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# Constructing Memory in the Wake of Tragedy: An Analysis of Film as a Tool of Collective Memory in the Aftermath of the Dictatorships in Argentina and Chile

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Claremont McKenna College

Constructing Memory in the Wake of Tragedy: An Analysis of Film as a  
Tool of Collective Memory in the Aftermath of the Dictatorships in  
Argentina and Chile

submitted to  
Professor Sarah Sarzynski

by  
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## Abstract

Acting as an audiovisual vector of catharsis, film has proved an innovative and effective tool in the process of reconstructing collective memory in the aftermath of traumatic events. This thesis focuses on the emergence of filmmakers and their movies in the post-dictatorial periods in Argentina and Chile as both nations sought to confront their violent pasts. A general overview of the process of memory construction is included to provide background for the subsequent analysis of film as a vector of collective memory following trauma. An examination and comparison of various films produced for both domestic and international audiences detail each country's engagement with the political and cinematic process of dealing with ideas of truth, memory, and identity. Central themes include the reconstruction of the identity of the *desaparecidos* and the challenges of producing films of a faithful, factual, reconstructive nature that also result in commercial success and appeal.

## Chapter 1

### *Introduction*

The end of WWII saw the world thrown into a decades-long era of geopolitical tension that reshaped the globe. The resulting Cold War ushered in a new era of politics, one that valued political maneuvering over all other considerations. With little regard for the lasting impact Cold War based policymaking would have on the stability and wellbeing of local populations, proxy wars and puppet states became the new foreign policy directive of both the United States and the Soviet Union. The consequences of this new, extreme interventionist foreign policy strategy were clearly apparent in Latin America. While the battle for hegemony raged across the globe, Latin America was transformed “into a battleground and prize in the conflict between communism and capitalism.”<sup>1</sup> Fearing that their Southern neighbors would fall into the hands of the Soviets, the United States sought foreign policy initiatives that would ensure Latin American cooperation in the growing global conflict.<sup>2</sup>

The United States had a long history of intervention in Latin American, claiming that the regions shared a special relationship that required close collaboration.<sup>3</sup> However, the Cold War fears stoking the political climate encouraged the United States to pursue

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<sup>1</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 117.

<sup>2</sup> Section adapted from Megan Schneider, “The Art of Justification: Representations of Pinochet’s Human Rights Abuses in the U.S. Media” (Claremont McKenna College, 2018). See Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> For further information regarding the special relationship between the U.S. and Latin America beginning with the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine see Barbara Zanchetta, “Between Cold War Imperatives and State-Sponsored Terrorism: The United States and ‘Operation Condor,’” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 12 (December 2016): 1084–1102.

an even more aggressive approach than had previously been in place. The most devastating result of this approach was the creation of Operation Condor, a political strategy and network of state-sponsored terrorism that led to rampant human rights abuses and the creation of military dictatorships across South America.<sup>4</sup> Operation Condor's systematic coordination of the armed forces in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia marked the start of a dirty war against South American citizens.<sup>5</sup> The systematic network of state-sponsored terrorism allowed regimes to target their own citizens under the guise of eliminating communist subversives. With no international oversight and discreet support from the U.S., South American regimes were able to repress all forms of opposition and maintain an iron grip on their respective countries.<sup>6</sup> The results were devastating for South American populations. Implementing the tactics of torture and extreme repression taught at the School of the Americas, regimes forced their citizens into submission and human rights abuses became common place across the Southern Cone.

Especially egregious was the act of "disappearing" supposed subversives, a tactic that became a hallmark of Latin American dictatorships. Regimes would forcibly detain individuals, take them to clandestine detention centers, and subject them to various forms of torture. With these arrests never officially recorded and military perpetrators committed to silence, targeted individuals would literally "disappear" for days, months,

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<sup>4</sup> Zanchetta, "Between Cold War Imperatives and State-Sponsored Terrorism."

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria* (Madrid: Siglo veintiuno de españa editores, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> For further information on the U.S. mentality towards Latin America and U.S. involvement with military dictatorships during the Cold War era see Zanchetta, "Between Cold War Imperatives and State-Sponsored Terrorism." Also see Schneider, "The Art of Justification: Representations of Pinochet's Human Rights Abuses in the U.S. Media."



or in the worst cases, forever. Tragically, detainments often ended in death of arrested individuals, with their bodies buried in clandestine mass graves or disposed of through *vuelos de muerte*, or “death flights.”<sup>7</sup> It would not be until years later, if at all, that the fates of these individuals would become public knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Known as the *desparecidos* or the “disappeared,” these individuals would become the principal victims of the military dictatorships of Cold War era Latin America.

Although the impact of the brutal tactics of these military dictatorships was seen across Latin America, this thesis will be focusing solely on the cases of Argentina and Chile. Like other Latin American countries, Argentina and Chile were ruled under brutal military dictatorships that were established by Cold War politics and backed by the United States. After overthrowing the previous governments, the respective military juntas quickly implemented mass forced disappearances to quash resistance movements. During the military junta’s reign in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, an estimated 30,000 people were kidnapped, tortured, and murdered. In Chile, an estimated 3,000 individuals were murdered, while tens of thousands of others were either exiled or detained and tortured during Pinochet’s rule from 1974 to 1990.<sup>9</sup>

Although more prevalent in Argentina, fear of retaliation in both countries fostered an environment where human rights violations flourished. In a political climate

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<sup>7</sup> Death flights were a common tactic of the military dictatorships, especially in Argentina. During these flights, victims were drugged and placed into planes where they would be flown over oceans, rivers, or wilderness areas and dropped to their deaths. This practice was seen as an efficient and clandestine way to eliminate subversives and dispose of their bodies.

<sup>8</sup> Truth trials after the fall of the dictatorships often traded immunity for the testimony of perpetrators in order to provide closure to the families of the *desparecidos*. However, the fates of many of the *desparecidos* are still largely unknown today.

<sup>9</sup> For further information of the “disappeared” and the techniques employed by the military junta see Elizabeth Lira, “Human Rights Violations,” *Radical History Review*, no. 124 (January 2016): 153–64,

where defying the government would result in kidnapping, torture, and murder, silence became a mechanism of survival. With public expressions of mourning risking violent retribution, conversation regarding the fates of the *desparecidos* was relegated to the shadows. However, despite the junta's efforts to eliminate the *desparecidos* from the collective memory, the traumatic rupture caused by the disappearances of thousands left an indelible mark on the Argentine and Chilean consciousness. The desire for answers in the wake of tragedy ensured that the induced silence was neither universal nor permanent. Activists and common citizens still fought for truth and memory despite the risk. Yet, only with the eventual collapse of the dictatorships in Argentina and Chile, was a space truly opened for the nations to directly confront their past.

The fall of the dictatorships marked a distinct moment of transition for Argentina and Chile. For the first time in years, these countries were tasked with constructing their own identity that no longer had to fit within the confines of oppressive regimes. Despite their new-found freedom, the two countries were still plagued by their violent pasts. Fractured from years of fear, repression, and human rights abuses, Argentines and Chileans struggled to confront their past trauma and reconstruct memories that had previously been shrouded in darkness. This thesis explores this contentious period and examines how Argentines and Chileans found ways to construct memory in the wake of tragedy. Although this memory construction occurred through a multitude of political, social, and cultural vectors, this thesis focuses specifically on the countries' respective use of film as a tool of collective memory.

Cinema became a unique, yet representative outlet for Argentines and Chileans as they sought to grapple with ideas of truth, memory, and identity. Simultaneously

retrospective and representative of the time of their production, films became both a tool and snapshot of the process of memory reconstruction. They allowed filmmakers and audiences to explore their pasts creatively and critically in a manner previously impossible under the dictatorships. In the years following the collapse of the old regimes, the silver screen became a new arena for memory construction, with the contentious debate over truth, memory, and progress spilling over into the cinematic world.

## Chapter 2

### *Statement of Methodology*

This thesis is the culmination of previous studies on the subject of memory and representation in Latin America. Although it draws on several previous analyses, the primary foundation of this thesis was an investigation conducted on site in Argentina in 2017 that explored film as a tool of collective memory in the wake of the human rights abuses that occurred during Argentina's military dictatorship.<sup>10</sup> The field work, film analysis, and secondary research conducted during the development of that investigation served as the basis for the chapters of this thesis that explore Argentina's relationship with film in the years following the dictatorship's collapse.

Inspired by the findings of that investigation, this thesis seeks to expand upon them by evaluating the trends observed in Argentina in comparison to Chile. Plagued by similar human rights abuses at the hands of a military dictatorship, Chile served as a natural point of comparison to the Argentine case. Additionally, unlike other countries in the Southern Cone, Chile fostered a thriving film industry that allowed for a close comparative analysis of film as vector of collective memory within the two countries. By applying a comparative approach, this thesis hopes to ascertain whether the trends observed in the research on Argentina were case specific or emblematic of a larger trend in film and memory construction. Ultimately, this thesis hopes to use these case studies to

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<sup>10</sup> Megan Schneider, "El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria" (SIT Argentina, 2017). This paper is included in Appendix A.

draw larger conclusions about the potential of film as a tool of healing in the wake of traumatic ruptures.

In order to reach these conclusions, this thesis employs a mix of secondary research and film analysis within larger theoretical frameworks. The films explored throughout this thesis are analyzed in accordance with the theoretical framework established by Stuart Hall's theories of representation.<sup>11</sup> The selected films are considered within the context of the larger representational machines that contributed to the construction of Latin American memory and identity within the collective imagination.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that this thesis draws its conclusions from analyzing patterns of representations within the Argentine and Chilean context. Calling upon the framework employed by Hall, this thesis extrapolates meaning from the connections between these films, rather than the individual films themselves.<sup>13</sup> The application of this approach was established in another previous investigation that explored representations of Pinochet and his regime's human rights abuses in the American mainstream media.<sup>14</sup> Although not directly related to the subject of film and memory, the paper's use of a cultural approach as well as its focus on representational studies helped provide a framework for this thesis's analysis of the impact of film on the construction of memory in Argentina and Chile. It also provided a base of understanding for the human rights abuses that occurred in Chile during Pinochet's rule.

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<sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall is a leader in cultural and representational theory. His work explores representational machines, assigning meaning through difference, and understanding representational patterns.

<sup>12</sup> Ricardo Salvatore, "The Enterprise of Knowledge: Representational Machines of Informal Empire," in *Close Encounters of Empire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 69–106.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> This paper is included in Appendix B.

By drawing upon the findings of the aforementioned investigations, the following chapters hope to reevaluate and expand upon their conclusions through additional analysis. Beginning with a theoretical examination of the construction of memory, this thesis first explores memory within the broader context before investigating film as specific vector of memory production. The subsequent chapters then explore the case studies of Argentina and Chile, examining both the larger political and social context as well as a selection of films. The films within these sections deal with the themes of the dictatorships and the *desaparecidos* and are analyzed within two larger categories: the first being films intended for an international audience, and the second those that were primarily targeted at domestic audiences. The thesis culminates with a series of conclusions regarding Argentina's and Chile's use of film as a tool of collective memory and how external political and social factors affected the country's cinematic construction of memory.

## Chapter 3

### *An Exploration of Memory*

Memory is central to the human experience. It acts as a tether to the world around us, providing us with a sense of who we are and where we came from. It informs our decisions, molds our personalities, and influences our interactions with our environment. However, the concept of memory is rife with paradox and nuance. Simultaneously deeply personal and socially constructed, memory is a product of conflicting forces of narration seeking to establish a universal truth. Memory may be commonly understood as a reconstruction of the past, but its contradictory nature encourages it to be questioned and constantly restructured. Commonly presented as tangentially related to history, memory is not considered infallible, rather seen as colored by external forces.

While it may be tempting for academic circles to present memory in stark contrast to history, this division may not be as strict as it appears upon first investigation. Like the formation of memory, history is often constructed in a manner that rarely captures the entirety of reality. As historian Peter Burke notes “neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases we are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion.”<sup>15</sup> Colonialism, imperialism, as well as racial and gender discrimination have all contributed to historical narratives controlled by a limited scope of voices, with the resulting “history” being called into question by those not included in its construction. With the acknowledgment of the constructed nature

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<sup>15</sup> Wolf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History & Theory* 41, no. 2 (May 2002): 189. For original use of the quote see Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” in *History, Culture, and the Mind*, ed. Thomas Butler (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 98.

of history, the division between history and memory becomes more an issue of semantics. In reality, the two concepts are largely interconnected, with history itself acting as its own form of collectively accepted memory.<sup>16</sup>

Whether or not it is an unbiased reflection of past events, memory remains paramount when the collective imagination comes to the forefront of the social dialogue surrounding key events. In many cases perception becomes reality, with selective memory and constructed biases forming the basis for social, cultural, and political representations of the past. This is particularly the case in the wake of human right abuses, when extreme trauma creates a social and historical rupture in society. As Dominick Lacapra explains in his discussion of memory in relation to trauma:

“Traumatic experience has dimensions that may threaten or even shatter identity and may not be “captured” by history, recorded in written archives, or contained by conscious recall. Yet it may paradoxically become the center or vortex-like hole of identity-formation, especially in the founding or foundational trauma.”<sup>17</sup>

After a traumatic event, memory becomes a society’s central nexus for identity construction. This effect is particularly pronounced when discussing the issue of the *desaparecidos* in Argentina and Chile. The traumatic rupture caused by the military juntas’ use of forced disappearances created a metaphorical memory blackhole, corrupting the larger historical and social timeline within both countries. The *desaparecidos* became lost to history, their sudden and often unresolved disappearances leaving those around them with more questions than answers. The resulting memory gap left in the wake of the *desaparecidos* called for a reconstruction of the identity of the

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<sup>16</sup> For an example of a scholarly discussion of this theory see Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory.”

<sup>17</sup> Dominick Lacapra, “Trauma, History, Memory, Identity: What Remains?,” *History & Theory* 55, no. 3 (October 2016), 391.



victims as well as the nations as a whole. However, this was a particularly difficult task, as identity, collective or individual, is intrinsically linked to the permanence of time and space, an element completely eroded with the act of forced disappearances.<sup>18</sup>

The process of the reconstruction of memory in Argentina and Chile will be discussed in later sections; however, it is important to first further explore what memory is and the process behind its construction. In its simplest terms, memory is a series of recollections that influence an individual's interactions with their environment.<sup>19</sup> The construction of an individual's memory is a constant process of selective remembrance of key events, facts, and stories that an individual has either personally experienced or heard secondhand from others.<sup>20</sup> The resulting collection of "memory lore" is then assigned meaning and importance within the larger framework of an individual's identity.<sup>21</sup> However, as mentioned previously, memory does not exist within a vacuum. Instead, individuals' memories are molded by social institutions and cultural interactions, with conscious manipulation and unconscious absorption transforming interpretations of the past.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the construction of memory is an inherently social phenomenon. As Argentine sociologist, Elizabeth Jelin, explains:

“[E]sto implica la presencia de lo social, aun en los momentos más individuales. Nunca estamos solo —uno no recuerda solo sino con la ayuda de los recuerdos de

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria* (Madrid: Siglo veintiuno de españa editores, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Section adapted from Megan Schneider, “El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria” (SIT Argentina, 2017). See Appendix A.

<sup>20</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*. Section adapted from Schneider, “El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria.” See Appendix A. Also see Steve J. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998* (Duke University Press, 2004), 68.

<sup>21</sup> The term “memory lore” comes from Steve Stern's *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*. It refers to the various items that make up an individual's recollections. For further explanation see Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory,” 181.

otros y con los códigos culturales compartidos, aun cuando las memorias personales son únicas y singulares—. Esos recuerdos personales están inmersos en narrativas colectivas, que a menudo están reforzadas en rituales y conmemoraciones grupales.”<sup>23</sup>

As such, memory then becomes a shared concept, molded by social interactions and the power structures present in a community.<sup>24</sup> However, the relationship is reciprocal, with individual memory, though mediated by external forces, contributing to the larger collective consciousness. This nuanced and simultaneous top-down, bottom-up construction builds a sense of collective memory.

The circular nature of the construction of memory makes marking the moment of transition from individual memory to collective memory difficult to define. There is a certain sense of fluidity associated with the concept that requires a theoretical framework to be applied if clarity is to be achieved. Historically established by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is traditionally defined as “collectively shared representations of the past.”<sup>25</sup> This definition is relatively limited in scope, but provides a foundation for understanding the larger concept of collective memory. In order to build upon this foundation and understand not only what collective memory is, but also how it is formed, it is necessary to explore the nuances developed by later memory studies.

There have been numerous memory studies since Halbwachs’ initial work on collective memory; however, as discussed previously, this thesis will be drawing largely on the framework established by Steve Stern.<sup>26</sup> Instead of relying on the strict dichotomy

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<sup>23</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*, 20-21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory,” 181.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Stern’s theoretical exploration of memory was chosen due to the fact that it was established within the Chilean context and considers the trends of memory reconstruction that occurred in the Southern Cone in the wake of the dictatorships.

between individual and collective memory, he purposes a more holistic approach. He establishes the concept of the collective memory box, a metaphorical repository of memory constructed through a process of selective remembrances and influenced by social actors operating within a larger collective framework.<sup>27</sup> The box becomes central to society, with people being instinctively drawn to it out of the desire to add or rearrange its contents.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the collective consciousness held within the box is molded by the memory of the individuals interacting with it.<sup>29</sup> However, not all of this memory lore becomes a part of the collective memory box. To be added to the box, memory must go beyond recollection. As Stern explains:

“Memory is the meaning we attach to experience, not simply recall of the events and emotions of that experience. This aspect of remembrance, especially crucial for study of collective memory, clarifies the distinction between the content (as in specific narrated events) of memory, and the organizing framework that imparts meaning.”<sup>30</sup>

This framework not only assigns significance, but also aggregates and elevates individual memory into the collective consciousness. Personal experiences may have value to the individual, but they can only become part of the collective memory if they “capture an essential truth about the collective experience of society.”<sup>31</sup> Individual or “loose” memory may act as raw material, but it requires a broader interpretive framework if it is to become emblematic of larger society.<sup>32</sup> However, this emblematic framework is continuously evolving, resulting in the constant making and remaking of memory.

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<sup>27</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, xxvi-xxviii.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi-xxviii.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-106.

Although the transformation from loose to emblematic memory is a continuous process, it is catalyzed by certain events. The transition is typically sparked by pivotal moments that Stern defines as “memory knots,” or moments in society, time, or space that, like a physical knot in the body, “interrupt the normal flow of ‘unthinking’ reflexes and habits.”<sup>33</sup> Typically associated with periods of extreme political and social tension, these knots cause a society to return to the collective memory box and question the established narratives that make up its contents. As a result, memory knots not only disrupt established norms, but also catapult issues of memory into the public domain.<sup>34</sup>

Memory knots may act as an opportunity for memory reconstruction; however, this process does not happen spontaneously, instead it must be fostered by effective representatives.<sup>35</sup> These memory spokespersons must work within the larger society to “discover how to construct bridges to emblematic memory and thereby find their collective truth.”<sup>36</sup> They must select and project certain memories into public and semipublic spaces in the hopes that mass circulation establishes a sense of legitimacy to the projected memory lore. Under their guidance, the construction of memory becomes a quest for truth, as they work to endow memory with a sense of authenticity and historicity.<sup>37</sup> In an effort to establish further legitimacy, they selectively circulate memory that has a certain sense of capaciousness, allowing those not directly involved in the

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<sup>33</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 120-124.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 120. The idea of a memory spokesperson simply relates to the leaders of memory movements. Perhaps the most well-known example is the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, a group of mothers of the disappeared that have publicly protested the disappearance of their children since the days of the dictatorship. They have become both leaders and symbols for the fight for truth and justice in Argentina.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-119.

reconstruction to still feel that their own experiences are compatible with those contained within the box.<sup>38</sup>

However, just as the memory box can be opened, it can also be closed. As a result, the construction of the memory box goes beyond mere recollection, rather it is based on a complex process of remembrance and oblivion. Oblivion is not necessarily an absence, but instead, a conscious space, sometimes vital for the construction of a manageable narrative.<sup>39</sup> As Lacapra explains, moments of silence are not devoid of meaning, instead:

“[These] silences may also speak in their own way, having a performative dimension that is not devoid of objective significance and moral force. The very breaks or gaps in an account such as a testimony may attest to disruptive experiences and relate to a reliving of trauma that collapses the past into the present, making it seem or feel as if it were more “real” and “present” than contemporary circumstances.”<sup>40</sup>

In times of trauma, oblivion often becomes a tool of necessity. Some memory is considered so disruptive that “little could be gained from a public opening and airing the contents inside.”<sup>41</sup> Deliberate exclusions act as a form of protection, with the revised, more digestible representations of the past allowing affected individuals to forget traumatic moments and move forward without the weight of the past.<sup>42</sup>

However, the creation of deliberate gaps in memory is not always so benign. It is important to understand that the “same process that brings certain meanings,

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<sup>38</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 114-119.

<sup>39</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Lacapra, “Trauma, History, Memory, Identity,” 377.

<sup>41</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 89.

<sup>42</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*. Section adapted from Schneider, “El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria.” See Appendix A.

remembrances, and voices to the forefront also buries others.”<sup>43</sup> Whoever controls the memory box essentially controls the truth, with their selective remembrances presenting a certain version of reality. This becomes especially dangerous when those in positions of power deconstruct memory in an effort to destroy any evidence of wrongdoing and eliminate the possibility of the resurgence of certain remembrances.<sup>44</sup> In cases of state sponsored terrorism and forced disappearances, this erosion of memory is particularly deliberate and deleterious. Using threats of violence, the regime encourages silence amongst its citizens.<sup>45</sup> Fear forces the memory box closed, relegating the acknowledgement of human rights abuses to the shadows. The erasure of memory becomes tantamount to the erasure of truth, ultimately distorting reality and perpetuating a regime’s ability to continue its crimes against humanity. By destroying any sense of accountability for their human rights abuses, regimes are able to maintain a sense of credibility and remain in power.

However, silence is rarely permanent. Ironically, the restrictive narrative implemented by those in power often results in a resurgence of counter-memory. Seeking to topple the corrupted narrative established by an oppressive regime, vocal groups of opposition return to the memory box and force it open. They challenge the established framework and call for the creation of a new iteration of emblematic memory.<sup>46</sup> With the formation of counter-memory movements, the battle for truth and justice ensues.

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<sup>43</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*, 133. Section adapted from Schneider, “El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria.” See Appendix A.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 106.

However, counter-memory movements do not operate in isolation. The forcible opening of the memory box brings an entire society back into the constant process of making and unmaking memory. The resulting contentious exchange between those trying to restructure the memory box and those trying to re-close it, leaves memory movements with the difficult task of grappling with ideas of truth and memory and finding ways to establish a new emblematic narrative.

## Chapter 4

### *Film as a Vector of Collective Memory*

The opening of the memory box may bring issues of memory to the surface, but an outlet is needed for memory to have a tangible presence in society. As discussed in the previous chapter, loose memory lore must become a part of a larger emblematic framework in order for it be added to the collective memory. However, this framework must be clearly established and understood by the general public. As a result, emblematic memory must circulate in the public or semipublic domain in order to gain a sense of legitimacy.<sup>47</sup> Traditionally, this results in mass media outlets becoming a major tool of memory construction, with their pervasive presence offering the perfect opportunity for mass circulation. These outlets come to act as an illustrative framework that elevates certain narratives into the popular culture, ultimately providing a foundation for coding memory lore with meaning and importance. As a result, new memory becomes “credible in part because of the validation by similar memory echoes in a public cultural domain.”<sup>48</sup>

The accessibility and commercial appeal of mass media encourages individuals to interact with the established narratives in the cultural domain and project their own stories onto those already in circulation. Individuals are drawn to mass media outlets like attendees to a circus, with mass media acting as a central tent for memory collection.<sup>49</sup>

The performative spectacle of media outlets “goes on incorporating and imparting

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<sup>47</sup> Steve J. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998* (Duke University Press, 2004), 68.

<sup>48</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> This metaphor is established by Steve Stern.



meaning to the varied specific remembrances people bring into the tent, articulating them into a wider meaning.”<sup>50</sup>

Although there are many forms of mass media, this thesis will focus on film as a vector of emblematic memory construction. With its near ubiquity to the modern human experience, film has been a natural tool of collective memory. Since its invention, cinema has been used by individuals to express themselves and explore the world around them without the traditional confines of reality. Cinematic exploration is a particularly useful tool in the wake of human rights abuses, when direct engagement with the past is often too painful. Film provides a buffer, allowing individuals to interact with their past from a figurative distance. They can explore raw, deeply painful moments of human cruelty, yet encode this exploration in palatable, visually stimulating narratives.

However, there is a considerable amount of debate within the academic community whether the assessment of film as a tool of collective memory has been overstated. In part, this is a result of the inherent difficulty of reception studies. Reception is an intrinsically personal process, with each individual interpretation depending on array of factors, ranging from demographics to personal experience. This process is further complicated by film’s unique qualities as a communication model. Created for entertainment and artistic expression, yet backed by financial and, at times, political institutions, a film’s intent can be difficult to discern. What may motivate a director versus a producer could vary wildly, with the collaborative process of filmmaking often allowing multiple, sometimes conflicting, messages to be conveyed to the audience.

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<sup>50</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, 106.

An audience rarely knows the envisioned intent of a film when they view it in theaters, instead they are left to ascertain meaning without the benefit of context. In a sense, film becomes an asynchronous conversation between the filmmakers and the audience, with the filmmaker's intent not always aligning with the audience's perception. Although filmmakers may inject a certain narrative into the public domain, it is ultimately up to audience to determine the meaning they take away from their films. As discussed in the previous chapter, memory construction is a simultaneous top-down, bottom-up process, and this also applies to film as a tool of collective memory. Intent and reception play an equally important role, both contributing to the cinematic construction of memory.

However, the difficulty arises when trying to determine a film's exact intent and reception. Film's artistic nature defies traditional analysis and as a result, reception can vary greatly between viewers. Critical reviews and commercial success often contradict each other, begging the question whether popular reception necessarily equates to effective impact. Without the possibility of firm quantitative analysis, it is difficult to definitively ascertain the effect an individual film has on its audience. However, this does not mean that further analysis of film reception is futile. Instead, to understand a film's impact, a comparative approach is necessary. As mentioned in the *Statement of Methodology*, Stuart Hall, a leader in reception theory, explains that images, or in this case, films, do not signify meaning when looked at in isolation.<sup>51</sup> Instead, meaning can only be derived when they are analyzed in connection with one another and patterns of

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<sup>51</sup> Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications, 1997.

representational practices are observed.<sup>52</sup> The resulting inter-textuality of representations serve as a foundation for inference on the overall meaning that, when looked at as a unit, these images begin to take on.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the value of this approach, it is necessary to acknowledge the shortcomings of this methodology. Inherent in reception studies is the fact that multiple meanings can be drawn from a single source. As a result, this thesis can only present one set of interpretations in accordance with observed representational patterns, but acknowledges that there are other possible conclusions. Studies have also shown that reception varies depending on age, gender, race, and background; however, the analytical limitations of this thesis do not allow for a full examination of the influence of these demographic factors on a film's reception and its overall impact.<sup>54</sup> Reception is also not static, but instead an active process of constructing and reconstructing meaning.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, film reception changes over time, causing an individual's interpretation to vary depending on their current environment.

Determining a film's influence is further complicated by an individual's prior knowledge or experience with the focus of the film. Depending on its audience, the same film can have an entirely different impact. For example, Argentines and Chileans watching a film about the *desaparecidos* would have a much more visceral response than

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<sup>52</sup> Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

<sup>53</sup> For further explanation of inter-textuality see Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

<sup>54</sup> For further explanation of the reception variations based on these characteristics see Stefanie Rauch, "Understanding the Holocaust through Film: Audience Reception between Preconceptions and Media Effects," *History & Memory* 30, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2018): 151–88. Although the assumptions and approaches presented in this article apply to Holocaust studies, the similarities between the films analyzed in this thesis and the Holocaust genre provide a foundation for comparison.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

individuals who have no connection to the human rights abuses that occurred during the dictatorships. Yet, regardless of the type of impact, film still influences its audience. Whether a film increases awareness, establishes a sanitized narrative, or reaffirms established beliefs, it still acts as a tool of collective memory and contributes to the construction of the memory box.

## Chapter 5

### *Tales of Redemption: Argentina's Cinematic Construction of Memory for the International Audience*<sup>56</sup>

Following the fall of Argentina's military dictatorship in 1983, a space was finally created for society to begin to fully process the human rights violations that had occurred during the military's rule. Free from the old regime's oppressive and violent policies, Argentines were finally encouraged to begin a political, social, academic, and cultural discussion about its dictatorial past and its democratic future. In order to move forward, Argentina would first need to come to terms with its past, a process made all the more difficult by the nature of the human rights violations carried out during the years of the dictatorship. The nature of the *desparecidos* resulted in a rupture in both history and memory, with the exact fates and resting places of the *desparecidos* being wiped from both historical accounts and the collective consciousness. As the country sought to define their new political and social identity, the construction, or more accurately, reconstruction, of memory became an essential part of Argentina's development.

The abrupt breach in the dam of silence constructed during the years of the dictatorship resulted in a flood of memory in Argentina. Without fear of retribution, Argentines could finally speak openly about the horrors that had occurred in the previous years. The resulting period that would later become known as *el show de horror* was characterized by graphic representations of the fate of the *desparecidos* and the quest for

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<sup>56</sup> Section adapted from Megan Schneider, "El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria" (SIT Argentina, 2017). See Appendix A.

justice for the atrocities carried out by the former regime. Groups like the *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, took to the streets demanding answers and calling attention to the violations of human rights. The *desparecidos* had now become a revolutionary identity.<sup>57</sup> However, the question of how to reflect and narrate the events of the dictatorship quickly became a point of conflict. While some saw *el show de horror* as a recovery of the truth and justice that the dictatorship had so callously denied the country, others thought that the representations were too graphic and prevented the country from reconciling with the past.<sup>58</sup>

This conflict had political ramifications as well. After his election in 1983, the new president, Raúl Alfonsín, and his administration initially placed an important focus on human rights, implementing several policies that sought to address the damage done by the dictatorship. The National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, or CONADEP, was created to investigate what happened to the 30,000 *desparecidos* and give closure to a population stuck in a constant state of mourning as they awaited answers.<sup>59</sup> When CONADEP's report, *Nunca Más*, was finally released and some of the details of the gruesome and tragic fates of the *desparecidos* were revealed to the general population, the Alfonsín administration reacted with force.<sup>60</sup> Repealing the *Ley de Amnistía*, which had previously provided legal protection for the military, the trials of the military junta begun.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *Los Trabajos de La Memoria* (Madrid: Siglo veintiuno de españa editores, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Emilio Crenzel, ed., *Los Desaparecidos En La Argentina: Memorias, Representaciones e Ideas (1983-2008)*, 1st ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2010).

<sup>59</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*.

<sup>60</sup> Gabriela Cerruti and La Comisión Provincial por la Memoria, "La historia de la memoria," *Puentes*, no. 3 (2001): 14–26.

<sup>61</sup> Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria*.

The rapidly evolving political environment also had a profound impact on Argentina's film industry, with the country's transition to democracy ushering in a new era of cinema. In an effort to foster an open cultural environment, the Alfonsín administration quickly reorganized the *Instituto Internacional de Cine* (INC) and abolished film censorship laws that had been in place since 1968.<sup>62</sup> Now actively encouraged by the state and funded through private sources, film production boomed, with cinematic output doubling from the approximate fifteen films per year during the dictatorship to twenty-five films per year under the Alfonsín administration.<sup>63</sup> The rapidly expanding film industry quickly became an outlet for cultural and political expression. Filmmakers actively exercised their new freedom by creating films that explored the country's recent dictatorial past, giving birth to a new genre of film in Latin America: the *testimonio*.<sup>64</sup> These films served as a visual testimony to the horrors of the Dirty War and reflected the country's struggle to confront their traumatic past.

However, the rise in social issue filmmaking was not solely the choice of the filmmakers. Under the Alfonsín-backed INC, the film industry became a public relations tool of the state. In part, the INC's goal was to promote a more positive image of the newly democratic Argentina, one liberated from the military dictatorship and ready for global integration.<sup>65</sup> Manuel Antín, the director of INC at the time, stressed the "push to promote Argentine cinema abroad worked as effectively for a nation as any

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<sup>62</sup> Tamara Falicov, "Film Production in Argentina Under Democracy, 1983-1989: The Official Story (La Historia Oficial) as an International Film," *Southern Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 123.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

ambassador.”<sup>66</sup> Circulated at international film festivals and markets, film would act as visual proof of Argentina’s evolution and encourage global economic and political integration.<sup>67</sup> As a result, films were constructed not only for the Argentine public, but also for the international community. However, this was often to the detriment of the Argentine audience as such films were not only less commercially appealing to them, but also less reflective of their own identity and experience. This was clearly reflected in audience reception, with Argentine films released in 1985 and 1986 being consistently more popular with foreign rather than domestic audiences.<sup>68</sup>

The international focus of the film industry also affected the content of the films being produced. Clearly reflected in Argentina’s numerous *testimonio* films, filmmakers presented sanitized narratives of the Dirty War that were deemed more palatable for international audiences. Although filmmakers were clearly engaging with the horrors of their past, they did so within the confines of the INC’s goals. Perhaps the most famous example of this restricted cinematic framework was 1985’s *La historia oficial*. Directed by Luis Puenzo, *La historia oficial* was an international phenomenon, earning numerous festival nominations and winning an Oscar in 1986, making it the first Latin American film to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.<sup>69</sup>

A gripping melodrama, *La historia oficial* tackles the conventional story of the *desaparecidos* in Argentina. However, the familiar narrative is flipped on its head, with the focus of the film, not on the victims of the forced disappearances, but rather on the

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<sup>66</sup> Falicov, “Film Production in Argentina Under Democracy, 1983-1989,” 124.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.



complicit individuals who stood by and benefited from their destruction. The film follows Alicia, an upper middle-class woman who gained her standing status via her husband's duplicitous business dealings with the military junta. Although previously content with the circumstances of her life, she begins to question her own complicity when she starts to suspect that her adopted daughter, Gaby, is the child of one of the disappeared and given to her husband through his connections to the military junta.<sup>70</sup> Her quest for the truth brings her into contact with Sara, a working-class woman claiming to be Gaby's grandmother, whose daughter was disappeared by the military junta.

Before her encounter with Sara, Alicia seems completely unaware of her role in the distortion of the truth, a theme reflective of the larger social conflict taking place in Argentina in the wake of the dictatorship. Regardless of becoming cognizant of her role, she continues to blatantly participate in the corruption of truth and memory. In Puenzo's most deliberate moment of social commentary, he explores Alicia's role as a history teacher preaching the distorted version of the history constructed by the military junta. Ironically, she tells her class that: "Understanding history is preparing to understand the world. No people can survive without memory. History is the memory of the people." Subliminally aware of the danger inherent in her actions, Alicia must face the reality of living in the very world about which she is cautioning others. Her husband, a symbol of the military junta, essentially kidnapped their daughter from one of the disappeared and

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<sup>70</sup> Argentina's military junta would often give the children of disappeared pregnant women to elite families that supported their rule. By placing children with high ranking members of the junta and their supporters, they could cover up evidence of their crimes and forcibly "reeducate" the children of those deemed subversives.

manipulated her into living a falsehood. Ultimately, it is her acceptance of her daughter's origin-story that shatters the delusion that has consumed her life.

Alicia's struggle to accept the reality of her circumstances ends with a physical confrontation with her husband after she has "returned" Gaby to Sara. Symbolic of her acceptance of the truth and her unwillingness to continue to be complicit to the horrors of the military junta, she leaves her home and husband as the audience is left with a final shot of Gaby in a rocking chair singing: "In the land of I-don't-remember, I take three steps and I'm lost. One step this way. I wonder if I may. One step over there. Oh, what a big scare." Hailing back to the story Alicia told earlier in the film about the sense of abandonment she felt as child sitting in a rocking chair waiting for her parents to come home the night they died in a car crash, Gaby is similarly abandoned, waiting for parents that will never come home.<sup>71</sup> Her real parents were murdered by the military junta and her adoptive parents were merely part of a well-constructed lie. She is stuck in the "land of I-don't-remember," a child of the *desaparecidos*, forced to occupy a space of memory limbo.

Despite the film's poignant ending and its consistent engagement with themes of truth and memory, it still presents a sanitized narrative of the realities of the military dictatorship. With the exception of a single scene, the film never directly confronts what happened to the *desaparecidos*. The shifting of the narrative away from the victims of the military junta to the complicit bystanders dulls the impact of the film and once again relegates the *desaparecidos* to the shadows. Missing from both the world and the screen, the tale of the disappeared becomes the story of those they left behind. The film is not

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<sup>71</sup> Falicov, "Film Production in Argentina Under Democracy, 1983-1989," 132.

about reconstructing the memories of the *desaparecidos*, but about a world coming to terms with its own involvement in their demise. Yet, the film refuses to take a strong enough stance on the issue of complicity, simultaneously offering criticism and redemption for those who willingly stood by and benefited from the destruction of others. Alicia may have spent years profiting from the crimes of the military junta, but she is able to redeem herself when she reunites Gaby with Sara. In her final shot, we see Alicia step into the light of redemption beyond the darkness of her home, literally and metaphorically closing the door on her past transgressions. Her story becomes a comforting parable, implying that redemption is possible even for those complicit in the perpetuation of human rights abuses.

Ultimately, Alicia becomes an idealized stand-in for the international audience, with the film's narrative explicitly designed to connect with viewers around the globe.<sup>72</sup> As Puenzo explained in an interview: "I told the story from my own perspective, that of a great majority who never participated in repression but who felt complicity. It is not a heroic stance, but it was a position I was in."<sup>73</sup> *La historia oficial* explores this perspective with the appropriate amount of shame and hope needed to placate its international audience. The world may have stood by, even participating in the military junta's crimes, but just as Alicia was offered a chance at redemption, so too is the audience. By simply bearing witness to the events on screen, the audience has indirectly confronted their own transgressions through a symbolic transference.

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<sup>72</sup> Falicov, "Film Production in Argentina Under Democracy, 1983-1989," 129.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Part of the popularity of *testimonio* films like *La historia oficial* comes from the fact that the simple act of watching them transforms the theater into the confessional. They offer a rare space for reflection and catharsis that comes with the promise of a finite end point. Within the span of the film's runtime, the viewer is taken on a compressed journey of memory reconstruction. As the picture rolls, the memory box is opened. Audiences explore the events of their past indirectly from the comfort and safety of a seat in a darkened theater. Although the film forces viewers to interact with the past, they do not have to do so directly. From the position of voyeur rather than the protagonist, audiences are able to explore ideas of complicity and guilt through a conduit that provides a comforting emblematic framework in which both forgiveness and progress are possible. By the time the credits roll, resolution and redemption have been found. Just like Alicia at the end of *La historia oficial*, the audience is able walk out the theater doors, leaving their guilt behind.

Conversation may continue, but only within the framework of the film's sanitized narrative. Despite Puenzo's ominous ending shot of Gaby in the rocking chair, the overall arc of the film still offers audiences the final promise of redemption that overshadows any call to action. Ironically, a film that seeks to comment on the dangers of complacency, encourages it within its audience. *La historia oficial* ultimately allows the viewer to feel that by simply watching the film that they have confronted their past and can once again close the memory box and move toward a better future. However, this was far from the case. Unlike Alicia, the audience cannot simply give back the missing children of the *desaparecidos* and turn their back on their past ignorance. Reality would prove far more complicated, with the fate of many of the children of the *desaparecidos*

remaining largely unknown even today. Although the film's promise of progress and redemption had a seductive pull, many could not move forward unperturbed by the scars left by the military dictatorship and the hundreds of thousands of complicit bystanders. The film's elusive messaging on the subject of blame and guilt may have provided comfort to those who stood by and watched the military's reign of terror, but it did little to ameliorate the resentment of the dictatorship's surviving victims.

In many ways, *La historia oficial* warned of the future to come in the years after its release. Its shirking of the question of blame and complicity were representative of the larger environment that came to define Argentina in the years following the dictatorship. The years between 1983 and 1989 were marked by the contradictory relationship between political stability and the quest for justice.<sup>74</sup> Socially and economically devastated from years under a repressive regime, the issue became not only how to address the violations of the dictatorship, but also how to advance the country. While the contents of Argentina's memory box could be examined during this time, assigning culpability often proved too volatile for the nation's own stability. Ultimately, films during this era sought to recount the previously repressed recent history while avoiding the issue of blame, choosing instead to look for a path forward in the wake of years of pain.<sup>75</sup>

Ultimately *La historia oficial* can be considered as a cultural product of its time, defined by the social and political context of the years of re-democratization.<sup>76</sup> The film

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<sup>74</sup> Burucua, *Confronting the "Dirty War" in Argentina Cinema, 1983-1993: Memory and Gender in Historical Representations*.

<sup>75</sup> Falicov, "Film Production in Argentina Under Democracy, 1983-1989," 128-129.

<sup>76</sup> Constanza Burucua, *Confronting the "Dirty War" in Argentina Cinema, 1983-1993: Memory and Gender in Historical Representations* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2009), 125.

premiered at the same time as the beginning of the trials of the military junta.<sup>77</sup> The trials quickly sparked controversy, with the debate over who was to blame for the violence of the dictatorship becoming a central point of strife.<sup>78</sup> Tensions grew as the nation struggled to confront its past, with the division between the military, government, and activist groups growing increasingly evident. With the growing strain between the military and the new government risking another coup, the Alfonsín administration began to think about a policy of national pacification.<sup>79</sup> Concerned that placing blame on the military officials would spell disaster for Argentina's infant democracy, the Alfonsín administration adopted amnesty laws that unofficially put an end to the trials that had only started the previous year.<sup>80</sup>

While the government's transition to amnesty laws may have been rooted in a desire to protect Argentina from another coup and keep the country on a path of progress, a large part of the population saw the shift in policy as equivalent to the erosion of memory. What resulted was a fragmented nation, defined by a society seeking justice versus a political system more concerned with the future than the past. Whereas this conflict would normally inspire a counter cultural movement, the government's

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<sup>77</sup> Marcela Visconti, "Lo pensable de una época. Sobre La historia oficial de Luis Puenzo," *Aletheia* 4, no. 8 (April 2014).

<sup>78</sup> Particularly contentious was *la teoría de los dos demonios*, a theory that equated the actions of rebel groups during the dictatorship with the actions of the military junta. The theory, indoctrinated by CONADEP and the Alfonsín administration, created another fracture in Argentine society as many argued that it only served to minimize the crimes of the military junta. For further information see Lucas Martin, "On Innocent Victims and Demons in Argentina (1983-1985)," *African Yearbook of Rhetoric* 3, no. 2 (January 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Burucua, *Confronting the "Dirty War" in Argentina Cinema, 1983-1993: Memory and Gender in Historical Representations*. Also see Elizabeth Jelin, *Los Trabajos de La Memoria* (Madrid: Siglo veintiuno de españa editores, 2002).

<sup>80</sup> In 1986, the *Ley de Punto Final* imposed a deadline for the presentation of evidence and the opening of cases against members of the army. The following year, the *Ley de Obediencia Debida* proclaimed that officers and subordinates of the armed forces could not be prosecuted as they were only following orders from the heads of the military junta.

involvement in the arts hindered Argentina's creative freedom. While legally free from censorship, the Argentine film industry was still subjected to the will of those in power. Yet, within the film community, there was a growing distaste for the sanitized narratives designed for international audiences being plastered across screens. However, it would take a new group of filmmakers combined with a changing political environment for Argentine film to enter the next phase of cinematic memory construction.

## Chapter 6

### *Controlling the Narrative: The International Construction of Memory in Chile*

While the effects of the collapse of Argentina's dictatorship rippled across the Southern Cone, Chile was still embroiled in the throes of Pinochet's dictatorship. Although much of the bloodshed of the dictatorship's early years had ended, Pinochet still maintained an iron grip on the country. Unlike Argentina, Chile would not experience a true transition to democracy until 1990. With stories of Argentina's *desaparecidos* playing on screens across the globe, the subject was rapidly becoming a part of the global consciousness, even if Chileans could not directly explore the topic within their own borders. Though the primary focus of this thesis involves an analysis of the use of film during post-dictatorial periods, the decade-long transitional period that took place in Chile is still worth consideration as it serves as a point of comparison to the concurrent timeframe in Argentina.

While the 1980s saw a rebirth of Argentine cinema following the dictatorship's collapse, Chile's film industry remained silenced by Pinochet's oppressive tactics. Film schools were still closed and film directors and technicians were either in exile or forced into politically neutral jobs in areas such as advertising and tourism.<sup>81</sup> Subject to censorship laws put in place at the start of Pinochet's reign, domestically produced films were often banned by the National Film Ratings Board for political or ideological

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<sup>81</sup> Bridget V. Franco, "Cinematographic and Political Transitions in 'La Redada' and 'La Frontera,'" *Hispania* 98, no. 3 (2015): 408.



reasons.<sup>82</sup> Unable to produce films domestically, Chileans in exile instead had to make their films abroad. Between 1973 and 1983, over 150 films in sixteen different countries were produced that critiqued Pinochet's regime and its rampant human rights abuses.<sup>83</sup> Shedding light on the horrific situation in Chile, filmmakers sought to expose the reality of Pinochet's regime to the international community. The influx of films produced on the topic inspired filmmakers across the globe, including non-Chileans, to begin making their own films dealing with Chile's dictatorship.

Perhaps the most famous of these films was *Missing*, a 1982 historical drama by Greek-French director, Constantin Costa-Gavras. Starring Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek, the film was an international phenomenon, earning multiple Oscar nominations and winning the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. Based on the book, *The Execution of Charles Horman: An American Sacrifice*, the film adapts the true story of the disappearance of American journalist Charles Horman in Chile. Although it begins before Horman's actual disappearance, the majority of the film deals with the aftermath of his death, following Horman's wife, Beth, and his father, Ed, on their desperate search for the missing man. Challenged by government bureaucracy and their own conflicting political beliefs, the pair must find a way to work together and come to terms with the truth of Horman's fate. The film rarely hesitates with its criticism, even openly acknowledging the United States involvement in Chile's coup and Pinochet's subsequent human rights abuses.

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<sup>82</sup> Franco, "Cinematographic and Political Transitions in 'La Redada' and 'La Frontera,'" 408.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

By focusing the film's narrative around Ed's character arc from disapproving father to political activist, Costa-Gavras also explores the idea of complacency. When he first arrives in Chile, Ed disapproves of his son's political activism, believing that he should not have gotten involved with affairs that have no bearing on his personal wellbeing. However, his perspective alters dramatically over the course of the film, as he realizes the true depths Chilean and American officials were willing to go to in order to maintain power and protect their economic interests. Uncovering the gruesome nature of his son's murder, Ed comes to understand no one deserves to be subjected to such levels of violence. His transformation is apparent in an intense exchange with the U.S. ambassador, where he condemns the U.S.'s support of a political regime that murders thousands of human beings. Accused by the ambassador that he would be at home, complacent with the situation in Chile, if it were not for his son, Ed is filled with shame and regret. He fully realizes the dangers of complacency, a message clearly meant to resonate with the film's international audience and encourage their own transformation after viewing the film.

Though *Missing* aims to promote international understanding of the situation in Chile and the events surrounding Pinochet's violent rise to power, the film ultimately falters when delivering its primary message. As renowned film critic, Roger Ebert explained in his review of the film:

“the movie never develops the power it should have had, because the director, Constantin Costa-Gavras, either lacked confidence in the strength of his story, or had too much confidence in his own stylistic virtuosity. He has achieved the unhappy feat of upstaging his own movie, losing it in a thicket of visual and editing stunts.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Roger Ebert, “Missing Movie Review & Film Summary (1982) | Roger Ebert,” January 1, 1982.

Ebert goes onto to explain how the film's construction and its "fancy meditation on the nature of reality" hinders its narrative's impact.<sup>85</sup> Rather than show the audience what actually happened to Horman, the film presents various scenarios of what could have occurred after he disappeared. Horman's true fate is only ever alluded to as Costa-Garvas explores the carnage plaguing the country in the immediate aftermath of the coup. While Costa-Garvas may have intended this construction to reflect the fractured reality of the families of *desaparecidos*, the point was largely lost on international audiences.

The film's focus on the disappearance of an American journalist also detracts from its overall impact. Although equally horrific, the disappearances of foreign individuals were rare. In reality, most of the *desaparecidos* were local Chileans who had been labeled as subversives. The shift in focus was a clear attempt to make the narrative more relatable to an international audience who remained largely unaffected by the violence in Chile. By telling Horman's story, the film demands international attention, implying no one is safe from Pinochet's terror, not even Americans. However, the internationally tailored plot ultimately posits misconceptions of the harsh realities in Chile. Unlike the Horman family, privileged with wealth and political connections, families of the *desaparecidos* rarely had the means to seek out the fates of their loved ones. Though Horman's body is eventually returned to his family in the United States, many Chilean families were never afforded this sense of closure. Furthermore, unlike Beth and Ed who escape Chile at the end of the film, actual Chileans remained trapped in the grim reality of a country destined to be ruled by an oppressive dictator for years.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Although *Missing* propelled the plight of Chile into the global consciousness, it did little for the construction of memory within Chile itself. The film was designed and produced with the international audience in mind, choosing to construct a plot that could be understood by individuals not directly affected by Pinochet's human rights abuses. Reflective of other films produced at the time, *Missing* acted as a portion of a larger narrative being constructed within the international community, one that would come to define Chile's global image in the years to come. However, the unique political conditions that perpetuated the censorship of the Chilean film industry allowed for few other options. Filmmakers could not make movies for the Chilean audience if they wanted to discuss Pinochet's rule. With Chile forced into silence, the construction of the memory box was transferred to a largely disaffected international community. An unfortunate consequence of this was Chileans were not given the opportunity to construct their own narrative, rather, one was thrust upon them. Until the resurgence of the Chilean film industry after Pinochet's removal from power, the films produced during this period merely served as placeholders until such time as Chile could reclaim the construction of the memory box.

## Chapter 7

### *Reclaiming the Screen: Memory Through Metaphor in Argentina*<sup>86</sup>

While sanitized narratives dominated the screen in the years immediately following the collapse of the dictatorships, a new wave of cinema began to appear in Argentina that sought to counter these established narratives. Ironically, the government's return to silence in the years following the establishment of *Ley de Punto Final* and *Ley de Obediencia Debida* encouraged bolder filmmaking. Regardless of the policy of appeasement initiated by Alfonsín and continued under the Menem administration, the desire to build memory based on truth and justice was too strong to be suppressed. A new generation of Argentines were reigniting the fight for memory and the impact of their efforts was echoed in the film community.<sup>87</sup> Dissatisfied with the government's attempt to close the memory box, filmmakers instead sought ways to encourage the public to confront the past that the government was so eager to leave behind.

Despite the rise of counter movements, Argentina's general public had fallen back into a state of fear over opening up the wounds of the past. As a result, filmmakers had to find creative ways to engage with themes of memory and tragedy that still appealed to an audience encapsulated in a culture of silence. With many unwilling to directly engage with the past, filmmakers instead began to explore Argentina's tragic history through

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<sup>86</sup> Section adapted from Megan Schneider, "El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria" (SIT Argentina, 2017). See Appendix A.

<sup>87</sup> The establishment of the activist group H.I.J.O.S. signaled a shift in Argentina. Founded by children of the disappeared, the group encouraged a new generation to join in the fight against the erosion of memory. H.I.J.O.S.'s bolder methods of protest acted as a strong countermovement to the administration's policy of appeasement and encouraged Argentines to reevaluate the current social and political climate.

metaphor. Although less direct than the films discussed in the previous chapters, these new films managed to explore the past more critically and honestly. Almost subversive in nature, these films would intertwine narratives, providing a traditional cinematic story, while simultaneously delivering poignant messages about the importance of remembering the events of the dictatorships. This delivery system allowed filmmakers to draw in tentative audience members with the promise of entertainment, but still dispense their ultimate message. Rather than merely presenting palatable narratives of little substance, filmmakers subliminally invited audiences to reclaim their agency while deciphering the meaning behind the metaphors imbedded in the films.

Even filmmakers that had engaged in the internationally focused films of the mid 1980s began to pursue this approach. *La historia oficial*'s director, Luis Puenzo explored the same themes of memory with more vigor in his 1993 film, *La peste*. Adapted from the French novel of the same name, the film tells the story of a city decimated by a plague and follows the interconnected stories of a doctor and two French journalists caught up in the quarantine. Although never explicitly named, the film is clearly depicting Buenos Aires. Mirroring the horrific events of the dictatorship, the film's true message is told through an allegorical tale. Cruel and repressive, the public health agency tasked with controlling the outbreak acts a symbol for the military junta. The plague's symbolic duality embodies the growing resistance movements against the dictatorship and the sweeping violent repression that sought to destroy voices of opposition. Just like the *desaparecidos*, the infected are forcibly removed from their homes and quarantined from the rest of society. Deemed a danger to public health, they are sequestered in horrible

conditions in public buildings, echoing the gruesome reality of the clandestine detention centers designed for supposed subversives during the junta's reign.

Similar to *La historia oficial*, *La peste* ends with a sense of positive ambiguity. The lifting of the quarantine signals a new day in a city once plagued by terror. However, the final line of the film ends with a warning from the narrator cautioning that the danger is not gone: the plague is only dormant and could return at any time. Within this final moment, the film offers its message: the world is never safe from the threat of destructive forces whether they be biological or political, and as such, it is imperative that society remain vigilant. Taking a firm stance on the issue of complacency, the film's ending demands reflection on Argentina's past. Unlike Puenzo's previous tale of redemption, *La peste* offers no promises to its audience, instead urging them to act and save themselves from an ill-fated future.

Puenzo's allegorical tale was not the only film to employ metaphor as tool of memory construction in the years following the fall of the dictatorship. The 1990s saw the science fiction genre enter a renaissance in Argentina, capturing the imagination by reflecting the society's anxiety over the nation's uncertain future. Despite being minimally funded by *Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales* (INCAA), science fiction films creatively embraced the imposed financial challenges, relying on metaphors and innovative filmmaking techniques to convey their message.<sup>88</sup> Ironically, the genre's lack of state support actually drove its success as a vector of collective memory. Without

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<sup>88</sup> Formally known as the INC, INCAA provided funding and approval for film production throughout Argentina. See Everett Hamner, "Remembering the Disappeared: Science Fiction Film in Postdictatorship Argentina," *Science Fiction Studies* 39, no. 1 (2012): 60–80.

state interference, filmmakers had the freedom to creatively explore the events of the dictatorship and construct narratives that did not have to meet state or international standards. As a result, the genre became a champion of memory, with its central themes echoing the sentiment of those fighting for the preservation of memory in the wake of the dictatorship. Warnings of dystopian futures left audiences with the message that if the nation did not confront its past, it risked its future.

This sentiment was clearly reflected in Fernando Spiner's *La sonámbula, recuerdos del futuro*. Set in a futuristic dystopian version of Buenos Aires, the film explores the aftermath of a chemical explosion that has caused hundreds of thousands of people to lose their memories. Labeled the "*afectados*," these amnesiacs are collected by the government and undergo experiments to have new memories and identities implanted inside them. A clear metaphor for the *desaparecidos*, the *afectados* have lost both their past and future, doomed to either be taken and controlled by a malicious government or wander the desolate, black and white purgatory that the film presents as Argentina's new reality.<sup>89</sup> The fictional society's lack of collective memory has become its downfall, "giving way to impunity and setting the conditions for the recurrence of military coups and dictatorships."<sup>90</sup>

Salvation only comes in the form of Eva, the solitary *afectado* that can still access her true memories. Presented in the black and white film's only moments of vibrant color, her memories reveal the presence of a mysterious rebel group and act as a beacon

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<sup>89</sup> Mariano Paz, "Buenos Aires Dreaming: Chronopolitics, Memory and Dystopia in La Sonámbula," *Alambique: Revista Académica de Ciencia Ficción y Fantasía / Jornal Acadêmico de Ficção Científica e Fantasia* 1, no. 1 (2013): 1–13.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



of hope in a world defined by tragedy. The film follows her journey to find the rebel leader in her memories while the government pursues her and her companion in an effort to destroy them. By reconstructing her past and finding the rebel leader, the world is offered a chance for redemption. Within her memories lies a truth that can topple callous governments and construct a reality full of life and color, unlike the monochromatic wasteland that flourishes in a culture of fear and oblivion.

Science fiction films were not limited to depictions of the dystopian future in order to comment on Argentina's construction of memory. Often, they would explore settings that mirrored reality, yet were slightly askew, as was the case with Gustavo Mosquera's *Moebius*. *Moebius* tells the story of Daniel Pratt, a topographer in search of Train 86 which mysteriously disappeared in the subway system beneath Buenos Aires. Using the lost train as a metaphor for the memory of the *desaparecidos*, the film "challenges the way Argentine official histories overlook the patterns of militarism, political corruption and human rights abuses."<sup>91</sup> Just as the train disappeared from the subway system, so too had the truth of Argentina's past. As Pratt's investigation continues, he learns that Train 86 is not gone, but rather suspended in an infinite time loop created by his former professor in an effort to protect the train's symbolic contents. By suspending the train in an infinite temporal space, the professor has ensured that the symbolic memory on board can live on even though it has disappeared from the present reality.

The end of the film finds Pratt becoming the missing train's new conductor, relieving his former professor of the burden of protecting the train from the city officials

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<sup>91</sup> Hamner, "Remembering the Disappeared," 61.

that control the metro system. Pratt's professor, a representative of the generation that survived the Dirty War, has shepherded the truth to the next generation as embodied by Pratt.<sup>92</sup> The passing of the train onto Pratt is tantamount to the transfer of memory to a new protector. Through him, the memory of the *desaparecidos* will live on as he guides the train through the infinite Moebius loop. However, memory cannot end with him. As Pratt begins to pull the train out of the station, he takes a final look out the window and sees Abril, the young girl who accompanied him throughout his journey. Although her presence proved unexplained and jarring throughout the film, this final moment reveals her true importance. She is destined to become the next conduit of memory, with Pratt one day passing the train along to her, ensuring that the memory of the *desaparecidos* continues to be shared with future generations.<sup>93</sup> Through its metaphorical exploration of memory, *Moebius* offers "a measure of meaning to the survivors of injustice and presses national and international audiences to face the memories of individual and cultural shame."<sup>94</sup> Like Train 86, the memory of the *desaparecidos* must live on within the Argentine consciousness and occupy a space of infinite permanence.

Films like *La peste*, *La sonámbula*, *recuerdos del futuro*, and *Moebius* offer audiences a unique opportunity to explore the past while maintaining a buffer from direct engagement with tragedy. Despite the creation of metaphorically distance, they still force audiences to return to the memory box and explore their own connections to its current construction. Clearly concerned with Argentina's new policy of appeasement and amnesty, filmmakers warned audiences of the bleak future the country would face if it

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<sup>92</sup> Hamner, "Remembering the Disappeared."

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 62.

decided to close the box on the past atrocities of the dictatorship. Unlike the internationally placated films of the past, these films refused to offer audiences the comfort of guaranteed redemption. Instead, they all ended with their protagonists in a state of flux, their futures uncertain. Typically ending at the crossroads between memory and oblivion, the films suggest that only a path that embraces the past ends with a future worth pursuing. However, it is up to the protagonist, and symbolically the country, to take the necessary steps to pursue a world that refuses to forget its past.

Despite these films' open engagement with memory construction, they struggled to reach a wide audience, rarely garnering the same commercial and critical success as films like *La historia oficial*. Unlike international blockbusters, these films defied traditional narrative structures and were difficult to follow, often requiring multiple viewings in order to ascertain their meaning. Their unique construction often deterred audiences from engaging with the films. While their content may have acted as a more effective tool of collective memory than films in the past, their lack of commercial success limited their impact on the construction of Argentina's memory box.

## Chapter 8

### *Balancing Commerciality and Impact: Chilean Cinema after Pinochet*

Whereas Argentina was using film to combat the resurgence of silence, Chile was entering a period of transition that would change the way the film industry interacted with ideas of the dictatorship. Pinochet was finally removed from power in 1990 when Patricio Aylwin and the Christian Democrats took over the newly democratic country.<sup>95</sup> With Pinochet removed from power, the Chilean film community could finally begin to produce films about the dictatorship within their own country. No longer dominated by the documentary or historical drama genre that had captivated international and exiled Chilean directors, filmmakers began to explore new ways to confront their past through cinema. Similar to the Argentine films discussed in the previous chapter, this often resulted in the use of metaphors and allegorical tales.

One such film was Ricardo Larrain's 1991 debut film, *La Frontera*. Following school teacher Ramiro Orellana's internal exile in a remote coastal town, the film explores Chile's struggle to confront its past while simultaneously transitioning to life after Pinochet. The film's coastal setting acts as a microcosm for Chilean society, with the community of social outcasts representing the individuals resisting the nation's "official message of 'consensus and reconciliation' that was touted as the political

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<sup>95</sup> "Patricio Aylwin Azócar." *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition*, January 2019, 1–1.

narrative of the transition.”<sup>96</sup> The ocean surrounding the town, having already destroyed the town once before during a massive tidal wave, acts as a “metaphor for the continuity of time that is periodically interrupted by moments of violence or crisis.”<sup>97</sup>

Thrust into the life of the tiny coastal town, Ramiro is forced to adjust to his new reality. In spite of being tormented by the city officials tasked to monitor his exile and his lack of traditional freedom, he begins to make a life for himself. He starts a romance with a local woman, Maite, and befriends a nameless diver who is in search of the cause of the first tidal wave. The relationships between the characters provide mutual salvation, with their connections offering solace in the wake of their personal tragedies. Maite and Ramiro’s relationship allows them to move past the loved ones they lost at the hands of either the destructive tidal wave or the ruthless government. Ramiro’s partnership with the diver allows for the symbolic exploration of the regime’s violent tendencies, while their companionship permits them to share the burden of the truth they discover. However, the characters’ happiness is short lived as news of a second tidal wave threatens the town.

Despite the advanced warning of the catastrophe, only Ramiro survives the wave’s destruction. Maite, unable to leave her past behind and build a new one with Ramiro in Santiago when his exile is lifted, is doomed to die in the isolated coastal town.<sup>98</sup> Her attachment to her past seals her fate. Refusing to escape the second tidal wave, she remains, clutching her father’s lifeless body as the as the basement fills with

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<sup>96</sup> Bridget V. Franco, “Cinematographic and Political Transitions in ‘La Redada’ and ‘La Frontera,’” *Hispania* 98, no. 3 (2015), 409.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 409-411.

water. Ramiro's only other companion, the nameless diver, is also swept away by the wave. Obsessed with his search for the truth behind the ocean's destructive force, he refuses to flee, donning his diving helmet once last time to meet the wave head on. The tragic end of Ramiro's companions acts as a warning to Chileans: if concern for the past becomes all-consuming, the nation is fated for destruction.

However, the film does not imply that the past should simply be disregarded. Ramiro's survival and his final message of resistance to the camera crew that comes to film the destruction of the town, suggests that a middle ground is possible. Speaking directly into the camera, he claims that he would repeat the act of protest that resulted in his exile, knowing that without resistance, the government would be able to exercise violence with impunity. It is at society's peril that individuals like him refuse to speak out when innocent people are disappeared by oppressive regimes. His exile has taught him "how to listen to the voices and the stories of citizens who must survive periodic catastrophic destruction," but he also understands life must move forward in the wake of trauma.<sup>99</sup> When his exile is lifted, he knows that he must return to Santiago rather than stay in the coastal town that is trapped in an isolating past. Ramiro must become the new national hero born out of the "turbulent political waters" and gifted with "acquired political consciousness."<sup>100</sup> He must speak for those silenced by the dictatorship and consumed with the past.<sup>101</sup> Only his dual understanding of the importance of memory and the need for progress is capable of moving society forward in a healthy, sustainable manner.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Unlike many of the allegorical films in Argentina, *La Frontera* enjoyed both greater domestic and international box office success, winning awards at the Berlin and Havana Film Festivals, as well as Spain's Goya for Best Spanish Language Foreign Film.<sup>102</sup> *La Frontera*'s commercial success was likely rooted in its more relatable message, with its commentary on memory construction being more flexible than some of its cinematic counterparts. Although it encourages Chile to reflect on its past, it does not shame it for looking to its future. It provided an appealing middle ground that connected with an audience still reeling from massive political change.

While films like *La Frontera* sought to engage with issues of memory in the years immediately following Chile's transition to democracy, other films struggled to find foundations of support for narratives exploring the nation's troubled past. It would not be until 2001 that the Chilean Congress would implement constitutional reform and repeal the censorship laws that had hindered the film community.<sup>103</sup> Formal legislation mandating national support for film production would not be enacted until 2004.<sup>104</sup> As a result, "in the decade following Chile's return to democracy, the majority of domestic film productions distanced themselves from narrative content directly associated with the traumas of dictatorship and the experience of exile."<sup>105</sup> In time, films such as Andrés Wood's *Machuca* would begin to more explicitly explore the events of the dictatorship.

Released in 2004, *Machuca* confronts the violence that occurred as Pinochet rose to power. It uses the unique perspective of a child to explore this traumatic period and its

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 407

<sup>103</sup> Franco, "Cinematographic and Political Transitions in 'La Redada' and 'La Frontera,'" 408.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

impact on the nation. The story is told through the eyes of Gonzalo, the young protagonist, as he comes to terms with the complicated reality of Chile in the 1970s. Following his budding friendship with Silvana and Pedro, the film allows the true story of political chaos to play out just below the surface of Gonzalo's childhood exploits. However, the audience can only enjoy Gonzalo's childhood naïveté for so long, as he quickly loses his innocence the more he learns about the dichotomy between his privileged lifestyle and the harsh reality of Silvana and Pedro's poverty-stricken existence. Gonzalo's innocence is shattered after he witnesses Silvana's murder at the hands of the military invading their shantytown. Distraught and helpless, he abandons his friends and returns home, only to find that his family is reaping the benefits of the coup, his home now refurbished and even more elaborate than before. The film ends before the true horrors of the dictatorship begin, instead leaving the audience with the uneasy awareness of the violence yet to come. The film draws audiences to the memory box, but leaves it up to the individual to decide whether or not they want to open it and address their own recollections of Pinochet's rise to power.

While films like *Machuca* memorialized the events of the dictatorship, they provided minimal commentary on the construction of memory in Chile. It would not be until recently that Chilean cinema would find its footing and create films that directly confronted the past while simultaneously reflected on the nation's interaction with the collective memory box. Perhaps the best example of this cinematic development was Pablo Larraín's 2013 film, *No*. Based on the events of Chile's 1988 plebiscite, the film follows René Saavedra, a former expatriate turned ad-man, as he works on the No campaign trying to oust Pinochet from office. With just fifteen minutes of airtime a night,



René and his team must find a way to inspire a nation to vote against a dictator that had ruled for over a decade. Thrown into a world activism previously only experienced through his ex-wife, René struggles to find common ground with his activist team members, fearing that their tactics will result in a campaign so incendiary that Chileans would abstain from voting altogether.

René attempts to convince the campaign to pursue a message of hope and happiness, drawing upon images of American pop culture to paint the image of the vibrant future Chile could have without Pinochet. However, his approach is met with distain. Members of the team who had loved ones disappear under Pinochet's rule find René's approach repulsive, believing that his brightly colored images mask a campaign of silence. Yet, René insists that campaign is simply using the language of advertising to deliver a political message. Ultimately, René's approach proves successful, with his unconventional campaign contributing to Pinochet loss of the 1988 plebiscite.

The film's constant engagement with the No campaign's debate over presenting truth versus hope reminds the audience to be wary when deciding whether the ends truly justify the means. In order to win the plebiscite, the campaign must set aside the stories of the *desaparecidos*. Though it seems a necessary evil, this decision haunts the group throughout the film as they question their willingness to sacrifice their morals in their quest to oust Pinochet.

The actual production of the film itself reflects this internal struggle. Leveraging the star power of Gael García Bernal, the film presents a flashy cinematic narrative that sometimes distracts from the film's overall message. However, *No*'s success suggests that such compromises are necessary. The film defied the traditional pattern of

domestically produced films, drawing both domestic and international acclaim, ultimately earning an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film.<sup>106</sup> Just as René sought to use advertising language to deliver a political message, so too does *No* deliver an impactful message wrapped in a commercially successful cinematic experience.

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<sup>106</sup> “No - Awards - IMDb.”

## Chapter 9

### *Conclusions*

The nature of collective memory in both Argentina and Chile was undeniably altered as a result of the traumatic socio-political events that took place under their respective dictatorships. In the wake of tragedy, both countries sought to restore and transmit memories of the *desaparecidos* in an effort to repair the gaping hole their disappearances left in the collective consciousness. When confronting such a violent political period, film became a powerful medium through which memory lost to trauma could be restored. Acting as a tangible outlet for memory construction, movies allowed filmmakers and audiences to productively engage with the past through the relative comfort of a constructed cinematic world.

Analyzing films from the post-dictatorial period in both Argentina and Chile, this thesis sought to determine the effectiveness of film as a vector of collective memory. Although initially considered to be an excellent outlet, the reality proved more complicated. While it is clear that film provides the potential for restorative memory construction, it by no means guarantees it. As revealed in the chapters of this thesis, filmmakers in Argentina and Chile attempting to reconstruct national identity and the memory of the *desaparecidos* faced the dilemma of creating films that were both true and powerful while also ensuring that the stories that needed to be told would be heard by a large enough audience. As a result, a film's ability to contribute to the collective memory box often correlated to its commercial success.

The pursuit of commerciality proved problematic when dealing the events and themes of the dictatorship. Sacrificing authenticity for entertainment, films seeking to reconstruct memory often inadvertently resulted in the closing of the memory of box. In the final analysis, this proves to be a necessary evil. Clearly evidenced by the examination of Argentine and Chilean cinema, direct engagement with the atrocities of the dictatorship was too traumatic, or too controversial, to be sustained. The best outcomes were achieved when films offered a measure of hope in conjunction with its efforts to address the past. Films like *No* remain a testament to the impact a film can achieve by occupying the metaphorical middle ground when attempting to facilitate the cinematic construction of memory. Part of the allure of film is its potential to deliver searing social commentary and poignant narratives under the guise of a purely cinematic experience.

The relevant conclusion in this thesis is that film can and does serve as an impactful tool in the arsenal of collective memory construction, but only under specific circumstances. It can never repair the physical and psychological damage caused by human rights abuses, but in reality, nothing truly can. Film has the capacity to spark interest in the process of construction of memory, but it is the individual members of present-day society who bear the burden of engaging in the often-painful process of constructing memory in a manner that will not allow the mistakes of the past to resurface in the future.

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## Appendix A

### *El cine como un vector de memoria: Un análisis de las representaciones de los desaparecidos en diferentes géneros del cine argentino desde 1983 a 2008 y sus vínculos con los ciclos de la memoria*

#### **I. Resumen**

From 1976 to 1983, the military dictatorship in Argentina ushered in a period of state organized terrorism that resulted in the forced disappearance of an estimated 30,000 people known as the “desaparecidos.” The regime’s fierce censorship and repression prevented the population from pushing back on these massive human rights violations. However, the end of military dictatorship in 1983 created a space for the Argentine population to begin to process and prosecute the atrocities that had occurred at the hands of the military junta. Without censorship or fear of repercussion, there was a tremendous increase in the political, social, academic, and cultural discussion about the events of the previous regime. As part of its transition to democracy, Argentina had to address the process of defining its new political and social identity. A key part of this was addressing the memory of the “desaparecidos.” Film became one of the many outlets that fostered this process, with filmmakers producing work that reflected an era of intense discussion of a traumatic past.

This investigation focuses on the cycles of memory immediately after the end of the dictatorship and how different films relate to them. It specifically studies four cycles of memory: the first from 1984 to 1989, the second from 1989 to 1995, the third from 1996 to 2001, and the fourth 2002 to 2008. Within the context of these time periods, it analyzes films from four different genres of Argentine cinema: historical, drama, science fiction, and documentary. Through a qualitative method of personal interviews with experts and industry members, film analysis, and academic study, this investigation seeks to demonstrate that filmmakers worked with specific genres in relation to the social and cultural context of the different cycles of memory to effectively and artistically convey different moments in the process of memory.

## II. Agradecimientos

Me gustaría agradecer a las siguientes personas. Sin su ayuda y apoyo este proyecto no habría sido posible.

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### **III. Introducción**

Desde 1976 a 1983, la dictadura militar en Argentina inició un período de terrorismo de Estado organizado, desatando un reino de terror que afectó profundamente la vida de los ciudadanos. Determinado a mantener el poder, el régimen militar no mostró ninguna tolerancia con la oposición y buscó eliminar a todos los discursos alternativos contrarios al gobierno. Fue una época que también se caracterizó, entre otras cuestiones, por la censura masiva de diversos modos de expresión y comunicación. Durante la dictadura, 30.000 personas, consideradas como una amenaza, fueron secuestradas, torturadas y asesinadas por la Junta Militar en un esfuerzo por eliminar sus voces de la memoria del país. La censura feroz del régimen coartó la posibilidad de manifestarse contra las violaciones masivas de los derechos humanos, así como las expresiones públicas de duelo por la pérdida de tantos miembros de la sociedad. Sin embargo, estos "desaparecidos" dejaron una huella permanente en la historia argentina y en las vidas de los argentinos.

Con el fin de la dictadura militar en 1983, se abrió un espacio para que la sociedad pueda comenzar a procesar las violaciones de los derechos humanos que habían ocurrido durante la dictadura. Con el levantamiento de la censura, durante los años de la transición democrática, hubo un gran impulso para la discusión política, social, académica y cultural sobre los acontecimientos del pasado dictatorial. A medida que fue pasando el tiempo, Argentina continuó su recuperación después de la dictadura con la definición de su nueva identidad política y social. La conversación sobre los desaparecidos ayudó en ese proceso de recuperación y elaboración de los hechos terribles de la dictadura, que habían ocurrido en el marco de un proceso de memoria que puso en juego distintos sentidos del pasado. Estos pueden organizarse, de acuerdo a diferentes autores, en sucesivos ciclos de memoria.

Los recuerdos sobre el pasado trágico fueron tomando diferentes formas, contenidos y sentidos. Distintos lenguajes artísticos y fuentes creativas se convirtieron en una forma de explorar este proceso. En particular, el cine contribuyó a poner en discusión estos temas difíciles, en contra de una erosión del pasado. A lo largo de los años, el cine seguía siendo una manera de recordar lo ocurrido en la dictadura y de proporcionar

comentarios sobre el proceso de la memoria en Argentina. Un gran número de cineastas abordaron el tema desde diferentes perspectivas, técnicas de cinematografía y géneros, resultando en un vasto corpus de películas que hoy en día, pueden ser leídas como un mapa de los ciclos de la memoria en la Argentina de la post-dictadura.

Esta investigación se enfoca en las representaciones de los desaparecidos en películas hechas después del fin de la dictadura. Con el análisis de estas representaciones, se busca dar respuesta a la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo las películas de diferentes géneros durante las décadas posteriores a la dictadura, de 1983 a 2008, se vinculan con los sucesivos ciclos de la memoria en la sociedad argentina? Para poder dar una respuesta a este interrogante, esta investigación explora distintos géneros fílmicos, incluyendo el histórico, la ciencia ficción, el drama y el documental, para a fin de dar cuenta en qué medida cada uno de estos géneros es representativo de las diferentes etapas de los ciclos de la memoria. Además, se analizan los cuatro ciclos que fueron elegidos y explorados académicamente, hasta la elección y primer año de la presidencia de Cristina Fernández de Kirchner: el primer ciclo desde 1984 hasta 1989, el segundo ciclo desde 1989 hasta 1995, el tercer ciclo desde 1996 hasta 2001 y el cuarto ciclo desde 2002 hasta 2008. Con el objetivo de explorar el modo en que el cine contribuye a la memoria colectiva, esta investigación examina las dimensiones siguientes: 1) cuáles son los ciclos de la memoria en Argentina, 2) cómo cambió la memoria colectiva durante cada ciclo, 3) cómo las películas de diferentes géneros representaron las violaciones de los derechos humanos de la dictadura, específicamente con respecto a los desaparecidos, y 4) de qué forma procesaron el contexto social y político en que se produjeron los films. La hipótesis del trabajo se plantea que los cineastas trabajaron con géneros específicos en relación con el contexto social y cultural de los diversos ciclos de memoria, para transmitir efectivamente y artísticamente los diferentes avances o momentos en el proceso de memoria.

#### **IV. Metodología**

Para realizar la investigación del cine como vector de la memoria colectiva, se optó por un enfoque de dos frentes. En primer lugar, un análisis de los ciclos de la

memoria en Argentina y los cambios de la memoria durante cada etapa. Y en segundo término, una examinación de cómo el cine, específicamente diferentes géneros fílmicos, procesan los sentimientos y el contexto en cada ciclo. Para abordar estos dos temas, se realiza un diseño de investigación cualitativo según el cual analizamos: 1) los recursos académicos sobre los ciclos de la memoria, 2) entrevistas semi-estructuradas con un experto, 3) las ocho películas, dos de cada género, que trabajan con temas sobre los desaparecidos, 4) los recursos académicos sobre cada película y género, y 5) entrevistas semi-estructuradas con miembros de la industria del cine. En esta investigación se emplea esta metodología para dar cuenta de qué modo el cine contribuye a la memoria de un pasado traumático para la sociedad argentina.

Para analizar los ciclos de memoria, se utilizan artículos, ensayos y revistas académicas que se encuentran en bases de datos universitarias, para complementar la investigación. Por lo demás, se usan las fuentes de la Biblioteca de la Escuela Nacional de Experimentación y Realización Cinematográfica (ENERC) del Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales (INCAA). También se realiza una entrevista con un experto académico con conocimiento en las industrias culturales y la memoria colectiva en Argentina. Sus pensamientos, opiniones y estudios sobre el tema completan esta investigación independiente. Las preguntas de esta entrevista están relacionadas con la conexión entre la memoria colectiva y el cine argentino.<sup>107</sup> Se pregunta sobre su anterior trabajo y sus antecedentes en el campo para proporcionar contexto y elaboración a esta investigación.

Por otra parte, esta investigación se apoya en el análisis personal y la reflexión crítica a partir de los recursos académicos para explorar cómo los filmes procesan los sentimientos y el contexto en cada etapa. El estudio de cómo diferentes géneros fílmicos representan cada ciclo de memoria, incluye fuentes primarias y secundarias. La mayoría de los datos fueron obtenidos del análisis de ocho películas realizadas en periodos asociados a los ciclos de memoria después de la dictadura, con un análisis de dos películas de cada etapa. Para el primer ciclo, desde 1984 hasta 1989, analizamos *La historia oficial* (Luis Puenzo, 1985) y *La noche de los lápices* (Héctor Olivera, 1986). El

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<sup>107</sup> La guía de entrevista para los expertos está ubicada en el anexo de esta investigación.

segundo ciclo, alcanza desde 1989 hasta 1995, en este caso analizamos *La peste* (Luis Puenzo, 1993) y *El acto en cuestión* (Alejandro Agresti, 1993). Con respecto al tercer ciclo, este va desde 1996 hasta 2001, analizamos *Moebius* (Gustavo Mosquera, 1996) y *La sonámbula, recuerdos del futuro* (Fernando Spiner, 1998). Por último, el cuarto ciclo abarca desde 2002 hasta 2008, y de ese período nos enfocamos en *Los rubios* (Albertina Carri, 2003) y *Our Disappeared/Nuestros desaparecidos* (Juan Mandelbaum, 2008). Para complementar este análisis, se recurre a los artículos y libros de otros académicos que han estudiado estos films, ya sea en una exploración general de sus temas o más específicamente en sus conexiones con la memoria.

Asimismo, se realizaron entrevistas con dos directores y un productor que han trabajado en producciones de películas relacionadas con la representación de los desaparecidos y la dictadura. Estos encuentros ayudan a proporcionar la perspectiva de los creadores de estas películas y a confirmar cómo abordaron las representaciones de estos temas tan difíciles. Las preguntas de estas entrevistas están relacionadas con sus motivaciones para entrar en la industria, las esperanzas que tienen en las producciones en cuanto a la posibilidad de que sean reconocidas también fuera del país, y sus pensamientos sobre el poder del cine.<sup>108</sup> Los miembros de la industria del cine pueden exhibirse sobre su interés de utilizar la película como una manera de construir memoria colectiva y de discutir las violaciones de los derechos humanos durante la dictadura.

Utilizando las anteriores fuentes de análisis, se desarrolla la hipótesis del proyecto planteada a través de una síntesis de los dos enfoques de investigación. Con una doble perspectiva que abarca tanto los ciclos de la memoria como las representaciones de la memoria de los desaparecidos en varias películas, se elaboran conclusiones sobre cómo el cine toma inspiración del contexto en que se produjeron las películas y, por último, cómo contribuye a la memoria colectiva. En otras palabras, se analiza cómo estas películas actúan como herramientas de la memoria y qué tipo de géneros eligen para abordar de acuerdo al período de la memoria colectiva en el que se produjo la obra.

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<sup>108</sup> La guía de entrevista para los miembros de la industria del cine está ubicada en el anexo de esta investigación.

## **V. Marco de referencia**

### *a. La importancia de la memoria en Argentina*

Como muchos otros países en América Latina, la historia argentina está marcada por la amplia influencia extranjera durante la guerra fría y las fuerzas de represión política. Durante muchos años, la historia de América Latina se definió por dictadores apoyados por otros países, lo cual resultó en un constante estado de inestabilidad política. En particular el Operativo Cóndor fue una estrategia política que produjo consecuencias devastadoras para los países en América del Sur. La coordinación sistemática de las fuerzas armadas en Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brasil, Paraguay y Bolivia, facilitada por los Estados Unidos en un esfuerzo por eliminar la amenaza del comunismo en el Cono Sur, obstaculizó la capacidad de los países latinoamericanos para definir sus propias identidades (Jelin, 2002b). Además, el Operativo Cóndor fue particularmente devastador para la soberanía y el sentido de independencia social argentinas porque llevó al establecimiento de la dictadura militar desde 1976 hasta 1983. Respaldada por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, la dictadura militar pudo gobernar a la Argentina con mano de hierro.

Ya debilitada por el neocolonialismo, principalmente llevado a cabo por los Estados Unidos a través de las guerras de poderes y de la inversión extranjera, de la capacidad para impedir una definición de su propia historia, la dictadura marcó el comienzo de una nueva era en la apropiación de la memoria del pueblo argentino. El uso por parte de la Junta Militar de las desapariciones forzadas de ciudadanos opositores al régimen, fue mucho más que simplemente eliminar al individuo de la sociedad. Ellos intentaron eliminar toda la presencia del individuo, cambiando registros, asaltando casas para robar fotos y objetos personales, para hacer como si esa persona nunca hubiera existido. En última instancia, quisieron alterar la memoria del país y moldear a la gente convirtiéndola en ciudadanos pasivos.

La historia compleja de Argentina con los dictadores y los poderes extranjeros marcando los procesos de identidad tuvo una fuerte importancia para la construcción de la memoria en la Argentina. Con el fin de la dictadura y el principio de la

democratización, Argentina asumió con el trabajo de confrontar su pasado. Como Gabriela Cerruti explica:

*“Ese trabajo de acompasamiento del lenguaje y el silencio, de reconocimiento del drama y de aceptación de la pérdida que implica el duelo. Un trabajo de reflexión y elaboración que nos devuelva los trozos perdidos de nuestra identidad y nos reúna en la solidaridad de la memoria” (Cerruti, 2001, p. 14).*

La memoria devino en cada vez más un eje central en la narrativa de la identidad argentina. La Junta Militar intentó eliminar las identidades de los que secuestraron. De este modo, para recuperar la memoria de los desaparecidos, los argentinos fueron capaces de rebelarse contra la dictadura y sus objetivos. Ahora, la memoria se convirtió en una manera para que los argentinos reclamen la verdad que se les negó durante la dictadura. La captura de testimonios y la grabación de la verdad se hicieron con el objetivo de mostrar al mundo lo que el poder quiso silenciar y dar voz a los sin voz (Jelin, 2002b).

#### *b. Breve resumen de la historia del cine sobre los desaparecidos en Argentina*

Ya desde sus inicios, al poco tiempo de su invención, el film ha mantenido una fuerza constante dentro de la cultura en la Argentina como en el mundo. La industria del cine en Argentina ha evolucionado a lo largo de los años; sin embargo, la dictadura afectó negativamente la producción cinematográfica nacional. La censura y la amenaza de la desaparición forzada hicieron que la producción de filmes se tornara increíblemente peligrosa, y pocos cineastas estaban dispuestos a tomar el riesgo de hacer una película con temas en contra de la Junta Militar.

Con el fin de la dictadura, el cine argentino experimentó una profunda transformación. Libre de censura por parte del estado, el cine tomó impulso y un nuevo rol con “la responsabilidad de la memoria,” “el deber del testimonio,” y “el peso del duelo” (Amado, 2009, p. 10). La década de 1980 marcó el comienzo de una época de reinención para el Nuevo Cine de América Latina, ese momento es cuando las películas que comienzan a experimentar con nuevos temas, técnicas y narrativas (Foster, 1992). El gobierno recientemente elegido de Raúl Alfonsín alentó la producción del cine a través del Instituto Argentino de Cinematografía con nuevas políticas y el cine argentino comenzó a ganar reconocimiento internacional (Foster, 1992). Sin embargo, hacia el final



de los años 80, la industria del cine comenzó a debilitarse debido a problemas económicos y dificultades para competir con producciones extranjeras, especialmente las de Hollywood (Foster, 1992).

*c. Características de los diferentes géneros fílmicos estudiados*

Por supuesto, la definición de los diferentes géneros cinematográficos es, en gran parte, subjetiva. Aunque hay algunas convenciones y características recurrentes, a menudo queda de lado del espectador asignar a una película un determinado género. Además, las películas a menudo pertenecen a múltiples géneros. Un film puede contener aspectos de diferentes géneros; por ejemplo, una película de ciencia ficción con elementos de drama. A pesar de todo, para esta investigación, exploramos cuatro géneros de interés en relación con el cine post-dictadura: histórico, drama, ciencia ficción y documental. Las siguientes definiciones están constituidas de conformidad con las características listadas por IMDb<sup>109</sup> en combinación con nuestro aporte personal.

Las películas históricas se centran en acontecimientos históricos y a menudo se enfocan en figuras históricas o personas reales del pasado (IMDB). Independientemente de que existan personajes, momentos y diálogos ficcionales, mayormente la narrativa se basa en la realidad (IMDB). Aunque están más bien en una zona gris, las películas que cuentan una historia ficcional basadas en estudios de casos típicos, desde un contexto de un acontecimiento histórico o un período de tiempo determinado pueden también ser consideradas una parte del género histórico.

El drama es un género muy diversificado que incluye todo un número de subgéneros. En general, el drama involucra a personajes que interactúan afectivamente como base de la construcción de la narrativa (IMDB). Los dramas se centran en las emociones de sus personajes y representan su lucha por superar los conflictos. Estos conflictos pueden ser internos, contra una lucha personal por la identidad o las emociones, o externo, contra las fuerzas de la naturaleza o los otros antagonistas. Diversos aspectos del género de drama pueden encontrarse en muchos otros géneros.

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<sup>109</sup> IMDb, la Internet Movie Database, es una base de datos online y una sucursal de Amazon que mantiene información sobre películas, programas de televisión y videojuegos.

Las películas de ciencia ficción tienen narrativas basadas en "descubrimientos científicos especulativos desarrollos, cambios ambientales, viajes espaciales o vida en otros planetas" (IMDB).<sup>110</sup> Los films de este género pueden tener lugar, ya sea en mundos muy diferentes del nuestro o en un lugar en nuestro mundo, pero desde una perspectiva diferente. La ciencia ficción aborda creativamente preguntas acerca de nuestro universo, entre ellas, quiénes somos, de dónde venimos y hacia dónde vamos.

Los documentales difieren mucho de otros géneros del cine. A diferencia de los géneros basados en la narrativa, los documentales, en principio, no incluyen los mismos elementos de ficción. Por el contrario, este género representa a personas y acontecimientos de la vida real (IMDB). Sin embargo, los documentales pueden incluir recreaciones, en las que los actores representan a las personas reales (IMDB). Los documentales tratan de contar la historia real y generalmente contienen un llamamiento a la acción en relación con el tema a discutir.

Según estas definiciones, las ocho películas enfocadas en esta investigación se clasificarán de la siguiente manera: *La historia oficial* y *La noche de los lápices* como históricas; *La peste* y *El acto en cuestión* como dramas; *Moebius* y *La sonámbula, recuerdos del futuro* como ciencia ficción; y *Los rubios* y *Our Disappeared/Nuestros desaparecidos* como documentales. Aunque los géneros de estas películas están abiertos al debate, para los propósitos de este proyecto, las mismas son clasificadas de esta manera.

## **VI. Marco teórico**

### *a. La definición de la memoria*

Para explorar adecuadamente el tema de esta investigación, es pertinente en primer lugar, entender el concepto de *memoria* en general. Este concepto de la memoria es un tema muy complejo que ha sido discutido e investigado por un número de académicos en los campos de las ciencias sociales, la psicología y la neurociencia. Sin embargo, para esta investigación, nos enfocaremos en la definición que se encuentra

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<sup>110</sup> Esta cita ha sido traducida al castellano. La cita original en inglés es: "speculative scientific discoveries or developments, environmental changes, space travel, or life on other planets."

dentro de las ciencias sociales, específicamente según lo descrito por la socióloga e investigadora social argentina, Elizabeth Jelin. Aunque el concepto de memoria de Jelin incluye una multitud de concepciones e ideas que justifican una investigación completa de cada una, para esta investigación, sólo nos enfocaremos en los siguientes conceptos centrales: 1) las diferencias y conexiones entre memoria individual y colectiva, 2) la diferencia entre memoria activa y pasiva, 3) el proceso de las capacidades de recordar y olvidar, 4) la idea de memoria como identidad, y 5) la relación de la memoria y el trauma. Al enfocarnos en estos conceptos centrales, llegaremos a la definición general de memoria utilizada para esta investigación.

Para empezar, es importante entender la diferencia entre memoria individual y colectiva. A nivel individual, la memoria es, obviamente, más personal. Es el proceso diario de una persona de recordar o de olvidar hechos, ya sea nombres o fechas o eventos, así como la colección de ciertos recuerdos del pasado, que se han arraigado en la mente del individuo e influido en sus interacciones con el medioambiente (Jelin, 2002b). Por otro lado, la memoria colectiva se refiere a este proceso en una escala mucho mayor, en un lugar más grupal o comunitario o incluso a nivel nacional (Jelin, 2002b). Esta investigación se centrará principalmente en la memoria colectiva; sin embargo, es importante entender la contribución de la memoria individual en la construcción de la memoria colectiva, dado que, esta es una colección de las memorias individuales (Jelin, 2002b). Además, la memoria individual es inherentemente social. Jelin, haciendo referencia a Paul Ricoeur, ella explica que:

*“[E]sto implica la presencia de lo social, aun en los momentos más «individuales». «Nunca estamos solo» —uno no recuerda solo sino con la ayuda de los recuerdos de otros y con los códigos culturales compartidos, aun cuando las memorias personales son únicas y singulares—. Esos recuerdos personales están inmersos en narrativas colectivas, que a menudo están reforzadas en rituales y conmemoraciones grupales” (Jelin, 2002b, p. 20-21).*

En ese sentido, la memoria colectiva es compartida, las superposiciones están enmarcadas por las interacciones sociales y las estructuras de poder (Jelin, 2002b).

Además, es necesario pensar acerca de la diferencia entre la memoria activa y pasiva. La memoria pasiva ocurre con más frecuencia en un nivel individual. El concepto de *reconocimiento*, “una asociación, la identificación de un ítem referido al pasado,” se

produce pasivamente, y subconscientemente afecta a las interacciones diarias de la persona (Jelin, 2002b, p. 23). Sin embargo, la memoria individual puede ser activa, se puede ver en el concepto de *evocación*, "que implica la evaluación de lo reconocido y en consecuencia requiere de un esfuerzo más activo por parte del sujeto" (Jelin, 2002b, p. 23). En el plano social, la memoria tiende a ser mucho más activa. La construcción y mantenimiento de bibliotecas, museos, archivos y centros de documentación se construyen conscientemente en un esfuerzo por preservar la memoria (Jelin, 2002b). El cine y el arte pueden servir como vía de expresión de los sucesos y los climas sociales del pasado, llevando a los espectadores a enfrentarse a ellas. Sin embargo, es importante aclarar que estos centros de recuerdos no necesariamente garantizan la evocación (Jelin, 2002b). Los individuos deben estar dispuestos a interactuar activamente con estos lugares, de lo contrario permanecerán sólo como edificios, como marcadores simples del pasado que posiblemente podrían provocar recuerdos de eventos.

Al mismo tiempo para entender completamente el concepto de memoria, conviene entender que la memoria no es simplemente el acto de recordar, sino que es un proceso complejo entre el recuerdo y el olvido. Obviamente, el recuerdo juega un rol central en la memoria. Sin el recuerdo de acontecimientos y percepciones, la memoria no puede existir. Sea como fuere, el olvido y el silencio también juegan un rol central. Es imposible tener una memoria absoluta. En realidad, la memoria es selectiva. El "olvido no es ausencia o vacío," pero en cambio, un espacio consciente, necesario para una narrativa manejable (Jelin, 2002b, p. 28). Además, el proceso de recolección es muy subjetivo. La construcción del pasado es un proceso "siempre activ[a] y construid[a] socialmente" (Jelin, 2002b, p. 27). El olvido puede darse de muchas formas. A veces es una forma de protección, de la gente para crear sus propias versiones, más asimilables de la historia (Jelin, 2002b). En otras circunstancias, el olvido es necesario para que las personas puedan avanzar con sus vidas y ver el mundo sin el peso del pasado (Jelin, 2002b). Por otro lado, desde el lugar del poder, el olvido puede ser muy deliberado, con la supresión de datos que permita a los actores poderosos destruir cualquier evidencia de la fechoría y cualquier posibilidad de resurgimiento de ciertos recuerdos (Jelin, 2002b). Los casos más

extremos de esto resultan en un silencio, a menudo como el resultado del miedo de la población a la represión del estado (Jelin, 2002b).

Aunque la idea de memoria como identidad es intuitiva, es importante destacar que esta investigación explora la memoria de los desaparecidos, el recuerdo, que está ligado profundamente a una convocatoria para la identificación de las víctimas de la dictadura y la protección de las identidades individuales que los militares pretendían eliminar. La identidad, colectiva o individual, está intrínsecamente ligada a la permanencia del tiempo y del espacio que ocuparon porque proporciona una fundación para la construcción de la identidad (Jelin, 2002b). Es la memoria de saber de dónde viene y cómo vivió lo que permite a una sociedad elaborar el proceso del conocimiento propio.

Finalmente, es importante entender la relación entre la memoria y el trauma. Como ya discutimos, la memoria es un proceso constante de recolección y construcción de datos. Por supuesto, los eventos traumáticos tienen efectos profundos sobre este proceso. Como los miembros de la sociedad procesan las consecuencias del trauma, ellos entran en una dinámica de relación con el pasado para decidir cómo afrontarlo. De lo cual resulta inevitablemente una fricción, en tanto existe un deseo de “poner una distancia entre el pasado y el presente, de modo que se pueda recordar que algo ocurrió, pero al mismo tiempo reconocer la vida presente y los proyectos futuros” (Jelin, 2002b, p. 69).

Con estos cinco conceptos centrales en mente, podemos llegar a la definición de memoria para esta investigación. Entonces consideramos que la memoria en este contexto, es el proceso subjetivo de una sociedad, cómo se construye una narrativa del pasado basada en las percepciones de lo que ocurrió para conmemorar eventos, construir su identidad y pasar la historia a las generaciones futuras. Además, esta investigación se centrará en la memoria de un momento traumático en la historia de Argentina.

#### *b. Los ciclos de la memoria en Argentina después de la dictadura*

El concepto de memoria es un concepto importante cuando discutimos sobre el desarrollo político y social de Argentina. Uno de los ensayos incluidos en el libro de

Elizabeth Jelin sobre la memoria en Argentina explica que es difícil discutir el tema de la memoria en Argentina:

“sin seguir sus cambios a través de distintas coyunturas históricas, entendidas como la alternancia de diversos actores sociales que sucesiva y también simultáneamente intentaron colocarse en el papel de los portavoces autorizados para «explicar» el significado de la conmemoración” (Jelin, 2002a, p. 55).

Además, explica que estos cambios históricos y sociales pueden ser organizados en períodos distintos de tiempo, o ciclos de la memoria. En concordancia con el trabajo compuesto por Jelin, esta investigación explora cuatro ciclos de la memoria: el primero va desde 1984 hasta 1989, el segundo, desde 1989 hasta 1995, el tercero, desde 1996 hasta 2001, y el cuarto, desde 2002 hasta 2008. Aunque estos ciclos comienzan con el ascenso de la dictadura, sólo nos enfocamos en los ciclos que comienzan después de la caída de la dictadura. Por lo demás, como las obras que se presentan en el libro de Jelin terminan en 2001, el cuarto ciclo de la memoria que se analiza es definido por los parámetros similares que son expresados en los ciclos definidos en él. Para la viabilidad de esta investigación, este ciclo adicional termina en 2008, el primer año de la presidencia de Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

El primer ciclo desde 1984 hasta 1989 fue el momento de la caída de la dictadura y la transición a la democracia. La caída de la dictadura dio lugar a la ruptura abrupta del silencio que había sido aplicado por la Junta Militar. Entonces, Argentina pudo hablar abiertamente sobre los horrores que habían ocurrido en los últimos años. Sin embargo, cómo narrar los acontecimientos de la dictadura rápidamente se convirtió en un punto de conflicto. Socialmente, el comienzo del “show de horror” y sus representaciones macabras de los desaparecidos crearon una división en la Sociedad Argentina. Grupos como las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, fueron a las calles para llamar la atención sobre las violaciones de los derechos humanos que habían ocurrido. Ahora, los desaparecidos se convirtieron en una identidad revolucionaria (Jelin, 2002a). Pero, mientras que algunos vieron el “show del horror” como una recuperación de la verdad y la justicia que había tomado de ellos, otros pensaban que las representaciones eran demasiado gráficas e impidieron al país resolver el pasado (Crenzel, 2010).

Políticamente, el nuevo presidente, Raúl Alfonsín, y su administración tuvieron un enfoque importante en los derechos humanos, implementando varias políticas que trataron de enfocar el daño hecho por la dictadura. La Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, o CONADEP, se creó para investigar qué pasó a los 30.000 desaparecidos y dar repuestas a una población en constante estado de luto (Jelin, 2002a). Su informe, *Nunca Más*, que dio cuenta del destino trágico de los desaparecidos en detalle sombrío, escandalizó a la población de Argentina y exigió respuestas políticas (Cerruti, 2001). De la misma manera, Alfonsín derogó la Ley de Amnistía, que proveía protección legal para los militares, y comenzó los juicios a la Junta Militar, que fue responsable del terrorismo de Estado (Jelin, 2002a). Sin embargo, los juicios también causaron controversia, con la teoría de los dos demonios se convirtieron en un fuerte punto de debate. La teoría equipara las acciones de grupos rebeldes durante la dictadura a las acciones de la Junta Militar (Martin, 2012). Los partidarios de la teoría pensaban que los rebeldes debían ser igualmente demonizados por sus acciones. Aún la CONADEP y Alfonsín hicieron alusión a esta teoría (Martin, 2012). En el otro lado, muchos pensaron que equiparar las acciones de violencia de la Junta Militar minimizó la crueldad de sus acciones.

La división política y social continuó creciendo en Argentina, en la lucha por enfrentarse a su pasado. Una profunda división entre los miembros del ejército y los militantes, como las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, era cada vez más evidente. Amenazado por los juicios, los militares presionaron a la administración de Alfonsín (Jelin, 2002a). La amenaza de otro golpe de estado obligó a Alfonsín a cambiar sus políticas. Ahora Alfonsín suscribió completamente a la teoría de los dos demonios, diciendo en un discurso que “comprendemos la inquietud de algunos camaradas de quienes se encuentran sometidos a proceso, pero rechazamos igualmente la pretensión de identificarse con una metodología perversa que no es cierto que fuera necesario utilizar para combatir definitivamente a la subversión” (Jelin, 2002a, p. 76). La tensión culminó con las Leyes de Punto Final y de Obediencia Debida. En 1986, la Ley de Punto Final impuso una fecha tope para la presentación de las pruebas y la apertura de casos contra miembros del ejército. Al año siguiente, la Ley de Obediencia Debida proclamó que

oficiales y subordinados de las fuerzas armadas no podrían ser procesados ya que ellos, según esta ley, sólo seguían órdenes de los jefes de la Junta Militar (Jelin, 2002a). Las dos leyes, para todos los efectos, detuvieron casi totalmente los juicios.

El próximo ciclo, desde 1989 hasta 1995, se corresponde con el comienzo de la presidencia de Carlos Menem. Menem continuó la política reconciliadora de Alfonsín y en julio de 1989 firmó un indulto para 277 acusados, permitiendo la libertad de los jefes militares (Jelin, 2002a). En un ambiente de silencio político y judicial, los militantes y las organizaciones de derechos humanos tuvieron que crear nuevas maneras de encarar a la memoria de los desaparecidos. Nuevas voces de la resistencia comenzaron a emerger, como *Página 12*, un diario liberal que hablaba abiertamente sobre el gobierno, el militar, y los acontecimientos de la dictadura, así como de los sindicatos, en particular la Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT) (Jelin, 2002a). Además, las Madres consolidaron su resistencia y continuaron marchando los días jueves, día depara reclamar por la verdad y la justicia de sus hijos desaparecidos (Jelin, 2002a). Asimismo, a pesar de las leyes de amnistía que fue enviada por Alfonsín para su promulgación, las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo encontraron maneras de trabajar alrededor de ellos. Afirmando que el secuestro y cambio de la identidad de los hijos de los desaparecidos no estaba protegido bajo las leyes de amnistía, las Abuelas pudieron condenar a los oficiales militares de nivel inferior (Sikkink, 2008). Uno de los momentos más importantes de esta etapa fue el testimonio de Adolfo Scilingo, un ex marino de la Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA), en el marzo de 1995. Scilingo no sólo fue el primero de la ex Junta Militar para contar públicamente sus crímenes, sino también el primero en confirmar la existencia de los "vuelos de la muerte" (Jelin, 2002). En detalle horroroso, describió cómo los aviones trasladaban los cuerpos inconscientes de los desaparecidos de la ESMA y, estando todavía con vida, los arrojaban al mar, como una forma de ejecución en masa. Sus confesiones "iniciaron una reacción que llevó a una gran presencia de la dictadura en los medios públicos, sobre todo audiovisuales" (Jelin, 2002, p. 81). Al final de este ciclo también se comenzó con los "juicios de la verdad." Estos juicios, si bien legalmente no podían condenar a la ex Junta Militar, debido a las leyes de amnistía, por lo menos



pretendieron dar respuestas a los amigos y las familias de los desaparecidos, y también a la sociedad argentina (Sikkink, 2008).

El tercer ciclo, se extiende desde 1996 hasta 2001, el cual vio el renacimiento y la re-politización de la memoria. Había una renovación e intensificación de las demandas de los organismos de derechos humanos. Estos lograron construir los símbolos de la memoria, como el Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado (Jelin, 2002a). Además, nuevas organizaciones comenzaron aparecer y muchas personas pedían cambios en el manejo del gobierno, en cuanto a las violaciones de los derechos humanos del pasado. Iniciado en 1999, el más importante de estos grupos fue H.I.J.O.S. o Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (Jelin, 2002a). H.I.J.O.S., conformado por los hijos de los desaparecidos, traspasó la lucha por los derechos humanos a una nueva generación. Sus protestas innovadoras como *el escrache*, una demostración realizada en el frente o en la cuadra de los domicilios de conocidos represores de la dictadura, para anunciar su presencia a sus vecinos, aseguraron que, a pesar de la falta de justicia, al menos mostraba un aspecto de transparencia sobre lo que había pasado con los desaparecidos (Jelin, 2002a). Una representación física del incremento del activismo político durante este período, fue en el año 2001, durante el Día nacional de la memoria por la verdad y la justicia.<sup>111</sup> Fue enorme la cantidad de personas que participaron en la marcha y especialmente la presencia juvenil fue muy grande, dejando claro que los derechos humanos y la memoria de los desaparecidos eran de suma importancia (Jelin, 2002a). También, hacia el fin de esta etapa, comenzó la discusión sobre la constitucionalidad de las Leyes de Obediencia Debida y Punto Final, con Gabriel Cavallo, un juez, quien dictaminó que las leyes eran inconstitucionales (Jelin, 2002a). El juicio continuaría en un tribunal superior para que las leyes sean revocadas.

El cuarto y último ciclo, desde 2002 hasta 2008, se caracterizó por la reestructuración y la creación de políticas públicas de reconstrucción de la memoria. Comenzando con la presidencia de Néstor Kirchner y continuando con la presidencia de Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, la administración de Kirchner hizo de los derechos

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<sup>111</sup> El Día de la memoria por la verdad y la justicia es un feriado nacional del 24 de marzo, el aniversario del golpe de estado en 1976, para recordar a las víctimas de la Guerra sucia y como una manera de reclamar el día de la dictadura.

humanos un tema central en su política. El momento más crucial para los derechos humanos y la memoria durante esta etapa fue la revocación de las Leyes de Punto Final y de Obediencia Debida. En 2003, con el apoyo de Néstor Kirchner, el Congreso declaró las leyes nulas y sin efectos. La resolución fue seguida por una decisión de la Corte Suprema de 2005 que declaró las leyes de amnistía como inconstitucionales y los crímenes de los desaparecidos, como crímenes de lesa humanidad (Sikkink, 2008). Esto significó que el estatuto de limitaciones no se aplicaría y después de quince años, los juicios contra la Junta Militar podrían comenzar otra vez (Sikkink, 2008). También, este periodo estuvo marcado por la recuperación de espacios. El más importante de estos lugares fue la ESMA. Declarado por el gobierno nacional en 2004 en el 28° aniversario del golpe de estado como el Espacio de Memoria y Derechos Humanos. La ESMA se convirtió en un símbolo de verdad, memoria y justicia (“La recuperación,” s.f.). Más tarde, en 2007 la ciudad de Buenos Aires declaró al Ente Público Interjurisdiccional Espacio para la Memoria y para la Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos como los nuevos propietarios del ex complejo militar (“La recuperación,” s.f.). Finalmente, Argentina confrontó su pasado políticamente, judicialmente y socialmente otra vez.

### *c. El cine como memoria colectiva en el contexto de Argentina*

Como ya se mencionó, el proceso de la memoria es increíblemente complejo. La “existencia de distintas visiones y distintos sentidos produce luchas por ocupar un espacio hegemónico en la narración del pasado de una sociedad,” es importante para que una comunidad tenga fuentes para procesar y construir su memoria colectiva (Jelin, 2002a, p. 55). Una manera de fomentar el proceso de elaboración y aceptación del pasado es través del arte, en este caso, el cine. El cine es “la representación de drama relativos a ‘nuestra’ historia, nuestro pasado, tradiciones y legado” (Jelin, 2002a, p. 55). Permite que el cineasta y el espectador creativamente confronten el pasado, procesen lo que pasó y estimulen la conversación sobre los temas y los conflictos.

También es importante mirar la capacidad del cine para contribuir a la memoria colectiva después de un trauma. Es común a raíz de la tragedia que la gente comience a buscar las maneras de recuperar e interpretar el pasado y formar sus propios recuerdos

(Amado, 2009). Para constituir la memoria, es necesario para encontrar las maneras de representar lo que pasó, una tarea difícil cuando está en relación con un evento de violencia o tragedia masiva. A pesar de la dificultad de la representación de este tipo, en esta escala, en el cine, muchos cineastas asumieron el desafío, resultando en una proliferación de representaciones sobre los temas incómodos (Crenzel, 2010).

En el caso de Argentina, el cine ha jugado un rol fundamental en la memoria del horror de la dictadura (Visconti, 2013). Como no había ningún cine de la propaganda en Argentina, todos los filmes que produjeron los cineastas estaban teñidos por sus opiniones sesgadas y personales (Visconti, 2013). Por supuesto esto significa que algunas de las películas eran a favor de la dictadura; sin embargo, todas las películas que crearon eran representaciones de la realidad social y política de Argentina y se hicieron sin interferencia del gobierno. De esta manera, el cine argentino proporciona una versión más honesta de la historia. Por supuesto una imagen no puede contar la historia. Sin embargo, las películas pueden ser una herramienta de la memoria colectiva, proporcionando una gama de perspectivas y representando el contexto en el cual fueron realizados.

## **VII. Análisis**

### *a. El ciclo de memoria desde 1984 hasta 1989*

Los años entre 1984 y 1989 estuvieron marcados por la relación contradictoria entre gobernabilidad y justicia (Jelin, 2002a). El fin de la dictadura dejó a la Argentina rota y dañada socialmente y económicamente por los años vividos bajo un régimen represivo. Por lo tanto, la cuestión se convirtió en cómo abordar las violaciones de la dictadura y también avanzar al país. Sin embargo, el pueblo argentino y el gobierno estuvieron divididos sobre cómo responder a esta pregunta. Aunque el inicio de este ciclo vio al gobierno enfocado en abordar el legado de los desaparecidos, la creciente tensión con los militares amenazó la estabilidad de un país que sólo apenas, había recuperado su equilibrio. Mientras el gobierno vio las leyes de amnistía como una forma de proteger a Argentina de otro posible régimen militar, una gran parte de la población lo vio como una erosión de la memoria. Lo que resultó fue una fragmentación de lo vivido, con el sistema

político preocupado en el futuro más que en el pasado y una sociedad exigiendo por la justicia, que podría venir con el reconocimiento de la memoria de los desaparecidos.

*b. El género histórico en el contexto de la primera etapa de memoria: La historia oficial y La noche de los lápices*

Las películas que estrenaron después del final de la dictadura definen una nueva era del cine en Argentina. Ahora libre de la censura, las cineastas quisieron confrontar directamente los acontecimientos de la dictadura y, como consecuencia del vistazo inquebrantable de estas películas al pasado, un número de estas películas pertenecieron al género histórico. Las películas históricas permiten cineastas explorar la memoria de los desaparecidos en detalle. *La historia oficial*, dirigido por Luis Puenzo, en 1985 y *La noche de los lápices*, dirigido por Héctor Olivera, en 1986 definieron este género y el futuro del cine argentino.

*La historia oficial* recibió reconocimiento nacional e internacional para su representación de la búsqueda de la madre para la verdad sobre el origen de su hija adoptiva. La película se enfrentó directamente a las consecuencias de la dictadura con un enfoque en los niños perdidos de los desaparecidos. *La historia oficial*, desde su título a su argumento, se centra en la idea de la historia, la verdad y la memoria. Irónicamente, Alicia, el personaje principal, es una maestra de historia que en realidad enseña la versión distorsionada de la historia que la dictadura creó en lugar de la verdad real. En el momento supremo de ironía, le dice a su clase “Comprender la historia, es prepararse para comprender el mundo. Ningún pueblo puede sobrevivir sin memoria. La historia es la memoria del pueblo.” Sin embargo, el mundo que Alicia advierte de ya es el mundo en que vive. Su hija fue robada de uno de los desaparecidos y su esposo le ha manipulado en vivir en una realidad falsa. *La historia oficial* “puede ser considerado como un producto cultural que define y es definido por el contexto social y político de la cual surgió—los años de la redemocratización” (Burucua, 2009, p. 125).<sup>112</sup> Aunque el film sigue a una familia novelada, la historia se basa en la realidad histórica. Aunque los detalles de la

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<sup>112</sup> Esta cita ha sido traducida al castellano. La cita original en inglés es: “can be considered as a cultural product that both defines and is defined by the social and political context from which it emerged—the redemocratization years.”

historia fueron fabricados, ellos advertían de un problema cultural más grande. La película fue lanzada al mismo tiempo como el inicio de los ensayos de los comandantes que llevaron a cabo las violaciones de los derechos humanos de la dictadura (Visconti, 2014). Sin embargo, los juicios habían creado tensión con los militares y la administración de Alfonsín había comenzado a pensar sobre una política de pacificación nacional (Burucua, 2009). *La historia oficial* critica claramente esta táctica y exige que Argentina enfrente su pasado, abierta y honestamente.

*La noche de los lápices* tiene un tono similar como *La historia oficial*. La película cuenta la verdadera historia de la Noche de los lápices, cuando siete estudiantes militantes de La Plata fueron secuestrados, torturados y, con la excepción de uno, asesinados por la Junta Militar en 1975. Es muy gráfica, mostrando las escenas de tortura detallada y la angustia emocional de los adolescentes. El film actúa como una cápsula de memoria y rindió homenaje a los estudiantes. A través de su obra, Olivera garantizó la memoria de estos jóvenes no serán olvidados. La dictadura intentó despojarlos de su identidad, pero la película desafía este objetivo y en su lugar, cuenta su historia a todo el mundo.

### c. *El ciclo de memoria desde 1989 hasta 1995*

El período entre 1989 y 1995 se caracterizó por un acento en la fragmentación y el reacomodamiento (Jelin, 2002a). Las Leyes de Punto Final y de Obediencia Debida instaladas durante el último ciclo de la memoria habían creado una cultura de silencio dentro de las esferas política y judicial de Argentina. La política de apaciguamiento de las fuerzas armadas, iniciada por la administración de Alfonsín y continuada en la administración de Menem, también inculcó un miedo en la población de hablar en contra de la injusticia, ya que el gobierno, una vez más, no estaba del lado del pueblo. Sin embargo, muchos militantes continuaron luchando por la justicia. El deseo de construir una memoria de la Argentina basado en la verdad y la justicia era demasiado fuerte para ser silenciada por la negligencia del gobierno. Los militantes ahora tenían que encontrar formas más sutiles para luchar por su causa sin la ayuda del respaldo del gobierno.

d. *El género drama en el contexto de la segunda etapa de memoria: La peste y El acto en cuestión*

El género de drama fue utilizado para criticar indirectamente a las políticas del gobierno en Argentina. Más sutiles que sus contrapartes en el género histórico, dramas utilizaron metáforas y narrativas creativas para contar dos historias a la vez: uno que se tejen una historia llena de los personajes y los escenarios interesantes y otro que pueda proporcionar comentario social. Ambos hechos en 1993, dos películas notables de este período fueron *La peste*, dirigido por Luis Puenzo, y *El acto en cuestión*, dirigido por Alejandro Agresti.

*La peste*, una adaptación de la novela francesa, cuenta la historia de una ciudad que es diezmada por una plaga. Se centra en las historias entremezcladas de Bernard Rieux, un médico, y Martine Rambert y Jean Tarrou, dos periodistas franceses, como queden atrapados dentro de la cuarentena de la ciudad. La película está claramente ambientada en Buenos Aires. El Dr. Rieux, quien también funge como el narrador de la película, describe la ambientación como una ciudad europea en América del Sur, haciendo alusión al refrán común que Buenos Aires es la París de América Latina. Los paralelos a la historia de la Argentina continúan a lo largo de la película. La agencia de salud pública, cruel y represivo que se encarga después de que el brote de la plaga, es una reminiscencia de la dictadura militar durante la guerra sucia. Similar al peligro de oponerse a la dictadura, la plaga sí mismo actúa como un símbolo de la represión ancho barrido que cualquier persona podría convertirse en una víctima de la. Los enfermos son tomados de sus casas y puestos en cuarentena en condiciones horribles en los edificios públicos, así como los desaparecidos eran cautivos en centros clandestinos de detención que funcionaban en áreas como la ESMA, sin el conocimiento del público en general. *La peste* termina con el levantamiento de la cuarentena. Sin embargo, la línea final de la película termina con el Dr. Rieux diciendo que el peligro nunca se ha ido como la peste sólo está latente y puede volver en cualquier momento. Con este momento final, la película ofrece su mensaje: el mundo nunca está a salvo de la amenaza de las fuerzas destructivas ya sea una plaga o un régimen represivo, por lo tanto, es vital para el pueblo

a entender el peligro potencial y estar en guardia contra él. El film está pidiendo a su audiencia no ser complacientes en la cultura política del silencio de la etapa.

*El acto en cuestión* también aborda temas similares. Sigue el ascenso a la fama de Miguel Quiroga después de que descubre un libro con un truco de magia para hacer desaparecer los objetos. Pronto se da cuenta que él también puede hacer desaparecer la gente, haciendo su acto aún más popular. Sin embargo, la fama y el dinero rápidamente comienzan a corromperlo. Pero, en realidad, la película es sobre “los desaparecidos y la represión ejercida en la Argentina durante la última dictadura militar” (Zylberman, 2009). Como un “contrabandista,” Agresti afronta este tema polémico a través de la metáfora. Además, el director explora el tema mirándolo desde una perspectiva del pasado más reciente, como Agresti era todavía muy joven durante la dictadura y tuvo algunos de sus propios recuerdos de la época (Zylberman, 2009). La película se centra en la idea que el gran poder resultar en la corrupción. A lo largo de la película, vemos a Miguel a transformar en “una suerte de dictador, de persona autoritaria que, creyendo poseer un poder excepcional, puede decidir por la suerte de otros” (Zylberman, 2009). Su capacidad para desaparecer personas es claramente una alusión al uso de la dictadura militar de las desapariciones forzadas. Sin embargo, al final de la película anticipa su inminente caída de la gracia. Su mánager ha descubierto el libro, que Miguel utilizó para aprender el truco de magia y había ocultado por muchos años, y va a lanzarlo al público, por lo tanto, destruyendo su carrera. Le pide a Miguel “¿vos te creés que las cosas desaparecen?,” con la escena haciendo hincapié que “nos recuerda que, tarde o temprano, aquello que se pretende ocultar sale a la luz,” una clara referencia al legado de los desaparecidos (Zylberman, 2009). También es importante tomar nota que toda la película es contada desde la perspectiva de un fabricante de la muñeca y los personajes y las escenas son en una casa de muñecas. El dispositivo de estructura extraña alude al verdadero propósito de esta película. Al igual que las muñecas en una casa de muñecas, la película juega con la narrativa. Agresti es como el fabricante de la muñeca, construyendo una historia del pasado. Él directamente confronta y construye la memoria de los desaparecidos a través de su obra.

*e. El ciclo de memoria desde 1996 hasta 2001*

Entre 1996 y 2001, hubo una re-politización de la memoria y el pasado en Argentina (Jelin, 2002a). A diferencia de los ciclos de la memoria anteriores, la población juvenil estaba fuertemente involucrada en el debate sobre la memoria colectiva y los desaparecidos. La aparición de H.I.J.O.S. significaba que los hijos de los desaparecidos no aceptarían más silencio sobre el tema de las violaciones de los derechos humanos de la dictadura. Una nueva generación surgió y trataron de definir su identidad a través de la memoria, de dónde vinieron. Era una nueva lucha por memoria, verdad y justicia. Los acontecimientos de esta etapa dejaron en claro que el cambio era necesario en la Argentina y que la gente fue creciendo ávida de una narrativa, que no incluyó el reconocimiento de las víctimas de la Junta Militar.

*f. El género de ciencia ficción en el contexto de la tercera etapa de memoria: Moebius y La sonámbula, recuerdos del futuro*

Antes de los finales de los años 80 y 90, la ciencia ficción, con la excepción del género en la literatura, era rara en la Argentina. De hecho, no fue hasta 1969 que este género apareció por primera vez en el cine argentino (Cuarterolo, 2007). Sin embargo, a finales de los años 90, el cine de ciencia ficción fue entrando en un renacimiento en el país. Aunque los fondos para la producción fueron limitados, y el apoyo del INCAA no fue muy grande, el género aprovechó creativamente el reto, mediante el uso de las metáforas y las técnicas de la cinematografía innovadoras (Hamner, 2012). Estas películas capturaron la imaginación de la población, revitalizada por las preguntas creativas sobre el futuro de Buenos Aires y advertían sobre las futuras distopías, si no se realizaban cambios. El género refleja los sentimientos de miedo al futuro del país, de no ocurrir cambios significativos. Al igual que las personas que protestaban en las calles, la ciencia ficción llamaba al progreso. Dos de los filmes que reflejaron este sentir, fueron *Moebius*, dirigido por Gustavo Mosquera, en 1996 y *La sonámbula, recuerdos del futuro*, dirigido por Fernando Spiner, en 1998.

*Moebius* cuenta la historia de Daniel Pratt quien emprende una búsqueda del Tren 86, que desapareció misteriosamente en el sistema del subte de Buenos Aires. Al igual



que muchas otras películas de ciencia ficción, *Moebius* utiliza metáforas contra la corrupción gubernamental. Utilizando el tren perdido, como una metáfora de la memoria de los desaparecidos. El film “desafía la manera que las historias oficiales de Argentina pasan por alto sobre los patrones del militarismo, la corrupción política y los abusos de derechos humanos” (Hamner, 2012, p. 61).<sup>113</sup> Particularmente, el film critica la administración de Menem y su rechazo a reconocer la injusticia de los desaparecidos. Como más tarde descubrimos, el Tren 86 está atrapado en un bucle de Moebius, un bucle temporal infinito, símbolo de “la ideología del nuevo gobierno ha convertido en tan plenamente incorporada en cuanto a sea invisible” (Hamner, 2012, p. 72).<sup>114</sup> Cuando Pratt finalmente encuentra el tren, él se encuentra dentro del bucle de Moebius con su antiguo maestro quien había construido la ruta del tren a través del bucle de Moebius. Su profesor le explica que él la creó como una forma de protección de aquellos que se habían negado a escuchar a la verdad. El espacio teórico dentro del bucle está más allá de la represión del estado. La metáfora de Mosquera acá es muy clara: la memoria de los desaparecidos está fuera del control del estado y debe ser protegido por el pueblo de Argentina. Además, la película implica una conexión generacional con la protección de la memoria. El maestro de Pratt, un representante de la generación que vivió durante la guerra sucia, le entrega su trabajo de conductor del tren, a Pratt (Hamner, 2012). Pratt es ahora el protector de la memoria. Como Pratt continúa en el tren, él mira por la ventana y ve a Abril, la chica que lo acompañó en todo su recorrido, lo que implica que él pasaría el tren y la memoria a la generación siguiente (Hamner, 2012). Esto muestra el aspecto reflexivo propio de la época, como la creación de H.I.J.O.S. que simbolizó cómo una nueva generación se constituye como protagonista en la lucha por la memoria. La película termina con otro tren que falta, señalando la repetición de la historia que acabamos de ver. Al igual que el bucle infinito de Moebius, la memoria de los desaparecidos es infinita. También es una prueba de que un poder gubernamental, no puede borrarla. *Moebius* ofrece de algún modo, “una medida del sentido a los sobrevivientes de la

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<sup>113</sup> Esta cita ha sido traducida al castellano. La cita original en inglés es: “challenge the way official Argentine histories were glossing over patterns of militarism, political corruption, and human rights abuses.”

<sup>114</sup> Esta cita ha sido traducida al castellano. La cita original en inglés es: “the ideology of the new government has become so fully incorporated as to be invisible.”

injusticia y presiona las audiencias nacionales e internacionales para afrontar los recuerdos de la vergüenza individual y cultural” (Hamner, 2012, p. 62).<sup>115</sup>

*La sonámbula, recuerdos del futuro* está ambientada en un futuro cercano, en Buenos Aires, después de una explosión química que ha causado la pérdida de sus recuerdos a 300.000 personas. El gobierno ha tomado a estos "afectados" y ha estado experimentando con ellos. *La sonámbula* sigue a Eva, cómo ella puede ser usada por el gobierno, acompañada por Ariel, para rastrear y capturar al líder rebelde, Gauna. Los "afectados" son claramente una metáfora de los desaparecidos. Como ocurrió a los desaparecidos, ellos han perdido su identidad debido a su falta de recuerdos y están recluidos en clínicas del gobierno que nos remiten a los centros clandestinos de detención (Paz, 2013). Hasta el número de ellos parece hacer referencia a los 30.000 desaparecidos (Paz, 2013). El film actúa como una metáfora de los peligros de la amnistía. Critica al gobierno argentino por perdonar los crímenes de la dictadura, alegando que es una manera de olvidar lo que sucedió y “la falta de memoria colectiva se convierte en un problema importante, dando paso a la impunidad y establecer las condiciones para la repetición de golpes militares y dictaduras” (Paz, 2013, p. 6).<sup>116</sup> Además, *La sonámbula* se basa en el simbolismo del color. Toda la película está filmada en blanco y negro con la excepción de unas pocas escenas y objetos. Todo lo que en el futuro es utilitario y carece de la memoria y la libertad, se ve en blanco y negro. Sin embargo, cuando vemos los recuerdos de Eva, estos son totalmente en color. A diferencia del oscuro futuro en el que ella se encuentra ahora, su pasado es brillante y lleno de vida, sin la tragedia o los gobiernos corruptos. La contrastante combinación de colores implica que, sin memoria, el mundo no es el mundo que conocemos. Al contrario, es una realidad desoladora, no diferenciada que es controlada por un gobierno maligno.

*g. El ciclo de memoria desde 2002 hasta 2008*

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<sup>115</sup> Esta cita ha sido traducida al castellano. La cita original en inglés es: “a measure of meaning to the survivors of injustice and push both domestic and international audiences to confront memories of individual and cultural shame.”

<sup>116</sup> Esta cita ha sido traducida al castellano. La cita original en inglés es: “the lack of collective memory becomes thus a major problem, giving way to impunity and setting the conditions for the recurrence of military coups and dictatorships.”

Los años entre el 2002 y el 2008 estuvieron marcados por una vuelta a un compromiso con la justicia y la memoria. Durante la administración del presidente Kirchner, hubo una época de victorias para los derechos humanos y la memoria de los desaparecidos. La derogación de las Leyes de Punto Final y de Obediencia Debida supuso que Argentina ya no siga la política de apaciguamiento y silencio de las administraciones anteriores. Con el reinicio de los juicios y la recuperación de antiguos centros clandestino de detención, la sociedad argentina fue una vez más directamente afrontando su pasado. Ahora más unida, política y socialmente, la Argentina pudo continuar con el proceso de la memoria. Después de un largo período en favor del olvido, el país finalmente fue capaz y estuvo dispuesto a abordar la realidad devastadora de los desaparecidos.

*h. El género documental en el contexto de la cuarta etapa de memoria: Los rubios y Our Disappeared/Nuestros desaparecidos*

Durante la década del 2000, hubo un aumento de documentales sobre los desaparecidos. Claramente influenciado por el ascenso del kirchnerismo y la reapertura de los juicios a la Junta Militar, las cineastas comenzaron a abordar el tema de la dictadura con una mirada resuelta a hurgar en los detalles espantosos y sus consecuencias. Los documentales en particular, trabajaron para recopilar información y contar las historias de los desaparecidos con tanto detalle como sea posible. Dos documentales notables de este ciclo fueron *Los rubios* en 2003, dirigido por Albertina Carri, y *Our Disappeared/Nuestros desaparecidos*, dirigido por Juan Mandelbaum, en 2008.

*Los Rubios* es un documental experimental que sigue la historia de Albertina Carri y su búsqueda por encontrar las respuestas acerca de la desaparición de sus padres durante la última dictadura militar. A diferencia de los documentales tradicionales, *Los Rubios* utiliza una actriz para representar a Albertina Carri, mientras la Carri real estaba detrás de la cámara como directora. Además, utiliza escenas de la animación de “stop motion” y del metraje que normalmente se consideraría detrás de las imágenes, como cortes de escena y configuración de la cámara. Un gran parte de las técnicas de narración

no son tradicionales y se derivan de la naturaleza de la materia de la cual se nutre este documental. La película trata de dar cuenta de una historia sin respuestas, una tarea imposible si la persona que cuenta la historia fuera “*alguien* no fuera una cineasta [...] [y] su destino es la ausencia de memoria (Riera, 2009, p. 109). Para contar una historia acerca de una ausencia de memoria como en el caso de los desaparecidos, la “cineasta tiene que inventar para construir un relato que sabe imposible” (Riera, 2009, p. 109). Lo que resulta es un documental de la percepción, no de hechos. Sin embargo, ese es el eje. Los hechos no existen para los hijos de los desaparecidos; para muchos no hay respuestas de lo que sucedió a sus padres. Como consecuencia, la verdad y los hechos fueron erosionados. Y cuando la verdad no existe, todo lo que queda es percepción. Ahora, la percepción es realidad del individuo. Para Albertina, su realidad es un limbo doloroso sin repuestas claras y *Los Rubios* es su representación de su historia construida. Así como Argentina durante este período volvió a enfrentarse a su pasado, así es como Carri volvió para construir su realidad, su identidad, su memoria, en esta película.

Por otro lado, *Our Disappeared/Nuestros desaparecidos* es un documental mucho más tradicional. La película sigue a Juan Mandelbaum, como él regresa a la Argentina de su vida en el extranjero para buscar respuestas de lo que les ocurrió a antiguos amigos y seres queridos durante la dictadura. El documental se enmarca por medio de las historias superpuestas del pasado de Mandelbaum. Él comienza su viaje con el descubrimiento de que su ex novia estaba desaparecida, lo que lo lleva a encontrar varias conexiones más hacia las víctimas. Similar a cómo Argentina fue volviendo a su pasado durante estos años, en un esfuerzo para construir una narrativa de la dictadura, Mandelbaum también busca, en el film, para completar las historias de las personas que fueron importantes dentro de su memoria, durante su tiempo en Argentina. Desde compañeros de trabajo hasta los vecinos, encuentra que muchas de las personas de su pasado en la Argentina fueron víctimas de la dictadura militar. Los vínculos estrechos que Mandelbaum tiene con los desaparecidos no es una historia única en la Argentina, sino que es representativa de una realidad común. Además, es importante tomar nota que este documental fue filmado en inglés. Aunque utiliza entrevistas españolas, claramente está pensado para una audiencia internacional. No sólo es Mandelbaum construyendo la memoria de sus

amigos, sino que además quiere compartir sus historias con el mundo. Para él, la memoria de los desaparecidos es algo más que una historia argentina, es una historia que el mundo necesita escuchar.

*i. El tema del cine como memoria colectiva en las entrevistas*

Durante las entrevistas realizadas en esta investigación, los entrevistados se hicieron claro que creían que el cine actuó como una herramienta de la memoria colectiva que ayudó a Argentina a procesar su pasado traumático. Lior Zylberman, un experto en este campo de estudio, explicó que el film está conectado profundamente con la cultura y actúa un reflejo de los procesos y las normas culturales. Además, expresó que el cine juega un rol tan importante en la Argentina debido a su capacidad para mezclar fantasía y realidad. A diferencia de muchos otros momentos de abusos de derechos humanos, el caso de los desaparecidos todavía tiene muchas preguntas sin respuestas. El cine ayuda a llenar en los espacios de la memoria. Él dio el ejemplo de *La noche de los lápices* como la primera película de imaginar lo que parecía el interior de un centro clandestino de detención. Esto les dio a argentinos una representación visual de su pasado que faltaban.

Las entrevistas con miembros de la industria del cine también proporcionan respuestas similares. En una entrevista con Gustavo Mosquera, el director de *Moebius*, él explicó que usó sus películas para transmitir un mensaje sobre la importancia de la memoria de los desaparecidos. Explicó que las películas, si visto por una audiencia suficientemente grande en los cines, tienen el potencial para efectuar un cambio en la sociedad. Asimismo, Alejandro Piñeyro, un productor, expresó su convicción que el film tiene la capacidad única para fomentar la conversación, que es una clave en el proceso de la memoria colectiva. Explicó que el carácter atractivo de las técnicas audiovisuales del cine captura la atención del público y potencialmente puede motivar a las personas a cambiar sus vidas, comunidades y gobiernos.

Como los otros miembros de la industria que fueron entrevistados, Laura Bondarevsky, una cineasta y miembro de H.I.J.O.S., expresó opiniones similares sobre el rol del cine como un vector de la memoria colectiva. Ella explicó que “el cine, como muchas otras cosas, es una herramienta con la que se puede construir un lenguaje popular”

(Bondarevsky, 1/6/2017). Hizo hincapié en la importancia de esta construcción en el caso de Argentina. En su opinión, Argentina no tenía una memoria colectiva hasta muy recientemente. Durante los años después de la dictadura, la gente negó a afrontar el pasado o fue detenida por la injerencia del gobierno. Sin embargo, el cine fue una de las maneras que el pueblo argentino fue capaz de eludir estos obstáculos e iniciar el proceso de construir su historia y su memoria. Además, ella explicó cómo el cine personalmente ayudó a construir su propia identidad. Como sus padres ya vivían en el exilio en Suiza en el momento de su nacimiento, su regreso a la Argentina era difícil y se sintió “por muchos años de [su] vida, sin patria” (Bondarevsky, 1/6/2017). Dijo que: “fue una manera del cine que a mí me permitió como reconstruir mi propia identidad [...] para entenderla, para descubrir, para saber un poco más sobre mi propia historia” (Bondarevsky, 1/6/2017).

### **VIII. Conclusiones**

Los terribles sucesos de la dictadura dejaron una cicatriz permanentemente en Argentina. Al final de la dictadura marcó el inicio de un proceso de reconciliación con el pasado y construcción de una nueva identidad basada en la verdad y la memoria. Es evidente que las películas hechas durante esta época buscaban más que entretener a audiencias. La película era una forma de expresión. Para volver a nuestra hipótesis inicial que los cineastas trabajaron con diferentes géneros en relación con el contexto de los ciclos de memoria para transmitir los diferentes momentos en el proceso de memoria, es evidente que esto es cierto en el caso de las películas analizadas. Estos filmes tomaron inspiración de su contexto social y político y transforman en arte con un mensaje. Los géneros que los cineastas decidieron usar para transmitir sus mensajes se han basados más en la elección personal y la comodidad con los temas que cada género implicaba, pero a pesar de todo, todas las películas reflejaban los tiempos fueron creados. Las películas son solo diferentes en las técnicas de cada género. Ya sea sutil o directo, las películas compartieron un mensaje de resistencia a la erosión de la memoria y de compromiso con el legado de un pasado trágico.

Aunque esta investigación demuestra la validez de la hipótesis, beneficiarían de más exploración. La elección del género aplicado a cada ciclo de la memoria se basó en gran parte del interés y la opinión personal. Sin embargo, más investigación sobre la concentración de los géneros durante varios períodos del tiempo, así como un análisis del éxito de cada película basada en el análisis de la taquilla y aclamación medida, podría proporcionar una división y aplicación de géneros a diferentes ciclos más concreta. Además, como el tiempo asignado para este proyecto fue breve, se beneficiaría de un análisis más sólido de los recursos académicos y las entrevistas con personas con experiencia en el campo.

Está claro que el cine ha jugado un rol muy importante en la construcción de la memoria en Argentina. Sin embargo, esta investigación se plantea la pregunta de qué es el futuro para el cine que se centra en el pasado de Argentina en un esfuerzo para ayudar a definir su identidad futura. Es importante mencionar que, en cada entrevista, el entrevistado expresó preocupación por el futuro del film con un mensaje social en Argentina y el mundo en general. La industria ha cambiado. En la edad moderna de Netflix, HBO y el internet, la gente ya no esperan en líneas para ver una película en los cines. Con un clic de un botón o una simple búsqueda en Google, el espectador puede tener acceso a casi cualquier película que puede imaginar. Por un lado, esto significa que una película puede ser vista por más gente que nunca antes. Pero, esto también puede significar que las películas son capaces de perderse en las masas de entretenimiento digital. Además, la naturaleza al ritmo rápida de la sociedad y el fácil acceso del cine no permite la misma conversación que solía suceder cuando las luces se encendieron en el teatro.

Hoy en día, el cine ya no tiene que ser un evento colectivo; se puede ser una experiencia sola en la intimidad de la propia casa. Una película no puede cambiar el mundo, pero las personas que la observan pueden. Pero si la película no resulta en conversación, potencialmente puede perder su poder. Estas preocupaciones son válidas; sin embargo, no señalan el fin del cine como una herramienta de impacto para la transformación cultural. La industria necesitará adaptarse, pero el cine nunca dejará de ser una parte crítica del proceso de memoria. El cine siempre será un reflejo de nuestro

pasado y una esperanza para nuestro futuro.

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#### *b. Entrevistas*

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- Mosquera, G. (2017, 23 de mayo). Entrevista personal.
- Piñeyro, A. (2017, 29 de mayo). Entrevista personal.
- Zylberman, L. (2017, 22 de mayo). Entrevista personal.

## **X. Anexo**

### *a. Guía de entrevista para un experto académico*

*[La entrevista es semiestructurada; las preguntas en algunos casos se adaptaron en función de facilitar la entrevista]*

Pregunta 1: ¿Puede hablar un poco sobre su trabajo o investigación con respecto al cine y memoria colectiva?

Pregunta 2: ¿Cómo cree que el cine construye la memoria colectiva?

Pregunta 3: ¿Cómo cree que las películas reflejan el contexto social y político en que se crearon?

Pregunta 4: ¿En su opinión, cree que un género particular del cine es más eficaz para comunicar temas difíciles como las violaciones de los derechos humanos durante la dictadura?

Pregunta 5: ¿Por qué cree que ciertos géneros eran más prominentes durante ciertas épocas? Por ejemplo, histórico en los años 80, la ciencia ficción en los años 90.?

Pregunta 6: ¿Cómo ha cambiado la cultura de la memoria en Argentina desde el fin de la dictadura?

Pregunta 7: ¿Cree que el cine ha ayudado a Argentina a procesar lo que ocurrió durante la dictadura?

Pregunta 8: ¿Qué piensa sobre el futuro del cine político o el cine con un mensaje social en Argentina?

Pregunta 9: ¿Hay alguna otra cuestión que considera sería útil para mi investigación y no fue dicha?

*b. Guía de entrevista para un miembro de la industria del cine*

*[La entrevista es semiestructurada; las preguntas en algunos casos se adaptaron en función de facilitar la entrevista]*

Pregunta 1: ¿Puede hablar un poco sobre su trabajo con respecto al cine y sus proyectos actuales y pasados?

Pregunta 2: ¿Por qué eligió trabajar en esta industria?

Pregunta 3: ¿Cree que el cine es una forma de hablar de temas difíciles e incómodos, como lo ocurrido durante la dictadura? ¿Por qué?

Pregunta 4: ¿Por qué cree que el cine argentino a menudo se enfoca en los desaparecidos?

Pregunta 5: ¿En su opinión, cree que hay un género particular del cine más eficaz para comunicar temas difíciles como las violaciones de los derechos humanos durante la dictadura?

Pregunta 6: ¿Cómo cree que el cine construye la memoria colectiva?

Pregunta 7: ¿Cree que una película puede crear un cambio en la sociedad?

Pregunta 8: ¿Cuál es la motivación detrás de su película? ¿Qué impacto espera que tenga la película?

Pregunta 9: ¿Qué piensa sobre el futuro del cine político o el cine con un mensaje social en Argentina?

Pregunta 10: ¿Hay alguna otra cuestión que considera sería útil para mi investigación y no fue dicha?

## Appendix B

### *The Art of Justification: Representations of Pinochet's Human Rights*

#### *Abuses in the U.S. Media*

From 1973 to 1990, General Augusto Pinochet implemented a repressive regime in Chile characterized by numerous human rights violations. In an effort to eliminate political opposition, an estimated 3,000 individuals were murdered, while tens of thousands of others were exiled or detained and tortured. Because of the military junta's technique of "disappearing" their perceived opposition, the exact number of victims of Pinochet's regime are not known; however, many human rights organizations estimate the actual figures to be much higher than initially reported.<sup>117</sup> Although the regime's most brutal years were between 1973 and 1978, human rights abuses and violent oppression continued throughout Pinochet's rule. However, both the military junta and the international community would continue to turn a blind eye to the persistent human rights violations taking place in Chile well into the 1980s.

In the United States, the Cold War ushered in a new era of politics, one that valued political maneuvering over the protection of human rights. Fear of Soviet influence brought national security to the forefront of American foreign policy and transformed Latin America "into a battleground and prize in the conflict between communism and capitalism."<sup>118</sup> To combat the perceived communist threat, the U.S. sought to exercise hemispheric hegemony to protect its political and economic

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<sup>117</sup> For further information of the "disappeared" and the techniques employed by the military junta see Elizabeth Lira, "Human Rights Violations," *Radical History Review*, no. 124 (January 2016): 153–64,

<sup>118</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 117.

interests.<sup>119</sup> Culturally, this required the formation of a narrative that demonstrated U.S. superiority over Latin America and the need for U.S. involvement in the region to protect the free world.<sup>120</sup> These principles were reflected in the American mainstream discourse surrounding Chile and Pinochet during the 1980s. Sparked by the Reagan administration's transition to warmer relations with Chile despite its continued human rights violations, the U.S. mainstream media began to scrutinize the validity of America's relationship with a known human rights violator. Although the mainstream media generally condemned Pinochet's human rights violations and Reagan's subsequent complacency, the discourse surrounding the topic relied heavily on stereotypes of Latin American inferiority. By analyzing primary and secondary sources from this era, this paper explores the U.S. mainstream media's depiction of Chile as a potential communist threat, a country prone to committing human rights violations, and a source of American exploitation and the implications these representations had on the human rights of Chileans.

To understand the stereotypes employed by the mainstream media, it is imperative to first contextualize them within the larger history of U.S.-Latin American relations. It is largely accepted by the scholarly community that there is an inherent imbalance within the power structure of transnational relations between the two regions, with the U.S. exercising a sense of cultural, political, and economic superiority. However, this inequity is not solely a result of U.S. imperialism. Instead, a complex history of cultural and political encounters has created a dynamic that both U.S. Americans and Latin Americans

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

<sup>120</sup> Sarah Sarzynski, *Start of the Cold War PowerPoint* (2018).

have been complicit in creating.<sup>121</sup> Culturally, these encounters have resulted in depictions of Latin America as subordinate to their northern neighbor. Latin American countries have historically been feminized and infantilized in order to engrain a sense of inferiority in the transnational relations power structure.<sup>122</sup> Even when the Good Neighbor Era ushered in a new wave of Pan-American representations, the inherent power structure was still present, with U.S. being depicted as the wise, benevolent neighbor needed to support and guide the Latin Americans next door.<sup>123</sup> Latin American perspectives further reinforced these ideas. Even though they often disputed the validity of the relationship between the two regions, Latin American ideas like dependency theory still presented Latin America as a source of exploitation for the United States.<sup>124</sup> Despite coming from vastly different historical periods, all these representations of U.S.-Latin American relations imply the inevitable necessity of U.S. involvement in Latin America and reinforce an unequal power dynamic.

Although it was exceptional period of history characterized by a unique political and social landscape, the Cold War continued to exemplify the inequality of power relations between the U.S. and Latin America. The hyper-politicized, global battle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union ensured that the consequences of this unequal power structure had more severe consequences than ever before. Latin America was now not only the U.S.'s neighbor, but also a hemispheric buffer from Soviet forces.

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<sup>121</sup> Glibert Joseph, "Close Encounters: Toward a New Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations," in *Close Encounters of Empire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 3-46.

<sup>122</sup> See Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the American Imagination*, n.d., 52-94, 105-174 for a case study on the feminization and infantilization of Latin America.

<sup>123</sup> See Darlene Sadlier, *Americans All: Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in WWII* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2012) for further information on the Good Neighbor Era.

<sup>124</sup> Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck*, 1971.

Washington's fear of Soviet influence may have been exaggerated, but it nevertheless played a crucial role in U.S. foreign policy.<sup>125</sup> Inspired by Cold War containment and domino theory, the U.S. sought to exercise control over Latin America out of fear that one country's turn to communism would threaten the entire hemisphere's security.<sup>126</sup>

As the Cold War continued and political events began to shatter the illusion of the U.S.'s infallible influence over Latin American politics, the U.S. sought a more aggressive, preventative approach to Latin America.<sup>127</sup> The resulting policy contributed to the rise of U.S. backed military dictatorships in the Southern Cone. Based on the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, a principle set forth by U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick in 1979, the U.S. began to approach Latin American relations from the perspective that "authoritarian dictatorships of the right [were] preferable to totalitarian dictatorships of the left, both for American interests and for [Latin America's] own populations."<sup>128</sup> The doctrine implied two possible approaches to foreign policy: the first being that the U.S. should support, or at least not destabilize, right-wing dictatorships as their collapse could

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<sup>125</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 117, 119.

<sup>126</sup> Drawing on the symbolism of a row of dominos being knocked down one after the other, domino theory stated that if one country fell to communism, the countries surrounding it would quickly succumb to communism as well. Containment theory drew on WWII quarantine policy and asserted that the Soviet Union and their communist ideology must be contained to a limited region. As a result, U.S. foreign policy had to focus on finding ways to prevent the spread of communism. Although both these theories had their origins at the start of the Cold War, they remained influential throughout the 1980s and played a central role in the Reagan administration's foreign policy decisions. For further information on domino theory see Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Domino Theory Principle," April 7, 1954. For further information on the history of containment policy and principles behind it see Eugene P. Trani and Donald E. Davis, "Woodrow Wilson and the Origins of the Cold War: A Hundred Years Later and Still Relevant," *World Affairs* 180, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 25–46.

<sup>127</sup> The Cuban Revolution was a significant blow to U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere. Despite its best efforts, the American government was not able maintain both their economic and political interests in Cuba. In the wake of the failure in Cuba, the Kennedy administration established the Alliance for Progress in an effort to combat communism and poverty. However, the U.S. still struggled to protect their interests, forcing them to look towards a more aggressive foreign policy in Latin America. For further information on this period of Cold War history see Lars Schoultz, "Cuba Determines the Answer," in *In Their Own Best Interest*, n.d., 196–217 and Sarah Sarzynski, *Introduction to Dictatorships Americas PowerPoint* (2018).

<sup>128</sup> "Two Cheers for Chile," *New Republic*, October 31, 1988, 7.

lead to a Communist takeover; and the second being that the U.S. should pressure right-wing dictatorships to “change incrementally” as these types of dictatorships were “susceptible to democratic reform in a way that Communist dictatorships [were] not.”<sup>129</sup> This ideology became central to Reagan’s foreign policy in Chile, with his administration embracing both corollaries during his presidency. Despite the different approaches the Kirkpatrick Doctrine induced, it ultimately relied on the same inequality of power relations that had been historically present in U.S.-Latin American relations. Once again, Latin America was deemed incapable of managing its own affairs and the U.S. was given moral justification to intervene. However, this time the U.S. was not simply exploiting an unwilling victim, but playing into the fantasies of dictators equally unconcerned with the wellbeing and human rights of actual Latin Americans.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this paper incorporates a cultural approach to examine and analyze the representation of human rights abuses in mainstream newspaper and magazine articles written about the Reagan administration’s policy towards Pinochet’s Chile. For the purposes of this paper, a cultural approach refers to the interpretive framework used by scholars to explore the representational machines that contribute to the cultural construction of Latin America and its relationship with the U.S.<sup>130</sup> This

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ricardo Salvatore, “The Enterprise of Knowledge: Representational Machines of Informal Empire,” in *Close Encounters of Empire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 69–106.

approach allows for an exploration of the intersection between culture and power, a theoretical framework essential for understanding a time period like the Cold War where ideology, culture, and politics became increasingly intertwined.<sup>131</sup>

This paper's primary source research is limited in scope to media from the 1980s, a time of supposed improvement of human rights in Chile. The 1980s saw a thawing of relations with Chile with the election of Ronald Reagan, which signaled a major shift in U.S. policy towards human rights.<sup>132</sup> Although largely acknowledged today, the human rights abuses during the 1980s were systemically overlooked at the time. By exploring the stereotypes and justifications employed in the media during this time period, this paper examines how the minimization of human rights in the international community contributed to the perpetuation of human rights violations.

The stereotypes explored in these articles are based on Stuart Hall's theories of representation.<sup>133</sup> Hall argues that differences are constructed in order to assign meaning to both ourselves and the world around us.<sup>134</sup> A construction of "the other" allows a society to classify its surroundings in binary opposition, placing the world into terms of

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<sup>131</sup> Glibert Joseph, "Close Encounters: Toward a New Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations," in *Close Encounters of Empire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 3–46.

<sup>132</sup> This time period also saw key events occur in Chile that sparked numerous reactions from global news sources. 1980 marked the adoption of the Chilean Constitution, a document heavily influenced by ideas of neoliberalism and the Chicago School. In 1984, Pinochet imposed a state of siege in response to rise in political opposition within Chile. In 1986, the U.S. abstained from a World Bank vote regarding loans to Chile, signaling their tacit support for Pinochet's regime. The end of the decade saw Pinochet lose the national plebiscite, forcing him to allow elections in 1989, thus signaling a transition to democracy. The importance of these events as well as the political transitions occurring in Chile and the U.S. during the 1980s also encouraged this time period to be chosen as the focus of this paper. In particular, the events' connections to the discourse surrounding human rights was intended to be

<sup>133</sup> Stereotypes are defined as generalized or oversimplified depictions of a culture, race, or other identifying factor. Although in line with Hall's theories of representation, these stereotypes are not inherently malicious, but simply an ambivalent part of the construction of the self.

<sup>134</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other,'" in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).



“us” versus “them.”<sup>135</sup> It is this process of defining and representing difference that leads to the construction of the self and one’s connection to their surroundings. On a larger scale, Hall’s theories of representation can be applied to the representational machines that contributed to the construction of Latin American identity within the American imagination. The stereotypes explored in this paper were selected based on their connection to Hall’s theories of binary opposition and how the resulting constructed dichotomy between Latin America and the U.S. contributed to the erosion of the importance of the human rights abuses that occurred in Chile. It is important to note that this paper draws its conclusions from analyzing patterns of representations. Choosing to explore a large sample size of mainstream media sources and calling upon the framework employed by Hall, this paper extrapolates meaning from the connections between these articles, rather than the individual articles themselves.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, the representations of human rights in Chile will be addressed in the context of three larger themes: Chile as a potential communist threat, Chile as a country naturally prone to violence and human rights abuses, and Chile as a source of American exploitation. In addition to the established theoretical and analytical framework, secondary sources and declassified government documents are used as basis of support for the proposed interpretations. Finally, it must be acknowledged that there is an inherent power dynamic within these representations as they are only from the U.S. perspective; however, for the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the ‘Other,’” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

purposes of this paper, analysis of Latin American mainstream media sources is not explored.<sup>137</sup>

### **A Communist Threat: Chile's Susceptibility**

The U.S. national dialogue in the 1980s was focused on combatting communism, not human rights abuses. This set a precedent for both the U.S. government and mainstream media to discuss the issue of human rights as subordinate to national security concerns. It was apparent to members of the political and academic community that the administration “[didn’t] care about human rights” and instead sought policy approaches that favored U.S. hegemony in the war against communism.<sup>138</sup> Declassified government documents make it particularly clear that the protection of human rights was not central to the Reagan administration’s foreign policy goals. National Security Council meeting transcripts reveal that the administration was concerned with fostering the “democratic community developing in the Western Hemisphere” and ensuring that the “communists and their Soviet and Cuban patrons” did not gain a base of support in the rest of Latin America.<sup>139</sup> Even when the Reagan administration began to shift its policy approach to Latin America by putting more pressure on military dictatorships to transition to democracy, the logic behind the transition was still rooted in Cold War strategy. In an

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<sup>137</sup> Hall explains that representational machines are burdened by an inherent power dynamic. Traditionally, the more powerful group controls the representations being created. However, this is not to say that the subordinate group does not contribute to the formation of these representations. Cross-cultural encounters contribute to the formation of stereotypes, but the power dynamic behind these encounters ensure that representations that are either favorable or helpful to the construction of identity of the more powerful group are elevated to a more prominent status.

<sup>138</sup> George Lister, “Our Chile Policy” (U.S. Government, April 3, 1984).

<sup>139</sup> “Chile National Security Council Meeting, November 18, 1986, 11:07 a.m.-11:50 a.m., Cabinet Room” (U.S. Government, November 18, 1986).

interview in 1989, Elliott Abrams, the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs and later the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs during the Reagan administration, commented that the administration “delegitimized the notion that military dictatorships [were] the most effective way of fighting Communism;” however, he still asserted that the government “should have done whatever [it] needed to do to get rid of Communism.”<sup>140</sup> Made clear by his statements, the removal of support of military dictatorships was not a decision based on the regimes’ propensity for human rights violations and oppression, but an strategic move in the Cold War battleground. Inherent in Abrams’ contradictory interview is the guiding principle behind the Reagan administration’s policy: that communism was an absolute evil that needed to be defeated by any means necessary.

This fear of communism was not just present at an institutional level, but engrained at a cultural level as well, with the media frequently instilling a sense of fear towards communism. A significant portion of the articles analyzed discussed the larger communist threat that the world was facing, particularly in Latin America.<sup>141</sup> Fear of communism was not only represented in the actual articles analyzed, but in the material surrounding them as well. For example, a book advertisement appearing next to Richard John Neuhaus’s magazine article, “Why Do U.S. Churches Apologize for Oppression?,” perpetuates the Reagan administration’s political agenda by reinforcing American

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<sup>140</sup> Adam Meyerson, “Foggy Bottom Freedom Fighter,” *Policy Review*, no. 47 (Winter 1989): 2, 3.

<sup>141</sup> For examples of articles that discussed the larger threat of communism see Hernan Errazuriz, “Ambassador of Chile Replies to Sen. Kennedy,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1987; Kenneth Freed, “Does Chile’s Dictator Deserve to Buy Washington’s Guns?,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1982; William Chaze and Andy Plattner, “Jesse Helms; Senate Crusader vs. the World,” *U.S. News & World Report*, August 18, 1986; Edward Schumacher, “Reagan Rights Policy Called Weak in 4 Latin Nations,” *New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)*; *New York, N.Y.*, April 17, 1983; Jeffrey Hart, “40 Years Later, Liberals Still Excuse Communism,” *Human Events*; *Washington, D.C.*, September 14, 1985.

anxieties at a cultural level. Although the book advertisement deals exclusively with the situation in Nicaragua, the language provides insight on the views of communism during this era. In bold letters, the advertisement exclaims that “Communism’s other name is DEATH” and that the “number of Communism’s victims grows daily.”<sup>142</sup> Rhetoric like this provided a framework in which the issue of Chile would be discussed.

In order to contextualize and justify the implications of the Reagan administration’s relations with Pinochet, the U.S. media presented Chile as a potential communist threat that required American mitigation. Echoing the Reagan administration’s concern of the political implications of Chile “going red,” the media first sought to justify the U.S.’s role in Pinochet’s initial rise to power.<sup>143</sup> A large portion of the selected articles reference Chile’s “Marxist” past and its supposed near spiral into communism with the election of Salvador Allende.<sup>144</sup> As expressed in Brian Crozier’s article, “The Inverse Law,” in the *National Review*, the Allende regime was deemed “Communist in all but name” and threatened a “‘demagogic spiral,’ which would have resulted inevitably in a collapse of democracy, whether or not the military had intervened

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<sup>142</sup> Richard John Neuhaus, “Why Do U.S. Churches Apologize for Oppression?,” *Human Events*; Washington, D.C., November 7, 1987.

<sup>143</sup> Despite initial denials, it has been largely accepted that the U.S. was heavily involved in the ousting of Allende. Despite his moderate socialist policies, Allende was deemed a Communist threat and the U.S. called for his removal from office due to national security concerns. Through CIA involvement and financial backing, the U.S. aided the military coup that removed Allende from office and led to his death. For further information see Sarah Sarzynski, *Chile PowerPoint* (2018).

<sup>144</sup> For examples of articles that mention Chile’s Marxist past and the threat that Allende posed see Edward Schumacher, “Chile Improves Human Rights Record but Is It Good Enough?,” *New York Times*, January 2, 1983; Edward Schumacher, “Foes of Pinochet In Mass Protests In Chilean Cities: 200 Reported Arrested in Clashes With Police,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1983; Cynthia Brown, “The U. S. Options Narrow in Chile,” *The Nation*, September 20, 1986; Shirley Christian, “3 Chilean Services, but Not Army, Backing an Open Election in 1989,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1986; Ariel Dorfman, “The Challenge in Chile: The Author, an Allende Supporter Returning to Chile after 12 After of Exile, Finds Opposition to the Military Government Mounting,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1986; Hernan Errazuriz, “Ambassador of Chile Replies to Sen. Kennedy,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1987; Shirley Christian, “Pinochet, a ‘Very Peculiar Dictator,’ Faces Voters,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1988.

in 1973.”<sup>145</sup> Ignoring the fact that Allende was elected by legitimate democratic means, the media still presented Chile as a country doomed to democratic failure, political chaos, and a potential communist takeover. Such a threat demanded American intervention.<sup>146</sup>

With the image of Chile as a potential communist threat engrained in the U.S. political and cultural consciousness, the commitment to preventing a possible communist takeover took precedent over the protection of human rights. With the Reagan administration clearly signaling that “human rights considerations would be subordinated to combating international terrorism,” the media was pressured into supporting this position.<sup>147</sup> Although the media rarely threw its full support behind the Reagan administration’s policy in Chile, the vast majority of articles framed the administration’s relationship with Pinochet within the larger context of Chile as a potential communist threat. This was most clearly expressed in Harold Evans’ *U.S. News & World Report* article, “Getting Away with Murder.” When referencing testimony from seventeen victims of the regime’s torture, Evans maintains that the testimony describes “how Chile is being saved from Communism by torturers who let rats loose on their victims and force loved ones to watch,” presenting a dangerous implication that human rights abuses are an unfortunate, but necessary reality of the war against communism.<sup>148</sup> This ideology was adopted and distorted by the U.S. backed military junta in Chile, with Kenneth Freed

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<sup>145</sup> Brian Crozier, “The Inverse Law,” *National Review*, May 8, 1987: 26.

<sup>146</sup> The concern over Chile as a communist threat and the need for American mitigation was perpetuated throughout the 1980s. Reports of Chile’s communist ties, notably the 1986 discovery of an arms cache shipped by Cuba to the Chilean Communist Party, intensified American anxieties. These concerns were echoed in the mainstream media. For further information on the discovery of the arms cache see “Chile National Security Council Meeting, November 18, 1986, 11:07 a.m.-11:50 a.m., Cabinet Room” (U.S. Government, November 18, 1986).

<sup>147</sup> Peter R. Kornbluh, “Certifying Chile On Rights Is Wrong,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1982. Note that here “international terrorism” is referring to communism.

<sup>148</sup> Harold Evans, “Getting Away with Murder,” *U.S. News & World Report*, March 23, 1987.

reporting in the Los Angeles Times that Admiral Tobio Merino Castro supported the theory that “communists have no human rights.”<sup>149</sup> The priority that the U.S. government and media placed on defeating communism now had even more dangerous implications. Communists were now not only the enemy, but an inhuman foe, laying the groundwork for the moral justification that would perpetuate Pinochet’s crimes against humanity.

The representation of Chile as a communist threat continued to provide justification for Reagan’s shift in foreign policy. As eliminating the communist threat took precedent over human rights, the Reagan administration was willing to radically shift their foreign policy towards Pinochet’s Chile in accordance with whatever solution was most likely to keep the perceived communist threat at bay. As Pinochet’s continued acts of oppression sparked outrage, the Reagan administration began to doubt the regime’s ability to subdue the growing left-wing countermovement. Shifting to the Kirkpatrick Doctrine’s second corollary of military dictatorships’ propensity for democratic transition, the administration began to aggressively call for free elections and Pinochet’s retirement from office in order to preserve Chile’s anti-Communist stance.<sup>150</sup> The media reflected these concerns and vindicated the necessity of the shift in policy, with one article in *The Nation* reporting on the growing “concern among U.S. conservatives that Pinochet’s continuation in power may be benefiting Chile’s Marxist left to the point where a transition might not be able to ignore the M.D.P.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Kenneth Freed, “Submachine Gun--Symbol of Santiago,” *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995); Los Angeles, Calif.*, January 4, 1982.

<sup>150</sup> This would eventually result in the Reagan administration’s financial support of opposition parties in 1989 plebiscite.

<sup>151</sup> Cynthia Brown, “The U. S. Options Narrow in Chile,” *The Nation*, September 20, 1986. Note that M.D.P stands for the Democratic Popular Movement, the Chilean political party based on Marxist and Communist ideology.

The rationalization for Reagan's shift in policy was also present in the previously discussed article by Harold Evans. Having previously justified the administration's past tendency to turn a blind eye to Chile's human rights violations, Evans shifts to justifying Reagan's new approach to Pinochet. He insists that there is a "right to be concerned about the Communist threat in Chile" and equates its growth to "Pinochet and his excesses."<sup>152</sup> In fact, he even condemns Reagan for not taking a stronger approach to combating the new issues posed by Pinochet, stating that: "America, having already helped restore freedom and decency to the Philippines, Haiti and El Salvador, has not been stepping up its pressure on Pinochet."<sup>153</sup> Evans not only reinforces the representation of Chile as a communist threat, but also as another Third World country requiring America's paternalistic intervention in the name of freedom. Inherent in his article is the evolution of the discourse surrounding Pinochet. The Chilean dictator may have once served as a preventative measure for eliminating Allende and his potential communist influence in Chile, but he was now representative of the communist threat himself, with his brutal regime risking the growth of a radical left. Once again, Pinochet was dismissed not because of his human rights abuses, but because of the threat of communism. Although official policy towards Pinochet may have changed, the underlying goal of the administration remained the same as it was in the early 1980s: "to strengthen anti-communist governments against any Soviet-Cuban activity in the area."<sup>154</sup>

### **Human Rights: A Latin American Issue**

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<sup>152</sup> Evans, "Getting Away with Murder."

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Kenneth Freed, "Does Chile's Dictator Deserve to Buy Washington's Guns?," *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1982.

Although the media was generally critical of Pinochet's continued human rights abuses, they painted the issues in Chile as an inherently Latin American problem symptomatic of non-Western and un-American ideals. This representation was reliant on the association of Chile with the rest of Latin America. Articles rarely discussed Chile independently from other Latin American countries, instead considering it in connection with other dictatorships in the Southern Cone or other communist and socialist leaning governments in Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>155</sup> The grouping of these countries implied that the issues of violence, political turbulence, and human rights abuses experienced in Latin America were symptomatic of a larger and inherently regional problem.

There was a clear implication in the media that there was a connection between Latin America and violence.<sup>156</sup> In Kenneth Freed's *Los Angeles Times* article, "Submachine Gun--Symbol of Santiago," he discusses the symbols associated with cities, stating that "Los Angeles has the movies, New York its Manhattan skyline," but "[in] Santiago, it is the submachine gun."<sup>157</sup> He continues to discuss the "other symbols" of Chile, noting the "barricades that go up late every night," "the censorship of the

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<sup>155</sup> For examples of articles that connect Chile to other Latin American countries see Anthony Lewis, "Merit Badge for Tyrants," *New York Times*, February 4, 1982; Edward Schumacher, "Reagan Rights Policy Called Weak in 4 Latin Nations," *New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y.*, April 17, 1983; Ximena Bunster Burotto, "Overcoming Death in Chile," *Cultural Survival Quarterly (1981-1989); Cambridge*, June 30, 1984; Morton M. Kondracke, "No, No Noriega," *New Republic*, October 5, 1987; Roberto Suro, "Pinochet Assures Pope He Is Seeking Stability," *New York Times*, April 2, 1987; Roberto Suro, "Pope, on Latin Trip, Attacks Pinochet Regime," *New York Times*, April 1, 1987; Aryeh Neier, "In Latin America, Winter for Democracy..." *New York Times*, February 11, 1989.

<sup>156</sup> Although the following example deals with an article exclusively referencing Chile's connection to violence, this representation can be applied to the rest of Latin America due to Chile's previous association with other Latin American countries. The resulting discourse then becomes affiliated not just with Chile, but with the rest of the region. This assumption is present in the section's remaining analysis.

<sup>157</sup> Kenneth Freed, "Submachine Gun--Symbol of Santiago," *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 1982.



television networks,” the detention of individuals “without warrant or trial,” and the guns that have come to represent “the politics of force used by the rightist military regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.”<sup>158</sup> Freed presents the U.S. in binary opposition to Chile, implying that such chaos could never be associated with American society. Only in Latin America would a city’s symbols be that of reactive violence.

Other articles discussed Chile’s connection to violence in less overt ways. Some articles implied that Pinochet’s human rights violations were a natural consequence of Chile’s inherently violent nature, while others acknowledged that the violence grew out the political vacuums that were born out of U.S. intervention.<sup>159</sup> Despite this dichotomy, both frameworks still implied that the violence occurring in Chile could only happen in Latin America. Articles consistently associated the violence with leftist opposition movements or rogue state police, two groups that were completely foreign in the American political system. This association was clearly discussed in Edward Schumacher’s article “Foes of Pinochet in Mass Protests in Chilean Cities.” In reference to an anti-Pinochet protest erupting in violence, Schumacher reported that Chilean officials claimed that “[b]ehind the organizers of these actions and taking advantage of the situation [was] the Communist Party and its known and permanent strategy of violence and subversion.”<sup>160</sup> Despite the lack of evidence of communist involvement, he reported that Western diplomats supported the Chilean’s claim and associated the

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> For an example of media that discussed the consequences of U.S. intervention see Neil P. Hurley, “Pinochet Rule in Chile,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 1982.

<sup>160</sup> Edward Schumacher, “Foes of Pinochet In Mass Protests In Chilean Cities: 200 Reported Arrested in Clashes With Police,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1983.

violence with “youth splinter groups” that embraced a radical leftist ideology.<sup>161</sup> Inherent in this article is the implication that escalation of violence in Chile was the fault of radical groups embracing un-American political and social ideology. Leftist protests were not only throwing the country into a state of chaos, but also instigating Pinochet’s violent retaliation, thus shifting the blame for the regime’s human rights abuses to the individuals that were its primary target.

The established dichotomy between the U.S. and Chile implied a connection between democracy and the protection of human rights. The human rights violations occurring in Chile and the rest of Latin America were inconceivable within the framework of the U.S.’s democracy. In the American imagination, Chile and Latin America had taken their democracy for granted when they supported left wing political leaders. In Chile’s case, the election of Allende was considered a grave error on behalf of Chileans and the resulting military dictatorship’s repression in the wake of the coup was subsequently their fault. This opinion was apparent in John Dinges’ “Winter of Discontent” in the *New Republic* when he states:

“A decade ago, leftists tended to dismiss democracy as “bourgeois,” a mask hiding the ugly face of capitalism. Rightists tended to talk glibly about how a taste of the military whip would be good for the country’s character. No longer. Next time, Chileans won’t take their democracy for granted.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. For further examples of media linking the violence in Chile with leftist or communist ideology see John Dinges, “Winter of Discontent,” *New Republic*, July 18, 1983; Lydia Chavez, “State of Siege Is Imposed in Chile: Chile’s Leader Imposes State of Siege and Curfew,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1984; Shirley Christian, “Chile Authorities Act to Prosecute Leaders of Strike,” *New York Times*, 1986; Bernard Weinraub, “Chile’s Leader Reported to Reject U.S. Calls for Democratic Change: U.S. Says Chilean Rejects Pressure,” *New York Times*, 1986; “Ignored Again: Human Rights in Chile,” *New York Times*, November 24, 1986.

<sup>162</sup> John Dinges, “Winter of Discontent,” *New Republic*, July 18, 1983.

The implication is clear: if Chile had upheld American ideals, they would have never had to face Pinochet's brutality.

By assigning blame for Pinochet's atrocities to Chile's Latin American character, the media again shifted the dialogue surrounding human rights. Human rights were represented as a natural consequence of Latin America's violent tendencies. The implication of the inevitability of human rights violations ignored the root causes of the political turmoil and perpetuated a dangerous idea that the international community could do little in the fight against human rights abuses. These ideas provided a less overt justification for the Reagan administration's involvement with Pinochet. With the assumption that Latin America was linked to human rights violations, the Reagan administration had no other choice than to establish warmer relations with countries like Chile despite their continued abuses. If the administration chose to cut ties with countries prone to human rights abuses, then they would have to sever relations with all of Latin America.<sup>163</sup>

The representation of human rights as a Latin American issue also provided justification for the Reagan administration's various shifts in policy. Represented as violent and reactive, Chile demanded U.S. intervention. Only the U.S., with its tenets of democratic freedom and protection of human rights, could save Chile from its vicious tendencies. During the latter half of Reagan's presidency, the media consistently called

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<sup>163</sup> It was clear that the Reagan administration did not want to sever ties with Chile. For evidence of Reagan's intentions in Chile see Ronald Reagan, "Certification for Argentina" (U.S. Government, December 7, 1983).

on the U.S. to more aggressively intervene in Pinochet's regime.<sup>164</sup> Despite the positive implications of these calls to action, they still relied on the stereotype that Latin America was unable to address their own problems, especially with an issue as supposedly culturally engrained as human rights abuses. However, this cultural framework ignored the U.S.'s involvement in the creation of the political environment that led to Pinochet's human rights abuses.<sup>165</sup> By ignoring the greater political and social context, the media diluted the realities behind the rampant atrocities in Chile and helped perpetuate the falsehoods about human rights abuses that contributed to a culture of willful ignorance.

### **Chile: A Source of American Exploitation**

The vast majority of mainstream media presented Chile as a source of American exploitation, transforming the discourse surrounding Pinochet's human rights violations into a discussion of furthering U.S. interests. The U.S. had clear economic and political interest in Chile that took precedent over combating human rights violations.<sup>166</sup> Major

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<sup>164</sup> For examples of media calling for more aggressive U.S. intervention in the fight against Pinochet's human rights abuses see Samuel Hofberg, "U.S. Wrist-Slap," *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1980; Peter R. Kornbluh, "Certifying Chile On Rights Is Wrong," *New York Times*, March 23, 1982; Edward Schumacher, "Chile Improves Human Rights Record but Is It Good Enough?," *New York Times*, January 2, 1983; John Dinges and Saul Landau, "A Defector's Story: Derailing Pinochet," *Nation*, March 7, 1987; "State of Siege," *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1986; Edward Kennedy, "America Sides With Pinochet's Atrocities," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1987; Peter Applebome, "A Chilean's Mythic Tale Challenges a Feisty Theater Troupe.: Chilean Dramatist Finds a Forum in Texas The Dark Material of the Play Has Unnerved Some of the Cast Members.," *New York Times*, July 17, 1988; Shirley Christian, "As Chile Prepares to Vote, U.S. Envoy Is Praised," *New York Times*, 1988.

<sup>165</sup> An exploration of the U.S.'s involvement in Pinochet's rise to power and his subsequent human rights abuses can be seen in Costa-Gavras, *Missing*, 1982. Although it is a dramatic film, it is based on the true story of the disappearance of Charles Horman and the U.S. involvement in his death as well as the 1973 coup. The film was acclaimed for its historical accuracy.

<sup>166</sup> It is important to note that this understanding of the U.S.-Chile relationship was understood and reinforced by Chileans and Latin Americans through dependency theory. Dependency theory, a counter theory to modernization theory, was established by Latin American scholars and purported the existence of core and periphery countries. Core countries would exploit periphery countries for economic and political gain, thus preventing development in periphery countries. Chilean authors discussed the consequences of

American investment in financial services in Chile ensured that economic considerations would color political decisions.<sup>167</sup> These motivations were expressed in a letter to Elliott Abrams where it was openly admitted that officials “doubted human rights could be much of a factor in [American] policy [in Chile] because of economic considerations.”<sup>168</sup> As a result, Pinochet’s legitimacy was considered in terms of whether “generals [were] good economic managers,” rather than if they were good moral and political leaders.<sup>169</sup> Politically, Chile also presented the U.S. with a tactical advantage. Offering strategic military bases, the country acted as the only natural passage connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in the case of the sabotage of the Panama Canal.<sup>170</sup> The U.S. government also believed that Chile’s democratic experience and time under a Marxist president would provide “invaluable insights to [...] [the] new members of the democratic community developing in the Western hemisphere.”<sup>171</sup>

Chile’s importance to U.S. interests was reflected in the media, with articles often presenting the human rights situation as improving merely as justification further U.S. involvement with Pinochet. This defense was incredibly important during the early years of the Reagan administration as they consistently turned a blind eye to Pinochet’s continued human rights violations in favor of warmer relations with the dictator.<sup>172</sup> In

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dependency theory in Chile in Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck*, 1971. For further information on dependency theory see Sarah Sarzynski, *Introduction to Dictatorships Americas PowerPoint* (2018).

<sup>167</sup> Mark Falcoff, “Chile: The Dilemma for U.S. Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 4 (Spring 1986).

<sup>168</sup> Lister, “Our Chile Policy.” For more explicit discussion on the economic considerations in Chile see “Chile National Security Council Meeting.”

<sup>169</sup> “Chile’s Caesar, in Black and White,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1984.

<sup>170</sup> Mark Falcoff, “Chile: The Dilemma for U.S. Policy.”

<sup>171</sup> “Chile National Security Council Meeting.” The assertions made in this government document are clearly based on domino theory. Chile was considered a country of crucial importance, with its fate possibly determining the outcome of the Cold War in Latin America.

<sup>172</sup> The Reagan administration was willing to turn a blind eye in part because of the economic interests the U.S. had in Chile. The administration’s desire to foster relations with Chile and protect U.S. interests can

order to support this shift in policy, the administration encouraged the media to present Pinochet's regime in a more favorable manner.<sup>173</sup> One of these early articles, "A Rare Hurrah for Pinochet's Chile," attempts to mitigate the realities of Pinochet's brutal regime, stating that:

"Chile is not a conventional police state. Soldiers do not terrorize or intimidate the population. The relatively few armed policemen on the streets are generally professional and courteous. One result is that the Pinochet government is not seen by most Chileans as a harsh dictatorial regime but as an authoritarian government that is efficient and honest. It shed many of its harsh trappings in 1977, when Gen. Pinochet disbanded the feared Intelligence Directorate which tortured and allegedly killed many political prisoners."<sup>174</sup>

However, this was far from the reality in Chile, where Pinochet's violent acts of oppression were continuing to silence thousands of Chileans.

Even when Pinochet's human rights violations were so blatantly unjustifiable that the media was forced to address them, they still discussed them within the context of how intervening would affect American interests. This was apparent in Kenneth Freed's article, "Does Chile's Dictator Deserve to Buy Washington's Guns?" Despite its critical tone towards American policy in Chile, the article still frames the U.S.'s policy towards human rights abuses by how intervention will affect American interests. Quoting an anonymous diplomat, the article explains that:

"These governments don't last and they are almost always replaced by people who remember you and hate you for the support you have given to the dictators. The

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be seen in Ronald Reagan, "Certification for Argentina" (U.S. Government, December 7, 1983); "Chile National Security Council Meeting, November 18, 1986, 11:07 a.m.-11:50 a.m., Cabinet Room" (U.S. Government, November 18, 1986); Robert McFarlane, "Meeting with Chilean Ambassador Enrique Valenzuela" (U.S. Government, January 17, 1984).

<sup>173</sup> Although the U.S. government has never officially admitted to manipulating information about the situation in Chile, it is possible to infer their involvement in censoring certain information based on their previous coverups of their involvement in the Chilean coup. Declassified government documents also allude to the U.S.'s hidden agenda. See "Chile National Security Council Meeting."

<sup>174</sup> "A Rare Hurrah for Pinochet's Chile," *Human Events*; Washington, D.C., October 18, 1980.

choice, it seems to me, is do you want a short-lived friendship with a dictator with no real payoff, or do you want to ensure that you have friends over the long run.”<sup>175</sup>

Even the inherent objection to the Reagan administration’s dealings with Pinochet is couched in the context of American interest. The question of U.S. involvement with Pinochet then becomes an assessment not of human rights, but of which course of action would further American hegemony.

Anthony Lewis similarly discusses the issue of human rights in his article “Merit Badge for Tyrants.” Although it denounces Reagan’s declaration that Chile had met international human rights standards and is one of the very few articles that provides graphic details of the torture experienced by Chileans opposing Pinochet, the issue of Pinochet and his human rights abuses are still considered through the lens of how it will affect American hegemony. Lewis notes that Reagan’s declaration is not only “cynical,” but also “humiliating,” already ensuring that the U.S. would be “hurt in international forums” like the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.<sup>176</sup> The policy decision is said to have made Pinochet feel “free to mock the United States on human rights,” implying a possible threat to U.S. superiority in the relationship.<sup>177</sup> Reagan’s complacency with human rights abuses may be condemned, but it is done so primarily because it “has the effect of weakening American influence,” a crucial blunder in terms of the Cold War landscape.<sup>178</sup>

## **Conclusions**

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<sup>175</sup> Freed, “Does Chile’s Dictator Deserve to Buy.”

<sup>176</sup> Anthony Lewis, “Merit Badge for Tyrants,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1982.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

The American mainstream media during the 1980s examined Pinochet's human rights abuses within the larger context of the Cold War. Influenced by a history of U.S.-Latin American relations and the ideological politics of the decade, the media presented Chile as a potential communist threat, a country naturally prone to violence and human rights abuses, and a source of American exploitation. Although these themes are relatively narrow in scope, they suggest larger conclusions about the overarching cultural discourse on Latin America. Each representation reinforced a sense of Latin American inferiority, the need for U.S. intervention, and the trend of placing U.S. interests above international concerns. These ideas framed the larger discourse surrounding human rights and played into a dangerous trend of minimizing the need for their protection.

However, before further exploring the implications of this paper it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Given the window of time for conducting research and the large number of articles detailing Pinochet's human rights abuses, a comprehensive review of all relevant mainstream media publications proved impractical, and therefore the scope of this paper did not incorporate materials from the rest of Pinochet's time in power. As this paper represents one set of interpretations of the primary source documents, it is reasonable to assume that there are other valid interpretations of the stereotypes employed and their implications on human rights. There were also exceptions to the general findings of this paper, including a small collection of sources very critical of both Pinochet and the Reagan administration which did not employ traditional stereotypes.<sup>179</sup> Further research on the evolution of media representations over the

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<sup>179</sup> It is important to note that many of these outlier sources were either opinion pieces or letters to the editor. This suggests that there was possible additional dichotomy of perception between the American



entirety of Pinochet's rule as well as a comparative analysis of these representations to similar depictions of human rights violations in the rest of the Southern Cone would prove useful.

Despite these considerations, general conclusions can still be drawn. The findings in this paper support the notion that stereotypes and politically biased media representations contribute to the dismissal of human rights and the erosion of their importance in the international community. This erosion is particularly problematic when discussing the human rights violations in Chile and the rest of the Southern Cone. The act of "disappearing" individuals was a uniquely cruel crime, leaving an indelible scar on the affected Latin American societies. The "disappeared" were not only brutally tortured and murdered, but wiped out of official existence. Their exact fates were rarely known by their own family members, let alone understood or spoken about by the international community. They were victimized twice, first by a brutal regime, and then by an indifferent international community. The violations of their human rights became intertwined with Cold War rhetoric that had little concern for the human impact of political maneuvering. This was certainly the case with the U.S. mainstream media's depiction of Chile, which consistently made concessions on behalf of the Pinochet regime and framed the discussion on human rights around Cold War fears. The resulting discourse heightened the sense of American superiority and contributed to silence

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public and the American mainstream media. This dichotomy garners further research. For examples of articles that did not match the findings of this paper see Barbara Gamarekian, "Chilean's Widow Pursues His Cause," *New York Times*, March 11, 1982; Ximena Bunster Burotto, "Overcoming Death in Chile," *Cultural Survival Quarterly (1981-1989)*; Cambridge, June 30, 1984; Dennis Manly Jr. and Silvia Edber, "Chilean Crackdown," *Time*, October 13, 1986; August Hawkins, "Reagan's Ghostship Foreign Policy," *Tri - State Defender (1959-1989)*, December 17, 1986; "Chile: Pope Visits Indians Pinochet Claims Do Not Exist," *Akwasasne Notes (1975-1989)*; *Rooseveltown*, May 31, 1987; Elena Brunet, "Current Paperbacks: Missing," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1988.

surrounding the realities of human rights abuses. In Chile, it would not be until 1990 that the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation would recognize the victims of the Pinochet regime.<sup>180</sup> Regrettably, neither the exact number of victims nor the extent of the crimes committed against them will ever be known with full certainty. Instead, the atrocities they faced will forever be intertwined with the media representations intentionally and artificially forced upon them.

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<sup>180</sup> Elizabeth Lira. "Human Rights Violations." *Radical History Review*, no. 124 (January 2016): 153–64.

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## Appendix

**STATE OF SIEGE**

*Boston Globe (1960-1987); Sep 9, 1986; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe*  
pg. 1

**STATE OF SIEGE**

Chilean President Augusto Pinochet shows his bandaged hand to an interviewer on state television after an attempt on his life Sunday night. Opposition leaders and priests were arrested yesterday in a government crackdown. Page 11.

**Editorial Cartoon 2 -- No Title**

*Boston Globe (1960-1987); Sep 12, 1986; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe*  
pg. 14



*Pinochet dictatorship celebrates 13th anniversary of military takeover in Chile*