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Film and the Culture of Memory in Argentina

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty and the Honors Program

Of the University of San Diego

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By

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Department of Languages, Cultures and Literatures: Spanish

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### Film and the Culture of Memory in Argentina

The last civic-military dictatorship in Argentina began on March 24, 1976 during the presidency of Isabel Perón. This military coup was headed by Army General Jorge Rafael Videla, Navy Admiral Emilio E. Massera and Air Force Brigadier General Orlando R. Agosti. The coup d'état resulted in the removal of Isabel Perón and the de facto presidency of General Jorge Rafael Videla, and all of the legislative powers of the government now resided with the executive authority, and military leaders were placed into all the government capacities (Mor 50). With this military takeover began what was called “el Proceso de reorganización nacional” (“The Process of National Reorganization”)<sup>1</sup>, with the purpose of eradicating subversion and transforming Argentina into a country equal with the “concierto de naciones” (“concert of nations”) (Feitlowitz 7). The “subversives”—as they were called by the new government officials—included people who were active in trade and workers unions, teachers associations, journalists, students, and many others who were seen as threats to the new power structure. Between the years of 1976 and 1983, as well as during the years preceding the military takeover, approximately 30,000 people were kidnapped, tortured, and murdered in what were known as “centros clandestinos de detención, tortura y exterminación” (“clandestine centers of detention, torture, and extermination”) (CCDTyE)—and these victims were officially referred to as “los desaparecidos” (“the disappeared”), a term which denied their existence entirely.

Following the end of the dictatorship and the return to democracy with the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín, there began a flourish of cinematic production focused on the horrors of the dark

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

years of the dictatorship. These new films contribute to the culture of memory surrounding the institutionalized violence of the dictatorship and demonstrate the different methods that exist to remember and process a traumatic period of history. This thesis is focused on the analysis of four films that examine the complexities and representations of the dictatorship. The films *Kamchatka* (Marcelo Piñeyro, 2002), *La noche de los lápices* (“*The Night of the Pencils*”) (Héctor Olivera, 1986), *Garage Olimpo* (“*Olympic Garage*”) (Marco Bechis, 1999), and *Crónica de una fuga* (“*Chronicle of an Escape*”) (Israel Adrián Caetano, 2006) are part of a historical-cultural archive that explores the many methods of remembering the last military dictatorship in Argentina.

### **Film as memory**

There exists a wide selection of testimonies, reports, and books that have been documented and explore this period of Argentine history. This film analysis allows for the extension of existing knowledge of what it means to remember and survive a period of state sponsored terrorism. This project’s analysis of each film’s content, structure, and technique contributes to the discussion of how a society remembers a traumatic event, and relationships can be drawn between the composition of each film and the historical events the film references. Mujal-León and Langenbacher define a collective memory as the “intersubjectivity [of] shared interpretations of a poignant common past—often some kind of traumatic event—with a high degree of affect” (70) and this project offers a unique way of examining these collective memories of the dictatorship. Exploring film production in response to a traumatic common past—such as the military dictatorship of 1976— allows for a nuanced perspective on how Argentina as a nation has processed and continues to process the horrors and human rights violations of this period.

Argentina as a country has a rich history of film production with ties to national identity—as such, there exists an extensive archive of film which permits for the study of memory and trauma. Filmmakers were considered to be “subversives” under the military government, and film production was greatly halted during the dictatorship (Mor 51), and the arrival of democracy opened a space for film to discuss the dictatorship. Partially contributing to this flourish of cultural production was the newly elected president, Raúl Alfonsín, who saw the opportunity that film posed to shape Argentina’s newly democratic image on an international level (Mor 77). Film censorship was greatly reduced, a new head of the National Institute of Cinematography was appointed, and the laws regulating film were altered (Mor 91). This transition period was marked by a new discourse, which redesigned the cultural space (Evangelista 42). Of particular importance to this discourse is the relationship of the viewer to the film, exploring “the space between the screen and the viewer’s eyes” (Mor 4), and this relationship forms the basis for this project’s analysis.

In *Voices of Survivors*, Liria Evangelista explains that testimony is an accusation against the ideological and political repression, and is a form of counter discourse—a discourse that opposes the rhetoric and power of the institution (15). Through this lens, film functions as a form of testimony. Film is used to shed light on the dictatorship era’s political structure of repression and to challenge the rhetoric which suggested that the victims of institutionalized violence were deserving of the horrific treatment they received due to their own faults and choices. Through this accusation film offers an avenue for “subverting state authority, offering alternative sources of historical knowledge, and structuring alternative historical narratives” (Mor 4). It allows for a critique of the perspectives offered by the state, and questions the authority’s discourse (Mor 4). Specifically, films produced during the transition to democracy relied on the viewer’s knowledge

of the historical events referenced, and created a mosaic of collective memories from these many experiences (Mor 10). This active participation of the film's audience in the collective memory of the dictatorship echoes the space created by art for the articulation of suffering, and can also be used as a restorative force to begin healing (Evangelista xx). In the case of post dictatorial Argentine cinema, film is a restorative force that can help to heal the collective trauma created by the many different experiences of the state violence.

Important to the conversation surrounding film are the ethics of representation—which are particularly important when the filmmakers and participants are other than the subjects of the film's storyline. Lessons from the Holocaust and the bibliography that has resulted from its study offers important and relevant insights to the discussion of visual representations of a traumatic event, and these concepts can be applied to post-dictatorial film. Jakob Lothe comments that images should not respond to the viewer's desire to be shocked by images, and that photographs remind the viewer of the connection between the image they are seeing and the historical and personal memory it embodies (223). This concept of photographs can be applied to film, as film evokes feelings in the audience in a similar manner that images do in their viewers. In a film that speaks to the gruesome realities of life in the concentration centers it is important that it does not simply satisfy the observers desire to be shocked. Each of the four films in this thesis follow this guideline, and the purposes and functions of each film's representations are complex and multifaceted.

In the films produced in post dictatorial Argentina there exists a variety of representation styles. *La noche de los lápices* (1986) and *Crónica de una fuga* (2006) represent specific events that occurred during the dictatorship. Both *Kamchatka* (2002) and *Garage Olimpo* (1999)

recreate events that “occurred” but are not based on one specific historical event, and *Kamchatka* tells its story from the perspective of a child.

### ***Garage Olimpo***

In *Garage Olimpo*, directed by Marco Bechis (1999), there are many references to the horrors of the dictatorship’s detention centers and the so-called “fight against subversion”. One of these references is to the death flights. During these flights, the military officials injected prisoners with a tranquilizer that rendered them unconscious, transported them (under the pretense of “transferring” them) from the detention centers to airplanes, and dropped them alive into the Río de la Plata where they died (Feitlowitz 60). The bodies of the victims were never recovered, and the only “evidence” of their existence came from pilot’s confessions and testimonies of officials. The testimony of Adolfo Scilingo, a retired Navy captain, who worked at the Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA)(The Higher School of Mechanics of the Navy) (see fig. 3-6), speaks to this reality. His testimony confirmed the existence of the death flights and gave his recount of what these victims experienced. Scilingo explained that “prior to ‘transfer’ ... the prisoners selected ‘to fly’ were called by their numbers, ordered to form a line and march—shuffle, really—in leg irons to the basement where, the brass explained, they were being flown to a recuperation camp in the south, and would now be getting ‘vaccinations’. Whereupon a physician administered the first dose of a tranquilizer (sodium pentothal)” (Feitlowitz 196).

In *Garage Olimpo* the horror of the death flights is recreated. The prisoners are in line to receive their “vaccinations” and an official explains that “from now on, you are legally dependent on the national executive power. Due to this, we are transferring you to different penitentiary units of the nation” (1:31:21). Moments later, the camera cuts to a long shot of an

airplane with the insignia of the Argentine Air Force flying above the Río de la Plata. The camera moves to a close up shot of the inside of the plane, with the cargo door opening and the shadow of a person visible. The shadow shows the person slumped over with their head hanging—the posture of someone who is unconscious. The camera then cuts to a shot from behind the airplane with the cargo door opening, and then to an out-of-focus image of objects falling into the river. This shot composition is suggestive of the prisoners from the Garage Olimpo detention center being thrown into the river. The injection of sodium pentothal is shown, as well as the transfer of the prisoners to the airplane and their unconsciousness while at altitude before being murdered. In this manner, *Garage Olimpo* serves as a method of memorializing and illustrating what the victims of state violence were experiencing during their final hours. This cinematic representation is eerily similar to details given during testimonies of other survivors and the officials, such as Adolfo Scilingo, and is a recreation of a collective experience of the dictatorship.

During the persecution of citizens for acts in supposed opposition to the military government, the Catholic Church was involved. The notion that Church officials possessed a list of the “disappeared” appeared during the trials of 1985, when some of the victims told about the “ambiguities, contradictions, and outright betrayals they suffered at the hands of clerics whom they had consulted in desperation” (Feitlowitz 217). This complicity of the Catholic Church is also represented in *Garage Olimpo*. A scene depicts a woman speaking with the priest in the confessional about the friends of her husband, a *desaparecido*. The priest asks her “would you recognize them?” and asks for a list of her husband’s friends to help “locate him” (48:50). Moments after, the camera cuts to the same woman alerting the others waiting to confess that “he asks for names. Do not speak” (50:01). This scene marks a memory of the participation of the

Catholic Church in the persecution of Argentines, and alludes to the trauma created by this complicity. The act of confession is founded upon the privacy of the conversation between the confessor and the clergy, and in this scene the woman's trust in the priest is shattered. She can no longer rely on what was her "safe space" and is unsure of who she can now trust. By applying this scene to the experiences of the family members of the victims, this unique form of trauma is explored and illustrated in an implicit manner.

*Garage Olimpo* also uses explicit scenes of torture to reference the conditions inside the CCDTyEs. During María's first interrogation, she is tied naked to a table and the guard, Félix, taunts her as he prepares "la picana" (an electrified cattle prod) (28:02). Félix is seeking out information on other supposed subversives, and says "If you speak you are saved, tell me where you were going to meet your friends. I will bring in one of them, you will be saved". He taunts her with the idea that if she reports on her friends, it will allow for her to save herself. By working to break down the sense of solidarity between victims, the dictatorship instilled a strong sentiment of mistrust in survivors. The camera cuts between shots of Félix from the point of view of María laying on the table, to close up shots of María's face, where her facial expressions and heavy breathing command the attention of the viewer and clearly illustrate her fear. This creates a memory of the experience of torture in the viewer. Even though the viewer did not experience this torture personally, the placement of the camera at the point of view of María forces the viewer to assume the role of the victim and to feel the terror of interrogation. At the end of the scene the perspective switches to an overhead shot, where the viewer is now watching María from above, in a "bird's eye view" (28:17). The camera pauses here, and the focus is on the powerlessness of María while Félix looms over her. This change in camera angle switches the viewer from the role of the victim to the role of an eyewitness. The overhead shot converts

the viewer into a witness of torture, as a witness of the human rights violations of the dictatorship.

As Shohini Chaudrhi explains, *Garage Olimpo* participates in the construction of its “own memory-world, which acts on and mediates our memories” (87). *Garage Olimpo* is acting on and actively creating memories of the death flights, the complicity of the Catholic Church, and of torture in each viewer. The purposeful use of camera angles and implicit references to the historical events of the dictatorship creates a sense of being, as though the viewer was present in Argentina during this time. The viewer plays an active role in combating the forgetting of this period of history, and denounces the abuse of power by the military.

### ***Kamchatka***

*Kamchatka*, directed by Marcelo Piñeyro (2000), focuses on the experiences of children growing up in the dictatorship era. 10-year-old Harry must leave his friends and his life in primary school to hide in the Argentine countryside with his parents and younger brother, who is known as “El Enano” (“the little guy”). His father—a human rights lawyer—and his mother—a scientist—are afraid of being forcibly disappeared after seeing what happened to their “dissident” friends. *Kamchatka* is narrated entirely from the perspective of a child through the use of a non-diegetic (sound that comes from outside the plot of the movie) voiceover in certain scenes.

The title of the film *Kamchatka* comes from the board game “Plan Táctico y Estratégico de la Guerra” (T.E.G) (“Tactical and Strategic War Plan”)—an Argentine board game based on the board game “Risk”. In T.E.G the players compete to conquer countries, and it teaches strategies of diplomacy and alliances. Kamchatka is a peninsula on the eastern edge of Russia, and is shown on the board game in a close up shot while Harry plays T.E.G with his father

(1:23:24). T.E.G is a childhood game, yet the concepts of territorial control—including the Kamchatka peninsula—conquests, and conflict may serve as implicit references to the military's control of Argentina during this time and to the many conflicts created by the dictatorship.

The first thing the father does when they children arrive to their new home is show them a pathway hidden in shrubbery. The path leads through the bushes to an open space on the other side. He tells the boys: “if mom or I are in chaos, what you have to do is this: drop everything you are doing, and come to this place running” (12:08). He then shows the boys how to run between the bushes without being scratched. Their father is explaining what they must do if someone from the military comes to take them away. By including a scene of a 10-year old child and his younger brother learning how to escape a kidnapping, *Kamchatka* references the impact that the dictatorship had on the day-to-day lives of children whose parents were suspected of subversion.

In *Kamchatka* there is no explicit reference to the dictatorship, and the parents never tell the two boys exactly why they have to flee their homes and move to the countryside. During one of the first family dinners in their new home, the mother tells Harry and El Enano that they will be staying in their new home for a while, and they do not know exactly for how long (16:45). The boys exchange a look that can only be described as a shared sibling annoyance, and Harry tells his mother that there is nothing to do there, it is “a bore”. El Enano echoes him in the typical manner of a younger sibling. The boys are bored, and this emphasizes their lack of knowledge of the dictatorship. Their lives have been uprooted and they are displaced, no longer attending school, and they must amuse themselves with things such as playing with a frog that appears dead in the pool (20:47). By showing life in hiding through the eyes of the two young boys, the

boys represent another type of victim (other than those who experienced the CCDTyEs) of the dictatorship.

While skipping rocks with his father Harry asks his mother for the camera to take a photo. The camera cuts from a medium long shot of the father demonstrating how to use the camera to a close up of his father's face from the exact point of view of Harry behind the camera (1:05:02). The shot places the viewer in the position of Harry, as though the viewer is looking through the viewfinder of the camera at his father. Harry is capturing the memory of his father in a photograph, and the same memory is now ingrained in the mind of the viewer in a similar manner. The childhood memory of his father skipping rocks will be one of Harry's last memories of his father.

After living in the countryside for a time, one morning the family suddenly must leave. The scene is narrated by Harry, where he explains "Dad yelled chaos" as the camera—through a long shot—shows the family running to their car. As Harry runs behind his mother he carries the game T.E.G and El Enano clutches a stuffed animal in one hand and his mother's hand in the other, who is also carrying a stuffed animal (1:25:00). There is a clear sense of urgency in this scene, as the father picks up El Enano on his way to the car and carries him to save time, and the mother starts driving the car before the passenger door is fully closed. A board game and stuffed animals are typical childhood toys, and bringing these toys on what is clearly a flight from danger highlights the boys' childhood innocence and unawareness. This illustrates the complexities and traumas of growing up during the dictatorship. In the car, the children know that something abnormal is happening and they ask their parents what is going on, but the parents cannot answer. How does one explain to their children that they are evading kidnapping and torture?

The family ends up staying with their grandparents, and in the final scenes of the movie Harry, his father, and his grandfather hold hands, with a close up shot of their three hands intertwined (1:37:22). This scene is laden with emotion, and the camera cuts to an image of a sleeping El Enano wrapped in his mother's arms, as she kisses his head and tells him she loves him (1:37:38). At this point it is clear that the viewer is witnessing a goodbye scene. A close up shot of Harry's face as his mother walks to meet his father at the car showcases his emotions (1:38:32). He appears sad, but not as sad as one would expect when saying goodbye to a parent forever—he appears to be much older than 10 years old and more mature in this scene, as though his experience of the dictatorship has stolen his childhood. His father hands him T.E.G and tells him “never forget” as he kisses him goodbye, and the final scene is a long shot of Harry watching the car drive away as his narration explains “the last time I saw him, my father spoke of Kamchatka... and every time that I played he was with me... Kamchatka was the place to resist ” (1:40:31). The board game is forever intertwined with Harry's memories of his father, and is his method of remembering him. As explained by Judith Herman, not only are the victims subject to the language of trauma, but the witnesses are as well. As a witness, it is even harder to “find a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen” (2), and in this case the language that Harry uses for the trauma of losing his parents is Kamchatka (T.E.G).

A collective societal memory is the accumulated memories of many people, often with different experiences and memories that compete (Tismăneanu and Iacob 71). That is to say, not only are the memories of Argentina's last dictatorship composed of those of the victims and their family members, but also of the memories of children such as Harry and El Enano. The boys lost both of their parents when they were too young to comprehend the gravity of the situation, but

they maintained a memory of them and their childhood, with Harry resisting the loss of these memories by playing T.E.G.

### *La noche de los lápices*

One example of post-dictatorship film that directly references a historical event is *La noche de los lápices*, directed by Héctor Olivera (1986). *La noche de los lápices* recounts the true story of seven students from La Plata, the capital of the province of Buenos Aires. These seven students were kidnapped and brought to a torture center because of their fight for a student ticket for the city bus. The night they were kidnapped is referred to as “The Night of the Pencils”, referencing their status as students. This political activism was seen as evidence of their political subversion and the threat they posed to the military dictatorship. Only one of the seven students survived—Pablo Díaz—and told the horrific story of himself and his friends. This film pertains to the period of Argentina’s transition to democracy, which required a “revisiting of traumatic and often incomplete collective memories of past events” (Mor 5), as a part of the second generation of transition film-making. *La noche de los lápices* and the other films in this earlier group focused on the “acknowledgment, familiarization, recognition, causality, and consequences” of repression (Mor 97). The purpose of this film is to document and expose the traumas of this institutionalized repression and to create a sense of experience with the horrors of the dictatorship, and was one of the first post dictatorial films to do so.

In a similar manner to *Garage Olimpo*, *La noche de los lápices* uses visceral scenes of torture to denounce the acts of the dictatorship. The first explicit torture scene occurs when Pablo arrives to the clandestine detention center and the military workers drag him to a table in a dark cell. The men drop him on the table with his legs and arms spread open wide, and they tie his limbs to the table (44:45). This scene is shown from a long shot, with the viewer located above

the table, far away from Pablo. This is another example of shot composition converting the viewer into an eyewitness of trauma, and creates a memory of “The Night of the Pencils” in the mind of every viewer. Suddenly, the camera cuts to a close up shot focused on the face of the official from the perspective of Pablo. From this perspective, Pablo (and the viewer) stare at the official while he tells Pablo how the “truth machine” works (44:49). The truth machine is “la picana”, the same cattle prod that is shown in *Garage Olimpo*. This change in camera angle, and thus the perspective of the viewer, changes the role of the viewer into a person involved in the scene. The viewer experiences a recreated version of what Pablo experienced, with the viewer as a victim.

Another horror of the dictatorship was the “disappearance” of pregnant women. According to Marguerite Feitlowitz, approximately 500 babies were “disappeared” (238), when pregnant women were kidnapped and then gave birth in the CCDTyEs. The babies were taken from their mothers and given to families that were either friendly with or part of the military regime and were raised without knowledge of their biological parents (239). *La noche de los lápices* references this atrocity, as a woman sharing the cell with Claudia is towards the end of her pregnancy (1:17:56). The camera focuses on Claudia with the woman laying her head in her lap, and crying in pain from her contractions. The camera is placed close to the two women such that it is as though the viewer is present inside the cell with them. The pregnant woman is then taken away and the sound of a crying baby crying can be heard. This scene references the babies born in captivity, such as the experience of Adriana Clavo de Laborde, who gave birth in a moving truck while bound in handcuffs with her feet shackled (Feitlowitz 239).

At the end of the film, the camera shows the faces of the six victims who died as a result of the state sponsored terrorism. The camera focuses directly on the faces and does not move as

the image switches to the next student's face (1:32:28). The composition of this final scene, with the last images of the movie being that of the victim's faces, serves as a denunciation of the violence, and as a tribute to the experiences of the students. As part of the films produced during the transition period, *La noche de los lápices* is characterized by the exposition of the previous reality, bringing to light what had gone mostly unspoken (Evangelista 105). This film directly commemorates and brings to light the experiences of these seven teenagers, contributing to the archive of the history of the dictatorship.

### ***Crónica de una fuga***

*Crónica de una fuga* (Israel Adrián Caetano, 2006) is based on the true story of prisoners from the Mansión Seré detention center, located in the Buenos Aires provincial city of Morón. On November 23, 1977 Claudio M. Tamburrini was kidnapped by the Argentine Air Force for suspicions of his guerilla activity (Tamburrini 9). Tamburrini survived captivity for 120 days, and on March 24, 1978 he escaped from the Mansión Seré with three other prisoners (Tamburrini 9). *Crónica de una fuga* adapts these facts and shows the experiences of Claudio and his companions during captivity. Claudio was not involved with the guerillas, but he was captured and tortured because Tano (another prisoner in the center) lied and gave the officials Claudio's name to try and save himself. When Tano and Claudio see each other for the first time in the room where they would spend the rest of their captivity, Tano tells Claudio "they found your number in my agenda" (1:09:00). Claudio asked him why he lied about the mimeograph, and Tano responded "They broke me. They did everything to me. Claudio, there was nothing else... I needed time. Do you understand?" (1:10:00). This scene reflects the reality of what happened, as well as shows that the act of lying to save oneself was not a singular phenomenon, it was something that the brutality of the torture required for survival.

During the end of the movie, the camera cuts to a series of shots focused on the four men during the last moments of their escapes. The scene begins with Guillermo, with text on the screen overlaid on the close up shot of his face, and explains what happened to him after his escape from the Mansión Seré. It explains that in 1985 he gave his testimony at the military trials (1:36:29). Next, the focus cuts to a far way shot of Vasco, with writing that also mentions that he gave his testimony at the trials. Then, the camera cuts to a close up of Gallego's face, explaining that he never returned to Argentina after his escape. The setting then changes to close up shots of the Mansión Seré, with text explaining that the mansion was set on fire to destroy the evidence of the torture that occurred there. The final scene of the film focuses on Claudio, and explains that he also gave his testimony. This series of shots focused on each of the main characters is very similar to the shots of the students in *La noche de los lápices*, and creates a memory of the experiences of these four men. The focus on the men's faces provokes a personal and intimate feeling, and allows the viewer to feel a personal connection to each of the victims. Establishing this personal connection helps to create a sense of obligation to remember each of their experiences.

## **Discussion**

The cultural production in Argentina following the last civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983) provides insight into the culture of memory surrounding this traumatic period. Each of the films in this selection creates memories in the viewers of the horrific events of the dictatorship and serves as a unique type of testimony. Each of these four films tells a story of the dictatorship from a different perspective and serves the purpose of “delegitimizing [the] authoritarian politics... in facing up to dictatorial legacies” (Tismăneanu and Iacob 4). These films speak to the traumatic legacy of the dictatorship and denounce the authoritarian rule of the military

government by creating a space for the experiences of the victims of torture, the children who grew up during this period, and for the families of the victims.

Central to the processing of trauma is the recognition of and discussion that the trauma was more than individual. The nation must recognize that there is a “deep lesion in a broken community” (Tismăneanu and Iacob 74). Film is a manner of recognizing and speaking to this societal trauma, and acknowledges that the dictatorship not only permanently altered the lives and experiences of individual Argentines, but also altered Argentine society at large. This is can be seen through the loss of trust in the Catholic Church in *Garage Olimpo*.

This analytical viewing of post-dictatorial film is relevant to the case of Argentina as well as on a broader level. Film production in response to collective trauma is not unique to Argentina’s last military dictatorship, and film analysis can be applied to other countries and histories. By telling these different stories, and involving the viewers in an active memory creation, these films contribute to a cultural archive of history that illustrates how a country understands and processes collective trauma. As explained by Mujal-León and Langenbacher, memories must be actively created and re-created in order to maintain their emotional intensity and political-cultural influence, as a defense against forgetting (71). Film serves as a way to continually recreate memories of the dictatorship in the audience, as a defense against the threat of forgetting. Sandra Lorenzano captured the essence of this project in her statement “Por los que están. Por los que no están.” (“For those who are here. For those who are not here.”) (14), which is who this project is dedicated to. *Kamchatka* (Marcelo Piñeyro, 2002), *La noche de los lápices* (Héctor Olivera, 1986), *Garage Olimpo* (Marco Bechis, 1999), and *Crónica de una fuga* (Israel Adrián Caetano, 2006) continue the conversation and the memory of those who are here and those who are not.

### **Visual archive**

While living in Buenos Aires, Argentina and attending the University of Belgrano, I began my research on the civic-military dictatorship of 1976. I visited several of the ex-detention centers that were converted into memorial sites following the end of the dictatorship, including the La Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) (The Higher School of Mechanics of the Navy) and the Club Atlético (Athletic Club). I spoke with my local professors about their experiences and views of the dictatorship and visited the Parque de la Memoria (Memorial Park) that is dedicated to the victims of state terrorism. I was invited to march with the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo—Línea Fundadora (The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Foundational Line), where I spoke with the family members and friends of the “disappeared” and witnessed their calls for justice and remembrance of the victims. I documented each of these experiences with photographs, and have included several of them here in a visual archive. The purpose of this archive is to draw connections between the cinematic representations of the dictatorship with the real locations and people involved. There are photos the ex-clandestine centers of detention, torture, and extermination, as well the memorial park, and documentation of the activism of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Foundational Line. Each photo is my own.



Figure 1. Map of the Clandestine Centers of Detention in the city of Buenos Aires.

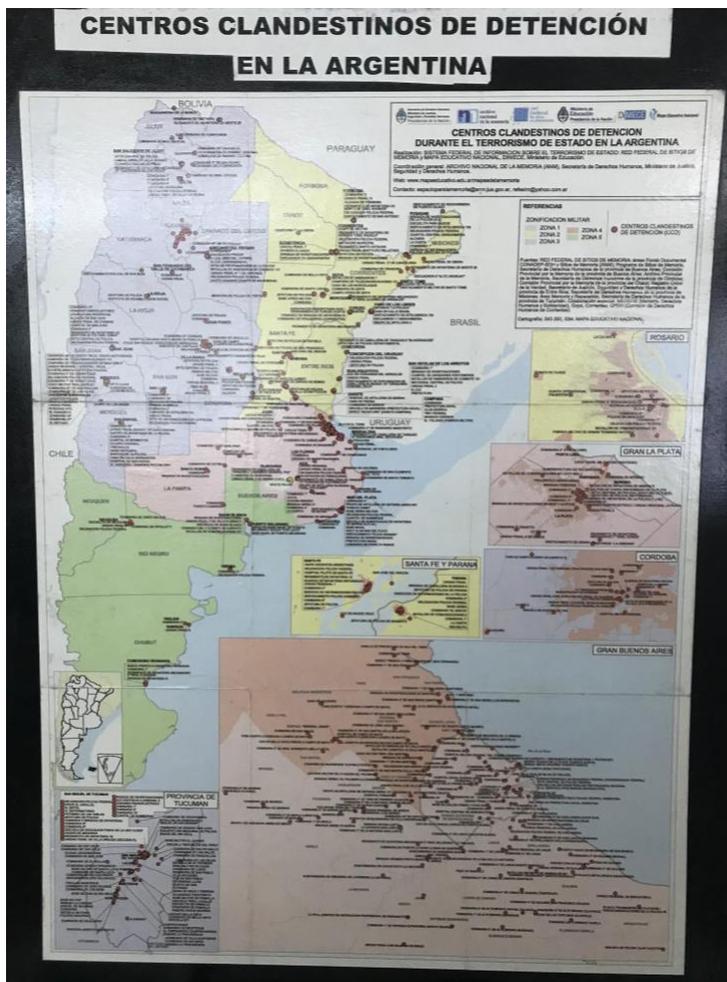


Figure 2. Map of the Clandestine Centers of Detention in Argentina.



Figure 3. La Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (*The Higher School of Mechanics of the Navy*) (ESMA). Former clandestine center of detention, torture, and extermination.

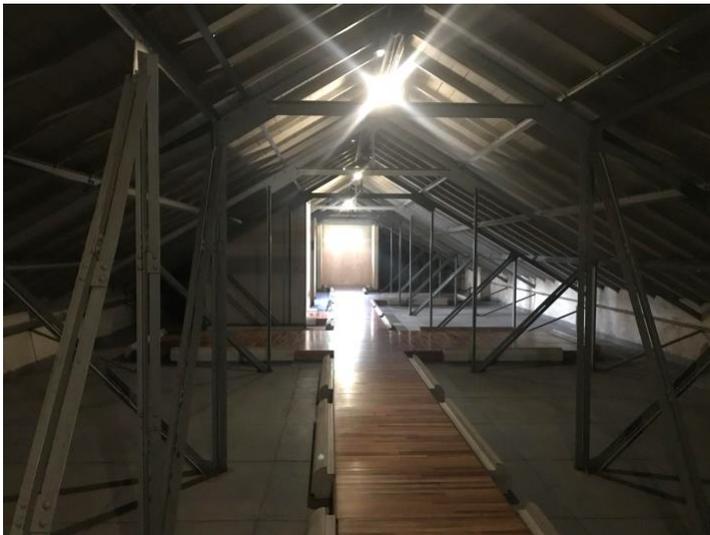


Figure 4. The attic of the ESMA where prisoners were held.



Figure 5. Spatial representation of where prisoners were held in the ESMA. 6.5ft x 3.2ft.

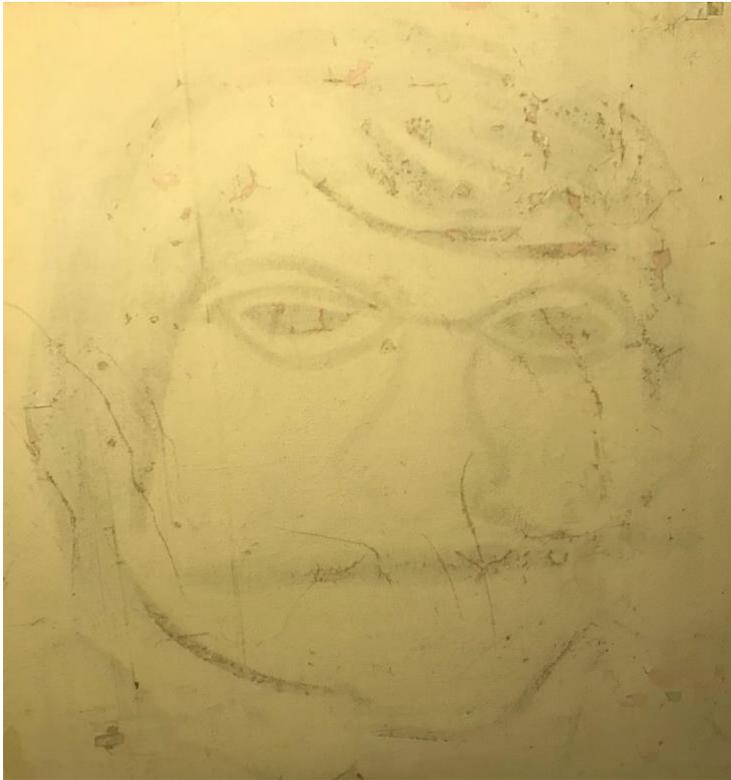


Figure 6. A drawing made by a prisoner on the wall of an attic cell room in the ESMA. Either a self-portrait, or a portrait of one of the torturers.



Figure 7. Memorial at the site of the former Club Atlético clandestine center of detention, torture, and extermination.



Figure 8. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Foundational Line. October 18, 2018.

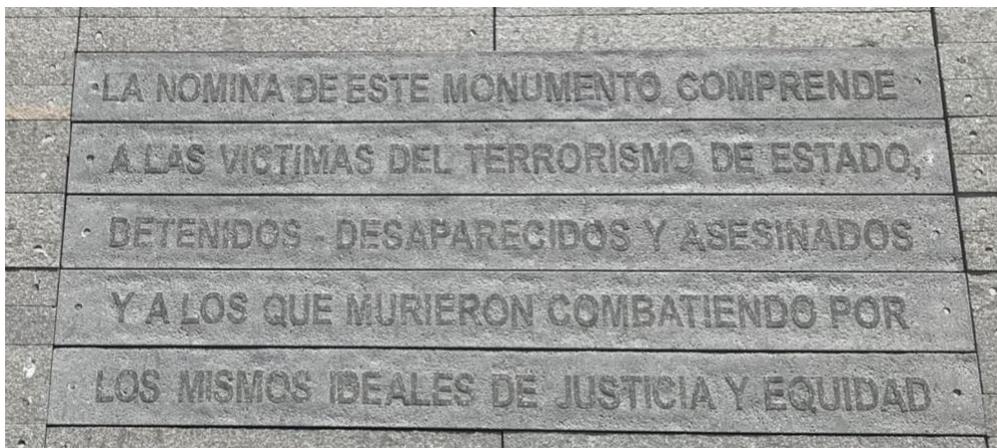


Figure 9. The dedication engraved on the memorial in the Memorial park, dedicated to the victims of the dictatorship.

*“The list [of people] of this monument is comprised of the victims of state terrorism, the detained, the disappeared, and the murdered and to those that died fighting for the same ideals of justice and equity”*

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