina in 1976, the beginning of the most violent period of the dictatorship in Argentina. This temporal marker causes the spectators to surmise that Ana left Argentina to escape the dictatorship, and in turn makes them then consider all other references to "exile" and "return" in the amplified image in dialogue with Ana's experience. This phrase is also the only clear marker of Jewish identity presented in *Los compañeros*, reflecting the fact that many students in the class photo were Jewish, including Brodsky and the "disappeared" students - Claudio Tisminetzky and Martín Bercovich. The fact that Ana chose to remain in Israel and that her youngest child speaks only Hebrew augments the importance of the representation of Jewish identity in the photograph, and contributes to the connection that spectators can make to *Los compañeros* in its presentation in contexts such as the Tucson Jewish Cultural Center.

The note for Leonor, who is sitting next to Ana in the class picture and is holding the sign with the class name and date, states, "Leonor zafó y volvió a Buenos Aires hace poco." Here again the comment includes a temporal marker, noting that Leonor has only recently returned to Buenos Aires, when taken in conjunction with Ana's note (which is read either directly before or after Leonor since they are sitting next to one another) leads the spectators to conclude that she too left Argentina during the dictatorship. The use of

the word "zafar" causes the viewer to reflect upon its meaning, as it traditionally means "to escape or to hide oneself in order to avoid risk or an encounter," but colloquially in the Southern Cone it can also have the connotation of "washing one's hands of a situation" or "freeing oneself from an obligation" (*Real Academia Española* - my translation). While this note could be interpreted as a subtle critique of Leonor for not having stayed in Buenos Aires to confront the military regime for those not familiar with Brodsky's own experience of exile, most spectators would understand the comment in the context of escaping some form of persecution, an interpretation that is augmented in the *Buena Memoria / Good Memory* book that explains that Leonor also went to Israel to live and that both of her children were born in Tel Aviv.

The implicit references to "exile" and "return" in *Los compañeros* are perhaps the strongest contributions to the possibility of international audiences to make multiple connections to the experiences of the military dictatorship represented in the enlarged image. First, *argentinos* who are living abroad and view the exhibit in their new countries will be immediately drawn to the notes about the students who have left Argentina, whether they were exiled during the dictatorship or left for other reasons. This shared experience of living in a new social context establishes a connection for all spectators who are immigrants, who find themselves in similar situations of reflecting upon their past lives in their countries of origin and their present experience in a different cultural and social environment. For example, the comment on the languages used by Ana's children reflects the experience of many immigrants whose children no longer speak the native language of their parents after many years in a new community.

The connections made to the theme of "exile" may not necessarily be a romantic "nostalgia" for the "patria", as spectators may connect to Brodsky's additional notes about Ana in the *Buena Memoria / Good Memory* book that place more importance on her present life in her adoptive country than a longing to return to her homeland, "Le preocupa la política israelí y el futuro de sus hijos en su tierra adoptiva. La política argentina, en cambio, no le interesa" (Brodsky *BM* 49). The reference to Israel gains further importance in the multiple, transnational contexts that the photograph has been exhibited and offers a space for spectators who maintain some form of Jewish identity to connect to the image. By not explicitly referring to the dictatorship his comments about "exile" and "return" in *Los compañeros*, Brodsky again maintains the "remnant" space between experience and representation open for spectators in different social contexts to make meaning through themes such as identity, displacement, language, immigration, or globalization. This contributes to a dynamic relationship to the representations of experience during the military dictatorship in Argentina and its influence on present-day society in both national and transnational contexts.

An interesting effect of the many comments that implicitly refer to the experiences under dictatorship is that it causes the spectators to question the notes that do provide a simple, explicit description of each student with no reference to the dictatorship. There are seven notes in *Los compañeros* that do not evoke any connection to the dictatorship nor the effects that it has had on the present day lives of the students. Four of the notes discuss the present-day occupations of the students: "Carlos es diseñador gráfico," "Martín es tenista y dentista," "Silvia es muy alta, como siempre. Es

fisioterapeuta," and "Gabriel se dedica a la producción audiovisual;" two notes refer to family: "Alicia tiene un montón de hijos" and "Etel se casó con el novio del Cole y sus hijos ya son alumnos de nuevo;" and one comment refers to both: "Silvana cuenta cosas de sus hijos y labura en la ORT."<sup>77</sup> The lack of any allusion whatsoever to the dictatorship in the notes that Brodsky wrote about these students causes spectators who are expecting to see explicit or implicit references to suffering or exile to pause and reconsider the comments. When it becomes apparent upon the second or third reading that these notes do not refer to the dictatorship, the viewers begin to question why these individuals were not affected by the military regime like the others. Did they or their families support the military government? Were they not involved with the political battles of this time period, choosing instead to focus on their daily routines? Were they against the dictatorship, but did not personally suffer from its repression? Why did Brodsky choose to only include this information about these students, or was this the only information that they provided to him? Is this lack of discussion about the effects of the dictatorship reflective of the institutionalized forgetting and reconciliation in postdictatorial Argentina and its influence on those who suffered during the dictatorship? Do these students only want to forget about the traumas and political battles of the past in order to focus on the present and the future (a passive forgetting that ignores the influence of the past on lived experience in the present)? These are some of the questions that may occur for spectators as they engage *Los compañeros* and place each note in

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<sup>77</sup> ORT is a transnational educational charity organization supporting Jewish causes, yet another reference to Jewish identity that certain spectators would immediately connect with, while others (such as myself) may need to research to find out what the initials stand for.

dialogue with their interpretations of the other comments written by Brodsky on the enlarged class-photograph.<sup>78</sup>

While the majority of Brodsky's comments portray his classmates in a positive light, or at least neutrally, the note that the photographer writes about Silvia calls the spectators' attention for its direct criticism of a student for not wanting to participate in the project. "Silvia no quiere saber nada de todos nosotros. ¿Por que será?" Placed within the context of the other comments written on *Los compañeros*, viewers may infer that Silvia did not want to participate in Brodsky's project because she or her family supported the military regime, which would provoke either critical or supportive reactions based upon the political affiliation and personal experience of the spectators. Other viewers may interpret that Silvia suffered during the dictatorship and was not yet ready to confront the trauma of her past, which would evoke personal reflections on "unnarratable" pasts that they themselves may be unable to engage. Or maybe she just didn't care about her classmates from nearly 30 years ago, as many of us who refuse to go to class reunions feel, and merely did not want to participate in Brodsky's project.<sup>79</sup> Regardless, we can observe Brodsky's attempt to influence the interpretation of the exhibit through his subtle critique of those who did not fully cooperate with his project. Here we note that while the photograph opens a space for multiple connections to be

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<sup>78</sup> One of these questions is answered in the *Buena Memoria / Good Memory* book, as Brodsky confirms Martín's support for the military dictatorship "Los daguerrotipos de su tatarabuelo en campaña militar lo distinguen de nosotros, sus compañeros [...] Su pensamiento es conservador como el de su abuelo. Pero podemos ser nosotros mismos y comunicarnos con él gracias a que crecimos juntos y a la camaradería del Colegio" (Brodsky *BM* 29). Brodsky's ability to consider Martín a friend despite their political differences is emblematic of the lack of militant ideology present in *Los compañeros* and the focus on the "emotional" element of the influences of the dictatorship on the present.

<sup>79</sup> No additional information on Silvia is included in the *Buena Memoria / Good Memory* book, which further raises questions for the spectators.

made to the experience of the dictatorship, Brodsky's work is articulated as a critique of the acts of state violence committed by the military regime and the "residual" effects that these actions have on present day society. This allows us to see the "constructedness" of the narrative presented in *Los compañeros*, as Brodsky selected what phrases to write about each student, what information to include or not to include in his comments, and the way that he wanted to portray each student and the group as a whole. As a result, some of the "narrative silences" created by his work can also evoke critical reactions by the spectators, and they deserve consideration.

In considering the possible ways that spectators can negatively to some of the "narrative silences" produced by the photograph, it is important to recognize the symbolism of the *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires*, which is the most prestigious secondary school in Argentina and is typically attended by well-educated students from wealthy families. The representation of the experiences of students from the *CNBA* in the image inherently elides the stories of "other" students whose experiences during the military dictatorship are often excluded from or appropriated by the traditional "testimonial" narratives about the dictatorship. This leads to a similar situation as the *ADNB* exhibit, where the experiences of certain "privileged" individuals during the military regime (intellectuals, students, activists, artists) tend to frame discussions of this time period. In terms of spectatorship, this could lead to "resistant" readings of Brodsky's work by those who consider the students of the *CNBA* to be "privileged" elites. For example, the majority of students who attended the *CNBA* came from families who had the political connections and financial capacity to escape the dictatorship through exile if

they chose to do so, whereas the majority of the Argentine population were unable to do this. This may evoke a feeling of resentment for some spectators, who may perceive a special status conferred upon the experience of these students compared to their own inability to flee Argentina during the dictatorship due to a lack of funding or political capital.

Brodsky was of course drawing from his own personal experience in creating *Los compañeros*, just as testimonials by those associated with the militant left were articulating their personal experiences during the military regime, although through a more openly ideological lens than Brodsky. Yet these "privileged" experiences seem to be the only ones that are circulated in the postdictatorship, which inherently excludes "other" experiences of students during the military regime. The memories of life under the dictatorship of students in poorer sections of the city do not have the same cultural capital as Brodsky's "memory art" to contribute to the typical memory narratives offered about this time period, and they are thus "inclusively excluded" (Agamben) within the representation of "student" in works such as *Los compañeros*.<sup>80</sup> For the spectators who do not recognize the "elite" status of the *CNBA*, the image may serve to represent the experiences of all students during this time period, whereas those viewers who perceive Brodsky's classmates as "privileged" may have a more critical interpretation of the image.

We can observe another example of possible "misinterpretations" of *Los compañeros* through the interventions that Brodsky makes about the two students of

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<sup>80</sup> We can also consider the fact that *Los compañeros* has been presented hundreds of times as part of larger photographic exhibitions and, based on the evidence that I have seen in my research until now, Brodsky has made no attempt to include "other" students within his "memory art".

Asian descent that appear in the class picture. On one student Brodsky wrote "María Teresa mentía, pero nadie le creía nada. Vive" and drew an "oriental" symbol on her image (Brodsky *BM* 46). On the other student, he simply drew another "oriental" symbol - no name and no note - and the symbol itself seems to have originated as a question mark, pointing to the possibility that Brodsky may not have remembered the student's name. By drawing these "oriental" symbols in black ink (the only time that black is used on the intervened image) on the only two students of Asian descent in the class photo, Brodsky draws the spectators attention to their "difference" from the other students in the class and maintains their status as "other" in the present. His comment about María Teresa paints her both as a "liar" and as someone to whom "nobody" paid attention, and then only mentions that she is "alive."

The representation of the other student with only an "oriental" symbol places her as a nameless subject, "inclusively excluded" by Brodsky in both the past and the present, which in a way causes her to be representative of the "remnant" experiences that do not enter into the narrative offered by *Los compañeros*. While Brodsky does inform us that the student's name is Eugenia in *Buena Memoria / Good Memory*, he also continues to "orientalize" her (Said) by describing her present-day work as a massage therapist as "siguiendo una técnica oriental" and explaining that the elderly from "pueblos del interior" go by the busload to her office to be soothed by "la magia de sus manos" (Brodsky *BM* 47). Here, Brodsky continues to constitute Eugenia as "other," describing her work as "magic" and hinting that only people from the "interior" (read "uneducated") utilize her services. This presents an interesting dynamic in terms of spectatorship, where

those of Asian descent might initially identify with María Teresa and Eugenia upon looking at the image, but then may become critical of Brodsky's portrayal of these students as "other," particularly in international contexts where spectators may be more acutely aware of political "correctness" in the representation of race.<sup>81</sup>

While they may not represent the experiences of students in less prestigious schools in Buenos Aires, we can see traces of "other" narratives in *Los compañeros* through the 6 students about whom Brodsky did not write phrases. Three nameless students are simply labeled as "vive" in the image, and no further explanation of their lives appears in *Buena Memoria / Good Memoria*, creating similar questions for the spectators as the comments written about Silvia that I previously mentioned. By simply writing "vive" for these students, Brodsky barely acknowledges their existence in the present, and doesn't even offer them the same type of subjective agency as Silvia, who at least appears as having made the decision to not participate in the project. The "absent" representation of these students is augmented when compared to a fourth student, Néstor, for whom Brodsky simply wrote, "Néstor está localizado". While this phrase also does not provide information about the present, in *Buena Memoria / Good Memory* Brodsky explains that Néstor "Fue uno de los últimos en venir a las reuniones: según dijo, tenía miedo" (Brodsky *BM* 33), which at least provides an explanation as to why information about his life was not included in *Los compañeros*.

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<sup>81</sup> In *Buena Memoria / Good Memory*, Brodsky includes an image of a current student of Asian descent at the CNBA "reflected" right next to María Teresa and Eugenia. While the photographer may have intended to show a connection between the past and the present in *Los compañeros*, one could argue that this merely reinforces the "otherness" of both the students in the picture and the young spectator by grouping them together apart from the other students in the image.

The inability to connect the past with the present life of the three students labeled as "vive" creates a similar feeling of "absent-presence" for the viewer as the images of the two "disappeared" students. Yet the lack of explanation about the lives of these students was not a result of the impossibility to narrate their lives in the present due to death, which causes the spectators to wonder about these "subaltern" subjects. While the exclusion of these students by the photographer may have been for any number of reasons (privacy, support for military regime, personal relationship with Brodsky, etc.) the lack of information about their lives causes the spectators to reflect upon Brodsky's role as mediator in the representation of experience of the students in the class photo. This may influence them to re-visit the other comments written on the image, and question the way that Brodsky represented each student within his constructed memory narrative. Yet, despite these possible "resistant readings" of the narrative silences presented in *Los compañeros*, the gaps in representation of experience force the viewer to actively engage these "remnant" spaces to make meaning. The spectator draws upon individual experiences with school, psychological problems, exile, suffering, or "disappearance" while interpreting the image, which provides momentary glimpses and connections to the effects of the military dictatorship in Argentina.

### **Conclusion**

As I have argued throughout this chapter, Marcelo Brodsky's aesthetic intervention on an "official" school picture, and the exhibition of *Los compañeros* in various social contexts, produces multiple possible meanings for the image and creates different ways for viewers to connect with the experience of authoritarian regimes, in

Argentina or elsewhere. By enlarging the image and writing phrases about the individual lives of his classmates, Brodsky dislocates the image from its "scientific use" as a static archive of a moment in the past and transforms it into an aesthetic photograph that articulates a dynamic movement between the past and the present. The exhibition of the image in different national and transnational contexts allow spectators to make connections to the image based on multiple, and often contradictory identifications and identities. While Brodsky clearly intends the photograph as a critique of the dictatorship and the effect that it has had on Argentine society, he does not attempt to articulate a totalizing, counter-narrative to the version of the past offered by the military in the same way as the *ADNB* exhibit. Instead, Brodsky maintains the inherent gaps in the representation of experience through language and forces the viewer to engage these narrative silences in order to make meaning. By not explicitly narrating the experience of each student, Brodsky's artistic modification of the photograph creates the conditions of possibility for making multiple, individual connections to a dynamic cultural memory about the military dictatorship and the effects that it has had on lived experience in present-day society.

In *Los compañeros*, Brodsky transforms a "ruin" of the dictatorial past into a way to reflect upon the "residual" effects of the military regime on present day society, activating memory in connection with social use in the present as opposed to offering a static representation of a moment in the past. By focusing on the human or "emotional" element of those who suffered during the dictatorship, Brodsky rejects participating within the discursive logic of memory of the postdictatorship that commonly frames the

way that this time period is discussed today. While spectators note Brodsky's intent to articulate a critique of the violence of the military regime and the effects that it has had on society, he does not idealize the activities of the armed-left nor attempt to appropriate "los desaparecidos" as symbols within a totalizing political discourse. In this way, *Los compañeros* is representative of Benjamin's concept of "refractory art," creating a space to think critically about the effects of military dictatorship while rejecting the dominant system of meaning that determines the "appropriate" way to talk about this time period. The multiple narrative silences produced by *Los compañeros*, either through the implicit references to the dictatorship or the students whose present-day lives do not enter into Brodsky's narrative, are representative of traces of experience that are typically excluded from the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship. The impossibility to incorporate these "allogical" memories within the (counter)hegemonic discourses of the militant left and supporters of the military regime is a key element of Brazilian author Beatriz Bracher's 2004 novel *Não falei*, to which I now turn.

## CHAPTER IV

ALLOGICAL MEMORY: THE TRANSGRESSION OF TRADITIONAL MEMORY  
DISCOURSES ABOUT MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN BEATRIZ BRACHER'S  
*NÃO FALEI*

In her 2004 novel *Não falei*, Beatriz Bracher<sup>82</sup> constructs a complex narrative that explores the connections between memories of Brazil's most recent military dictatorship (1964-1985) and its influence on present-day society. The story is narrated by a professor who is retiring after many years of teaching in the public school system and at the university, and is in the process of moving from his family's home in São Paulo to the smaller community of São Carlos. The professor, whose name, Gustavo, isn't revealed until the end of the novel, is asked by a student (Cecília) to be interviewed about his experience during the dictatorship, which sparks a fragmented narrative that constantly jumps between Gustavo's memories and his present situation. Gustavo also engages contradictory memories of his family members presented through excerpts of journals, letters, and his brother's autobiographical novel, and often enters into lengthy digressions on language and the education system in Brazil, which further disrupt the narrative structure of his recollections of the past.

Gustavo, who was not part of the militant left during the dictatorship, was tortured by DEOPS<sup>83</sup> agents in order to obtain information about his brother-in-law, Armando, a

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<sup>82</sup> Bracher is a relatively new Brazilian author located in São Paulo. She has written 2 other novels *Azul e dura* (2002) and *Antônio* (2007), and has contributed to two screenplays of films by Brazilian writer/director Sergio Bianchi - *Cronicamente Inviável* (2000) and *Os Inquilinos* (2009).

<sup>83</sup> In the novel, the term DOPS (Departamento de Ordem Político e Social) is used instead of DEOPS (Departamento Estadual de Ordem Político e Social). In my research I found that the two terms are often used interchangeably, regardless if the word "state" (estadual) appears in the description or not. As a matter of continuity with chapter 2, I will use DEOPS in this chapter as well.

leader of the armed-left that sought a revolutionary overthrow of the military regime. He declares multiple times in the novel that he did not provide any information to his torturers about his wife's brother, reflecting the title of the novel. However, Armando was captured and killed on the same day that Gustavo was released from prison, leading family members and friends to suspect that he had "betrayed" Armando under torture, which plays an important role in the reflective meta-narratives articulated by the professor. As the story develops, readers learn that the narrator's wife, Eliana, died in exile while he was in prison, and we perceive that the doubt as to whether she believed that her husband had "betrayed" her brother haunts Gustavo, as he haltingly attempts to come to terms with his past and consider the effects that it has had on his life.

In this chapter I focus on the ways that Bracher's narrative both critiques and elides what I have called the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship, constituted by the (counter)hegemonic discourses of the militant left and the military regime. First I explore the ways that Gustavo's memory discourse serves to fracture the idealized vision of a united left "resisting" the dictatorship by questioning the "logic" that guided political militants (and particularly the armed revolutionary groups) during that time period. Next, I examine Bracher's exploration of the theme of "betrayal" in the novel and how Gustavo's narrative serves to de-mythify Armando as a revolutionary "hero," while at the same time offering a fragmented account of the violence that he endured from the military regime. This serves to deconstruct the hero/victim discourse described by Idelber Avelar and Nelly Richard, offering a memory narrative in a language that resists appropriation within the established discursive regime of the

postdictatorship. I then examine the intersubjective nature of Gustavo's memory discourse, as his narrative interacts with the memories offered by his family members. This contributes to the constantly negotiated site of memory presented in the novel that problematizes the idea of "truth" and creates a space for readers to actively engage the inherent fissures of representation in order to make meaning. I close by examining Gustavo's realization of the "impossibility" to communicate his experiences to others, not only because of the inherent gaps in meaning that accompany any representation of experience, but because he realizes that his narrative is outside of the postdictatorial discursive logic of memory. I conclude that Gustavo's memory discourse is "allogical" (drawing from Alberto Moreiras' discussion of the concept of atopics) and thus offers an opportunity for a new way to engage the dictatorial past and reflect upon the influence that it has had on present-day society.

### **Fracturing the Discursive Logic of Memory in the Postdictatorship**

"Lígia diz que agora é diferente, chegamos ao poder. Chegamos quem, minha filha?" (NF 48)

Beatriz Bracher's *Não falei* produces a memory narrative that elides the constitutive logic of memory in postdictatorial Brazil by critically exploring residual experiences of the past that are often excluded from the dominant memory narratives about this time period. This is exemplified through Gustavo's recognition of the "accepted" discursive system of meaning that guides the way to talk about the dictatorial past today. "E há uma história em andamento, seus vícios e desvios resultantes de batalhas antigas, hoje já sem sentido, mas que a linguagem continua a carregar nos nomes que somos obrigados a utilizar se queremos de fato incluir nosso pensamento na cadeia

comum" (*NF* 77). Through these comments we can observe Gustavo's realization that in order for his memory narrative to be "understood" within common social discourse, he must articulate his experiences from within what I have been calling the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship. Here we can draw from Michel Foucault's notion of the *régime of truth* that both produces subjects *and* subjects them to the dominant discourse in the production of knowledge. The language associated with the "antiquated battles" of the past between the militant left and the military regime continues to control the way that the dictatorial past is to be discussed, and Gustavo is *subjected to* this discursive system if he wants to locate his experience within the collective social narrative about this time period.

The narrator critically reflects upon this situation throughout the novel while articulating his "residual" experiences in a way that disrupts the (counter)hegemonic memory narratives about the dictatorship. An important way that Gustavo's narrative contributes to this is by fragmenting the idealized counter-memory of "united resistance" to the military regime in the name of democracy that is still articulated by the militant left, reflected in the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit that I examined in chapter two. Gustavo continuously questions the totalizing "logic" of the militant left, and particularly armed revolutionary groups (who were more radical in their ideological convictions), as he articulates his own fragmented memories about the dictatorship. This is most clearly demonstrated in the novel through the contrast between Gustavo and Armando, both of whom "resisted" the dictatorship but from alternative perspectives and with different goals in mind for the future of Brazil:

Não enxergava os militares como adversários, mas inimigos, isso fez toda diferença. Éramos habitantes de universos distintos, sem comunicação ou origem comum. Não havia pontos de contato, apenas de atrito. Louco assim mesmo, incoerente, sem lógica, [...] mas era assim que enxergava a coisa e por isso não me preparei. Armando tinha a mesma lógica dos militares, aceitava a idéia de uma guerra. (NF 112)

Here, Gustavo notes that he did not view the military and DEOPS personnel as "adversaries" participating in a battle for power within a shared system of meaning. For him, the military personnel who tortured him were more like an alien "enemy" from a different universe; he did not understand their "logic," but he physically and psychologically suffered from their actions. Gustavo had a vision for social change and he did not agree with the repressive policies of the military regime, just like the militant left, which is why he was able to consider the military as a common "enemy." However, Gustavo's perception of the conflict was articulated within a different discursive register, outside of the logic of "war" that was shared by both the military regime and the militant left, and for that reason he wasn't prepared for the violent experience that he endured while imprisoned. Armando on the other hand, representative of the armed-left, did see the military as adversaries, competing against them within the same logic articulated by the military regime. For this reason, Gustavo considered Armando as an "adversary" of the military, as he agreed to the rules through which their "battle for the nation" was to be played out, including the use of violence at all costs. In this way, while they shared a common enemy, Armando's approach to social change was just as "alien" to Gustavo as

the military's violent repression. This serves to fracture the idea of a monolithic "resistance" to the military regime and problematize the idealized memory narratives of a "unified" left often produced in the postdictatorship.

Gustavo offers another interesting contrast between his approach to social change and that of the armed "organizations" like the one led by Armando earlier in the novel:

Não fui um revolucionário, não participei de seu entusiasmo, nunca tive o lume de um inimigo certo. Meu ânimo era grande, iríamos mudar muito mais do que o mundo, os homens, cada um por seu caminho e estávamos juntos mesmo que eu não fosse capaz da mesma trincheira vigorosa dos movimentos. Movimento, na verdade não era sempre esse o nome das coisas. Os da luta armada diziam organização, fechavam-se. (*NF* 71)

Gustavo explains that while he did not consider himself to be a "revolutionary," he shared much of the same idealism as the armed organizations. Here we also note his contention that everyone could contribute "in their own way" to the cause of social change, without being tied to the totalizing beliefs held by many integrants of the militant left. His contrast between the "openness" of the word "movement" and the "closed" nature of the term "organization" is important here, as it reflects this criticism of the totalitarian nature of the militant left (and especially the armed organizations) that Gustavo repeats throughout his narrative. He continues to describe the ways that he "participated" in the movement for social change, "mais comunzinho, dar aulas, estudar, criar família" (*NF* 72), while noting that his classes were "inflammatory" and that he participated in student politics, student congresses and study groups, and academic centers. This marks a stark

contrast with the idealized vision of student activism portrayed in the *ADNB* exhibit, with students marching in the streets in defiant "resistance" to the repression of the military regime.

Gustavo's comment that he did not have an image of a "true" enemy in the first part of the quote above may seem to contradict his remarks about the military being a common "enemy," albeit an "alien" one for him. However, this in fact exposes another difference between Gustavo's vision of social change and the idealized figures of "students" fighting the repression of the military regime often articulated by the militant left. Gustavo mentions that he also wrote "violent articles" and was in charge of the union newspaper of the Natural Sciences at that time, "(quando isso? 62, 63? por aí)" (*NF* 72) and then he explains his reference to the lack of a "true" enemy:

Falei sobre o lume de um inimigo. Já existiam, os inimigos, antes de 64, os burgueses, a miséria, o capitalismo, a ignorância, a opressão, mas eu podia com sinceridade entender [...] que esses antagonistas nos habitavam e a luta era travada dentro de cada um de nos, construir uma vida nova para o novo mundo. (*NF* 72)

By referencing the time frame prior to the military coup (1964), Gustavo marks himself as *older* than the figures typically associated with the militant left, often placed in the context of the late 1960's (with 1968 being the most emblematic), who for Gustavo represented the younger generation of students that he was teaching at that time.<sup>84</sup> More importantly, he notes that these social problems ("misery," "ignorance," "oppression,"

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<sup>84</sup> Within the novel, Gustavo is captured, tortured, and released in 1970, almost 10 years after his time as a student in the early 1960's.

etc.) already existed as part of the inequalities in Brazil's social structure *before* the military coup. So for Gustavo, there were in fact a whole series of "social enemies" that he intended to combat in his day-to-day activities in order to "build a new life," which dislocates the military regime as *the* "enemy" for all those who were involved politically during this time period.<sup>85</sup>

Another piece of the "logic" of the younger generation of the militant left that Gustavo did not understand was their use of culture as ideology, exemplified through his reflections on his conversations with the 18 and 20 year olds who were in prison with him while he was 30 years old:

Lá, como agora, eu era um estrangeiro [...] Sim, eu acompanhara os festivais e conhecia as músicas, meus cabelos não eram curtos. Como explicar? Ouvira Joyce<sup>86</sup>, seu proselitismo cultural, mas não atinara que pudesse haver verdade. Música, cabelos, roupas e sexo como uma forma de ideologia e não de cultura. Aquilo era esquisito, cativante, poderoso e excludente. Eu não entendia. (NF 122)

Here we note a critique of the idealized representation of artists in "resisting" the repression of the dictatorship through their music and lyrics, similar to my evaluation of

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<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, these are the "enemy figures" that the militant left sought to battle prior to the dictatorship that are often displaced by the idealized vision of "resistance" to the military regime in memory narratives about this time period today, as I mentioned in chapter two.

<sup>86</sup> Readers can observe a double meaning of the name Joyce here: they could connect it to the young female singer who arrived on the cultural scene in 1968/1969 and whose music is often evoked in the same vein as Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil as representative of artists who "resisted" the dictatorship (which, as I explained in chapter 2, can be problematic). The name most likely refers to a character in the novel who was a member of the same militant organization as Armando, whose "nome de guerra" was Joyce, who often talked about sexual liberation as part of the "revolution." Either way, both of these figures would serve to represent the critique of "culture as ideology" that Gustavo is making here.

the *ADNB* exhibit in chapter two. However, Gustavo extends this critique to include those who used the transgression of social norms of dress and sexuality as the impetus for political activity, while noting that he himself was the one who was "excluded" for not conflating culture and leftist political ideology in his vision of social change. He also mentions that he feels like a "stranger" again today, reflective of his recognition that his narrative of the era of the dictatorship does not fit into the idealized vision of united "resistance" (which includes this union between culture and militant ideology) that is typically represented in postdictatorial counter-narratives.

This criticism of the "logic" of the armed-left and the conflation of culture and political ideology appear together in Gustavo's most direct rejection of the idea of a "unified" left "resisting" the military dictatorship. In one of the many instances of intertextuality in the novel where the narrator engages song lyrics, literature, philosophy, and other emblematic cultural production, Gustavo is thinking about a song that his mother used to sing ("Cortando pano") while hemming clothes to make some extra money, and lyrics from the song are reproduced in the narrative. Gustavo then connects this song and the work that his mother did to the different possible experiences during the military dictatorship by contradicting the lyrics of Geraldo Vandré's iconic protest hymn *Pra não dizer que não te falei das flores*. "Não, não éramos todos iguais, braços dados ou não, cada um levava sua história no cortar do pano, e flores e armas e amores, não lembro mais qual a importância disso. A vida era sem razão e eu não morreria pela pátria, tampouco pela revolução" (*NF* 145). In the original lyrics, Vandré says that soldiers learn to "morrer pela pátria e viver sem razão" during their military training, and then,

referring to his vision of the "povo" being repressed by the military, the song continues, "Somos todos soldados, Armados ou não [...] Somos todos iguais, Braços dados ou não" (Vandré). When Gustavo says that "we were not all the same" and "had different stories," and that he did not give his life in defense of military regime's notion of "nation" nor for the social revolution called for by the militant left in their vision for Brazil, he disrupts the idealized narrative of united "resistance" to the dictatorship. These comments reflect the overall effect of Gustavo's fragmented memory narrative throughout the novel, eliding the totalizing logic of both discourses by demonstrating that one could be against the repression of the dictatorship without supporting the revolutionary ideology of the militant left. This is particularly true in Gustavo's criticism of the activities of the armed organizations and his deconstruction of "Armando" as a mythic hero of the militant "resistance" to the dictatorship, which I analyze later in this chapter.

In an interview with Beatriz Bracher in São Paulo, she told me that making a distinction between what she termed the "armed revolutionary organizations" and the "democratic movement" was an important piece of her novel, as the two are often conflated in the memory narratives of "united resistance" that ignore the ideological differences of the left during this time period:

Acho que uma coisa que a gente esquece é que as pessoas da luta armada lutavam por um governo comunista, não era uma resistência democrática. Eu acho que esta é outra coisa esquecida, outra coisa que não se fala. A revolução não era o dia-a-dia [...] Acho que esta diferença para mim foi

uma coisa muito importante para fazer, de lembrar que existe espaço destas pessoas que ficaram no Brasil e tiveram um movimento que era "anti" os militares e não "pro" revolução. (Bracher *Interview*)

The idea that the revolutionary idealism offered by the armed-left did not reflect the day-to-day lives of most Brazilians during the dictatorship is another way that Bracher explores the residual experiences left out of the (counter)hegemonic memory discourses of the "esquerda engajada" and the military regime. Much of Gustavo's memory narrative describes the daily lives of his family during this time period, such as his mother sewing clothes to make extra money, as opposed to idealizing the militant activities of Armando. This description of his mother is especially important in that it marks the gendered nature of political militancy - armed guerrilla operations and public demonstrations by students and workers are portrayed as defending the rights of the "povo," while women working within the home are excluded from these representations of "revolutionary ideology." In this way, Gustavo's narrative provides a contrast between the lived-experience of many working-class Brazilians during the dictatorship and the symbol of "worker" often appropriated by both the military government and the typical counter-narratives of "resistance" by the militant left.

For example, Gustavo and his wife, Eliana, who worked as a teacher and nurse respectively, spent the majority of their time working within the day-to-day realities of a school and a hospital, which the narrator marks as a fundamental difference with the idealistic views of "revolution" embodied in Armando. "Por outro lado, convivíamos de perto com loucos e crianças, o que, penso hoje, nos permitia uma visão do mundo onde a

ditadura e a revolução eram menos determinantes do que no coração de nossos amigos" (*NF* 108). For Gustavo (and Eliana), social change came in small doses through interactions with students and patients, seeking to better the lives of others through their daily activities working with concrete individuals. They recognized that the needs of particular groups of people must be solved in specific ways, and that the totalizing vision of "revolution" offered by Armando often excluded the "real" experiences of individuals, which were subsumed within the idealized concept of "povo." Here we can observe a distinction between the day-to-day experiences of most Brazilians during the dictatorship and the idealized discourses about this time period that typically enter into circulation through the postdictatorial "explosion" of memory to which I have previously alluded. While cultural production such as the *ADNB* exhibit conflates the experiences of workers, students, and armed revolutionaries into a mythic discourse of "resistance" to the military regime, Gustavo's memories serve to deconstruct this narrative and articulate "remnant" experiences that are often excluded from discussions about the dictatorship.

The critique of the appropriation of "worker" as a mythic symbol of the militant-left is best represented in the novel through Gustavo's memories of his father, Joaquim. Joaquim was a factory worker who believed that politics were to be used to obtain "simple things," such as better salary or working conditions, and was wary of anybody in power and the institutions that they represented:

Não se empolgou com Jango<sup>87</sup> nem se desesperou com os militares [...] desconfiava de qualquer poderoso e suas instituições [...] Discordava do

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<sup>87</sup> João Goulart, the left-leaning president who was overthrown by the military coup in 1964.

uso do patriotismo, nacionalismo ou internacionalismo, tinha dificuldade mesmo com a união de classe, proletariado, camponeses e operariado. Seu universo era o de trabalhadores, roceiros, colonos, sitiantes, peões, gente da fábrica, funcionários públicos. Não existia campo, mas interior, roça, sítio, fazenda. (NF 92-93)

Here we can contrast the ideological battle between the revolutionary left and the military regime with the experience of workers who sought to use politics to achieve small, tangible improvements in their daily lives. Joaquim's mistrust of anybody in a position of power and his disdain for broad, ideological terms such as "nationalism" and "patriotism" offer an important criticism of the appropriation of "workers" as symbols of the "nation," both by the military regime and the militant left. Joaquim serves to de-mythify the "worker" and disarm politically charged terms such as "proletariat" and "campo," exposing the constructedness of these terms in appropriating an idealized vision of the daily experience of workers within a totalizing ideological narrative.

Gustavo also exposes the continuation of the same ideological battle of the era of the dictatorship in today's social discourse through his reflections on the education system in Brazil. One example is his critique of his ex-student "do Partido," Otávio, for taking the same totalizing approach of an ideological "war" to solving the systemic inequalities of access to public education in present-day Brazil, while contrasting this with his own vision for engaging these problems:

Entendo a lógica de Otávio, as linhas de pensamento organizam-se em trincheiras e vivemos em guerrilhas permanentes. Por essa lógica, já

sabemos tudo de antemão e o dizemos ou não em função das necessidades do combate [...] Não pretendia construir um instrumento de batalha, mas entender de que guerra estávamos falando, ir resolvendo coisas pequenas que nos levariam às grandes [...] Minhas cartas tinham o objetivo de trazer Otávio para dentro das escolas, colocar seu ouvido nas salas de reunião, nos recreios, nas conversas das mães esperando os filhos. (NF 49)

Once again we can observe Gustavo's rejection of the totalizing "logic" maintained by many members of the militant left, many of whom now occupy influential positions in Brazilian government in the postdictatorship. Gustavo criticizes Otávio, who is the new Minister of Education, for offering a plan to solve the inequalities of the education system without first engaging and fully understanding the diverse problems that exist within the schools. Instead, Gustavo argues for tackling these issues from "the bottom up" by first resolving the small, daily problems of individuals, much in the way that he envisioned social change during the dictatorship. Through these comments readers perceive the persistence of a logic typical of traditional left and its cultural manifestations of *Cinema Novo* and *Música de Protesto*, led by such figures as Glauber Rocha, Chico Buarque, and Geraldo Vandré, who proposed to speak for the "povo" while not fully understanding the day-to-day realities of Brazilians outside of their intellectual, university-centered worlds. Gustavo criticizes Otávio for applying the same totalizing vision of "knowing what's best" for the underserved in the Brazilian education system without fully understanding the daily realities of different groups of teachers, students, and parents.

Through his criticism of the "logic" of the militant left and his focus on the daily activities of his family and his own experiences as a teacher, Gustavo's memory narrative fragments the mythic discourse of "united resistance" to the military regime that is often invoked to describe this time period. In this way, Gustavo's narrative points towards what Gareth Williams would call "the other side of the popular," the experiences of the "povo" during the military dictatorship that are often excluded from the idealized appropriations of this term by the militant left (and the military regime). I maintain that this is a conscious effort on Gustavo's part, as he recognizes that the same language used in the "battles of the past" is repeated in both the memory narratives produced about the dictatorship and in confrontations with present-day social issues, such as the education system in Brazil. Yet, fragmenting the representation of a unified-left "resisting" the military regime for the same reasons through the memory narrative of a character who was tortured by the military is only one of the ways that *Não falei* seeks to elide the dominant discursive logic of memory in postdictatorial Brazil, as I explain in the next section.

### **Betrayal, Torture, and "Truth"**

Bracher's exploration of the idea of betrayal and torture in *Não falei* problematizes the mythic figures of "victim" and "hero" that are often offered as symbols of "resistance" to the military regime in the postdictatorship. As Avelar (*The Untimely Present*) and Richard (*The Insubordination of Signs*) maintain, these figures of "victim" and "hero" are often constructed within the same discursive system of meaning consecrated by the military. This ultimately serves to reify the "official" version of the

past by accepting its discourse as "logical," and simply inverting the roles of "good" and "evil" within this hegemonic structure. Both authors contend that a memory narrative that seeks to critically engage the experiences of the dictatorship "requires another language" (Avelar *TUP* 64) while "avoiding the nostalgia of an anti-dictatorial Symbol" (Richard *TIS* 21). Gustavo's memory narrative and reflections on betrayal and his torture experience serve to explode the complicit (counter)hegemonic discourses of the militant left and the military regime in postdictatorial Brazil by deconstructing a "heroic" figure of "resistance," while at the same time rejecting appropriation within the established discursive system of memory.

The primary trauma that Gustavo is attempting to overcome in the novel was not that he was tortured, it was the accusatory treatment that he received by his family and friends after being let out of prison because they believed that he "betrayed" Armando to DEOPS. As Avelar points out, the expectation of leftist militants to resist torture or face the consequences of being labeled a "traitor" and either shunned or punished by the organization draws from the same logic of "macho militarism" (*TUP* 67) employed by the military regime. This is an important element of Bracher's novel, as she wanted to expose both these expectations to "resist" and the violent punishments that those who did "talk" under torture received from their supposed "companheiros." "É um pouco também a idéia de que quando você tem um ideal muito messiânico e esta idéia de missão, você deixa muito, e isso a gente sabe que aconteceu de matarem companheiros por achar os companheiros trairem" (Bracher *Interview*). Her description of the "messianic" ideals of the armed left is key here, as the violence employed by these organizations against their

own members does not correspond with the struggle for democratic values in which these groups are included in the *ADNB* exhibit. In his memory narrative, Gustavo reproduces a comment by Francisco Augusto, a friend who set his broken bones after leaving prison, that reflects this dilemma: "Tem um lado diabólico na resistência. Sobre-humano. Não é humano resistir. Quase um prazer. Esse lado heróico. Você entrou numa dimensão alucinada, louca, do heroísmo na resistência à tortura" (*NF* 125). By describing resistance to torture as a "crazy," "hallucinatory," and "inhuman," Francisco's comments challenge the idealized heroism attributed to "resistance" by the militant left, placing this belief within the same discursive system consecrated by the military regime.

Bracher further problematizes the idealized hero/victim discourse through Gustavo's inability to comprehend the logic of "macho militarism" accepted by the revolutionary left. "Eu não havia sido treinado para a cadeia especial, não fizera parte das organizações e tive que adivinhar o discurso correto" (*NF* 77-8). The professor acted like he thought that he was supposed to in order to protect his brother-in-law, enduring torture and not "giving up" Armando, but afterwards he is treated by his family and friends as if had talked. "Fui torturado, dizem que denunciei um companheiro que morreu logo depois nas balas dos militares. Não denunciei, quase morri na sala em que teria denunciado, mas não falei. Falaram que falei e Armando morreu" (*NF* 8). This sparks multiple reflective metanarratives about betrayal in the novel that serve as an indictment of the armed-left and their complicit participation in the logic of "war" ascribed to by the military regime. At first, Gustavo's reflections on betrayal and culpability seem to absolve both him and Armando, arguing that the men who tortured him and killed

Armando were the "visible" and "unquestionable" cause of their suffering, which initially repeats the discourse of symbolic victim/hero of the dictatorship alluded to by Avelar and Richard:

Armando fora entregue por minha causa, não por minha boca, mas isso não fazia diferença [...] E provavelmente fui preso por sua causa. E nessas causas todas esquecíamos a causa visível e incontestável, os homens que foram à minha casa e me prenderam, os homens que foram ao seu refúgio e o mataram. Militares, agentes da repressão, Operação Bandeirantes, os porões dos poderes constituídos (*NF 117*)

However, as Gustavo continues to reflect on the meaning of betrayal, he returns to questioning the logic of the revolutionary left, shifting the cause for the "suffering," and "betrayal" endured by those who were tortured to the rigid belief in the same logic of "war" as the military:

Não, eles não eram a causa de traições e mortes, de humilhações e sofrimentos, de suicídios e enlouquecimento, pois eles eram os inimigos, estavam em seu papel. Eu mesmo, que não chegara a constituir-me como inimigo de ninguém, pensava assim. E procurava as causas nas entranhas, minhas e de meu amigo, nos meandros de um movimento cuja lógica eu não entendia. (*NF 118*)

Here, Gustavo destabilizes the victim/torturer discourse that remains prevalent in postdictatorial societies by placing some of the blame on the shared adherence to "macho militarism." In this way, Gustavo's narrative offers a more complex representation of

torture than offered in the cultural production criticized by Avelar and Richard for merely reiterating the accepted discursive language of the postdictatorship, such as Miguel Bonasso's *Recuerdo de la muerte* and Ariel Dorfman's *La muerte y la doncella*.<sup>88</sup>

The novel culminates with Gustavo blaming Armando for his capture and torture and Eliana's exile and death, which further dislocates the victim/hero narrative by exposing a contradiction between individual memories and collective discourse in the postdictatorship. While Gustavo maintains that he resisted torture and did not divulge information about Armando, a heroic act in the discourse articulated by the militant left, he became a symbol of "betrayal" in the collective narrative of his family and friends because he was perceived to have "given up" Armando. Conversely, while Gustavo considers him a traitor for having exposed his family to torture, exile, and death, Armando is collectively held up as a mythic, heroic figure for having sacrificed his life in the name of his revolutionary ideals. We can observe this contradiction through Gustavo's memories of a conversation with Armando's wife, Luiza, after he was released from prison. "Luiza aconselhou-me resistência revolucionária [...] apesar de Armando você continua um dos nossos, nem todos resistem, mesmo os mais fortes, Eliana morreu sem saber, não se preocupe" (*NF* 8). In these comments by Luiza, we note the language of both "Christian forgiveness" and the "macho militarism" associated with the

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<sup>88</sup> It is also interesting to note here that Gustavo says that he was not an "enemy" of anybody, which contradicts his earlier comments about viewing the military as an "enemy," but not as an "adversary." This points to the dynamic nature of memory, which is constantly undergoing negotiations of meaning and interpretation that can even cause representations of a personal experience to change. This instability of memory is an important aspect of *Não falei*, and I examine it in detail later in this chapter.

"revolutionary resistance" described by Avelar, as she notes that while Gustavo "failed" to resist under torture, he was still "one of us."

The end of these comments by Luiza is important as, she invokes Gustavo's wife, Eliana, who left to Paris in exile after Gustavo was imprisoned, where she later died of pneumonia. Luiza attempts to make Gustavo feel better by telling him that Eliana died without knowing that he had "betrayed" her brother Armando. Gustavo returns to this comment later in the novel, offering a direct rejection of the belief by his family and friends that he had betrayed Armando:

Eu não matei Armando. Eliana, eu não falei, está ouvindo, minha pequena, minha essencial, eu não falei. Mas então eu nem sabia que esta hipótese pairava em minha mulher. Como podia imaginar? Eu não falei, e é como se tivesse falado [...] E agora eu vou falar com uma moça Cecília que não te conheceu. (*NF* 107)

These comments are key on two levels. First, they are directed towards Eliana, the only person to whom Gustavo really wants to explain that he did not "give up" Armando, but he is unable to because she is dead. In fact, the "absent-presence" of Eliana appears throughout Gustavo's memory narrative, and the readers can sense that while he is responding to the interview request of Cecília, his words are actually directed towards Eliana. Second, by reiterating that he did not provide information to his torturers about Armando, but yet the collective perception is that he did, these comments accentuate the inability of the established discursive logic of the postdictatorship to explore the complexities and residual experiences that do not fit within the totalizing hero/victim

narrative. In criticizing this "logic," Gustavo is able to transfer the blame for his torture and Eliana's death to Armando, "Armando nos expôs ao perigo" (*NF* 113), which fragments the mythic image often created about armed militants who died at the hands of the military regime.

Armando's image as an idealized "hero" is further fractured in the novel through multiple comments by Gustavo such as "Veja bem, veja bem, diria Armando antes de começar a mentir" (*NF* 59) or "Uma das diversas namoradas simultâneas de Armando" (*NF* 42). These comments about Armando's life outside of his political militancy serve to "de-ideologize" Armando, transforming him from a "martyr" who gave his life for the revolution to a human being with faults. The iconic image of "revolutionary idealism" is most strongly shattered through Joaquim's indictment of Armando in a conversation with Gustavo - the only "clear" memory of the 1970's that remains for the narrator. "Gustavo, ele diz, Armando colheu a morte que plantou. Pausa. Levou junto a irmã e a mãe" (*NF* 146). Joaquim's position as a "de-mythified worker" in the novel makes his criticism of Armando particularly poignant, separating the actions of the armed organizations from other organized groups on the left who "resisted" the dictatorship through non-violent means. This critique of the mythic construction of "revolutionary heroes" also recalls Nelida Piñon's short story "O jardim das oliveiras" (1979), where the narrator criticizes both the militant left and the military regime for appropriating those who underwent torture as symbolic "victims/heroes" or "subversives/enemies" under totalizing discourses of "war" for the "nation" in Brazil. *Não falei* offers the same critical reflection in the

postdictatorship, problematizing the (counter)hegemonic narratives that dominate the way that the dictatorship is typically talked about today.

While Gustavo's memory discourse exposes fissures in the idealized victim/hero narrative of resistance to the military dictatorship, the fact that Gustavo was not part of the armed, revolutionary organization and yet was still tortured by DEOPS also disrupts the justification often cited by the military that they tortured in order to "defend the nation from armed, communist subversion." Gustavo's fragmented narration of his torture experience and the physical and mental effects that it had on his life exposes the violence used by military regime, which prevents the appropriation of his criticisms of the militant left within the memory narrative typically offered by supporters of the military government. Unlike the testimonial representation of torture experiences that use the same language as the military, Gustavo's narrative utilizes a "babbling" language (reflective of the inherent fissures of representation that are augmented in cases of torture) that does not explicitly offer a counter-narrative "truth" about the past, forcing the readers to engage the "silences" in Gustavo's testimony in order to make meaning:

O prazer de bater, o rosto dos homens, sangue, apanhar, a risada, um teatro, vômito, aquela luz balançando, o cansaço dos homens que batem, o suor deles, a barriga branca que aparece sob a blusa azul amarfanhada, o nariz com cravos, os meus gemidos, seus dentes tortos, o meu teatro, não agüentar mais, o medo de morrer, chorar e tentar não enxergar o que vi, não entender o que via, esquecer. Éramos todos homens, impossível apagar de meus neurônios essa informação. Éramos homens. (*NF* 121)

Here, Gustavo articulates fragments of his memories of being tortured, "remnants" that evoke images of the experience (e.g. sweat, blood, laughter, vomit, fear) without narrativizing them within the logic of "heroic resistance" to the physical and mental violence to which he was subjected by his torturers. The fragmented narration of his torture experience reflects the impossibility to fully represent trauma through language, while at the same time recognizing the need to confront this experience in order to engage in an "active forgetting" of the past through an alternative language that remains "on guard against narratives that all too easily put things into place" (Avelar *LOV* 47).

In this passage, Gustavo also reflects upon what Brett Levinson would call the "limit-experience" of torture, maintaining that he "did not understand what he saw" and expressing his incredulity at how this experience were possible if they "were all men." Gustavo invokes the idea of "shame" immediately before this fragmented description of torture as what stayed with him after the experience, and Bracher expertly includes a section of Primo Levi's *The Reawakening* just after Gustavo's "testimony" to connect the shame felt by Gustavo (and implicitly, the readers) towards the "shameless" actions of his torturers to the Holocaust:

a vergonha que os alemães não conheceram, aquela que o justo experimenta ante a culpa cometida por outrem, e que se aflige que persista [...] e que os sinais da ofensa permaneceriam em nós para sempre, nas recordações de quem a tudo assistiu, e nos lugares onde ocorreu, e nas histórias que iríamos contar.

(*NF* 121-22, quoted from Levi)

As I mentioned previously in my discussion of Marcelo Brodsky's photography, invoking the experience of the Holocaust as a way to analyze state violence committed by military regimes in the Southern Cone has become a common trope in postdictatorial cultural criticism. In this case, Bracher's comparison between the Nazis and those that tortured during the Brazilian dictatorship offers a strong indictment of the violence committed by the military regime as "inhumane acts" that fall outside of the justification of "defending the nation from subversion." Yet, drawing from the Holocaust as critical base for analyzing the violence of the dictatorships in the Southern Cone does NOT signify equating the experience of genocide based on racial difference during the Holocaust to the torture and "disappearance" of citizens based on political or ideological differences during the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. Bracher seems to be conscious of this tenuous connection between the Holocaust and the military dictatorship in the construction of her narrative, as Gustavo feels "disconcerted" at being admired by young people for having survived this "limit-experience" of torture, arguing that, "Os militares não eram alemães, Cecília, e nunca fui judeu" (*NF* 126). This reflects Andreas Huyssen's warning to not conflate the experience of the Holocaust with the use of the "global Holocaust discourse" as an analytical lens for similar experiences in the 20th century, as this risks preventing meaningful engagement with a "local" traumatic experience.

Gustavo's narration of the mental and physical effects that the torture experience has had on his life further demonstrate how his memory discourse resists appropriation by the "official" policy of "forgetting" and reconciliation called for as part of the transition to democracy. Upon leaving prison, Gustavo notes the broken bones, the

deafness in his right ear, and two missing teeth that resulted from his torture, and that he was scared to pick up his daughter Lígia out of fear that he might hurt her "Meus dedos estavam meio tortos, ficava com medo de deixá-la cair no chão" (*NF* 141). Apart from the physical effects of torture on his body, the mental effects of this traumatic experience appear throughout the novel as well, as the memory of the torture experience keeps "flashing up" in connection with his activities in the present. For example, Gustavo compares his retirement from teaching and his pending move out of his childhood home to the moment when he was released from prison, a momentary suspension between his past experience and his impending future that evokes the same feeling of "emptiness" that he felt immediately following his torture experience, "[...] mergulhado num vazio que ecoa o que conheci ao sair da prisão. Sem o desespero de então, mas ainda assim, triste. Naquele momento, como agora, o mundo perdera a nitidez e me sentia tateando para reencontrar meu lugar e uma linha de futuro na qual pudesse me agarrar" (*NF* 83).

The mental effects of Gustavo's torture during the dictatorship are evoked once again when he equates Cecília's interview request about his past to his interrogation by DEOPS personnel. "Os torturadores tinham prazer em bater, mas não batiam por prazer, e sim para coletar informações. [...] aquilo era um trabalho investigativo, coletar informações [...] Essa moça tenta fazer o mesmo" (*NF* 115). This comparison between Gustavo's experience of being tortured and the interview by Cecília offers an interesting connection to Foucault's concept of the "juridico-discursive paradigm" that Avelar

employs in his analysis of *La muerte y la doncella* in *The Letter of Violence*.<sup>89</sup> Avelar argues that for Foucault, a major piece of this discursive structure is "the convergence or collapse between confession and truth" which:

disciplines subjects into speaking in the first person, recounting experience, and thereby producing truth. The figure of the interrogation is key here: Drawing upon the understanding of truth as hidden interiority, the practice of the interrogation is one of the major instances through which subjects are constituted for Foucault. As we have seen, both the metaphor of truth as that-which-is-hidden-and-covered and the scene of confession are heavily gendered. (*LOV* 40)

Applying these ideas to Gustavo's torture experience, he was expected to "confess" to whereabouts of Armando, and DEOPS personnel "penetrated" his "feminized" body in order to discover the "hidden truth" that he was concealing from them.<sup>90</sup> The comparison between this experience and the interview request is intriguing, as Cecília is also attempting to "penetrate" the depths of Gustavo's memory for a nugget of "truth" about his experience during the dictatorship - once again conflating the ideas of testimonial confessions as "truth" about the past.

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<sup>89</sup> Like Richard's critique of this play, Avelar maintains that Dorfman merely inverts the roles of tortured/torturer while participating within the same discursive system consecrated by the military regime. The "truth" about the past is revealed when the female victim of torture during the dictatorship forces her male torturer to "confess" to his crimes by inverting the roles and attempting to "penetrate" his "feminized" body in the present. As I mentioned in chapter two, this also creates a situation where the torturer still controls the "truth" about the past - it is his "confession" and not the victim's accusation that constitutes the torture experience during the dictatorship as "true."

<sup>90</sup> This view of torture as the "penetration" of feminized subjects reflects the gendered aspects of interrogation that Avelar alludes to above.

As I have previously argued, this collapse between testimonial and "truth" is problematic, as there is always a remainder or an excess in the representation of experience through language. Gustavo reflects upon this in the novel, which serves to critique the "juridico-discursive paradigm of modernity" described by Foucault:

Essa entrevista, as cartas-relatórios, os interrogatórios e minhas não-confissões, o que são? [...] Com suas entrevistas saberá mais sobre uma época do que as pessoas que a viveram. Mas, como na tortura, cada um falará o que não o ameace, só o que não torne penso o seu presente.

Porque talvez não seja possível um retorno coletivo ao que já aconteceu, apenas individual. As entrevistas darão a ela apenas os tais elementos de fora, ao alcance das mãos, o comum com o qual cada um foi construindo sua couraça e placenta. (*NF* 115)

At the beginning of this reflection, Gustavo alludes to the way that Cecília will use his "testimony" to continue to accrue more knowledge about the history of the dictatorship, which will allow her to know more about this time period "than the people who lived through it." However, Gustavo then points out that in discussing a traumatic experience, individuals will often construct memory narratives that discuss everything about their past except for the "trauma" that would "threaten" their present lives. Or in other words, the "confession" that is extracted (by the tortures or by Cecília) will inherently contain a lacuna, the inherent fissure in any representation of experience. For this reason, Cecília will only piece together a collective discourse based on what each individual was willing to share with her, while the "unarratable" memories of trauma remain outside of the realm

of possibility of discourse. Through these comments, Gustavo exposes the limits of individual testimony about the dictatorship, as these "real," traumatic experiences are unable to be included in the shared narrative about the past, leaving fragmented residuals that are not transmitted as part of a collective social memory. Through this reflection by Gustavo, Bracher acknowledges the impossibility to fully represent these experiences through language, a theme that she accentuates throughout the narrative as she critically explores the intersubjective (de)construction of memory and "truth" about the past, which I will now examine.

### **The "Constructedness" of Individual and Collective Memory**

"Diferente que José, que procura, assim como dom Casmurro construir um passado que lhe seja dócil ao presente, eu procuro meus erros, vou chutando pedras e desentocando baratas, dando com teias de aranha na cara e indagando a cada marco que resta pomposo [...]" (NF 16).

The narrative structure of *Não falei* reflects both the need and the impossibility to fully represent a past trauma through language by inviting the reader to participate in the narrator's struggle of "memory work" at an individual level. Gustavo rejects the notion of a nostalgic use of memory that does not disturb his present, and attempts to critically reflect upon his past and the influence that it has had on his life by "digging up" and confronting the traumatic experiences that appear throughout his fragmented memories. At the same time, Bracher explores the intersubjective nature of memory by placing Gustavo's individual memory narrative in dialogue with "other" memories about the years of the dictatorship, which influence the way that Gustavo remembers the past. As such authors as Mieke Bal and Elizabeth Jelin argue, we can consider the relationship between individual memories and collective discourse as a process of constant negotiation, where

"the past is continuously modified and redescribed" (Bal vii) and "interpretations and meanings are never fixed once and for all" (Jelin 51). Bracher's exhibits a metaliterary awareness of the constructedness of both individual and collective representations of the past by including multiple, contradictory narrative voices through the "remnant" writings of Gustavo's family members, the questioning of his own ability to fully remember the past, and the transfer of social memories to the next generation through the figure of Cecília.

As Gustavo is cleaning out his house in preparation for his move to São Carlos after his retirement, he comes across old letters, journals, and other documents pertaining to his sister (Jussara), his mother (Joana), his father (Joaquim), his daughter (Lígia) and his nephew (Armando's son Renato). These "remnants" of those who have either died or moved away causes Gustavo's memories to "flash up," to borrow from Walter Benjamin, reflecting the idea that memories are always subordinated to the needs and uses of the past in the present. "Não lembro disso ter sido importante nos últimos vinte anos, mas voltou com a força dos primeiros tempos agora que me aposento, que penso nessa entrevista, que mexo nos papéis velhos para desocupar a casa" (*NF* 144). Gustavo's retirement and pending move from his family's home, his encounter with objects pertaining to his family members, and the interview request from Cecília serve as catalysts for constant shifts between the past and the present in Gustavo's memory narrative. This is one of the ways in which the form of the novel augments the meaning of the content, as we are placed within Gustavo's thought processes as they jump between experiences in the present, memories of the dictatorship, and reflections on the past

articulated in the present. This schizophrenic memory narrative, which is further fragmented through multiple theoretical discussions on language and meaning, forces readers to follow Gustavo as he "stirs up the static fact of the past" (Richard *CR* 17) and critically reflects upon the effects that the dictatorship has had on his life. This differs immensely from the "static" memory discourse about the dictatorship offered in the idealized testimonial cultural production criticized by Avelar for inviting "specular, unreflective identification and precludes the possibility of asking questions about the nature of that experience," (Avelar *TUP* 65), such as the *ADNB* photography exhibit.

While Gustavo's memory discourse frantically moves between the past and the present, his mental dialogue with fragments of his family's writings expose the constructedness of both individual and collective memories, causing the readers to question the idea of "truth" about the past. Gustavo engages his brother's autobiographical novel throughout his memory narrative, which provides a different version of the past (particularly of their family and their childhood) than Gustavo's memories. For example, José's novel paints Gustavo (who he calls "G."<sup>91</sup>) and his father as casting a "luz negra de um destino cruel" (*NF* 56) on the rest of the family, while their mother needed to protect the other children from G. and his father. Gustavo immediately questions this representation of the family, and often notes the differences between his childhood memories and those of José, often differentiating between "seus pais" and

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<sup>91</sup> Here we can note an interesting aspect of *Não falei* in that the reader does not find out the narrator's name until the end of the novel. José refers to the narrator as "G" in his autobiographical novel, Jussara refers to him as "Guto" in her journal entries, and it is not until the end of the novel where the narrator's name is revealed to be Gustavo (page 146). This "de-subjectification" of the narrator (which we can also observe in Sergio Chejfec's *Los planetas*) further opens the interpretation of meaning for the reader, as the memories articulated could pertain to anyone and thus offer a type of "collective testimonial" without fixing a narrative "truth" from the speaking subject.

"meus pais," or "sua infância" and "minha infância" (*NF* 39, 59). As Gustavo reads pieces of his brother's novel, he continuously points out the errors in José's description of the past ("não tínhamos poltrona, só sofá [...] essa foi vendida [...] não, não, tinha uma janelinha basculante muito feia [...] por favor, José" (*NF* 31-2)). Gustavo also openly questions the truth of José's narrative and argues that he was always a "ladrãozinho" (*NF* 40) who couldn't be trusted, "José mente descaradamente ao dizer o que foi e o que fomos" (*NF* 100). This critique about the validity of José's memory narrative initially serves as a guide for readers to not believe his brother's autobiographical novel and appears to strengthen the capacity of Gustavo's memories to represent the "truth" about the past.

As the novel proceeds, however, readers begin to question Gustavo's recollections of the past, influenced by the narrator's own interest in continuing to read José's novel in an attempt to fill in the gaps of his own memory. Comments such as, "Prossigo para ver como José descreverá esta cena. Talvez, mesmo por conta da imaginação tão ativa, sua memória seja melhor do que a minha" (*NF* 43) and "José, com seu livro, expande minha infância para lados que não conhecia" (*NF* 114) contradict Gustavo's initial reaction to his brother's novel. This may cause readers to return to other moments in the narrative where José's novel is reproduced and reconsider the validity of the statements initially described as "lies" by Gustavo. These comments also reflect the "intercohort differences" in memory described by Jelin, as Gustavo and José may have shared the same house at the same time during their childhood, but their perceptions of this experience are different, creating a "multiplicity of memories and narratives about the past" (Jelin 37). This

interaction with José's novel and Jussara's diary (which I examine shortly) begins to influence Gustavo's own perceptions of experience, reflecting the intersubjective nature of memory that constantly resignifies meaning in representations of the past.

The narrator openly acknowledges his inability to fully remember the past as well, best exemplified through this passage describing his capture and the time after his release from prison:

Não recordo dos policiais me tirando de casa, nem da chegada na prisão [...] Imagino que a celas fossem abaixo [...] Acho que havia sol [...] Lembro do barulho da porta [...] Lembro que não falei [...] Não me lembro de alguém me contando da morte de Armando [...] Não lembro quem, nem onde, nem a situação, mas disseram que minha ficha fora consultada [...] e estava limpa. Tudo ajuntado assim, lembranças e não lembranças, começo a pensar que estive errado. (*NF* 143)

This admission by Gustavo that his memories (particularly the years following his release from prison) contains lacunas creates a sense of "uneasiness" for the readers about the "truth" contained in the memory narratives presented in the novel, as even the narrator himself doubts his capacity to remember the past "correctly." From the perspective of trauma studies, Gustavo's inability to fully remember the traumatic experience of the past is emblematic of the mental block surrounding the psychoanalytical notion of the "traumatic event," where those who have endured trauma are unable to fully confront and narrate that experience through language. Yet, seen through the prism of the "negotiated space" of memory, this situation also exposes the inherent gaps in any representation of

the past (be it individual or collective), reflecting the fact that certain elements are always "forgotten" (either consciously or unconsciously) in the elaboration and transmission of memory discourses, as authors such as Huysen and Benedict Anderson maintain.

Gustavo's encounter with his sister's journal near the end of the novel is the most important "remnant" for the professor, as it sparks his "final return" to the past, where he admits that he does not fully remember the events immediately following his release from prison except for one: the final conversation that he had with his father where he blames Armando for "betraying" his family. Jussara's diary entry also plays an important role for the readers, as it provides information about the days immediately following the Gustavo's release from prison, events that Gustavo was unable to articulate in his memory narrative. Jussara's describes "Guto's" return home, her perception of his physical and mental state, and the family's reactions to his return:

O Guto chegou ontem [...] e fico feliz porque ele está vivo e a Lígia não vai ser orfã e também porque eu gosto muito dele e achei que ele fosse morrer [...] Eu fico feliz do Guto estar aqui, mas ele é tão triste. A casa toda está estranha. Parece que ainda vai acontecer alguma coisa pior [...] está tudo parecendo ruim, a voz de Guto está baixa e grossa. (NF 136-37)

Told from the perspective of "childhood innocence," Jussara's diary offers readers an alternative perspective of the effects of the torture experience on Gustavo's physical and emotional state. Jussara also comments on the fact that Gustavo did not seem to want to hold Lígia and questions whether or not he was even happy to see her, which sparks Gustavo's explanation that he was scared to hold her because of the broken bones in his

hand that I previously mentioned. By noting the general feeling of "strangeness" in the house, the diary entry also hints at a confirmation of the accusatory treatment felt by Gustavo for "having betrayed" Armando, a situation that Jussara does not completely understand due to her young age.

In addition to a description of Gustavo's return home, Jussara's journal provides readers with a description of her relationship with both of her brothers, which further complicates the interpretation of the contradictory memory narratives offered by both José and Gustavo. Jussara portrays José as a counter-culture rebel who was almost "never at home," and lived in London at the time of Gustavo's release from prison. He would often send Jussara "psychedelic postcards" written mostly in English along with references to The Beatles, The Who, and other cultural icons representative of the world outside of their home that José told her that she needed to experience. While this representation of José is similar to Gustavo's portrayal of his brother as a "hippie," Jussara also notes that she relied on José to learn about the "serious things" in the world. "Acho que sempre foi um pouco assim, podia contar com Guto para me proteger e ajudar, mas para saber as coisas sérias do mundo eu prestava atenção em José" (*NF* 139).

Here we observe an interesting contrast to the typical discourses articulated by the militant left during that time period about "counter-culture hippies" (such as Cateano Veloso, Rita Lee, and Gilberto Gil) as being "alienated" from serious political issues. Yet, at the end of her diary entry, Jussara contradicts her earlier opinion about her brother with comments (directed towards him) that are critical of José for being disconnected from reality, "Uma vez eu queria ser Rita Lee. Uma vez eu queria estar em Londres com

você. Mas às vezes acho que você é um babaca que está por fora de tudo, que não sacou nada, nada" (*NF 140*). As a result, readers who initially thought that Jussara's diary entries were going to clear up the "truth" of the contradictory memory narratives offered by Gustavo and José are dismayed, as she in fact casts further doubt on *both* of their narratives by questioning the capacity of both of her brothers to communicate the "serious things" about the world. In this way, the conflicting versions of the past represented through Gustavo's engagement with the written memories of his family members reflect the intersubjective conflicts related to any representation of the past, where meaning can never be "finally fixed," and is susceptible to "resignifications" by different social actors in the present.

By exposing the inherent gaps in both individual and collective memory, Bracher avoids producing a narrative "truth" about the past. In this way, she uses the fissure between experience and representation as "a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity" (Huysse *TM 3*) and creates the opportunity for readers to actively engage the silences in the text in order to produce meaning. The focus on the impossibility to fully represent experience through language appears throughout the novel, and Bracher embraces and accentuates these representational "absences" by lauding their power in the (de)construction of totalizing systems of meaning. We can observe this in one of Gustavo's many reflections on language and meaning that disrupt his memory narrative in the novel:

a ausência [...] mantém a idéia de movimento, quiçá a reforça. A fala das crianças, dos pais das crianças e dos loucos contêm esse reforço da

ausência. As anotações de seu Joaquim sabiam dessa força, as memórias de José não sabem. A ciência, sua linguagem, sabe, e por isso a evita. Aprendi a escrever o livro da natureza, as ausências do exuberante real devem ser preenchidas de forma a mingua-lo em escrita inteligível a todos da cadeia do saber. (*NF* 109)

In this reflection, Gustavo notes the power of "absence" in language to allow for "movement" in meaning that resists being "fixed" within discursive systems of power. At the same time, he notes that he learned to write in the scientific mode,<sup>92</sup> filling in gaps of the "exuberant real" in order to subject it within the accepted "chain of knowledge." Here we observe a connection to the Lacanian notion that the "real" is only perceived after it has been subsumed into a symbolic system of representation, as well as Foucault's argument that language must be both a subject of and subject to the dominant social discourse in order to be "understood." Gustavo's inability to fully reconstitute his memories and place them in a language that others will understand in accordance with the "scientific" discourse in which he was trained worries the professor throughout his narrative. However, by *accentuating* Gustavo's incapacity to articulate a clear narrative about his experience and including speaking subjects that contradict the narrator's interpretations of the past, the novel resists articulating a counter-narrative "truth" about the military dictatorship, and instead allows for the "power of absence" to reinforce the

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<sup>92</sup> Here we note an interesting connection between scientific language and "truth" and the "scientific use" of photography as representative of "truth" about the past described by Rosalind Krauss that I examine in chapter three.

movement of memory and meaning and create the potential for a dynamic connection between the dictatorship and lived-experience today.

While frustrated by his inability to articulate his memories in a language that people will "understand," Gustavo also recognizes the inherent fissures in all representation, exemplified through a reflection on language and meaning that connects two main themes of the novel, betrayal and transmission of memory:

Traição e tradição têm em comum o transmitir, a ação de entrega. A brincadeira entre traidor e tradutor não tem origem apenas na semelhança fonética das palavras, nem num significado mais profundo do ato de traduzir, a semelhança é simples e está na origem das palavras, ambas significam fazer passar de um lado para o outro. E sabemos que essa entrega nunca é inocente e o conhecimento transmitido não sai imune do outro lado. (*NF* 69)

Here we observe an interesting comparison between the act of betrayal ("giving up" someone) and translation ("giving meaning" to someone or something). Both involve the transmission of knowledge through language, and Gustavo notes that there is always an "excess," that no communication of experience will be completely received by "others." We can connect these ideas to Gustavo's reflections on torture and the interview with Cecília, where he mentions that those who suffered from a traumatic experience will only discuss aspects of the past that will not "threaten" their present. In these comments on "translation" however, Gustavo is not referring specifically to an (un)conscious attempt to block a traumatic past, but rather that *all* attempts to transmit experience through

language contain these gaps - even those that do not attempt to hide the "real/trauma" through narrativization. Through these reflections on the impossibility of language to fully represent experience, readers are provided with a meta-literary guide as to how to interpret Gustavo's memory narrative, and are prepared for the disjunction between his "testimonial" about the past and its reception by Cecília, which I will now examine.

### **The Transmission of Memory**

"Eu falei a ela que não me lembrava de quase nada e ela disse que queria isso também, a lembrança quebrada, um embaralhamento do que sobrou visto do longe, quase sumindo [...]" (NF 19).

While the "remnant" voices of Gustavo's family members provide contradictory versions of the past that cause the reader to question the veracity of Gustavo's own narrative, the figure of Cecília plays an important role to explore the transmission of cultural memory to future generations in the novel. Much of Gustavo's memory narrative is directed towards Cecília, who represents the "younger generations" that Jelin maintains have the capacity to provoke critical reflections about the dictatorship by asking questions about the experiences of this time period. Gustavo reflects upon the process of representing and transferring memories to those who did not experience the dictatorship first hand and his role as "witness" for Cecília on multiple occasions, such as:

O processo da condição humana, é isso que Cecília procura em mim e em outros, as minhas idéias valem tanto quanto meus afetos. Ela quer lampejos de um personagem, pedaços de um ser no mundo que ela não conheceu inteiro, mas cujos ecos, mortos e sobreviventes formaram a estrutura do que viveu e vive. (NF 66)

These reflections on the transfer of memories to future generations whose lives are affected by the "echoes, dead, and survivors" of the past constitute another way *Não falei* resists producing a "static" testimonial narrative trapped in an idealized vision of the past. Gustavo not only reflects upon the influences of the past on his own life in the present, but he offers numerous digressions on the transmission of meaning about the past and how new generations are going to interact with the memory of the dictatorship and connect these experiences to the current socio-political context.

For example, Gustavo includes an episode of attempting to teach the meaning of João Cabral de Melo Neto's poem "Tecendo a amanhã" to his daughter, Lígia. The poem points out that one rooster crow isn't enough to "sew together the future," that the rooster's crow must be heard and echoed by other roosters through multiple calls in order to create a "tenuous web" that will continue to be spun by the interactions between the multiple crows of the roosters in the future. Gustavo uses the metaphor of a "tenuous web" to discuss the transmission of memories from generation to generation, which reflects the narrator's concern for communicating past experience to others in a language that can be "understood," while recognizing the multiple possible interpretations and uses of memory narratives:

Uma teia tênue, [...] que um lança e outro apanha, e a manhã está no cruzar de vários, quando se tecem. Entendemos que os muitos cantos fazem, ao cantar, amanhã [...] E um dia, já é hoje, você cantará e no seu

canto todos os engolidos soarão. O canto da geração que Marta<sup>93</sup> agora  
ouve e tece outras amanhã.

(*NF* 104-05)

As he does throughout the novel, Gustavo takes something that he finds and reads as he is cleaning out the house and incorporates it into his narrative, this time taking Melo Neto's poem and turning into a discussion on the fragility of memory, and the multiple possible interpretations and reiterations of the past. This connects to the arguments made by Jelin regarding the inevitability of "reinterpretations, resignifications, and new readings of the past" (Jelin 96) in the transmission of cultural memory in different social contexts, and reflects Bracher's recognition of the "open ended" nature of memory and the diverse ways of interpreting meanings of the past.

In my interview with Bracher, she told me that she placed herself in the novel through Cecília ("Cecília é um pouco eu").<sup>94</sup> Yet, we can observe the ways that she problematizes this representation of an inquisitive younger generation by creating a character who had internalized the idealized narrative of the late 1960's (revolution, resistance, music, counter-culture, etc.) typically articulated by the memory discourses of the militant left. This is best exemplified through Gustavo's commentary on how Cecília planned to use his interview for her novel:

No romance quer falar sobre um período em que a educação parecia ter  
um significado detonador, explosivo e que fim levou tudo isso. Já leu

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<sup>93</sup> Marta is his grand-daughter, Lígia's daughter.

<sup>94</sup> As part of her research in preparing the novel, Bracher interviewed people who were imprisoned and tortured during the military dictatorship.

livros sobre a história da educação, sobre a repressão e os movimentos de resistência, viu filmes, ouviu músicas, mas diz precisar das entrevistas pessoais porque seu livro não é sobre política, nem sobre a educação, mas sobre alguma coisa que nem ela entendeu direito ainda [...] Disse que precisa do linguajar do tempo, detalhes e nuances que não encontrou em livros. (NF 19)

Here, Bracher calls attention to the multiple possible uses of memories of the dictatorship between different generations. While Gustavo is engaging in "memory work" in an attempt to confront his traumatic past and critically reflect upon the connections that it has had on his life, Cecília is searching for a voice who can recreate the "essence" of 1960s so that her novel about this time period seems more "authentic." While her novel is not specifically about "politics" or "education," Cecília is interested in capturing the moment where education was "inflammatory," culture functioned as ideology, where students, workers, and revolutionaries "united" to resist the repression of the military regime - the exact idealized vision of this time period that Gustavo's narrative deconstructs. It is here that readers notice the contradiction between the memory narrative about the dictatorship that Cecília is expecting from Gustavo and his actual interpretations and representations of this time period. While Cecília has learned about this time period through memory narratives produced within the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship, Gustavo's narrative represents a "subaltern" experience of the dictatorship that falls outside of this logic - that is "allogical."

### Gustavo's "Allogical" Memory Discourse

In *The Exhaustion of Difference*, Alberto Moreiras argues that "the subaltern is what is left out of any and all hegemonic closures" (*TEOD* 262) and is located in an "atopian or excessive region" (*TEOD* 299), what Spivak refers to as the "absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" (*SSDH* 16). Moreiras maintains that attempting to think towards the limits of this "atopian" space without restituting the "subaltern" as a speaking subject creates a space to think beyond (counter)hegemonic structures of meaning.<sup>95</sup> An intriguing example of "atopics" that Moreiras provides is the "abandonment" of political power by a group of zapatistas (Emiliano Zapata) during the Mexican Revolution presented in Martín Luis Guzmán's *El aguila y la serpiente*. The zapatistas had momentary possession of the presidential palace, but exhibited no interest in maintaining hegemonic control within the existing possibilities of political structure, thus allowing the villistas (Pancho Villa) to rise to power within the Revolution.

Moreiras then offers this analysis:

What if [...] the apparent abandonment of the political had been nothing but an alternative understanding of the political, a radicalization of subaltern negation [...]? Zapatista atopics: I will not be where you place me, in a context in which hegemonic thinking can only at most place everything [...] If subaltern negation is a simple refusal to submit to hegemonic interpellation, an exodus from hegemony, is that not a new

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<sup>95</sup> As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, while Moreiras develops this ideas as a way to escape the hegemonic structure of the global/local or national-popular/globalization debates, these ideas are also applicable to thinking about new ways to examine memory in the postdictatorship.

assumption of political freedom that remains barred to any and all thinking of hegemony, to any and all thinkings of location? (*TEOD* 126)

We can apply these ideas on "atopian thinking" to the analysis of Gustavo's memory narrative about his experience during the military dictatorship in Brazil. As I have argued throughout this chapter, Gustavo criticizes the "logic" of both the military regime and the militant left during the dictatorship, and for this reason his memories resist appropriation by the (counter)hegemonic discourses that guide the way that the dictatorial past is "supposed" to be talked about in the present. Like the zapatistas in Moreiras' analysis, Gustavo rejects the rules of the game - he does not participate in the hegemonic structure of meaning that constitutes the militant left either as dangerous "subversives" to the "nation" or symbolic "heroes" of "resistance" to repression. He refuses to place himself in direct opposition to the hegemonic discourse articulated by supporters of the military regime, thus reflecting a "subaltern negation" of the typical counter-narrative articulated by the militant left. In this way, Gustavo's memory narrative elides the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship - it is *allogical*. At the same time, Gustavo states on numerous occasions that he can not fully represent his experience, that he can not articulate his memories in a way that will be "understood" within the dominant system of representation. This is a necessary element in considering Gustavo's narrative as "subaltern," for as Spivak intimates, once a "subaltern" voice is "heard," once it enters into a discursive system of meaning, it ceases to be "subaltern."

Gustavo's reflections on the impossibility to communicate his experience to others that bookend his narrative and are repeated throughout the novel are essential to

considering his memory discourse as "allogical." The narrator begins the novel by saying:

Se fosse possível um pensamento sem palavras ou imagens, inteiro sem tempo ou espaço, mas por mim criado, uma revelação do que em mim e de mim se esconde e pronto está, se fosse possível que nascesse assim evidente e sem origem aos olhos de todos [...] surgisse como pensamento de cada um, ou ainda, uma coisa, mais que um pensamento, se coisa assim fosse possível existir, eu gostaria de contar uma história. (NF 7)

So in the first lines of his narrative, Gustavo maintains that if it were possible for a thought to exist "without words or images," representing his "hidden interior," and that would be immediately understood exactly as it was articulated within the minds of others, he would like to tell a story. Gustavo then proceeds to narrate his story, often repeating these sentiments (e.g. "Se fosse possível. Minha história percebida como coisa, sem palavras, sem voz, mas apreendida inteira, sólida" (NF 37) and "Se fosse possível. Minha história percebida como rumor, sem palavras, sem voz, mas incorporada inteira, sólida" (NF 114)). Gustavo then finishes his "memory work" (and the novel) by saying "Eu falaria isso, Cecília, se fosse possível" (NF 148), *enclosing his entire narrative within the realm of impossibility*, which causes the readers to consider why his testimonial memory narrative is not possible. One way we can interpret the "impossibility" of Gustavo's memory narrative is through the lens of trauma studies, as he reflects upon both the need and the impossibility to narrativize his traumatic experience through language, leading to a state of "mourning" this impossibility as a way to confront and overcome the traumatic

experience of his past. This interpretation would follow both Avelar's ("mourning the "defeat" through allegory) and Moreiras's ("el duelo del duelo") analysis of successful "memory work" in post-dictatorial cultural production that I reviewed in the theoretical chapter.

However, by examining Gustavo's reflections on the impossibility to communicate his experience within the accepted discursive structures of meaning, we can consider his narrative as "subaltern," that which is excluded from all hegemonic closures of meaning. When I asked Beatriz about the meaning of "se fosse possível" during our interview, she said:

Se fosse possível é um pouco que o que seria importante para ele contar, é uma coisa que ele não pode contar [...] A narração é como se só tivesse sentido para ele e ele tem muita certeza que não vai ter sentido para a pessoa para que fala porque o sentido no que ela está interessada ele não está interessado e nem sabe como fazer [...] Não é que não é possível porque ele não vai ser capaz falar, é que ela não vai ser capaz ouvir. Ele não vai servir aos propósitos, não vai confirmar nada do que ela quer ouvir. (Bracher *Interview*)

Bracher's explanation that the "impossibility" of Gustavo's narrative has less to do with his capacity to speak than with Cecília's inability to "understand" allows us to analyze his memory discourse as "allogical" - outside of the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship. The principal reason that Gustavo feels that his narrative is "impossible" is that he is unable to fill-in the fissures of his memory with narrative

"truths" to produce a totalizing, "scientific" discourse about the past. He knows that his fractured memories do not constitute the "essential," "authentic" identity of the 1960's that Cecília is looking for, and he believes that she will be unable to understand his narrative because it does not fit into the idealized vision of "revolutionary resistance" to the dictatorship that she has internalized and is expecting from him. Gustavo recognizes that his narrative is "allogical" from the beginning, that it will not be understood by others who are expecting him to speak in different register about his experience, and it is for this reason that he bookends his narrative with "se fosse possível." This can also lead us to interpret a new meaning for the title of the novel - as "não falei" can be transposed from referring to Gustavo's torture experience during the dictatorship to the inability of Cecília to understand his memory narrative - producing the effect that he "didn't talk" to her either. In this sense, Gustavo's criticism of both the military regime and the militant left "resists appropriation" within the constitutive (counter)hegemonic structure of meaning in the postdictatorship, while the "impossibility" of articulating this criticism marks Gustavo as "beyond restitution" as a speaking subject.

### **Conclusion**

In our conversation, Bracher commented that Gustavo's narrative attempts to "undo" the idealized memories about the dictatorship, arguing that these simplified discourses are "desestimulantes" because they do not allow for any critical reflection on what happened and present a mythic version of the past to the next generation. "Eu acho que isso é muito perigoso para os jovens hoje em dia, porque eles têm uma admiração por uma coisa que não aconteceu daquela maneira" (Bracher *Interview*). The "allogical"

nature of Gustavo's memory discourse is what allows *Não falei* to destabilize the discursive logic of memory in postdictatorial Brazil - creating a space to engage the experiences of the dictatorship in new ways. Instead of attempting to fill-in the inherent fissures in representations of the past by articulating a "narrative truth" about this time period from within the hegemonic discursive register ("hero"/"subversive," war for "nation," forgetting/reconciliation, remembering/justice), Bracher *accentuates* the gaps in the construction of memory. This forces readers to engage the "impossibility" of representation while momentarily exposing "remnant" experiences that are often excluded from traditional memory discourses about the dictatorship, creating the conditions of possibility to construct a dynamic cultural memory through the negotiable site between individual memories and collective discourse about the past.

We can in fact observe multiple levels of "impossibility" in Bracher's novel: the impossibility to express a traumatic experience due to the (un)conscious mental blocks of the past; the inherent fissures in all representations of experience through language; and the inability of Gustavo to insert his narrative within the established "logic" of postdictatorial discourse. This concept of the "impossibility" to represent "subaltern" experiences in existing discursive structures is a key element of recent postdictatorial cultural production, particularly in relation to those that were "disappeared" during the military dictatorships throughout the Southern Cone. For those that "survived" the military regimes, all that one is able to do is engage the "traces" of those who were killed through what Giorgio Agamben calls the "remnant" space that both connects and

separates those who died with those who "survived." This is the main theme in Argentine author Sergio Chejfec's novel *Los planetas*, which I will now examine.

## CHAPTER V

S AND M IN THE POSTDICTATORSHIP: SUBJECTIVITY AND MEMORY IN  
SERGIO CHEJFEC'S *LOS PLANETAS*

In the 1999 novel *Los planetas*, Sergio Chejfec<sup>96</sup> explores the residual effects of military dictatorship through a complex narrative that engages with themes of memory, subjectivity, and the "remnants" of the "disappeared" in postdictatorial Argentina. The novel is primarily narrated by S, who is attempting to confront the disappearance of his friend M during the dictatorship by evoking his memory in the present. The circumstances around M's kidnapping and what became of his body are unknown, and for this reason S can only evoke the childhood memories of his best friend and the effects that his disappearance has had on his life. The narrative constantly jumps between multiple pasts and the present, and S's fragmented memories "flash up" when he examines a photograph of M, during encounters with M's mom (R) and M's childhood neighbor Sito, and most importantly, through interactions with the urban spaces of Buenos Aires. Chejfec uses three narrative voices that engage one another throughout the novel - S's first person memories, narration, and reflections in the present; the reproduction of stories told by M and M's father; and a 3rd person omniscient voice who often describes the same scenes as S's memories while referring to S as "el otro." The information provided by these narrative voices is often contradictory, and the themes of truth and the impossibility to represent experience through language are constantly revisited by S as he attempts to confront the ever present "absence" of M. The novel

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<sup>96</sup> Sergio Chejfec is an Argentine author who has written multiple novels, including *Lenta biografía* (1990), *El aire* (1992), *Boca de lobo* (2000), *Los incompletos* (2004), and *Mis dos mundos* (2008).

culminates with S nearly changing his name to M as a type of penance for having survived while M was "disappeared," before deciding to embrace the inevitability of the fading traces of M's life and contemplate new uses for these memories in the present.

My analysis of *Los planetas* is framed around the impossibility to represent the experiences of those who were "disappeared" during the military dictatorship in Argentina, leaving only the ability to engage the "traces" of these individuals through "remnants" of their lives that remain in the present. I begin by discussing the powerful description of human remains scattered across the landscape that opens the narrative, and I contend that this scene foreshadows the multiple physical and discursive "remnants" of M that appear throughout the novel. Next, I explore the narrator's obsessive focus on the impossibility to fully represent "truth" about experience through language and, drawing from the critical work on desubjectification and postdictatorial memory by Idelber Avelar and Gareth Williams, I maintain that this "impossibility" is exactly what connects S to other characters dealing with M's absence in the present. I then analyze the way that S uses the "traces" of M that he perceives throughout the urban landscape of Buenos Aires to evoke his memories of their times together walking through these very same spaces, demonstrating the power of the "absent-presence" of M to make connections between the past and the present. Drawing from Giorgio Agamben's theoretical conception of "remnant" as the "disjunctive space" between those who died and those who survived, I then explore the relationship between S and M in the novel as "traces" of one another, arguing that S's "testimony" about the effects of M's disappearance is inseparable from M's incapacity to speak. I maintain that this allows us to consider S's memory narrative

not solely as a mechanism to overcome the trauma of M's absence, but also as an attempt to communicate with others who share this "limit-experience" of the postdictatorship, following the ideas of Brett Levinson. I conclude that this creates a space for "de-mythified" uses of memory about the "disappeared" (both within the novel and for the readers) that allow for multiple possible connections to the *effects* of their absence in the present, and the construction of a dynamic cultural memory about the military dictatorship in Argentina.

### **Remnants of the Past**

"Sin embargo, al revés de muchas otras circunstancias, los efectos del crimen no se borran de inmediato, tampoco en el mediano o largo plazo y más bien nunca" (*LP* 19).

One of the earliest scenes described in *Los planetas* sets the tone for the preoccupation with the theme of "remnants" that appears throughout the novel: the effects that the residuals of the past have on the present life of the narrator. Writing from the present, S discusses the memory of reading a newspaper article describing an explosion in a sparsely populated area on the outskirts of Buenos Aires called "P" just days after M's disappearance:

Aquella noticia hablaba de restos humanos esparcidos por una extensa superficie. Hay una palabra que lo describe muy bien: regados.

Miembros regados, repartidos, ordenados en círculos imaginarios desde el centro inequívoco, la explosión. Hacia cualquier lado que uno fuese, todavía a cientos de metros podía toparse con rastros, que por otra parte ya no eran más que señales mudas, aptas tan sólo para el epílogo: los cuerpos

deshechos después de haber sufrido, separados en trozos y dispersos.

(*LP* 17)

While the article specifically refers to the physical remains of body parts that were spread out from the explosion, the multiple synonyms of the word "remnant" included in the description ("restos," "rastros," "señales mudas," "trozos") foreshadow other uses of the term that refer to the "traces" of M that S encounters throughout the novel. We can make a direct connection between this description of the remains of the explosion and the theoretical concepts connected to the idea of "ruins" or "residuals" of the military dictatorships developed by such authors as Alberto Moreiras, Nelly Richard, and Idelber Avelar (all drawing from Walter Benjamin). The effects of the military governments throughout the Southern Cone are inscribed on the present through both physical and discursive "remnants" that point to experiences during the dictatorship, while often being excluded from or appropriated by the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship.

Upon reading the newspaper article about the human remains left behind from the explosion in P, S immediately imagines that M's body was among those blown apart by the explosion. While he mentions that he has no way to prove that his suspicions are true, he has also not found any evidence to contradict this initial reaction to the article. Faced with the incapacity to explain M's disappearance, S at first succumbs to the need to "acabar historias" and imagines that M was killed in the explosion, giving him a false sense of closure with M's death. Yet, after reading the article again and noting that none of the "witnesses" could verify anything about the explosion and could only respond to

the event with "silence,"<sup>97</sup> S realizes that the impossibility to know what happened with M's body precludes any closure with the past, noting that "lo que sigue es una historia que no ha terminado" (*LP* 19). Like the human remains left after the explosion, S can only engage the traces of M that remain after his disappearance: a photograph that they exchanged as children, encounters with others who knew M, and the urban spaces of Buenos Aires, through which S and M wandered and forged their friendship during childhood. These "silent signals" have a common origin, M's disappearance, but just like the explosion in P, there is no way to know the circumstances surrounding the traumatic event, despite being able to encounter the effects of this event "wherever one went." These traces evoke multiple childhood memories about M, the most powerful "remnants" that S has of his friend, which continue to "threaten" him years after M's disappearance.

We can observe an example of the capacity of physical objects to evoke memory when S examines a childhood photograph of M that he had received in exchange for his own at the beginning of their friendship. S explains that he has kept the photo buried at the bottom of a trunk since M's disappearance because the image evokes the pain of this event and the effects that it has had on his life. S comments that he and M had often joked about the "mysterious properties" of the photographs that they exchanged, which, according to M, "provenía de nuestra pertenencia a un tiempo ausente, o bien ya abolido o bien todavía no arribado" (*LP* 189). This offers an interesting connection to the effect of "absent-presence" caused by a photograph that I analyzed in Marcelo Brodsky's *Los compañeros*, reflecting the idea that, like the "desaparecidos" from Brodsky's class, the

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<sup>97</sup> This is the first of many references to "silence" as a response to M's disappearance, which I analyze in detail in the next section.

"absent-presence" produced by the image is augmented since it represents the residual of M's disappeared body in the present. S's description of his encounters with the image adds to this characterization of the photo, noting that the inscription written on the back of the image is "medio borrosa" and that, "Encuentro la foto siempre oculta, vuelta hacia abajo" (*LP* 188). The photograph serves as a metaphor for S's present relationship with M: he has attempted to "forget" the trauma of his disappearance by keeping the photograph face down at the bottom of a trunk. Yet, when he encounters the image, his childhood memories of M "flash up," but they are always "half-erased" and merely serve to accentuate the void left by M's disappearance.

Upon seeing M's photograph, S narrates the memory of the ceremonial exchange of photographic portraits as a symbol of their friendship, including M's explanation for the ritual and his opinion on the social use of photographs:

La tarde cuando cambiamos las fotos M aclaró: 'No creo en las fotografías [...] Las fotos son pruebas de una realidad momentánea, siempre arcaica y desplazada, [...] pero que por lo mismo carecen de valor documental, apenas reveladas ya son reliquias, son mudas; son el vínculo entre el pasado -la circunstancia que describe la foto- y el presente -el momento cuando la contemplamos. ¿Y qué hay entre el pasado y el presente? [...] Nada, vacío bajo los pies; si pensamos que las fotos son verdades auxiliares, o no existe la verdad o la realidad no necesita pruebas. (*LP* 24-25)

Here, M's comments are critical of the capacity of images to represent reality, arguing that they merely represent a static moment in time that do not provide a connection between the past and the present because "nothing" exists between the past and the present. Later, S returns to discuss the images and notes that he also does not believe in photographs, repeating the phrase that the boys used to close their friendship ceremony, "Guardemos estas fotos como talismanes, pero no como pruebas" (*LP* 188). These comments bear striking resemblance to the work done on social use of images and their (in)capacity to represent "truth" by authors such as Roland Barthes and Rosalind Krauss, and, as we shall see later, the photographs are not the most effective "trace" to evoke the memory of M for S. This concern with the inability to represent "truth," or the inexistence of "truth" in "reality" extends beyond images, as S is confronted with the impossibility to explain exactly what happened to M, creating a preoccupation with "truth" and representation that seeps into all areas of his narrative.

*Los planetas* is filled with references to the impossibility to represent experience through language, as S's incapacity to explicitly narrate what happened to M is alluded to multiple times throughout the novel. The most overt example of the inherent gaps between experience and representation are the multiple references to "silence" as the only response that M's family and friends could muster when confronted with his disappearance. S explains that "el motivo de nuestro silencio radicaba en que la desaparición de M era un hecho excesivo" (*LP* 125). The use of the word "excess" to describe M's disappearance is repeated throughout the narrative, reiterating the "impossible" nature of M's death - that it exceeded the norms of "reality." S explains that

there is no language that exists to represent excess, the only possible response is silence, "las personas callan ante lo excesivo; es el *silencio de exceso*" (LP 126). This "silence" reflects the Lacanian notion of the impossibility to fully represent experience through language, taken up in the critical work on the postdictatorial Southern Cone by thinkers such as Moreiras, Avelar, and Richard. There will always be an "excess" or remainder in the attempt to represent the experiences of torture, murder, or "disappearance" through language. What is important is that the relationship with these narrative silences is articulated in a way that provides for momentary connections to these experiences without attempting to collapse the gap of representation or fill in the space with ideological or political discourse.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to his reflections on the impossibility of speaking about the violence of M's disappearance, S constantly questions the idea of "truth" in both his memories of the past and the stories told by M and M's father that he reproduces in his narrative. One notes S's preoccupation between language and truth in comments such as this reaction to M's ability to make his stories seem true:

todo lo que dijera me hacía entrever un valor que excedía lo literal; era una aspiración de las palabras a ser otra cosa, alcanzar una *segunda categoría*, un escalón auxiliar donde no tuvieran que confrontarse con prueba alguna para corroborar su verdad. Esa índole subalterna y equívoca de su lenguaje paradójicamente convertía el conjunto en ese momento en una verdad plena [...] M resultaba más creíble por los matices, a pesar del

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<sup>98</sup> I analyze Chejfec's articulation of the postdictatorial relationship to the "silences" of the past in the last section of this chapter.

hecho de que uno [...] sólo estaba en condiciones de juzgar a partir de las palabras escuchadas. (*LP 60, my emphasis*)

S reflects on this capacity of language to reach a "secondary category," or a discourse, to produce "truth" multiple times in the novel, such as "no me importaba su grado de verdad, sino la escala real de lo escuchado" (*LP 201*) and "Cuando la naturaleza es tan oscura que resulta imposible alcanzar la verdad, es mejor crear una organización eficiente, aunque ilusoria, que nos permita representarla como si fuera real" (*LP 29*).

These reflections by S recall Foucault's ideas about discourse and its capacity to produce a *régime of truth* that both produces subjects and subjects them to its "natural" organization of reality. We can read these comments as allusions to the way that S initially attempts to deal with M's disappearance, making himself believe that M was present at the explosion in P solely based on the plausibility created by the newspaper article that S read a few days after M's disappearance. While he realizes that this was an "illusion," it initially provided him with a "reality" through which to interpret and deal with M's disappearance.

The novel contrasts this capacity of language to make things seem "true" based on its articulation within an accepted discursive structure with its inability to represent an event that actually *did* occur when activated outside an accepted system of meaning. One example is the story of S, M and M's dad witnessing a murder in the street during one of their multiple searches for M's dad's stolen car in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. The man who was killed had raped his daughter while her mother (his ex-wife) was out of the house, a story that all of the neighbors were familiar with, which appears to make it

plausible that the mother had killed the man. Yet, when they tell the neighbors that they saw the mother running with a gun after watching the man die in front of them, nobody believes their story, which causes S, M and M's dad to doubt what they had witnessed:

Al padre, M y el otro nadie les creyó, en cualquier caso daban como veraz lo contrario de lo que decían sus palabras. Nada tenía ningún valor, todas las circunstancias, aunque ciertas, arrastraban una importancia hipotética, anterior a la propia verdad de cada una de ellas. Tan razonables parecían las prevenciones de los incrédulos, que incluso ellos tres, pese a ser testigos privilegiados, comenzaron a dudar de lo ocurrido aunque lo hubiesen visto con mayor claridad que el aire más transparente. (*LP* 158)

The excessive nature of the occurrence (father raping daughter, mother killing father) made it impossible for the testimony of S, M and M's dad to be believed by the neighbors. No language can fully communicate events that, while true, fall outside of the "accepted" realm of possibility, and for this reason the neighbors did not believe S, M and M's father. In this sense, this story exposes the same limits of representation that S is struggling with: M's disappearance exceeded the norms of "reality," and as a result, it is impossible to communicate what happened through language - in the same way that Agamben maintains that the experience of those who were killed during the Holocaust is "unsayable."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The most common example of the impossibility to fully represent "excesses" through language is the Holocaust, which, as I mentioned previously, is also often applied to the state violence committed during the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. I will return to this concept later in the chapter when I apply Giorgio Agamben's concept of "remnant" to my analysis of *Los planetas*.

We can connect the doubt felt by S, M and M's dad with regards to the "true" nature of something they experienced first-hand with another of S's childhood memories of M telling a story about finding an eyeball on the train tracks near his childhood home. After telling the story, M's classmates (including S) informed him that the story did not make sense and that they did not believe him, causing M to doubt whether or not what he experienced was true. "Los recuerdos, aunque inmediatos, primero le parecieron inciertos; más tarde serían falsos [...] afirmaba 'Vi un ojo, después un perro, que perseguí y era incapaz de creerlo; [...] La consecuencia fue que al poco rato como recuerdo ya lo tenía olvidado" (*LP* 77). Here, we again observe that the implausibility of first "seeing an eye" and then "chasing a dog" outweighs any "truth" that may be behind M's statement, causing his friends to not believe him because what he says is outside of the "accepted" possibilities of "reality." This reflection by S about M connects to the fissure in representation that exists within any attempt to describe the experience of the "disappeared" - it is impossible to represent their experience because it is "unspeakable" within the realms of discursive possibility. This is also the first of many instances where S openly states that he did not believe the story told by someone else that he reproduces in his narrative (e.g. M, M's dad, their childhood friend Sito), which not only calls into question the validity of these stories, but also causes the reader to doubt the "truthfulness" of S's narrative. This further augments the focus on the impossibility to represent "truth" through language in the novel, as the reader is unsure which (if any) narrative they are to believe.

This "uncertainty" with regards to the past is a major focus of Chejfec's approach to engaging the military dictatorship through literature. In a paper entitled "La memoria disuelta" that he presented at Hood College in 2005, Chejfec comments about the impossibility to fully represent the dictatorial past through language, while noting the demand for "truth" about and "interpretation" of this time period as part of the current focus on "collective" memory in the postdictatorship. He maintains that the dictatorial past is "hidden," "dispersed," "undefined," and "undetermined," but that these traits can be beneficial if "not understanding" what happened is given a positive turn - if the inability to fully articulate the "excesses" of the past through language is ultimate goal of the postdictatorial "witness:"

Pienso que ese sentido de no entender, ese estado de conmoción frente a las señales del pasado o la memoria, es la situación ideal que debe alcanzar la literatura [...] sabemos que difícilmente la literatura se conjuga según premisas de verdad. La literatura es un discurso verdadero solo en la medida en que establece una relación ambigua con la verdad y con lo falso. (*LMD* 165)

In these comments, Chejfec marks this "incapacity to understand" as an ideal, as a way to connect to the experience of the dictatorship in the present. Faced with the impossibility to explicitly represent the experiences of the tortured, murdered, and "disappeared" through language, Chejfec calls for a literature<sup>100</sup> that *accentuates* this impossibility, instead of filling in the gaps of representation with an ideological or political narrative.

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<sup>100</sup> While Chejfec uses the word "literature" here, I believe that his ideas can apply to other forms of cultural production as well.

This parallels Gareth Williams' call for a posthegemonic site for cultural production by "opening up the political field to a certain form of unintelligibility" (Williams 149).

Through the constant questioning of the idea of "truth" and the ability to represent experience through language, *Los planetas* establishes this "incapacity to understand" as the central theme that connects the experiences of both the readers and the characters within the novel.

### **What's in a name? Desubjectification and Shared Cultural Memories**

"[...] el efecto se revirtió en causa, el nombre de M fue aislado por el silencio y de este modo retornó al estado de puro encantamiento en el que flota cualquier nombre hasta que lo rescatamos con el uso, asignándole un individuo" (*LP* 42).

One way that Chejfec accentuates the gap between representation and experience is by only including a first initial to identify the main characters in the story, S and M, which multiplies the possible meaning that these letters can have for the readers. At the beginning of the novel S states that, "En mi caso, la explosión tenía un pasado doloroso, que comenzaba con el secuestro de M (M de Miguel, o de Mauricio; también podría decir M de Daniel, ya que, como sabemos, detrás de las letras puede haber cualquier nombre" (*LP* 18).<sup>101</sup> Here again, the narrator reflects upon the uncertainty of meaning that language can provoke, noting that the initials may not even reflect the first letter of the name of the "disappeared" individual. The ambiguous nature of the names of the main characters allows readers to interpret the initials in multiple ways - connecting them to their own personal experience with the "disappeared" or highlighting the idea that this

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<sup>101</sup> In the paper that he read at Hood College, Chejfec acknowledges that the name of his "disappeared" friend was indeed David, and that he decided to leave the name in the novel as M because he felt that using the name David would be like "burying" him in the past. "Por eso la vacilación frente al nombre de mi amigo opté por el falso, porque preservaba al cierto y lo dejaba de algún modo vivo, aún al precio de la ignorancia" (*LMD* 164)

experience could have happened to anyone. The most common connection made is with the novel's author, Sergio<sup>102</sup>, marking the novel as a type of "testimonial" literature (albeit very different than the testimonials criticized by Avelar and Richard) which guides the readers' engagement with the narrative. The initials can also be considered as symbols for the multiple themes that appear in the book: Subjectivity/Memory, Sobreviviente/Muerto, Space/Memory, etc. This desubjectification of the primary narrative voices in the novel prevents them from becoming fixed as speaking subjects and opens up interpretation of the meaning in the novel through multiple "testimonial" voices.

The absence of proper names in S's narrative is also reflective of the fact that M's name has never appeared on any official list of those who were "disappeared" during the dictatorship, "Todavía hoy me asombra no haber encontrado el nombre de M escrito en ningún lugar, en los listados de las organizaciones ni en los avisos de la prensa" (*LP* 42). S explains that M's parents were too scared to inquire about their son after his disappearance, and later they refused to report him as "disappeared" in order to protect the rest of their family. The absence of M's name further accentuates the effects of his disappearance for S, who notes that *not* seeing the name of someone known to be "disappeared" has a particularly strong impact on the family members or friends who "survived" the individual:

Ese pacto entre ausencia y realidad, hecho con nadie y entre todos, donde también intervienen palabras desde todo punto de vista ambiguas como recuerdo, olvido, nombre e individuo, soy incapaz de romperlo [...] Se

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<sup>102</sup> In *La memoria disuelta* Chejfec explicitly states that the novel was his attempt to "reflejar mi experiencia en relación con un amigo que había sido secuestrado" (*LMD* 163).

ignora el nombre de muchos secuestrados; sin embargo sólo su ausencia en las listas públicas nos habla a nosotros, que lo conocimos, de un vacío que pone en duda la misma existencia: no es que fuera preciso verlo en un índice para verificar su paso por la vida, pero ello habría expandido el espesor de su recuerdo; nadie ha vuelto a escribir su nombre ni nadie lo ha leído. (*LP* 42-43)

These comments about the joining of "absence" with "reality" are particularly important for S, as they mark the only "truth" about M - his absence in the present. The fact that his name has never been included in any lists of "disappeared" doubles M's erasure, excluding him from a group of individuals whose memories were "rescued" from the oblivion of the past as part of a political project in the present. In this sense, we can consider M as "subaltern" within the counter-hegemonic project of using the "disappeared" as symbolic victims of the military dictatorship, one can only see traces of his memory through the "absence" of his name on these lists. The referral to the ambiguous nature of memory, forgetting, names, and individuals are also exemplary of the postdictatorial condition for S - officially recognizing M's name or "rescuing" his memory in the present is not going to change the fact of his absence or the effects of his disappearance on the lives of his family and loved ones, which is the focus of S's narrative.

One way to consider this refusal to use the "proper name" is through the idea of "subjective destitution," which is the final stage in overcoming a traumatic experience in accordance with the precepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Through the acceptance of the

impossibility of fully recuperating or representing the "real/trauma" or the "proper name" of the experience, the victim no longer conceives of him/herself as a subject seeking this "loss," is no longer "subjected" to its influence, and is able to move on with his or her life. It is this concept of "subjective destitution" that is activated by Avelar (*The Untimely Present*) and Moreiras (*Tercer Espacio*) as a way to overcome both the individual and collective trauma of "dictatorship" through an allegorical "critical melancholia" (Avelar) or an unfinished "duelo del duelo" (Moreiras). Both authors call for literary production that "mourns" both "the need and impossibility" to represent the "truth" about traumatic experience as a way to produce postdictatorial memories in a new language that is not subjected within the narrative discourse established by the military regime. Both critics present the work of writers such as Diamela Eltit (*Lumpérica, Los vigilantes*), Tununa Mercado (*En estado de memoria*), and Ricardo Piglia (*La ciudad ausente*) as models to follow for a postdictatorial literature that creates the conditions of possibility for alternative individual and collective memories about the past through unfinished mourning and desubjectification.

Avelar maintains that all mourning requires a "desubjectifying gesture" to displace memory from an individual "prison house" of trauma towards a collective engagement with the past (*TUP* 135), much in the same vein that Andreas Huyssen warns against collapsing memory into trauma, which eliminates the political influences and intersubjective relationships with representations of the past. While it is clearly important to consider effects of the violence of the dictatorships from the perspective of trauma studies, it is also necessary to consider how this displacement from individual

"mourning" to collective memory takes place, how individual memories interact and are shared between different subjects in the postdictatorship. To consider the social construction of cultural memory in the postdictatorship requires us to place the limits of the psychoanalytical approach (trauma, mourning, etc.) in dialogue with the limits of other theoretical approaches for, as Brett Levinson argues, "The study of postdictatorship, of community after disaster, or of radical injustice is the exposure of every discipline to its limit and thus to the need of other disciplines" (Levinson 54). Gareth Williams' analysis of Piglia's *La ciudad ausente*<sup>103</sup> in *The Other Side of the Popular* offers an intriguing way to engage the limits of the concept of "allegorical mourning" offered by Avelar by focusing on the interaction of multiple subjects with this "impossibility" to fully represent a traumatic experience, what Williams describes as the "shared" relationship to this representational fissure. This allows us to explore how cultural production that utilizes desubjectification (such as *Los planetas*) can activate residual effects of dictatorship (those that are impossible to represent) in new ways that allow for intersubjective connections with the experiences of the past in the present.

A key element of Piglia's novel is a "narrative machine," adapted from Macedonio Fernandez's novel *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna*, that takes in multiple, individual stories (both true and fictional) and continuously produces new narratives by mixing the

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<sup>103</sup>While I do not have space to enter into an in-depth analysis of *La ciudad ausente* here, the novel is often considered one of the best examples of postdictatorial literature in Argentina, particularly for its attempt to articulate a narrative in a language that elides the dominant discursive system of the postdictatorship. Both Williams (*The Other Side of the Popular*) and Avelar (*The Untimely Present*) have written excellent critical analyses of *La ciudad ausente*, focusing on this concept of "de-subjectifying" memory through mixing multiple narratives about the past. While both make many of the same arguments regarding the novel, William's focus on the "shared" relationship to the limits of representation better connects with my approach to studying the intersubjective relationships that influence cultural memory, which is why I have chosen to focus on his study of the novel here.

names, plots, and other elements of the original stories. We can consider this as the desubjectification of memory, as individual experiences interact with one another and are continuously reshaped in the production of "myths and of images creating and re-creating collective cultural memory" through which "[t]he machine produces, from within the unfolding and expansion of its differential narratives, the promise of a common plot, and, therefore, the grounds of a limitless future" (Williams 162-163). The government (representative of postdictatorial Argentina) notes the danger in the future commonality of the narratives produced by the machine, particularly those that point to the torture, murder, and "disappearances" of the past, and order the machine to be shut down and hidden in the basement of a museum. The machine understands what is happening, and at the end of the novel combines the voices of all the dead female characters whose stories she (la máquina) has reproduced into a new narrative telling of her own demise. In this sense, the machine uses the theme of "disappearance" for all the female characters to generate a common plot uniting them at the end of the novel. Yet, these voices are not speaking subjects, they are dead, and while it is impossible to fully represent their experience through language, the machine enacts their traces, their memories, for new uses in the present. As Williams concludes: "The novel ends, then, with a sharing, but not with a constituted communion. On the contrary, what is shared by all is a limit that opens them (and the novel itself, and, therefore, literature itself) to being-in-common as being-for-other and through others" (*TOS* 169).

We can observe a similar desubjectification of memory in *Los planetas* through S's reproduction of stories told by M and M's dad, which also seep into to his own

memory narrative. The content of S's narrative maintains a dialogue with the stories of M and M's dad, as ideas from each are often invoked by S's reflections on the past, particularly those having to do with absence/presence, "truth," and the urban spaces of Buenos Aires. As the novel proceeds, the stories of M and M's dad begin to bleed into S's narrative, and the reader is often unaware whether the narrative is S's memory, his interpretation of the past, or a reproduction of one of the other stories. An excellent example of this are the sections about a man named Grino, the first character that appears in *Los planetas*. The novel begins, "Sueño, pesadilla, verdad. Para Grino esta serie se cumplió como si hubiera sido una promesa fiel, y no un sueño" (LP 15), and the reader finds Grino reflecting on a dream that he had a few days earlier about watching a young girl climb a tree and then fall to the ground, injuring her "beautiful" and "attractive" legs. Then we come to find out that his dream had just become a reality, he had just watched the same girl fall from a tree, causing him to reflect on the power of dreams and their ability to influence reality. Grino then compares the girl's legs to the photographs of swimmers from his high school that he used to look at when he was younger, while revisiting the scene that he had just witnessed again. The next sentence induces a break in the narrative, "Algo ocurre y el escenario se transforma. La detonación se produce puntual" (LP 16), and then S's narrative about the explosion in P and M's disappearance begins, leaving the readers to wonder about Grino's role in the novel.

Grino next appears on page 161, in the Second Story by M's Dad that S reproduces in his narrative, and the readers may initially miss the connection due to the lack of importance that the character has held up till that point in the novel. Through the

story told by M's dad during one of their jaunts around Buenos Aires looking for his stolen car, readers find out that Grino was unemployed and was a closet alcoholic for years. He finally gets a job as a guard at a warehouse, where he spends his days thinking about the past, allowing the occasional truck driver through, and watching a young girl attempt to climb a tree. It is here where the readers make the connection to the beginning of the novel, especially at the end of M's dad's story where Grino wakes up after having a dream about watching the young girl fall from the tree. In his dream he is again looking not so innocently at the girl's legs when she falls, and he does not get up to help her, fearing that he would be blamed for her injury and lose his job regardless if he helped her or not. When he wakes up, he is overcome with guilt, and M's dad concludes his story by saying, "Al revés de como sucede siempre, en este caso el sueño rompe el hechizo de la realidad. Así comienza su temporada en las vías" (*LP* 167). While this conclusion to the story about Grino brings the reader back to the first pages of the novel (though the importance of Grino is still unclear within S's narrative), the reference to the beginning of his life on the "train tracks" causes the reader to connect this story to the first story told by M's dad, which begins "Amparado en la oscuridad de las vías, un violador consumió la violación" (*LP* 154). It is here that one begins to see a connection between Grino and the other stories told throughout the novel: M's dad tells a story about the unnamed rapist just before they witness the murder of the man who raped his daughter (and just after they saw him running through the street with his pants down). He tells the story about Grino's life as an alcoholic immediately after they witness a car crash, where they assume that one of the drivers was drunk. Grino briefly appears for a final time near the end of the

novel as a part of S's memory narrative, reflecting on the inability of photographs to represent "truth," which connects to similar comments by M and S earlier in the novel.

The inclusion of Grino within different narrative voices and for different purposes within the novel exemplifies the same desubjectification of memory represented by the "narrative machine" in Piglia's *La ciudad ausente*. A name that S first heard in a story told by M's dad when he was a child enters into his own narrative, mixing memories and subjective voices as S narrates the effects of M's disappearance on his life in the present. The description of Grino's daily activities while working as a guard in the story told by M's father provides us with a metaliterary clue to his role in the novel:

ocupaba su jornada pensando en las mismas cosas, por lo general del pasado, hechos o recuerdos que no necesariamente debían pertenecerle, les podían haber sucedido a otros [...] Llega un momento en que es vano localizar los recuerdos [...] Los recuerdos propios o ajenos no se dividían; pese a carecer de un pasado común, los orígenes estaban tan ocultos en la memoria que la propiedad. (*LP* 163)

While thinking about the past, Grino does not differentiate between his individual memories and the experiences of others, which he has incorporated as part of his own memory. This reflects the constant interaction between individual memories and collective discourse about the past that such authors as Mieke Bal and Elizabeth Jelin argue make cultural memory a space of continuous negotiation in the present. The intersubjective nature of memory influences all representations of the past, as the most intimate individual memories are shaped by interactions with "others" within social

structures that are susceptible to the influence of alternative individual or collective experiences.

In the same fashion, S incorporates stories told by M and M's dad during his childhood into his own narrative about the past, a desubjectifying maneuver that produces a commonality between the memories of "self" and "other" that leads to a "being-in-common as being-for-other and through others," as argued by Williams. We can not consider S's memory narrative solely as an individual, melancholic narrativization to overcome a past trauma because his memories of M constantly interact with and are informed by his contact with "others" in both the past and the present: M's Dad, M's Mom, M's childhood friend Sito, and Mirta (the state employee who attempts to help S change his name to M). While S can not fully understand the experience of these individuals, they all share the impossibility of not being able to fully explain M's disappearance and the commonality of the effects of his disappearance on their present lives (even though they may feel these effects differently). In this way, the novel does not attempt to uncover the "truth" about M's disappearance or construct him as an ideological symbol, but rather focuses on the shared effects of his absence for his family and friends, the "residuals" of the past felt in the postdictatorship. The articulation of S's relationship to both the impossibility to fully "restitute" M as a speaking subject and the effects of his disappearance on the present creates a shared "limit-experience," both within the novel and for the readers, which allows for momentary connections to the individual and collective effects of the military dictatorship in the present and creates the possibility for a dynamic cultural memory of this time period.

### The Traces of the "Disappeared"

"Estamos condenados a la verdad, por eso también sujetos a su dominio - para mí el caso más tangible en esta circunstancia es precisamente M y su ausencia" (*LP* 109-10).

The "absent-presence" of M is a constant preoccupation for S, and he continuously refers to the void in his life as a result of M's disappearance. It is impossible for M to enter into the narrative as a speaking subject, and the reader can only grasp momentary glimpses of M through S's memories and reflections about M's disappearance in the present. As is the case throughout the novel, the childhood memories that S narrates are always perceived as premonitions of M's disappearance, even though S had no way of knowing that M would be kidnapped during the military dictatorship years later. An excellent example of this is a memory of M walking away from him and M's dad at sunset to get something during one of their many trips through Buenos Aires looking for M's dad's car:

M parecía una sombra recortada contra ese fondo [...] Así de por sí delgado, desde nuestra perspectiva M se tornó todavía más angosto. La luz intensa borroneaba su perfil [...] observamos con el padre su silueta, paulatinamente más estrecha [...] a su danza vacilante y a su transparencia [...] el mecanismo de la tarde por el que M se diluía [...] Ahora resultaría fácil interpretar estos incidentes como sueños y aquel violento, aunque fugaz, apogeo luminoso de M como la figuración anticipada de su ausencia. (*LP* 171-72)

In this scene, M appears as spectral figure<sup>104</sup>, a shadow with no distinguishing features, barely visible while he fades into the background from the perspective of S and M's dad. S's comment at the end of the quote sparks a reflection about M in the present, and how S still can not believe that M was "disappeared," even after so much time has passed and nothing has been able to "restitute his absence." The narration of this memory closes with S describing a sunset in Caracas that he witnessed "a few weeks ago" that created a similar effect of "transparence" for objects that were in front of him, which he explains, "No sé porqué, pero esto fue suficiente para que M apareciera en mi recuerdo" (*LP* 173). The ending of this section is unexpected, as it places the narrator outside of Argentina in Venezuela, which breaks from the images of Buenos Aires that are the central background for the novel and causes readers to think that perhaps S is writing while in exile.<sup>105</sup> More importantly, it demonstrates the ever-present "absence" of M on S's life, as an experience in the present immediately reminds him of a similar childhood memory of M, which he then re-connects to his disappearance and the effect that it has on his current life.

After reproducing the First Story told by M (about Sergio and Miguel, two boys who switch identities<sup>106</sup>), S reflects upon a conversation he had with M about the meaning of the story and then comments on M's belief system during their childhood, "Según su convicción más profunda [...] siempre la naturaleza conservaba para sí un

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<sup>104</sup> While I do not have the space to discuss this more deeply here, Derrida's notion of "specters" of the past that "haunt" the present is another common way to consider the effects of the "disappeared" that are felt in the postdictatorship.

<sup>105</sup> This also may be a moment of collapse between the author and the narrator, as Chejfec lived in Venezuela for many years, which can further augment the "testimonial" nature of the novel for the reader.

<sup>106</sup> I analyze this story later in the chapter.

exceso que funcionaba por sustracción: nada era del todo, siempre existía algo por sumar, que al no estar restaba, y que era la circunstancia que en definitiva impedía la disolución" (LP 64). Here again, S draws from his memory of a childhood conversation with M to point towards the effects of his absence in the present, an "excess" that was "conserved" by nature. We can interpret the final part of the phrase as a direct reference to the "remnants" of M that remain despite his disappearance, the traces of his life that prevent the "dissolution" of his memory for his family and friends. Yet, if these "restos" are not present, if they are invisible, then S must look beyond physical objects such as M's childhood photograph in order to "see" his absence. For those who "survived" M, it is the interaction with (and within) the urban spaces of Buenos Aires that constitute the primary mechanism to engage the effects of M's "disappearance" on the present, which I now examine.

### **Space and Memory: The "Disappeared" Inscribed in the Cityscape of Buenos Aires**

"Ciudad, futuro, proliferación y verdad, los cuatro extremos de una cruz regular; en la parte superior figura la palabra 'ciudad', los otros tres se pueden intercambiar" (LP 138).

The majority of the memory narratives and present-day dialogues in *Los planetas* take place within specific urban spaces of Buenos Aires, and various streets, buildings, parks, and other "real" spaces of the city are mentioned throughout the novel. The urban landscape of the city holds a special importance in the relationship between S and M, as a large portion of their time together was spent wandering throughout the city immersed in conversation or helping M's dad to find his stolen car. After M's disappearance, it is S's interactions with these same places of the city that spark most of his memories about M, which often appear in contrast to his present experience in these spaces with others, such

as Sito and Mirta. For S, the "traces" of M are inscribed within the urban spaces of Buenos Aires and guide the way that he imagines the cityscape and his relationship to these places, what David Harvey calls an individual's "cartographic imaginary" of the city.<sup>107</sup> S's cartographic imaginary of Buenos Aires is formed through a nostalgic memory of his many trips through the city with M and M's father, which are the focus of an entire chapter of the novel and referred to within other sections of S's memory narrative. These adventures "vagabundeando" in search of M's dad's stolen car or discussing philosophical questions with M left an impression on S, who admits that he "deseaba más y más cuerdas por recorrer, estaba feliz de tener la oportunidad de deambular sin fronteras, como si el Gran Buenos Aires fuera ciertamente el territorio de la vastedad" (*LP* 143).

One example of the formation of S's cartographic imaginary of Buenos Aires is a discussion between M and S (narrated in the 3rd person) about the streets on which they were walking and the different modes of transportation that had been used before the *colectivos*:

Las líneas suprimidas perduraban como huellas abiertas, surcos vivos de la memoria, del mismo modo como los números antiguos, previos a las ordenanzas que los modificarán, o los que antes habían sido trolebuses o

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<sup>107</sup> While Harvey employs the idea of "cartographic imaginary" primarily to the representation of the urban processes associated with capitalism, I believe that it is a useful term to describe S's interactions with the urban spaces of Buenos Aires in the novel. I also argue that the connections between memory and the urban processes associated with neo-liberal capitalism is a fruitful space for research on the postdictatorial Southern Cone through the theoretical lens of critical geography. I have presented a paper on Luis Fernando Veríssimo's short-story *A mancha* approaching the memory of the dictatorship in Brazil from this angle, and will pursue the study of postdictatorial memory through critical geography in my future research.

tranvías. También los diferentes nombres de las mismas calles eran fuente de misterio y casualidad, y como sucede en tales casos el azar quedaba oculto bajo el arbitrario de la realidad. "San José es la continuación del Uruguay", repasaban; "Cobo de Caseros, Yatay de Muñiz", y así siguiendo. (*LP* 103)

This conversation evokes Andreas Huyssen's concept of considering urban spaces as "palimpsests" that produce multiple possible meanings depending on "memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is. The strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses, and heterotopias" (Huyssen *PP* 7). S and M recognize the traces of the past (trolleys, street cars, old house numbers) that have been covered up by the *colectivo* buses and new address systems, as well as the different streets that seemingly change names for no reason, within the real urban spaces of Buenos Aires. This allows them to perceive the different possible meanings that space can produce dependent upon the approach that humans take in interacting with the urban landscape, reinforcing the idea that space itself does not determine meaning. However, like other memories narrated in the novel, this conversation also foreshadows M's disappearance and S's "palimpsestic readings" of his "erasure" within the postdictatorial urban space.

After M's disappearance, S describes the change in his relationship with the cityscape of Buenos Aires and the power that space has in communicating the "absent-presence" of M:

El espacio, esa ilusión tan real, o más precisamente esa acotada ciudad habitual donde nuestra identidad recíproca se ponía de manifiesto, una vez que faltó M acabó borrado. Careció de sentido intentar recuperarlo con periódicas, inevitablemente anónimas y más o menos tristes visitas a su barrio, los alrededores de lugares frecuentados y demás porque, al contrario de los objetos - que, como las fotos, en cualquier momento son pasibles de transformarse en talismanes o reliquias-, el espacio tiene jerarquía inmaterial. El espacio es mudo, nada nos dice, carece de superficie y paradójicamente es el más perdurable de los tiempos.

(*LP* 105-06)

S is struck with the feeling that space has become "erased" and "silent" after M's disappearance; it appears to no longer have meaning because the cartographic imaginary that guided his relationship with the city, his friendship with M, no longer organizes his interactions with space. The comparison between the capacity of photographs and space to evoke S's memories of M is particularly important, for while he seems to privilege a physical object's capacity to contribute to remembrance by turning into "talisman" or "reliquias", he notes that space, while "immaterial," is also the most "durable" (both in length of time *and* in its capacity to evoke memory). By reading S's comments "otherwise," we note that the "silence" of space in fact speaks volumes to M's disappearance and the effect that it has on S's life. Where before, the urban spaces of Buenos Aires represented philosophical conversations between the two friends about the

never ending possibilities for the future, it now is an ever-present reminder of M's absence that forms a new guide for the way that S imagines and interacts with the city.

The "absent-presence" of M is so deeply inscribed on the cityscape for S that he even attributes his encounter with M's childhood neighbor Sito as the work of M manipulating their actions through space: "- y conocemos la importancia del espacio en la adopción de costumbres y en la interpretación de los hechos, muestra de lo cual es mi absoluta certeza de la intervención de M en el encuentro con Sito (como si verdaderamente fuera capaz de estar en cualquier lado)" (*LP* 125). While walking with Sito through many of the same urban spaces that S explored with M when they were younger, memories of M "flash up" for S as they pass by familiar streets or plazas. "Mientras atravesaba la plaza Constitución me acordé de una obra de teatro contada por M. En ella había algunos personajes interpretados sin embargo por una misma persona, como ocurría con Sito" (*LP* 202). Here we observe the capacities of S's interaction with urban spaces to not only evoke a memory of a story told by M, but immediately connect that story to his present experience in that space with others, such as the multiple personalities he observes in Sito. S mentions many places in the urban landscape of Buenos Aires as he narrates his walks with Sito (e.g. "en el cruce de Tucumán y Reconquista" (*LP* 115); "mientras caminábamos por Reconquista y después por Corrientes hasta el Obelisco" (*LP* 198); "Al llegar a la calle Esmeralda [...] lo vi alejarse hacia Lavalle" (*LP* 199); etc.), and his narrative continuously jumps between memories of M and his conversations in the present with Sito as they walk through these spaces.

As a result of this new cartographic imaginary, S's walks through the city after M's disappearance not only accentuate M's "absent-presence," but he also compares all interactions with others in the city to the memory of his travels throughout Buenos Aires with M. For example, while walking with Mirta (the state employee who attempts to help S change his name to M), S comments "Llegamos hasta Montevideo [street] sin decir nada. Yo pensaba en M, cuán distinta sería esa caminata si estuviera, del mismo modo como sería diferente la ciudad" (*LP* 218). Here, S begins to understand that the meanings produced by urban spaces are governed by the way that humans engage these spaces, noting that his experience within the city would be much different if he were walking with M (or at least with the version of M conserved in his childhood memories). It is soon after this that S decides to not change his name to M (which I analyze in the next section) and begins to seek out the "traces" of M that appear throughout Buenos Aires, recognizing that M's "absence" is inseparable from his presence, though it may be only in the form of memory. "En la calle Rodríguez Peña doblé hacia la derecha, quería pasar frente a la biblioteca del Maestro, donde alguna otra vez habíamos ido con M a consultar manuales [...] En ese momento advertí un estatuto diferente en la ausencia de M [...], no sólo es una pérdida sino también una amenaza" (*LP* 223). The "threat" that S refers to is the ability of his interactions with space to cause him to remember M at anytime, which is possible precisely because there is no physical object or language that can explicitly represent his disappearance. "[N]inguna marca ni señal ni muesca sobre piedra o metal que resista de manera perdurable el paso del tiempo, como la ausencia de M, la incógnita y el silencio sobre su suplicio y desgraciado final [...] como amenaza

[...] que nos espera [...] al doblar la esquina" (*LP* 224). Yet, if these "remnants" of the "disappeared" can only be alluded to by those who momentarily recognize their absence through memory, how can cultural memory be constructed that communicates the effects of the military dictatorships in the present and for future generations?

### **El Sobreviviente y el Muerto: The Remnants between S and M**

M y yo permanecemos callados, pero en el recuerdo del sueño ese silencio es la forma de expresar la verdad" (*LP* 232).

Giorgio Agamben's conceptualization "remnant" allows us to consider how cultural memories about the "disappeared" can be activated for new uses in the postdictatorship despite the impossibility of representing what happened to these individuals through language. Agamben's use of the term "remnant" to describe the "disjunctive space" that both connects and separates those who survived and those who were killed in Auschwitz is an intriguing theoretical tool to analyze the relationship between S and M presented in *Los planetas*. We can consider the "disappeared" of the military dictatorship in Argentina in a similar fashion as the "Muselmann" of the Nazi concentration camp - as their lives were also "made bare" and eliminated in an "unwitnessable" manner. The impossibility of fully knowing what happened to the over 30,000 individuals that were "disappeared" during the military dictatorship makes them the "complete witnesses" of these atrocities, as even truth commissions or confessions by military personnel can never fully reconstitute the experiences of those who were killed. By the same token, we can consider those who "survived" the dictatorship (those who were imprisoned, tortured, or exiled; or family and friends who were affected by these activities) as "witnesses." The ability of the "survivor" of the dictatorship to articulate a

testimony about the past is inseparable from the impossibility of speaking for those who were killed, a situation that is accentuated in case of the "disappeared" because of the lack of juridical knowledge of their experience. So the "remnants" between the "disappeared" and their families, friends, or others who suffered during the dictatorship create the conditions of possibility of a new language for the memory of the dictatorship (as called for by Richard and Avelar) that refers to the "impossibility" to represent the experience of the "complete witnesses." The testimony of the survivors can only focus on the *effects* of the "disappeared" on their lives, which allows for multiple possible connections to the narrative of these "witnesses" (located in the disjunction between the "survivor" and the "disappeared") and creates a space for a dynamic cultural memory about the dictatorship and its influence on present-day society.

The inseparable nature of the relationship between S and M is a theme that is revisited multiple times throughout *Los planetas*, either through explicit references by S or in metaphors sprinkled throughout the stories told by others and reproduced within S's narrative. A primary example of this is the use of the word "planets" to describe the strong connection between S and M during their childhood, which is also an obvious reference to the title of the novel. S narrates two particular instances where S and M accidentally met up with one another while wandering through Buenos Aires that reflect this connection between them. The first encounter happened after they had said goodbye, turned around and each walked in the opposite direction. Both S and M had become disoriented while walking in the city and ended up running into one another at a

magazine stand on a street. M begins their conversation by saying, "A veces pienso que andamos por la ciudad como planetas" (*LP* 110) and S finishes by commenting:

Así, el movimiento aparente de aquello que está en el cielo [...] se convirtió, por obra de casualidad, en clave y emblema de nuestro vínculo: pese a los vacíos y distancias que pudieran producirse, eventualmente [...] entre los dos, siempre habría una influencia recíproca, pautada por simples principios de equilibrio y compensación, ley suprema de nuestros cursos y recorridos. (*LP* 111)

S accentuates the importance of this "reciprocal" attraction between them through the memory of a second encounter with M, which was even more inexplicable than the first because neither were lost and both should have been on the other side of the city.

However, "guided by mysterious forces" they had met up with one another hours after having said goodbye, reiterating the importance of this strong connection with M for S. "Y esas fuerzas, vimos claro, eran la conjunción alrededor de cuyo poder gravitábamos sin pausa. Ese poder casi siempre nos unía, protegiéndonos de toda distancia" (*LP* 194).

The "gravitational" forces that pulled S and M together in these instances are further explained through the characterization of their meanderings through Buenos Aires as the orbiting of planets in such phrases as, "Las constelaciones que M y yo creíamos formar a lo largo del día conectando idealmente nuestros itinerarios, necesitaban precisamente del espacio de la ciudad para ser concebidas como tales; como las órbitas de los planetas" (*LP* 147) and "Errábamos como planetas, y nuestras órbitas pasaban bien lejos del radio de influencia de la actividad" (*LP* 149). As I analyzed above, the shared

experiences within the urban spaces of Buenos Aires were an important piece of S's relationship with M, and for this reason played an important role in evoking M's memory for S in the present. Yet, their imagined roles as "planets" orbiting within the "spatial system" of the city is a significant part of the way that S conceives of their relationship, both in the past and in the present. Through this metaphor of "planet," S considers his life as "inseparable" from M's, and that even after his disappearance, M continues to exert an "invisible" influence on S's life, which we can consider the residual effects of the dictatorship. "A veces me he preguntado si esta solidaridad pudiera seguir actuando [...]" Los cuerpos tienen entonces una categoría existencial negativa, definida por sus consecuencias o señales más que por su materialidad. Por lo tanto, la influencia sería invisible, pero efectiva" (*LP* 111).

The inseparability of the lives of S and M is further accentuated by multiple references to "parts of the whole" or "the other side" in the stories told by others that are reproduced by S in the novel. In the Second Story told by M that S reproduces in his narrative, there is different kind of reference to planet that also functions as a metaphor for the "inseparability" of the experiences of S and M. The story is about two nameless immigrants who are held in a "camp" between the Paraguayan and Argentina border for two weeks before being allowed to return to Argentina. During their journey, the immigrants encounter a young girl named Marta who was trying to find her family. After considering adopting her, they ultimately decide to not take her with them to Argentina, and they are left only with a mental image of her in their memories which leads them to question whether or not she actually existed:

Que Marta estuviera presente no a través de lo carnal y vivo, las personas, sino de las imágenes [...] Un mundo construido con la imaginación bien podría no acabar nunca [...] pero para perdurar era necesaria la calma del otro mundo, el verdadero y tangible, porque cuando explotara [...] la segunda cara del planeta, el hemisferio de la imaginación, se convertiría en la sustancia de la disgregación, el combustible de la flama. A veces verdad e imaginación podían parecer dos caras más o menos armoniosas, otras incluso podían convivir como dos ciclos de la misma cara, pero siempre la caída de una implicaba el ascenso de la otra, consumiéndose.

*(LP 96)*

While this story serves as a reference to the "absent-presence" of M, who only exists within the imagined space of S's memories, the metaphor of two "faces" of the same planet to describe the relationship between "truth" and "imagination" also represents the relationship between S and M. Both the tangible (presence) and the imagined (absence) worlds can exist in a harmonious relationship as two sides of the same planet, but both can not appear at the same time. In this sense, S serves as the "trace" of M in the wake of his disappearance, his survival and presence in the postdictatorship point towards the absence of M, while at the same time "consuming" his existence as memory.

A second reference to "traces" that combine to make a whole appears in a story that S overhears while waiting for Sito outside of a store during one of their walks in Buenos Aires years after M's disappearance. S overhears two girls discussing an ashtray

that had fallen and split into two while they were at a bar, and after looking everywhere, the people who dropped it were only able to find one piece - the other half had vanished:

"Pero es un cenicero grande, no puede desaparecer así como así". "No, es que no desapareció todo; desapareció la mitad [...] Al caer se rompió, buscaron por todos lados y faltaba la otra mitad [...] Nadie le hace caso a un cenicero, pero cuando falta la mitad todos se paralizan de terror." "¿Y por qué terror?" "Porque no vieron lo sobrenatural, sino sus efectos."

(LP 200)

Again, hidden inside one of the multiple stories within the main narrative of the novel, we find a reference to two pieces of a whole that serves as a metaphor for the relationship between S and M. The last part of the quote is especially important, as it notes this occurrence as a "supernatural" act and that the "witnesses" can only observe the *effects* of this event on the present - just as it is impossible to describe M's disappearance and his family and friends can only react to the residual effects of his absence on their lives. S immediately makes this connection, barely listening to Sito describe how he would react if he were unable to find the "other half" while thinking:

Nada impide tomar la desaparición de medio cenicero como una señal, un presagio, un efecto, una causa, una prueba o una reminiscencia [...] Así estaba, preguntándome por la naturaleza de un hecho imposible; y no solo eso, sino más: tratando de encontrar algún indicio que explicara su aparición en mi camino. (LP 202)

Once again, S connects something that he hears while walking through the city to the "impossible fact" of M's disappearance and the influence it has had on his life, imagining M as the missing piece of ashtray whose "absence" is felt in the present.

The presentation of S and M as "traces" of one another is repeated in the First Story of M that S reproduces in his narrative, which is about two best friends who exchange names and identities in order to play a trick on their parents. The two friends, Sergio and Miguel (a more than obvious reference to S and M) each go home in the place of the other one day after school and are surprised by the reaction of their parents, who accept each as their own child- creating a situation that is both "familiar y extraño a la vez" (LP 48).<sup>108</sup> The boys begin to take the place of the other while conserving their own identity, creating yet another situation where the absent "trace" of one was always already implicated in the presence of the other. "La identidad, [...] latía dentro de cada uno de una manera errática, iba de un cuerpo a otro, confundida entre nombres, recuerdos y creencias [...] Eran equivalentes. Decir *Sergio*, por ejemplo, significaba decir uno mismo y el otro a la vez; lo mismo sucedía al decir *Miguel*" (LP 53). At the end of the story, both boys fall into a river and drown, and M explains that the moral of the story has to do with the insecurity of one's own identity, which M connects to a group of orthodox Jews that the boys saw on the street, saying that they too are unsure of the origins of their identity.<sup>109</sup> In S's reflections upon the memory of this story, however, he maintains that

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<sup>108</sup> The narrator repeats this sentiment "familiar y extraño a la vez" throughout the novel, particularly when he is interacting with the urban spaces of Buenos Aires without M.

<sup>109</sup> While I do not have the space to discuss this in detail, the representation of Jewish identity is another major component of the novel. S and M are both Jewish, and there are multiple references to Yiddish, religious ceremonies, and the Jewish neighborhoods where S and M grew up. This, like in Brodsky's *Los compañeros*, provides another way for readers to connect to the memory narratives produced in the novel.

the moral was not that Sergio and Miguel had decided to exchange identities, it was that in doing so, "olvidaran la naturaleza profunda de la propia, el nombre" (*LP* 62). The fact that Sergio and Miguel were "traces" of one another was not problematic; it was the inability to mark a difference between them (presence of one, absence of the other) that caused their mutual erasure. This reference to marking difference with a "name" is key to interpreting S's desire to change his name to M, and his eventual decision to not collapse M's identity on to his own, maintaining the "disjunctive" space between them.

Near the end of the novel, S narrates the episode that he was "too embarrassed" to tell Sito about, his desire to officially change his name to M in the aftermath of his disappearance. In explaining his reasons for wanting to change his name, S states:

Ya que él había tenido la desdicha de ser muerto, ya que era él quien había sufrido el martirio, me pareció justo que yo, habiendo quedado vivo, compensara su ausencia volcando su nombre sobre el mío. Pero no lo pensaba solamente como una compensación; era, [...] un equilibrio que debía reestablecerse. Sentía que con M habíamos alcanzado una compenetración insólita y diversa, y que ella necesitaba restituirse aunque fuera de un modo puramente verbal o incluso nada más que figurado.

(*LP* 213)

In the analysis of this portion of S's narrative, it is important to consider the characterization of S and M throughout the novel that I described above: as "traces" of one another, as separate "planets" that gravitated towards each other, or as two parts that together formed a "whole." While the strong connection between S and M is repeatedly

demonstrated in the narrative, they are never presented as one in the same, and in fact the story about Sergio and Miguel serves as a warning as to what would happen if the "difference" between them was eliminated. This allows us to problematize Noble Novitzki's contention that S "strives literally to become his dead friend M" by becoming a writer and through "the extreme act of self denial" of changing his name, "to experience the end of his own name, the renouncing of his own experience" (Novitzki 1-2). In the above cited quote, S maintains that he wanted to change his name to M to re-establish the "equilibrium" and the "co-penetration" that he had with his friend, words that inherently require two individuals, not one.<sup>110</sup> S did not want to *become* M, he wanted to restore the connection that had always existed *between* them.

It is in fact this desire to maintain the relationship *between* them that S decides *not* to change his name to M at the end of the novel. "Todo podía ser muy paradójico, pero ante la posibilidad real de cambiar de nombre advertía mi propio temor [...] no por lo que pudiera pasar conmigo, sino por lo que pudiera sucederle a mi recuerdo de M, a él dentro mío" (LP 225). S recognizes that by collapsing M's identity onto his own, he will eliminate the difference between them, as well as his "testimony" about M contained in the memories of their times together. As Isabel Alicia Quintana argues, in order to keep M near him, but at the same time "outside" of him, M needed to continue to be "different" than S (Quintana 35). It is important to consider this "difference" not only in the sense of "mourning" the "loss" of M without "incorporating" it in order to overcome the traumatic experience, but also as Agamben's "remnant" space between *Sobreviviente* and *Muerto*.

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<sup>110</sup> Novitzki's translation of *compenetración* as "mutual understanding" also implies a relationship between two individuals.

In his explanation for wanting to change his name, S describes M as a "dead martyr," while referring to himself as "alive," the one who survived the dictatorship. Following Agamben, the "disjunction" between S and M, the "non-coincidence" of their experiences as "survivor" and "disappeared" makes them inseparable - S's narrative "testimony" about the effects of M's disappearance on his life is based upon the impossibility of M to speak about his experience. If S collapses this "remnant" by becoming M, his ability to bear witness to the effects of M's death and share this experience with others will disappear as well.<sup>111</sup>

### **Communicating the Impossibility of Representation**

The use of Agamben's "remnant" to analyze S's memory narrative in *Los planetas* allows us to consider how to transmit the memory of the "disappeared" to others and contribute to a dynamic cultural memory about the dictatorship and its effects on the present. An important piece of activating the residuals of the past for new uses in the present is communicating these experiences to others - testimonial narratives about the military dictatorship do not only function as a way to overcome individual (or collective) trauma, or point to the "impossibility of speech" of those who were killed, they are also used to make connections to other "survivors" as well as future generations. Brett Levinson's concept of the "limit-experience" as a response to the "radical injustices" suffered during the military dictatorships offers an effective way to build upon

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<sup>111</sup> At the end of the novel appears a type of postscript, called *Final*, where S mentions that he wakes up with "La estela de su cuerpo sobre el mío propio" (Chejfec *LP* 232), and then he proceeds to recount a dream where he was riding a train with M and they arrived at what they thought was Moreno station, but was in fact El Palomar, "Es El Palomar bajo el nombre de Moreno" (Chejfec *LP* 233). Here again, I argue that S is not dreaming about becoming one and the same with M, but rather, he perceives the "wake" of M, his "trace", upon his body. He does not see Moreno and El Palomar as the same, but as "traces" of one another.

Agamben's concept of "remnant" to analyze the intersubjective communication of experience represented in *Los planetas*. Levinson maintains that "radical injustices" are those crimes for which the victim can receive no equal compensation, and that the subject of "radical injustice" is located at the limits of the politics of representation, "precisely at the historical time and place of the absolute failure of convention" (*TEOL* 50). We can consider the "disappeared" as a subject of "radical injustice", and, as Levinson argues, the impossibility to fully represent the experience of the subjects of "radical injustice" through language is exactly what opens up the possibility of communication. The "unspeakable" is "the limit of speech which opens communication [...] the limit of language is not outside of language but belongs to its infrastructure [...] without an unspeakable, language and communication could not be possible" (*TEOL* 76). Paralleling Agamben's definition of "remnant," Levinson argues that this "shared, common, or liminal region-finitude" (*TEOL* 70) of the "unspeakable" is what both separates and connects the limits of "self" from "other," and that the way to enact a "politics of radical injustice" in the postdictatorship is to explore the limit-experience of self, to "push the self towards the other" in order to "*articulate* their relation," which he maintains "might also represent the ontological foundation of important postdictatorship communal or political activity" (*TEOL* 51-52).<sup>112</sup>

This is exactly what S attempts to do throughout *Los planetas* - he articulates his relationship with M through the shared, disjunctive space that binds and separates them

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<sup>112</sup> Gareth Williams' concept of making connections to others through the "limit of experience and of language that both joins and separates" (*TOS* 169) and the formation of a "negative community" offers a similar way to analyze the transmission of memory in the postdictatorial Southern Cone as Levinson.

as "survivor" and "disappeared." He pushes himself to the limits of representation by evoking possible signs of M's pending "disappearance" in his memories of the times they shared together as children, and even imagines that M's body was among the human remains found after the explosion in P as a way to confront the impossibility of knowing the exactly what happened to M. Yet in the end, S recognizes that he can not reconstitute M as a speaking subject, he can only reflect upon the residual effects of M's disappearance on his life in the present as a "survivor" bearing witness to the impossibility of speaking. S can not represent the "other" through language, he can only perceive the traces of M that appear in the "remnant" space that binds them. By articulating his relationship with M's absence throughout the novel instead of attempting to fill in the "unspeakable" with an ideological or political representation of the "disappeared," S's narrative creates the possibility for both the readers and the other characters in the novel to interact with his memories and make their own connections to the effects of the dictatorship on the present. This exploration of the limits between "self" and the "other" is not only limited to S and M, but we can observe it in S's interactions with other characters in the novel, which exemplify the type of "communal" activity in the postdictatorship that may provide a space to deal with the "unresolvable limit of radical injustice" described by Levinson.

An excellent example of this is S's description of his first encounter with M's mom, R, after his disappearance. At first, S did not want to talk to R, as he knew that it would immediately conjure the memory of M and the pain that his disappearance caused them, so he turned his head away and avoided her as they crossed paths on the street. S immediately felt bad for having avoided R in this way, so he ran around the block in the

opposite direction so that their paths would cross again, and this time they interacted for the first time since M's disappearance, which S describes as the moment that he fully understood that he had "lost M forever." This provokes a "silence" in him when faced with an "unspeakable" past:

Otra vez me encontraba sin habla. Pensé que ella, ante quien yo no podía decir nada porque ignoraba todo, en especial aquello que en ese momento ocurría en su interior, al pedir que visitáramos [...] ponía de manifiesto una sabiduría superior, certera, en buena medida porque obviaba el silencio del que yo no podía liberarme [...] era ella que me había rescatado del silencio mientras la abrazaba. (*LP* 38)

This description of their encounter demonstrates Levinson's call to push oneself towards the "other" to articulate an "unspeakable" past through communication, even though this interaction was ruled by silence. S states that he had no way of knowing the feelings inside of R at the moment of their meeting, but he knows that the absence of M is what connected them, and the act of embracing one another both physically and metaphorically pushes each towards the "other", an act that S maintains "rescued" him from his silence as a response to M's disappearance. S and R are connected through their shared impossibility to fully know what happened to M and the limits of only being able to reflect upon the effects of his disappearance on their lives in the present.

The relationship between Sito and S offers a similar example of the shared "limit-experience" of fully restituting M's memory through language, as it is his disappearance that joins them years later, "la ausencia de M, claramente omnipresente- tanto que fue,

era y sigue siendo la circunstancia que hizo posible que nos conociéramos-, le otorgaba a aquel encuentro un aire de tristeza, desconfianza e incluso despropósito" (*LP* 115).

While noting that it is their common experience of M's "absence" that unites him to Sito (as with R), the initial effects of this bond result in a mutual distrust with one another. S mentions multiple times that he did not believe a word that Sito was saying, and that Sito probably did not believe him either, and the thought even crosses S's mind that Sito was responsible for M's death. Despite the initial negative tenor of the reencounter, the shared experience of facing M's disappearance allows them to communicate with one another, even if they did not speak about M, or if they did, they were incapable of fully articulating the effects of his disappearance through language:

Tal como sucediera con la madre de M hace años [...] al reconocer con otras palabras que M no estaba [...] también Sito y yo jugábamos un papel ingrato [...] Frente a su desaparición, su ausencia, cualquier comentario, aunque no se refiriera a M, adquiriría un matiz inadecuado, impropio, como si un lastre le impidiera alcanzar una trascendencia real. (*LP* 115)

The shared experience of dealing with the "radical injustice" of M's disappearance, of only being able to articulate their individual relationship to the effects of this event on their lives, creates a space for a dynamic interaction with the experiences of the dictatorship in the present for S, R, and Sito. The intersubjective interaction with "remnant" space between their roles as "survivors" and M's role as "complete witness" reflect the type of dynamic reactivation of memory that may provide a way for new uses for the residuals of the past in the postdictatorship.

### **New Uses for Memory of the Disappeared in the Present**

S's comments about his interactions with Sito many years after M's disappearance point to a new use for the memories of M in the present:

Antes dije que la intervención de Sito fue decisiva para que escribiera todo esto. Ahora veo que, más allá de sus palabras, también Sito fue importante al pagar los cafés. Puede parece ridículo, inapropiado, probablemente se lo podría considerar de muchos modos, pero el gesto de Sito sirvió para hacerme sentir que de M podía provenir algo bueno, y que ello no debía pertenecer necesariamente al pasado. (*LP* 124)

The last part of this quote is important, as it expresses the hope that something good could come out of S's memories of M and that his death did not only pertain to a static moment in the past. The shared connection to M's disappearance between Sito and S allows them to form a friendship in the present, despite the mutual distrust each has for the other, as they each begin to interact with the urban spaces of Buenos Aires again. This occurs between S and R as well, as each is able to communicate their engagement with the effects of M's disappearance through an embrace, even though they are unable to fully express their experience through language. By recognizing the impossibility to fully represent the experience of the disappeared and instead focusing on the effects their absence has on those who "survived," *Los planetas* offers the opportunity to articulate the *memory* of the disappeared in new ways, outside of the (counter)hegemonic ideological discourses that typically govern the way that the military regime is discussed in the postdictatorship. This creates a space to activate the "residuals" of the dictatorship for

new uses, both within the space of the novel and for the readers engaging this narrative, and offers the possibility of a dynamic relationship between the dictatorial past and the socio-political contexts of the present in Argentina.

As I argued in my analysis of Brodsky's *Los compañeros* and Bracher's *Não falei*, one of the new uses for memories about those who suffered during the most recent military governments of the Southern Cone is to deconstruct the mythic representation of this time period that is often enacted in postdictatorial discourse. In *Los planetas*, S doesn't transform M into a symbolic hero of "resistance" to the dictatorship nor attempt to incorporate M's disappearance into an ideological argument about this time period. Multiple comments on the politics of the 1960's and 1970's appear throughout S's memory narrative, particularly in the only conversation that he had with Sito where they explicitly discuss M's disappearance. The conversation begins with a critique of the armed-left in Argentina through a story told by Sito about one of his high school classmates, who was making bombs out of gas cans when he was captured by the military. "Todavía podía ver la consagración inocente que lo empujaba; su idea de la lucha armada, para la cual esos explosivos se fabricaban, como algo parecido a un carnaval, una competencia que los bandos dirimirían a sifonazos", leading him to forget, "aspectos un tanto más decisivos de la guerra" (LP 119). In his critique of the "innocence" of many armed guerrillas, Sito seems to intimate that while the repressive actions of the military were not justified, the activities of his ex-classmate were in fact the cause of his kidnapping, an idea that S had alluded to earlier in the novel "Muchos podían pensar que el secuestro de un militante político no se justificaba, pero la causalidad,

aunque cruel y asesina, no dejaba de operar como tal" (*LP* 42). During this conversation, S also confirms M's "political innocence" at the time of his disappearance, that he did not participate in the activities of the militant left and was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time, which serves as an indictment of the indiscriminate violence used by the military regime during the dictatorship.

Like Gustavo in *Não falei*, M's disappearance is presented as a critique of the violent activities of both the armed left and the military regime, and in this way elides the postdictatorial discursive logic that traditionally governs the way this time period is discussed. S is in fact very critical of the historical narratives that are typically presented about the military dictatorship, which often substitute critical reflection on the violence of the time period with political ideology:

Algunas veces, como puse, me he preguntado si alguien llegado el caso de que esté leyendo esto, no pensará que sugiero, o quiero descubrir, en la imagen de M como emblema, la razón o enigma sobre las cuales la gente boga desde aquellos años; pero la verdad es que hay poco para proponer y aún menos para descubrir. Entonces el sentido histórico no estaba en la profundidad, era superficial, estaba a la vista de todos saturado de muertes y se desplegaba según una lógica transparente y equívoca, porque era la respuesta práctica al otro sentido histórico, eventualmente legítimo, que luchaba por manifestarse. (*LP* 183-84).<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> The majority of S's reflections on violence in this part refer to the years just before the start of the military dictatorship, which were also filled with violence on both the political left and the right, reflecting a common argument that the violence of the dictatorship was in fact a continuation (on a much larger scale

S does not intend to present M as an "emblem", a symbol of "victim" or "hero" during the military dictatorship, which would appropriate his death within an ideological discourse about the past, what he later calls "la sustitución violenta y trivial producida en el llamado sentido histórico" (LP 187). Much like Marcelo Brodsky's *Los compañeros*, Chejfec "de-mythifies" the "disappeared," refusing to represent them as mythic symbols and instead focuses on the *effects* of their disappearance in the present, which offers the possibility to activate their memory in new ways that are outside of the discursive logic of the (post)dictatorship.

### **Conclusion - Erasure of the Past**

"En la Avendia Belgrano pensé en el recuerdo cruel que quienes sobreviven poseen de quienes no sobrevivieron, no tanto porque, al fin y al cabo como todos, remite hasta desaparecer, sino porque se *distorsiona* y con su transformación cambian las cosas, abandonándolas así antes de tiempo. Este hecho que no es más que la mecánica del recuerdo y se produce siempre, en el caso de M adquiriría una especie de torsión dramática, doblemente cruel, al no haber lugar alguno donde asignar su presencia, o sea su cuerpo" (LP 125).

After deciding to not change his name to M and instead seeking out his traces throughout the urban spaces of Buenos Aires, S comments at the end of his narrative that in the years since his disappearance "ha sido inevitable ir perdiéndole el rastro a las huellas de M" and that he notices "una nostalgia cada vez más diluida, el eco de una presencia paulatinamente más delgada" in the urban spaces that they explored during their childhood (LP 226). S affirms that forgetting is an inherent part of memory, and as a result, one should always be wary of memories and their (in)capacity to represent

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and primarily perpetrated by the State) of the violence of the years immediately prior to the military government. This and other sections of S's narrative also offer a critique of the "complicit" actions of all Argentines for not acting to stop the violence of the dictatorship, which Quintana points out in her study of the novel "Ciudad y memoria en *Los planetas* de Sergio Chejfec." These perspectives on the violence prior to the dictatorship, the concept of "dos demonios" (armed-left and military right), and the "complicity" of all Argentines in allowing the "disappearances" by the State to occur are explored in detail in Hugo Vezzetti's *Pasado y Presente: Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina*.

"truth" about the past - just as he has alluded to throughout the novel. This is an important moment in the novel, as S realizes that not only can he not fully explain the circumstances surrounding M's disappearance, but he also can not fully reconstitute M as a speaking subject through memory. Faced with the inevitability of forgetting as an inherent part of remembering, while recognizing that memories about M (both his own and those of Sito, M's mom R, and M's dad) are all that remains following his disappearance, S closes by asking:

si este es el futuro del pasado, ir mezclándose con las formas del olvido, distorsionando cada vez más la evocación hasta borrar las mismas huellas que dejamos y nos dejan [...] me pregunto entonces por el verdadero papel nuestro [...] pienso que si esto pertenece, como parece, al orden natural de las cosas se necesitaría objetarlo con un nuevo argumento, con otras pruebas y con diferente tipo de acción. (*LP 227*)

Here, while recognizing the inherent gaps in memory and the "natural" processes that will cause him to "forget" more and more about M's life, S ends by articulating a call for a different approach to engaging the dictatorial past and activating memory for new uses in the present.

This begs the question, what does this "new consideration" for the "future of the past" look like? In what ways can memories about the dictatorship be used for a "different type of action" in the postdictatorship? Chejfec himself offers artistic cultural production as way to "intervene" on the past and activate memory for new uses in different social and political contexts in his talk at Hood College:

Quiero decir, las propuestas estéticas no son subsidiarias de la historia concreta ni de los contenidos. Feliz o lamentablemente, ocurre al revés; la historia que queremos representar a veces es una excusa sencilla y fundamental para intervenir sobre la realidad de un modo específico. El pasado se nos escapa, aunque haya sido terrible; y a las sociedades les pasa igual, queda la literatura para tratar de insinuarlo hacia el futuro.

(LMD 166)

As I have argued throughout this chapter, *Los planetas* itself presents new uses for memory narratives in the postdictatorship that "insinuate the past towards the future." In refusing to fill in the inherent gaps of representation and memory with political ideology and instead *accentuating* these fissures, Chejfec constructs a narrative that forces readers to actively engage these gaps to make meaning. By using the memories of a "survivor" of the dictatorship to point towards the "unspeakable" experiences of the "disappeared," the author constructs a type of testimonial narrative that does not intend to represent the "truth" about the past, but rather its unarchivability- as argued by Agamben in his notion of "remnant." The characters in the novel are only able to articulate their relationship to the effects of M's absence, which pushes themselves towards the "other," creating a collective based on their shared connections to the "limit-experience" of the disappeared - following the ideas of Williams and Levinson. This opens the space for an intersubjective interaction with the effects of the dictatorship, both within the novel and for the readers, and creates the conditions of possibility to activate residual memories for

new uses in the present and maintain a dynamic connection to the past through cultural memory in the postdictatorship.

## CONCLUSION

As I finish this manuscript, I am struck by the recent decision (May 2010) by the *Superior Tribunal de Justiça* (Supreme Court) in Brazil regarding amnesty: the court has ruled that military personnel can *not* be tried for crimes committed during the military dictatorship, continuing the institutionalized "forgetting" of this time period in Brazil. This most recent incident amplifies the importance of cultural production that seeks to provide a space for a shared, dynamic interaction with the dictatorial past, where the inherent fissures in memory are accentuated and spectators or readers are able to actively interrogate these gaps in order to make meaning. I argue that this creates a more meaningful engagement with the era of dictatorship in both Brazil and Argentina, allowing for multiple ways to connect to the diverse experiences of this time period without reifying the ideological perspectives of the supporters of the military regime nor the ex-militants of the left that continue to influence the way that the dictatorship is typically discussed today. Cultural manifestations that critically explore the negotiated spaces of memory and meaning offer the opportunity to engage "residual" experiences that are often excluded from or appropriated within the dominant discourses about the past. These "silenced" memories may provide new interpretations of the past, serve to disrupt the "accepted" discourses about dictatorship, or could be enacted as part of a new social project in the present. Cultural production that recognizes the impossibility to fully represent the past through language (oral, visual, written, corporal, etc.) resists articulating a narrative "truth" about the military regimes, and instead offers a way for spectators or readers to create relationships to the *effects* of an "unrepresentable" past

through diverse connections based on their interest in engaging the memory of the dictatorship, their individual experiences and cultural knowledge, and a dialogue with "other" interpretations of this time period.

Yet, postdictatorial cultural production can also offer a "static" memory narrative about the dictatorship, that does not provide the opportunity to critically reflect upon the experiences of this time period nor the influences that it has on the present. This can even occur in projects that are attempting to articulate a counter-memory about dictatorship and seek to "rescue" perspectives that are excluded from the "official" version of events. To exemplify this, I engaged in an extensive analysis of the construction of mythic heroes of "united resistance" to the dictatorship by the curators of the *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit. I demonstrated the ways that the exhibit idealizes the activities of students, workers, and armed-revolutionaries during this time period, and ignores ideological differences both between and within these groups by conflating them into a memory narrative articulated from the perspective of the militant left. I also criticized the way that this exhibit appropriates those who were tortured, killed, or "disappeared" during the dictatorship as symbols within a (counter)hegemonic discourse of "resistance," which ultimately displaces the lives of these individuals and the effects that their suffering has had on their family and friends in favor of a celebratory narrative of militant mobilization against the military regime. I concluded that the language used in both the visual and textual narratives of the exhibit participates within the same discursive logic of "war" that was consecrated by the military regime, and thus implicitly reifies the "official" version of this time period as a logical possibility, and

prevents the memories that it purports to "rescue" from being activated in new ways in the present.

In contrast to the *ADNB* exhibit, I offered Marcelo Brodsky's *Los compañeros* as an example of the capacity of visual culture to create a space of shared, dynamic memory about the military dictatorship in Argentina. I argued that Brodsky's "aesthetic intervention" onto an official school photograph transformed it from a static representation of a moment in the past into an interactive image that connected the past to the present for both the individuals in the picture and the viewers of the exhibit. The subtle notes that Brodsky wrote about the lives of each student further contribute to the dynamic nature of his work, as they can cause spectators to rethink their initial interpretations in dialogue with both the comments about other students and the collective narrative that Brodsky constructs for the class as a whole. The appearance of *Los compañeros* in multiple transnational contexts has multiplied the possible interpretations of the image and the ways that spectators can connect to the representation of the effects of the dictatorship, taking Brodsky's "memory art" out of the national context in Argentina and inserting it into a dialogue on the effects of violence and repression at a global scale. Finally, I also maintained that Brodsky "de-mythified" the "disappeared" students in his class by refusing to construct them as symbols within a totalizing political discourse of resistance against the dictatorship. By choosing to focus on the human element of their lives and the effects of their disappearance on their family and friends, Brodsky offers a new way for spectators to engage and connect with the "unrepresentable" figures of Argentina's dictatorial past.

Beatriz Bracher's novel *Não falei* also serves to "de-mythify" some of the iconic figures of the militant left, particularly the idealized "worker" and the heroic "armed revolutionary." Through the constant criticism of the totalizing logic of the militant left and their lack of understanding for the daily lives of most "workers," Bracher deconstructs the image of a "unified left" fighting the military regime that we observe in *ADNB* exhibit. The novel's exploration of "betrayal" in connection to the expectations to resist torture within revolutionary ideology serves to fracture the image of the armed-left as "heroes" fighting against the repression of the dictatorship in the name of democracy. In addition, the interaction between contradictory narrative voices that appear in the novel, as well as the narrator's inability to fully remember his experiences during the dictatorship reflect the inherent fissures in all representations of the past, and create a space for readers to actively engage the narrative gaps in order to make meaning. I concluded my analysis of the novel by arguing that since Gustavo encloses his entire narrative within the realm of "impossibility" - not for his inability to speak but for the incapacity of others to understand - we can consider his memory discourse as "allogical." In this way, the narrative resists appropriation within the discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship, but at the same time it destabilizes this discursive system and offers an alternative way to interpret the memory of the dictatorship.

The theme of the "disappeared" returns in Sergio Chejfec's novel *Los planetas*, but the focus this time is on the way that his narrative constructs an intersubjective relationship to these "unrepresentable" experiences during the military dictatorship in Argentina. The characters in the novel are all faced with the impossibility to explain the

circumstances surrounding the disappearance of M, and are only left with the ability to articulate a relationship to the effects of his absence in the postdictatorial present. The "residuals" of M appear primarily within the urban landscape of Buenos Aires, sparking memories by S about childhood experiences with his best friend, which are becoming more and more difficult to remember. The shared impossibility to fully represent the experiences of the "disappeared" creates a space for both the characters and the readers of the novel to communicate about the effects of the military dictatorship without participating in the dominant system of representation in the postdictatorship. Much like Brodsky's *Los compañeros*, the "disappeared" are not presented as symbolic victims of the military regime within a counter-hegemonic political discourse, and I concluded that this "de-ideologizes" the "disappeared" and offers a new way to engage the "remnant" experiences of the dictatorship and activate them in different social contexts to critically reflect upon the experiences of the dictatorial past and the effects that it has had on the present.

Through my analysis of Marcelo Brodsky's "memory art" and the novels by Beatriz Bracher and Sergio Chejfec, I have presented three examples of postdictatorial cultural production that offer innovative techniques to articulate memory discourses about the dictatorships in Argentina and Brazil that de-stabilize the "accepted" ways to talk about the dictatorial past. A common element of the work of Brodsky, Bracher, and Chejfec is the attempt to "de-mythify" and "de-ideologize" the experiences of this time period by articulating memory narratives that resist appropriation within the dominant discursive system in the postdictatorship. All provide a space to engage the dictatorial

past from multiple perspectives without constructing a singular narrative "truth" about this time period. They recognize the inherent fissures that accompany any representation of experience and instead of attempting to "fill-in" these gaps with political or ideological discourses, they *accentuate* the impossibility to fully represent experience through language. This creates a space for a more meaningful engagement with the "residual" memories of the past and the opportunity to activate them within different social contexts for new uses in the present through dynamic interactions with memory and meaning.

The capacity of cultural objects, such as those analyzed above, to allow for new uses of memory in different social situations is one of the key features of their potential to create dynamic interactions between the past and the present. The attempt to activate the memories of violent repression during the military regimes in order to strengthen a commitment to human rights in the present is one of the goals often articulated in postdictatorial cultural production (as we observed in the *ADNB* exhibit). This is a laudable objective, considering the continued use of torture, kidnapping, and other forms of violence against marginalized groups (poor, women, indigenous populations, immigrants, etc.) in present-day Brazil and Argentina. Reflecting on the situation in postdictatorial Argentina, Sandra Lorenzano maintains that photographic images of the "desaparecidos:"

remind us that the struggle for memory is the struggle for justice. They will be there forever, calling to us from the death notices that appear in the newspaper every day of the year. The 30,000 victims of the last military dictatorship are joined today by those killed by the police during the

historic days of December 19 and 20, 2001, by those who have fallen victim to the '*gatillo fácil*,' by the mafias that protect the privileged [...]

Despite President Néstor Kirchner's commitment to human rights, despite the upturn in the national economy, repression continues to appear throughout the country. (TR 258)

Activating the memory of the "disappeared" or testimonial narratives about torture, murder, or exile during the military dictatorships for new uses in the present must resist the temptation to portray the individuals who suffered these atrocities as ideological symbols within the (counter)hegemonic discursive logic of memory in the postdictatorship. As we have seen, this displaces the suffering of these individuals and the *effects* of these violent acts on the present, which I maintain weakens the capacity to connect to the dictatorial past for those who have no personal connections to this experience. It is for this reason that memory narratives that seek to "rescue" the "residual" experiences of the past need to be dynamic, and not merely articulate a historical (counter)narrative that is frozen within a moment of the past. Cultural production that seeks to intervene on the "forgotten" violence of the past in order to alter the trajectory of the present needs to articulate memory narratives in a way that connects to current lived-experience in the different social contexts, so that spectators or readers can make meaningful connections to the experiences of the past, apply it to the reality of their everyday lives, and create the conditions of possibility to imagine a future where violence and human rights violations such as those committed during the military dictatorships will truly happen "nunca más/mais."

### **Future Research - Space: The Next Frontier of Postdictatorial Memory**

An important theme that appeared in all of the examples of postdictatorial cultural production that I examined in this dissertation project is the connection between space and memory, though I only explored this relationship in detail in Chejfec's novel and Brodsky's photography. The *A ditadura no Brasil* photography exhibit was presented within the ex-torture and detention center of DEOPS; Brodsky's *Los compañeros* has been exhibited in museums, art galleries, cultural centers, school buildings, and other spaces; Gustavo mentions multiple "real" spaces in São Paulo in his memory narrative in *Não falei*; and the urban landscape of Buenos Aires plays a central role in Chejfec's *Los planetas*. I believe that the relationship between space and memory is a fruitful avenue for the examination of the production, transmission, and reception of memory narratives about the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone, and I plan to take my future research in that direction. I have previously completed an article manuscript drawing from critical geography (primarily the theoretical contributions on the "creative-destructive" processes associated with neoliberal capitalism and the concept of "cartographic imaginary" developed by David Harvey) to analyze the connections between urban space and postdictatorial memory in Luís Fernando Veríssimo's short-story *A mancha*. I seek to continue this type of research on the representation of urban space and postdictatorial memory in novels, films, and other cultural objects. The work of Andreas Huyssen has again been influential in my pursuit of further investigation of cultural production through a spatial lens, as his approach to studying urban spaces as palimpsests allows for interesting ways to examine the production and reception of

memory discourses in urban space, arguing that "techniques of reading historically, intertextually, constructively, and deconstructively at the same time can be woven into our understanding of urban spaces as lived spaces that shape collective imaginaries" (*PP* 7). We can apply these ideas to the study of both the representations of space in cultural production and the way that meanings are produced by actual physical spaces in cities, which will be another component of my future research.

Within the Southern Cone, there have been multiple recent transformations of ex-detention and torture centers into spaces associated with "memory."<sup>114</sup> Many of these projects are the result of an attempt to "rescue" these spaces from destruction either by the military regimes or the "creative-destructive" processes of neoliberal capitalism that always seeks to remake space for its needs in the present. Either way, both of these processes can be viewed as another type of "forgetting" by destroying or remaking the physical buildings where people were tortured and killed during the military dictatorships. Yet, following the arguments that I have laid out in this dissertation, the mere presence of the building or the intent to "rescue" space (memory) that has been "forgotten" does not inherently offer what Huyssen refers to as a "usable" memory about the dictatorship. It is the way that these spaces are utilized - the form of the memory discourses produced and the manner in which individual spectators interact with these spaces that produce meanings about the past. As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, even a photography exhibit about the military dictatorship installed in an ex-torture center can offer a problematic representation of the past, failing to take advantage of the spatial

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<sup>114</sup> Some examples include the ex-DEOPS in São Paulo, the Club Atlético and the ESMA in Buenos Aires, and Villa Grimaldi in Santiago, Chile

aspects of memory, which can lead to a further "invisibility" of this space in social discourse about dictatorship. Even within spaces that are representative of the violence of the dictatorship, memory narratives need to be constructed in a way that creates an opportunity for an active engagement with the past by exploring the inherent fissures between experience and representation - allowing spectators to interpret meanings in diverse ways and providing multiple possible connections between the past and lived experience in the present.

A recent essay by Nelly Richard entitled "Sites of Memory, Emptying Remembrance"<sup>115</sup> exemplifies this argument to critically consider the way that memory is constructed in these cultural centers and museums dedicated to memory. In this essay, Richard is quite critical of the way that memory narratives are produced in the *Villa Grimaldi*, an ex-torture center in Chile that has been transformed into a cultural space for memory about the military dictatorship. She maintains that the "map of memory" (176) that is created by this space "makes an ordered *field of vision* out of what once was a lacerated *texture of experience*" (177), which serves to displace the suffering and the impossibility to "name" this experience in language for the torture victims. She contrasts the memory discourse produced in Villa Grimaldi to cultural production that seeks to insert itself within urban spaces that individuals pass through during their everyday lives, forcing them to confront the memory of the disappeared throughout their daily routine. One such project was installed at the *Puente Bulnes* which placed images of "disappeared" individuals on a wall:

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<sup>115</sup> This is included in a new collection of essays edited by Michael J. Lazarra and Vicky Unruh called, *Telling Ruins in Latin America*.

Instead of concentrating memory in a cult-like place (the cemetery ) that invites both inwardness and exclusion from the city's dynamism, the wall at Puente Bulnes wants to deprivatize the act of remembering and force the memory of the disappeared to intersect with the routines of a living community whose members, in turn, can disseminate their memory unpredictably in their daily comings-and-goings. Instead of being reduced to an agreed-upon ritual site, remembrance moves throughout the city, mixing with the flow of passers-by, opening the possibility that the conformity of their conduct (their social conscience turned away from a focus on memory) might be modified, virtually, by their head-on encounter with the photographic images of the victims. (*TR* 181)

In my future research, I will examine the memory discourses produced in ex-torture centers that have been or are in the process of being transformed into sites of "cultural memory" in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.<sup>116</sup> I have already conducted some research in the ex-DEOPS in São Paulo, and I plan to return to investigate the changes that have been made to the *Memorial de Resistência* under the direction of Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro to examine how the space is currently being used and what kind of memory discourses are being produced about the military dictatorship in Brazil. I am also interested in researching the participation in the open debates about this time period

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<sup>116</sup> Recent work by Silvia Tandeciarz "Citizens of Memory: Reconfiguring the Past in Postdictatorial Argentina," examines the spatial aspects of memory in a similar way as my proposed project. I hope to engage these spaces from a transnational perspective, focusing primarily on Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay (as much work has been done in Chile already), which could lead to further dialogue about ways to construct "usable" memories in these spaces in multiple social contexts.

that are occurring at regular intervals within the building, and examining the language being enacted to discuss the dictatorship in these debates. I also plan to return to Buenos Aires to examine the transformation of the ex-torture center *ESMA* (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada) into a cultural center dedicated to memory and human rights. There has been a long debate over how best to utilize *ESMA* as a cultural center, laid out by Marcelo Brodsky (who has been very involved in the process) in *Memoria en construcción: el debate sobre ESMA*. I will again examine the techniques used to represent the violence of the dictatorship, and critically consider the discourses being used to articulate these memories within the space of the cultural center at *ESMA*.

My research will also include the study of ex-torture centers or prisons that have *not* been transformed into cultural centers, which can also serve to evoke memory or provide spaces for critique of erasures of the past. I began research in one such space as part of my master's thesis, the *Punta Carretas* Shopping Mall in Montevideo, Uruguay, which has been transformed from the primary detention center for political prisoners during the dictatorship to an upscale shopping center.<sup>117</sup> This offers an interesting connection between "forgetting" the violence of the past and the establishment of neoliberal economic systems in the postdictatorial Southern Cone. These spaces, while lacking official designation as "sites of memory," have the potential to be used for temporary installations of "memory art," street performances, or other transitory interventions within the interstitial spaces of the urban landscape. These interventions

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<sup>117</sup> While doing the final revisions of this chapter, I encountered a recent contribution by Hugo Achugar analyzing the connections between space and memory in the *Shopping Punta Carretas* - "On Maps and Malls" In: Birón Rebecca E. Ed. *City / Art: The Urban Scene in Latin America*. Durham: Duke UP, 2009. I intend to dialogue with Achugar's contribution in my future work on this space.

have the capacity to interrupt the daily lives of viewers, like Richard's analysis of the images of the "disappeared" displayed under the *Puente Bulnes*, and may create moments of spontaneous connections to the dictatorial past. The focus does not need to only include those spaces that are dedicated as "lieux de memoire," but can also incorporate the social use and interaction with other spaces associated with the violence of the dictatorship whose connections to the past have been hidden underneath the urban palimpsests of memory throughout the Southern Cone. The way that memories associated with these spaces are articulated is essential to providing a space to engage the "residuals" of the dictatorship within new social contexts. It is not enough to "rescue" the ruins of the past, it is how they are activated in the present that is important.

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