

Impure Memory, Imperfect Justice:
A Comparison of Post-Repression Fiction Across the South Atlantic

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines literary representations of—and interventions in—the conflicts between memory, justice, and national reconciliation after authoritarian regimes. I compare fiction written during the democratic transitions following apartheid in South Africa and the military dictatorships in Chile and Argentina in the late 20th century. In my analysis, I consider not only how post-dictatorship fiction approaches historically traumatic events, but also what these novels contribute, both to collective memory and to our understanding of the individual and social dimensions of settling accounts with traumatic recent pasts. The novels studied in depth are: Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* (South Africa, 2004), Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* (South Africa, 2000), María

Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* (Argentina, 2010), Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* (Argentina, 2011), and Carlos Franz's *El desierto* (Chile, 2005).

My analysis is developed within two complementary theoretical frameworks: collective memory (especially by Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora), and human rights and their intersections with literature (by Andreas Huyssen, Joseph Slaughter, and Sophia McClennen, among others). Thus, my study investigates the relationships between history, memory, and literature from an ethical perspective provided by human rights studies.

The questions I contemplate include how narratives address the tensions between history, memory, and truth; the political and aesthetic uses of memory and forgetting in post-authoritarian societies; truth commissions and their representations in literature; the response of younger generations to a traumatic past not personally experienced, but that nevertheless affects them; and how fictional literature contests the politics of amnesia and amnesty embedded in the discourses and acts of national reconciliation in South America and South Africa.

I argue that literature of post-authoritarian societies has assumed responsibility for remembering history in order to prevent the repetition of atrocities, and that fiction writers take the liberty and the responsibility to question the discourses pronounced by official entities and reproduced by the media. This probing attitude gives voice to those who are silent (or have been silenced) in society and in government, and nudges the memory and the conscience of others. They also are eloquent examples of the interweaving of fictional text and historical context.

The analysis of these research questions shows that, while the South African and Southern Cone post-authoritarian societies are all (still) concerned with issues of memory, truth, justice, and reconciliation, they place different emphasis on each of these issues. These differences, manifest in both the content and form of their fiction, correspond to each country's distinct historical and cultural context. Taking into consideration the similarities and peculiarities of these geographical histories, this comparison of novels corroborates and adds nuance to my hypothesis that fiction offers a possibility of reclaiming memory and challenging the official discourse that champions reconciliation at the expense of memory and justice.

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Introduction

The transnational violence that ushered in the 21st century is establishing a new paradigm of how the world is structured at a global scale. The "us vs. them" division is no longer defined by the polarized ideologies of the Cold War, but rather by a struggle for resources framed by religious, ethnic, and national distinctions often defined and enforced through violence. Artists of every discipline have begun to express this shift in our world view; their productions coexist with artistic expressions that work with remnants of the memory of traumatic events of the past century. Thus, decades after the fall of the military regimes in South America and the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, literary fiction from these areas is still representing and questioning the legal, social, and personal processes that developed during the repressive regimes and in response to each nation's transition to democracy.

This dissertation examines not only how post-dictatorship fiction approaches historically traumatic events, but also what those texts contribute to our collective memory and to our understanding of traumatic recent pasts. This encompasses the individual, as well as the social, dimensions of coming to terms with the trauma caused by the violation of human rights at a national level. My research is guided by two kinds of questions. The first is generic: I ask about the form and function of narration: How do the act of narrating and the narrative choices intervene in processes of memory, recovery from trauma, and the pursuit of justice? In other words, how does narration operate in addressing amnesia, imagining the possibility of justice, and envisioning the prospect of reconciliation at the national, familial, and personal levels? The second kind of question addresses historical events and their social and political aftereffects: How are the injuries

caused by state terror on persons and collectives represented in literature? How do individuals reconstruct lives and identities truncated by the horror imposed by the state? Post-dictatorship social conditions such as personal and national amnesia are intertwined with political and institutional procedures, such as unofficial politics of remembering and forgetting, and the official establishment of truth (and sometimes reconciliation) commissions (TCs). Both types of mechanisms—the subjective and the political-institutional—are employed by societies to settle accounts with the past. Narration in the form of legal testimony, memoir, historical account, and fiction, is one avenue for accomplishing this resolution, as the works analyzed in this dissertation illustrate.

My corpus consists of five novels—chosen because each provides a different perspective that brings to the forefront connections between personal experiences and national trauma. These five novels offer a 21st century perspective of events that occurred in the previous century (and, in three cases, in the previous generation) in order to comment on the present. The South African experience of apartheid and its aftershocks is taken up in two novels: Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* (2004), in the form of a personal memoir of a man unable to forget; and *Red Dust* (2000), where Gillian Slovo works through the problem of the undecidability of memory distorted by torture. The Chilean dictatorship, its abuses, and its long-reaching effects are addressed in Carlos Franz's *El desierto* (2005; *The Absent Sea*, 2011) by interpellating today's young adults, and explaining the traumatic past from the perspective of the older generation. Franz's novel also makes explicit the topic of collaboration with the oppressor. Argentines' experience of state terror across generations is central to both María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* [Mother Tongue] (2010) and Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres*

sigue subiendo en la lluvia (2011; *My Fathers' Ghost is Climbing in the Rain*, 2013).

While both novels focus on the effects of the terror of the latest dictatorship on the younger generation, they take different perspectives. Andruetto's novel describes the infrequently explored phenomenon of *insilio* (hiding inside the country for long periods to avoid capture by state agents, torture, and likely death) and the individual and family sacrifices entailed by this option. Pron's protagonist, on the other hand, recovers the memory of a less spectacular (i.e., normalized) condition of fear, but whose deeper and more complex psychic scars are still felt in the present.

While there are evident differences between the two subcontinents that are the object of my study, certain commonalities are worth examining in order to delineate structures (political, social, economic) that allow or promote the occurrence of systems that methodically violate citizens' human rights. My research suggests that literatures from distant and distinct societies share common strategies to respond to national trauma. Throughout this dissertation I look at historical events and societal conditions inasmuch as they help to establish and understand connections in my sample of fictional works from South Africa, Argentina, and Chile. While there are important cultural and historical differences between the two latter countries that will emerge in the course of this study, it is useful to aggregate them as "Latin American Southern Cone"¹ when making comparisons to South Africa—especially in reference to the types of societies and authoritarian regimes with which this study is concerned. My trans-Atlantic bifocal reading of history and fiction provides an understanding of the national experiences—and the literature about these experiences—as part of a system rather than as individual cases.

¹ Chile and Argentina are only part of the Southern Cone, a name for the southernmost region of South America, which always also includes Uruguay, and sometimes Paraguay and Southern Brazil.

This is valuable because it permits theoretical elaboration that is independent of specific historical facts and conditions, and which can be applied to other repressive situations and to the artistic response to abuse in other places and historical periods.

I start my reading of the novels with the hypothesis that fiction written and read historically (i.e., with special attention to the historical context of its topic, even if the work is not a historical novel²) offers a possibility of reclaiming memory and contesting the official discourse, and advances new interpretations of the past. The link between ethics, history, and literature is an instance of the mutual influences between the social sciences (especially in the area of human rights) and cultural practices. The interdisciplinary field that emerges from these connections is rooted in multiple approaches from holocaust, trauma, and postcolonial studies, and includes personal stories that respond to collective suffering. By addressing questions about the often oppositional relationships between history, memory, and literature, this comparison of novels from South Africa and the Southern Cone contributes to current research on the humanistic and literary dimensions of human rights and social memory elaborated by numerous thinkers. This dissertation relies heavily on the ideas developed by Maurice Halbwachs, Andreas Huyssen, Elizabeth Jelin, and Pierre Nora, whose contributions will be examined in the Theoretical Framework section.

The purpose of employing a comparative analysis of systems of oppression from different corners of the Global South is to make evident that fiction offers a perspective rich in texture that complements strictly historical claims to objective truth. An interdisciplinary approach to massive traumatic experience is necessary to disseminate

² According to Frye et al., a historical novel is "set in a time prior to that available to the author's direct experience" (237).

awareness and to generate empathy. This appeal to empathy is independent of geographical location and nationality; rather, my voice echoes and adds examples to the work of thinkers such as Dominick LaCapra and Sidonie Smith, who argue that we are to be interpellated as humans, regardless of birth contingencies. My conclusions apply anywhere where human rights are being violated on a massive scale—an unfortunately long roster these days, which includes places in all continents. Further research will no doubt indicate whether or not the connections I've found between South Africa and Latin America apply to other inter- and intra-continental comparisons as well.

Because this dissertation is so grounded in the relationship between literature and history, historical clarity (at least in broad strokes) is important before starting a comparison. The next section provides a concise background of the history, politics, and circumstances that gave rise to the traumatic events with which my study is concerned.

Historical and Political Background

The Cold War and Authoritarian Regimes of the Second Half of the 20th Century

Worldwide, the decades from the end of World War II to 1989 were dominated by the ideologies and politics that defined—and were defined by—the Cold War. Bearing in mind the ideological alliances and antagonisms of this period is essential to understanding why the different situations of South Africa and the Southern Cone—and the cultural manifestations responding to these situations—can be studied together. South Africa's minority-elected apartheid regime and South America's unelected military governments were aligned with the United States' anti-Communism and its National Security Doctrine. They were intent on controlling the spread of the revolutionary

potential inspired by the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban Revolutions, and by the successful anti-colonial liberation struggles in Africa. The apartheid government believed in, and disseminated the perception "of a link between Communism and the struggle against white domination" (*TRC Report II:7*). Similarly, the purpose of the 1973 military coup in Chile was explicitly to topple elected President Salvador Allende's socialist project; in Argentina the 1976 coup was allegedly aimed at finishing off what remained of leftist guerrilla forces such as Montoneros and the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) (Skidmore and Smith 96-98).

In South Africa, the social and economic structure of racialized policies that became known as apartheid was systematized after the National Party took power in 1948. Yet the system of racialization, segregation, discrimination, and exploitation was developed over centuries of European colonization since the arrival of Dutch settlers in 1652 (Thompson 33-45). In 1948, it simply became official, intensified, and more efficient. Apartheid was designed to secure the political and economic supremacy of the white population through the political exclusion and labor exploitation of non-whites. This arrangement was maintained by legislation and police violence that, as in the dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s, included detention, kidnapping, and "disappearing," which involved torture and murder. As could be expected, there was resistance to apartheid both before and after it became known by that name. A major opposition movement was reignited by the 1976 Soweto uprising—a massive protest initiated by schoolchildren resisting the imposition of Afrikaans as the language of instruction. The children's protest quickly spread throughout the country, marking the end of a relative lull in black resistance since the Sharpeville massacre in 1961 (which had

inaugurated a wave of incarceration of political leaders, including Nelson Mandela). In 1990, after a period of reforms that addressed concerns expressed through heightened insurgent activity, a transition to majority rule and the dismantling of formal apartheid were negotiated between the government and the African National Congress (ANC). This process culminated in the first democratic election in the history of South Africa, in 1994 (Thompson 187-264).

Across the South Atlantic, the Chilean and Argentine military coups in 1973 and 1976, respectively, were not isolated events. Under the aegis of the National Security Doctrine³, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia were already controlled by authoritarian regimes responding, at least in part, to revolutionary armed struggle. The context of the 1976 military coup in Argentina (the sixth in 46 years) was the turmoil unleashed after the death of President Juan Domingo Perón in 1974. The military intervention ushered in the most violent period of Argentina's 20th century. It was purportedly aimed against guerrilla activity; however, by the time the military took power, leftist guerrilla groups had already been practically annihilated by parastatal forces sponsored by the Peronist government (Skidmore and Smith 96-98). While Chile did not experience the chaos of the same level of guerrilla and counter-insurgency activity, it suffered debilitating economic problems. Salvador Allende's three-year administration was sabotaged by right-wing forces supported by the United States (Skidmore and Smith 128, 132-133), and ended violently with the 11 September 1973

³ According to this doctrine, terrorism and communism are the main enemy, and the Army is the only entity capable of controlling them; torture and other state crimes are justified to achieve the necessary physical elimination of enemies (Dussel et al. 23-24).

military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, who established a dictatorship that would last 17 years.

Whereas the specific political and social forces at play in these two countries were different, the stated objectives of the governments in the Southern Cone were similar, and were in line with the capitalist goals in the Cold War. The political agenda aimed at eliminating revolutionary elements, while reestablishing order and control by the government. Economically, the objective was to replace the import-substitution industrialization program with a neoliberal economic plan, and in general to protect the capitalist system from leftist ideologies throughout the continent (O'Donnell 406; Skidmore and Smith 56; Stern *Remembering* xx, xxiii).

The military repression in South America affected not only revolutionary militants, but the entire society, and sent thousands into exile. In the international arena, as Skidmore and Smith write, "once proud Argentina became an international pariah, along with Chile and South Africa, and its people, by habit articulate and argumentative, suffered the ignominy of silence and intimidation" (98). The historians' comment brings up another shared feature between the nations under study: state violence and the resulting citizens' fear and silence. Furthermore, there was active and material cooperation given by the Argentine and Chilean militaries to South Africa's government (Bystrom 3-4; *TRC Report II*: 28).

The similarities between the South African and the Southern Cone authoritarian regimes lie principally in their marked anti-communist and Christian discourse, which foregrounded the "internal enemy," the favoring of free markets, and military and police intervention, ostensibly to protect social values. This should not obscure an important

difference: The violence of apartheid was directed against entire *ethnic* communities for the purpose of maintaining a system of labor exploitation for the benefit of a racial minority; thus, was in the first instance exploitative, and only secondarily political, as Mahmood Mamdani has pointed out ("Diminished"59-60). The Southern Cone regimes' targeted *political* communities with the intent of disseminating terror among the entire population in order to protect capitalism against revolutionary or socialist ideologies. The result was that the state continued to allow the wealthy to reap most of the benefits of the countries' economy—precisely what Allende's government in Chile, and the leftist groups in Argentina were trying to address (the latter sometimes through violence). The neoliberal policies inaugurated during the authoritarian regimes in the 1970s and 1980s still constitute the prevailing economic paradigm in both areas today.

The End of Authoritarian Regimes and the Institution of Truth Commissions

In 1982, in the midst of rising citizen discontent and protest, the Argentine military invaded the long-claimed Malvinas (Falkland) Islands. Situated about 300 miles east of the Atlantic coast of the Patagonia and some 8,000 miles from England, the two main islands of the remote archipelago were inhabited by 1,800 English-speaking British descendants and their 600,000 sheep. The islands have been a British territory since the mid-19th century, but claimed by Argentina repeatedly since then. During the war, the inhabitants unequivocally identified with the UK, not with the invading Argentine troops. The forceful response by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the British Navy spelled a disaster for Buenos Aires's fleet and conscripts, who were ill-prepared and rapidly

demoralized.⁴ The military's gambit to boost its popularity had failed. The Junta's unity and power began to unravel, leading to a process that culminated with the 1983 election of Raúl Alfonsín (Skidmore and Smith 100-101).

Early in his presidency, Alfonsín created CONADEP (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) to investigate and report on the human rights violations perpetrated under the auspices of the military Juntas and their parastatal forces. CONADEP's report, entitled *Nunca más* (Never Again), became a best-seller and had an enormous social effect. The sheer number of confirmed victims (almost ten thousand) and the amount of gruesome details revealed by the report elicited horror and indignation, even though the practices of abduction, illegal and clandestine imprisonment, torture, and execution were widely suspected (but mostly, by definition, uncorroborated). Importantly, the testimonies submitted to CONADEP provided crucial information that was used in trials against perpetrators of abuses (Bakiner 108; Hayner "Fifteen" 604).

The justice expected from these trials was thwarted by the enormous pressure from the still-mightily armed military, which, with renewed coup threats and even one attempt, forced the new President to promulgate two controversial laws that effectively stymied the trials of the Juntas. The 1986 *Punto final* (Full Stop) law mandated the end of further prosecutions of individuals accused of political violence during the dictatorship. The *Obediencia debida* (Due Obedience) bill of 1987 stipulated that any military personnel under the rank of colonel could not be held responsible for abuses because they

⁴ There is a significant subgenre about the Malvinas war in Argentine fiction and film. See, for instance, Roberto Fogwill's *Los pichiciegos* (1983), Carlos Gamerro's *Las islas* (1998), and Bebe Kamin's film *Los chicos de la guerra* (1984). It would be interesting to compare these invariably pessimistic and bitter works to British fiction about the same war.

were following military due obedience to their superiors. The process of increasing impunity for known perpetrators of torture, disappearances, illegal imprisonment, and murder reached its apex in 1990, when President Carlos Menem pardoned all the convicted officers (Méndez 129-30). In a subsequent twist, these pardons were annulled 15 years later, and the prosecution of Argentine military repressors resumed during the administrations of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Hayner *Unspeakable* 46-47).

In Chile, democracy was reinstated by agreement after a 1989 referendum that said "No" to the continuation of Pinochet's regime. Patricio Aylwin, the first president elected after the dictatorship, established the Rettig Commission in 1990 to investigate deaths caused by military and police members that constituted violations of human rights (Ensalaco 657-60; Roniger and Sznajder 94-99; Stern *Reckoning* 91-93). In 2004, a second truth commission named after its chairman, Bishop Sergio Valech, investigated cases of torture, a violation of rights that was not considered by the previous commission (*Informe Valech*). The testimonies given to these commissions were not public, and the reports were not allowed to name perpetrators. While some trials against violators of human rights have taken place in Chile, the Rettig and Valech hearings and reports have not had a punitive effect comparable to that of their Argentine counterpart, or the social impact of the South African TRC (Bakiner 87-173; Gutiérrez-Mouat 58).

In 1995, the newly elected South African government led by Nelson Mandela promptly established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which took into consideration the experiences of Argentina's CONADEP and Chile's Rettig Commission. The TRC's mandate was to uncover human rights violations from 1960 to 1994, to

publicly acknowledge the suffering in order to help restore the victims' dignity, to work towards national reconciliation, and to grant amnesty to perpetrators in exchange for full disclosure. The TRC hearings were unprecedented in many ways, and the institution—and especially its chairman, Archbishop Desmond Tutu—became world-famous celebrities. Designed as part of the democratic and participatory reconstruction of national history, the TRC was characterized by the transparency of its hearings (many of which were public and intensely broadcast in the media), its emphasis on the healing effects of storytelling and giving testimony, and "a radically new kind of justice" (Phelps 9). Through the TRC, South Africa sought restorative—as opposed to retributive—justice; in other words, the efforts of the Commission were aimed at affirming the dignity of victims and understanding what happened and why, rather than at punishment or revenge. This is a conceptualization of justice closely associated with the need to reconstruct society (Rotberg "Truth Commissions" 3, 11; Rotberg and Thompson 159). Among the several unique features of the South African TRC is the explicit place for *ubuntu*, "the mainspring of the African humanist world-view, an attitude of tolerance and empathy grounded in the interdependence of the individual and the collective [. . .]: 'A person is a person through other people'" (Simpson 248 n. 3). This principle stimulated an unexpectedly peaceful and productive recovery of truth. The legitimacy of South Africa's new dispensation was based, at least in part, on acknowledging the past and the rights violations. Like CONADEP and the Rettig Commission, the TRC "employed a rhetoric of truth-telling to promote catharsis and healing" (Ross 235), but in contrast to the Chilean commission—which was not allowed

to name perpetrators and had no effect on the military's self-declared amnesty—the TRC did name names and demanded truth in exchange for amnesty.

The TRC was tasked with promoting national unity, and it linked truth to reconciliation by arguing that knowing the truth is necessary for creating a new, unified, national identity. The traumatized nation's healing would allegedly be achieved by establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature, and extent of the gross violations of human rights between 1960 and 1994, and by establishing the fate of victims and restoring their dignity through the narration of their accounts and devising reparations. The process would finally issue a report that included recommendations to prevent future human rights violations (*TRC Report I*: 48-53). The controversial decision to consider granting amnesty in exchange for full disclosure was a way to generate more information about gross human rights violations during apartheid. The perpetrators' confessions would make amnesia and denial more difficult, and the process of applying for amnesty and publicly acknowledging one's actions⁵ was, according to many, indispensable to prevent total chaos in the country (Graham 32).

Important criticisms have been leveled at the TRC. The faults found include that a TC is a poor substitute for justice (defined as criminal prosecution, i.e., retributive) (Phelps 9; Rotberg 8); that its narrow mandate ignored some categories of human rights violations (Adam and Adam 33; Bundy 18-19; Graham 32); that the assumption that revelation equals healing is incorrect (Adam and Adam 37; Dawes 395); that its theological perspective affects its credibility (Adam and Adam 33; Holiday 55-56; Robins 129). A serious and persistent criticism of the TRC is that its focus is on

⁵ Asking for forgiveness was encouraged but not required to receive amnesty.

individual victims and perpetrators, and only on gross human rights abuses committed with political motivation; this focus excludes from the discussion the systematic racial structural violence of apartheid itself, including its politics of dispossession and exploitation (Adam and Adam 33; Attwell and Harlow 2; Mamdani "Diminished" 60; Mamdani "Truth" 181, Nolan 147; Posel and Simpson 5-6). Furthermore, as Chapter IV discusses, many South Africans have become disappointed with the unrealized promised material and social benefits. Even TRC Chairman Tutu has expressed dissatisfaction with his own commission's results, characterizing the process as yielding "'ungenerous' reparations, unfair treatment of victims, amnesties granted too quickly, failure to reveal the truth: neither truth nor reconciliation were achieved" (qtd. Ross 236).

The political conditions that determined how the authoritarian regimes ended, and the features of the transitions in which the TCs were created, varied from country to country. These different circumstances determined the TCs' different mandates, procedures, outcomes, and effect on their respective populations, as Bakiner explains, and, I suggest, include writers' responses. Thus, in South Africa—where the TRC were public and widely broadcast—writers have taken up the truth and reconciliation topic, but this subject is much less visible in South American fiction⁶; I surmise that this difference may be the result of the closed-door policy of their commissions, which made the narrative processes less present in the Southern Cone than they were in South Africa. In Chapter I, I describe Onur Bakiner's more detailed explanation for this difference.

Theoretical Framework

⁶ The best-selling success of *Nunca más* notwithstanding,

While the historical background is necessary for a full comprehension and analysis of each of my selected fictional works, the theoretical framework provides the necessary scholarly glue that connects them for proper comparison. There are two distinct but related perspectives from which to make an analytical reading of my chosen novels: theories of collective memory, and theories of human rights in literature.

Memory, History, and Narrative

The tense relationship between history and fictional literature is evident in an equivocation that sometimes occurs in Spanish, where the term *historia* means both "history" and "story," denoting facts as well as fiction. Both meanings of *historia* refer to narratives with a beginning, a middle, and an end, regardless of whether they are factual or not, as South African novelist André Brink observes in "Stories of History." In another piece, Brink writes that, in relation to historical events, art "attempt[s] to heighten the perception of that experience and intensify its texture [. . .] or, at the very least, to transform the experience [. . .] into something that can be grasped by the imagination in order to guard against its repetition" ("Interrogating" 20). Brink thus advocates for the role of literature in remembering and understanding the past, a function that operates both at the individual level (for the writer), and at the collective level (for the readership).

The first concept underlying my study of various fictional and nonfictional *historias* is memory—especially historical and collective. The relevance of remembering is that society has an obligation to take responsibility for what happened in its midst, to learn the lessons, and to guard against the reiteration of the damaging events. Yet keeping memory alive is also a source of tension between, on the one hand, those who insist on

the collective's need and right to know and, on the other hand, large sectors' indifference to massive trauma (an indifference often dictated by the aspiration to reach national unity—as if the dictum "forgive and forget" should or could apply to entire nations). Indeed, reconciliation often involves amnesia and its legal sibling, amnesty, and can lead to a sense that injustice has not been redressed.

Maurice Halbwachs, who developed the notion of collective memory in his book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (first published in 1925, and translated and edited by Lewis Coser as *On Collective Memory*), offers a flexible and pragmatic perspective. Halbwachs posits two important ideas: that social memory is constructed rather than spontaneous, and that an absolute and permanent memory is not viable. Halbwachs explains how collective memory works and why it is important, even (or perhaps, especially) for those who were not present at the events being narrated. His view is that different elements of society are interdependent; as he describes in *On Collective Memory*, an individual's understanding is strongly linked to his or her group's consciousness and recollections, even if that individual did not experience the events remembered by the group. Conversely, the group's understanding of the past depends on individuals who remember it. But rather than a *post-hoc* constructed combination of individual memories inserting themselves onto an empty canvas, social memory is an instrument that serves "to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (Coser 40). This idea is based on Halbwachs's belief that individuals and groups are connected within a system of ideas.

Halbwachs's sociological conceptualization of collective memory is relevant because it represents a departure from the theories of memory used in psychoanalysis,

extending memory from the personal to the social realm of experience. Beyond individual memory, but dependent on it, there is group memory, to which the individual's identity is strongly linked—since in order to remember, the person needs the group as a context. At the same time, for collective memory to exist, there must be individual consciousness of the past. For Halbwachs, memory is socially constructed, relates to a group, is presentist (present-oriented) and reconstructive rather than retrieving of the past: "[T]he past does not recur as such, [. . .] the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (Coser 39-40). Current critics such as Elizabeth Jelin and Steve Stern add that memory is essential for understanding historical meaning and for identity. But for historical memory to persist, some kind of written or graphic record is necessary, and is used to keep a memory alive through collective commemorations. In other words, historical events are not merely remembered directly by the individual, but rather are interpreted, reconstructed, and re-presented by formal or informal social institutions. The passage from the individual to the group is how historical memory takes the form of what Pierre Nora has termed *lieux de mémoire*.

For Nora, memory sites—fixed external manifestations of collective remembered experience—are deliberate attempts to preserve memory in a physical manifestation. They are places and objects that condense or symbolize events that are part of the social identity, such as museums, monuments, or texts that remind the public of a date, a period, a struggle, or an event. In the context of this study, one example of *lieu de mémoire* is the Museo de la Memoria, housed within the Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (Navy School of Mechanics) in Buenos Aires, an infamous site of clandestine detention, torture, and execution, used during the 1976-83 dictatorship. The museum explicitly

states its conceptualization of history as open, and as constantly and collectively being constructed (Espacio Memoria). A less physically massive, but not necessarily less present, structure of memory is what Stern has called "memory knots": "specific social groups, networks, and leaders who are sufficiently motivated to organize and insist on memory [. . .]. They interrupt a more unthinking and habitual life, they demand that people construct bridges between their personal imaginary and loose personal experiences on the one hand, and a more collective and emblematic imaginary on the other" (*Remembering* 120). The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo are such a knot. From 1977 to 2006, they marched every Thursday in Buenos Aires's most historically and politically symbolic square, demanding to know the fate of their disappeared children (Skidmore and Smith 65, 99). This increasingly vocal group greatly irked the military and subsequent democratic governments with their demands for justice, while not letting the common citizen forget their plight. Works of literature can also serve as sites or knots of memory, and are thus important in the confluence of ethics and aesthetics and of past and present. The narrative dimension of memory constitutes the intersection between past (the remembered event), present (the moment of recollection and narration), and future (when it is read). Or, as Nora writes, "by defining the relation to the past, [memory] shapes the future" (11).

The mental retention and interpretation of what has occurred to one personally and to one's society is an essential component of identity and of the process of seeking knowledge. Steve J. Stern, a historian of the Chilean transition, elaborates a typology of memory that acknowledges both the social and the individual aspects of memory of national events. He distinguishes two types of memory: emblematic and loose.

Emblematic memory is "a socially influential framework of meaning drawn from experience" (*Reckoning* 10); this is a discursive structure, not content-specific. Loose memory, on the other hand, is "a realm of personal knowledge that can remain rather private" (*Reckoning* 10), and is content-specific. Stern identifies four emblematic memory frameworks constructed in Chile since the 1973 coup: salvation (which recalls the chaos of Allende's government and sees the military coup as saving the nation); unresolved cruel rupture (held by those affected directly and persistently by state violence); persecution and awakening (for those who recall the years of dictatorial repression as a period when they discovered the collapse of democratic rights and which served as a test of their social commitments); and a closed box of memories best buried in order to move on (*Remembering* 104-11). Stern's typology of frameworks covers the main political ideologies voiced in Chilean society after the 1973 coup. These frameworks of thought apply to large groups, but do not indicate the contents of memories; they are general modes of thinking and remembering the dictatorship, not specific ideas or opinions. The contents (loose memory) are individual; they are the stories of particular lives and lend themselves to the function of grounding emblematic memory as reality at a public level (in addition to providing material for fictional and testimonial literature). Importantly, the culture of memory in Latin America is a way to counter the politics of amnesia, amnesty, reconciliation, and silencing fomented during the transitions (Huysen 15).

Halbwachs writes not only about remembering but also about social forgetting. He argues that "society tends to erase from its memory all that might separate individuals or that might distance groups from each other. It is also why society, in each period,

rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium" (Coser 182-83). While Halbwachs accepts unproblematically the necessity of the processes of erasure of memory at a social level, cultural critic Nelly Richard is very judgmental of the official and unofficial attempts to erase recent trauma from the social conscience in Chile. She faults the post-Pinochet administrations for ignoring parts of the national memory with the intention of creating an image of consensus, in order to protect the fragile negotiated transition. For Richard, this consensus is a myth rooted in the free-market ideology to foment complacent consumerism, part and parcel of the liberal economic ideology established by the Pinochet regime. Pinochet's economic policies were continued and strengthened during the transition; their success requires, according to Richard, forgetting the traumatic past. As Jean Franco explains, Chile's reconciliation "depended on overlooking the crimes committed by the military. The amnesty decreed by Pinochet before he left the government and the limitations placed on the [Rettig and Valech reports], which could not name perpetrators, foreclosed a thorough examination of the past" (188). Thus, in the view of some critics, Chilean society has not quite faced the atrocities committed in its name and in the name of freedom. While Richard and Franco are, in my opinion, rightly outraged, this erasure is consistent with Halbwachs's ideas of how society seeks an equilibrium in order to function.

The fraught association between memory, forgetting, and power suggests that the past is not just a personal issue to be analyzed only in psychoanalytic terms, but that it is also a political issue. Personally and socially, the mental retention of what has occurred during specific eras is an essential component of identity. Focusing on the Argentine

traumatic experience of the latest dictatorship, Elizabeth Jelin gives narrative a privileged place to "bestow meaning to the past" (16). Like many other thinkers—such as Harlow, Huyssen, Santayana, and Todorov—Jelin attributes to memory a political role: to prevent repetition of atrocities, to denounce violations of human rights, and to pay tribute to the victims. Similarly, social identity has political ramifications because collective memory can be a weapon in the political struggles of any ideology. On a pragmatic note, as Franco writes, the recollection of atrocity "is not simply available but is constituted *post hoc* with the aim not only of clarifying the fate of the disappeared but of documenting a crime" (203). The use of testimonies submitted to CONADEP in Argentina's trials of the Juntas is an example of this procedure (Bakiner 108; Hayner "Fifteen" 604).

Historical events are not merely remembered directly by the individual, but rather interpreted by social institutions, and in this sense collective and historical memories are interdependent and recombinant. They are even erasable, according to Halbwachs, if necessary to maintain social balance (Cosser 182-83). Truth commissions (especially the South African TRC, which has been criticized for subordinating truth and justice to peace and reconciliation [Attwell and Harlow 2; Graham 32; Rotberg 14]) are paradigmatic of this procedure, and are often critiqued through works of fiction⁷.

The idea that collective memory is a constructive process rather than one of retrieval bears relation to the much newer concept of postmemory elaborated by Marianne Hirsch. For this critic, recollections of traumatic events persist in the collective and mark the lives of those who were not there to experience them, but who reconstruct their parents' past in an effort to construct their own identities. In *The Generation of*

⁷ See, for example, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1990) and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001), in addition to Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, discussed here.

Postmemory, Hirsch argues that memories of traumatic events live on to mark the lives of those who were not present at the momentous event, and that these postmemories are always traumatic and always mediated by images, objects, or stories passed down within the family and the culture at large. She contends that "memory *can* be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event" (3, emphasis in the original), but she stops short of asserting that we can *remember* what we have not experienced; rather, she writes that the experiences were transmitted "so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right" (5, emphasis in the original). While the concept of postmemory is mostly applied to the children of Holocaust victims, it can be used productively to study the social memory of other national or ethnic traumatic experiences, such as slavery, apartheid, and other oppressive regimes like the South American dictatorships (Nouzeilles; Serpente). Even if Hirsch does not fully explain the mechanism of transgenerational transmission of memory and how this differs from cultural transmission, the concept of postmemory is valuable for analyzing the relationship of the younger generation to their traumatic national or familial history, as the two Argentine novels studied here illustrate.

Hirsch is correct in asserting that memories of traumatic events persist in the collectivity and even mark the lives of those who were not there to experience them but who reconstruct their ancestors' past in an effort to construct their own identities. The protagonists of María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* undergo this process of reconstruction and construction by delving deeply into their parents' past and recognizing how it affected the next generation; they emerge having achieved a more balanced and integrated identity

than they had at the beginning of the novels. The concept of postmemory provides a future dimension absent from Halbwachs's notion of collective memory. For him, memory ends with the death of the individual who remembers, and his or her community: "to the extent that the dead retreat into the past, this is not because the material measure of time that separates them from us lengthens; it is because nothing remains of the group in which they passed their lives" (Coser 53). The concept of postmemory allows us to work with memory, even if those who were involved or witnessed the events have passed on.

The two novels by Andruetto and Pron mentioned above are about Argentina's dictatorial experience; this is not to say, however, that the authors are consciously applying Hirsch's theory to their art. Moreover, Argentine literary and cultural critic Beatriz Sarlo finds fault with Hirsch's concept of postmemory, characterizing it as "theoretical inflation" and a category whose necessity remains to be proved. Sarlo objects to the use of the concept because of its inadequate specificity and distinctiveness from other kinds of memory and experience, and because it presupposes trauma as a requirement for memory (*Tiempo pasado* 127-34). Huyssen, while acknowledging that historical trauma is part of our explorations of memory, also disapproves of collapsing memory into trauma. Sarlo's critique of the memory culture is part of her wider attack on what she calls the "subjective turn" of cultural studies—that is, the importance granted in academic research to the subjective and the personal, and the fallacy of equating first-person testimony with truth, without the rigorous scrutiny applied to other academic discourses, and therefore, at the expense of sound theory. Franco also is critical of the practice of equating testimony and nonfiction with truth. In contraposition to the subjective turn is the "affective turn" in cultural studies, which understands subjectivity

in relation to present bodily perception rather than to the past, and intends to "break with the tyranny of representational memory" (Callard and Papoulias 248). Different aspects of all these theories developed from the 1920s (Halbwachs's first publication about collective memory) to the 2010s are useful for analyzing both the works of fiction at the core of this dissertation, and the social and historical contexts of those novels.

In "The Abuses of Memory," Tzvetan Todorov defines two kinds of memory⁸: the first he calls literal memory, which establishes a continuity between past and present; by submitting the present to the past, this kind of memory is used to "understand new situations with different agents" (14). Todorov's second kind of memory, which he calls exemplary, permits learning lessons from the past; this memory has a political dimension because it goes beyond understanding and "becomes a principle of action for the present" (14). It emphasizes resemblance (or difference) rather than contiguity, i.e., it is comparative; it uses the past to illuminate the present, or aims at justice through the lessons of the past: "Justice is born in effect from the generalization of the particular offense" (15). Unlike literal memory, which tends to be contemplative, the past is put to the service of the present and of justice. My study is concerned with the literary representations of the social and political ramifications of memory; thus, as Todorov states, "the right to recover the past becomes a duty: that of witnessing" (9) momentous and tragic events. This is a link between theories of memory and those that constitute the second theoretical framework of my study.

⁸ I am fully aware that I have already mentioned several different typologies of memory. This is an effect of what Andreas Huyssen has called the "explosion" or "hypertrophy of memory". There is some overlap in these classifications, and even at the risk of redundancy, I only mention the ones that I find most helpful for my analysis.

Human Rights and Literature

Human rights is the second theoretical area on which this dissertation is based. By examining the interactions between human rights and literature, I intend to highlight how the issues of rights violations and redress are taken up in literary fiction. As Ricardo Gutiérrez-Mouat observes, the language of human rights has become the privileged medium of expression of social justice for a large part of the world. The humanities, including literary studies, are interested in human rights as political and philosophical practices that shape their objects of study. I am in agreement with Huysen's opinion that the discourse of human rights is more useful than the psychoanalytic view of memory to analyze the intersections of politics, history, and memory—and thus for the literary analysis of my chosen period. I do not mean to minimize the personal suffering visited on direct and indirect victims by imprisonment, torture, and death. Rather, I wish to focus on the social effects of oppression at a national level; concepts of human rights and of collective memory are better suited than Freudian theory to address dynamics within social systems.

In *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law*, Joseph Slaughter explains how literature and human rights frameworks produce meaning in and through each other. He sees a parallel between the discourse of human rights and the discourse of the *Bildungsroman*: in both, an individual is the agent of a narratable plot, and is incorporated into a larger community. Another way to put it is that literature and human rights law are mutually reinforcing producers of the contemporary consensus on human rights. Slaughter also argues that violations of individual rights harm not only individual victims, but also the society of which they are part, and thus a victim is "an

instance of a racialized, ethnicized, nationalized" (161) community. This process may thus have the paradoxical effect of dehumanizing victims by making them a symbol of an actual group, as Sashi Thandra notes.

In his study of literature in the transition periods of South Africa and Argentina, Oscar Hemer concludes that literature is a means for social change, an echo of Barbara Harlow's assurance that literature and poets have a role in the "the struggle alongside the gun, the pamphlet, and the diplomatic delegation" (xvii). Hemer suggests that literature fulfills this role through the reactive process of examining history, and the proactive stance of interrogating it. This conclusion is in agreement with Francine Masiello's more general argument that literature, among other cultural practices, invites readers to make the necessary articulations for the practice of politics (13). It also concurs with Saúl Sosnowski's suggestion that literature can be thought of as an instrument used to see, and not only to be seen ("*literatura para ver y no solamente para ser vista*") (50). Despite her objections to the subjective turn of cultural studies, Sarlo acknowledges that, even though literature does not solve all problems, the literary narrator thinks from outside the experience, showing that humans can not just suffer the nightmare, but may also appropriate it. The narration of experience can expose, record, memorialize, and be a model. The mediation of memory between the past and the future both acknowledges debts to the dead and a duty to the next generations; in this way, literature is used "to tell stories, to constitute community, to negotiate identities, to imagine worlds, to relate to one another ethically, to survive, and to imagine a future" (Smith 571). In other words, narrative can have an ethical and political function—again an echo of Harlow.

Testimony—in both its legal and literary variants—is, along with fiction, a vehicle for the advancement of human rights claims, as Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith assert. Additionally, fiction can show vividly the intersections between ethical and aesthetic aspects of culture. As Schaffer and Smith, Martha Minow, and Teresa Godwin Phelps argue, and as the South African TRC hearings demonstrated, much of the human rights work depends on storytelling for the purposes of giving testimony and for catharsis and healing—at both the individual and the collective levels.

Cultural expressions of the pleas for human rights and for the recuperation and preservation of collective memory in the Americas date from more than two centuries ago, and include slave narratives, pulpit oratory for civil rights in the U.S., *testimonios* of indigenous peoples (McClennen and Slaughter 7) and, more recently and related to my research, the marches of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, as well as anti-apartheid freedom songs. The literary expressions explored in this dissertation signal specifically the function of literature for understanding post-repression societies that suffered gross violations of human rights. The truth commissions, established by governments newly elected after authoritarian regimes, suggest an intersection between human rights and literature. This occurs in part because narration in the form of testimony is central to the process through which truth is reached in these instances, as Joseph Slaughter claims, and the South African TRC report abundantly illustrates and asserts: "By telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multilayered experiences of the South African story. These personal truths were communicated to the broader public by the media. In the (South) African context, where value continues to be attached to oral tradition, the process of story telling was particularly important" (*TRC Report I:112*). TCs

ask of victims, witnesses, and sometimes perpetrators, an account of the violence in order to acknowledge the experience, to permit the collective to learn and prevent a recurrence of the atrocities, and to prevent history from being lost (and therefore repeated) or re-written. TC procedures are an instrument with which to fulfill the state's obligation to investigate and disclose human rights violations, but their impact extends outside the official institutions and proceedings. To be sure, TC processes contain paradoxes and questionable assumptions regarding the relationships between memory, truth, justice, reconciliation, and healing. These issues have been extensively analyzed and weighed, especially in South Africa by critics such as Adam and Adam, Attwell and Harlow, Bundy, Dawes, Graham, Holiday, Hunter-Gault, Krog, Mamdani, Nolan, Nuttal and Coetzee, Posel and Simpson, Robins, and Rotberg and Thompson. While TCs' findings are often partial and sometimes controversial⁹, some investigations and reports have activated important social dialogues, have been instrumental in legal proceedings against perpetrators, and—being sensitive to, and productive of, literary forms—have sometimes prompted imaginative literature¹⁰.

If the goals of political fiction are, as Nick Mansfield writes, "*to remember, to reveal, to remind, and to resolve*" (203, emphasis in the original), then the relationship

⁹ For instance, the "theory of the two demons" has plagued the Chair of CONADEP, Ernesto Sabato, who began his prologue to the first edition of *Nunca más* thus: "During the 1970s, Argentina was torn by terror from both the extreme right and the far left," a phrase interpreted by many, especially those who had been victims of state terror, as an endorsement of the "theory of the two demons" (the state and the guerrillas) that seemed to justify military repression. This view currently has little traction in Argentina because it presupposes the guilt of the disappeared (regardless of whether or not they were guerrillas), justifies state terror, and implies that the so-called war was legitimate, even if "dirty." In fact, a new prologue was written for the 2006 edition (to mark the 30th anniversary of the coup), and it makes no allusion to the two demons. See Drucaroff "Fue por algo."

¹⁰ Examples outside of the regions studied here are the novels by Horacio Castellanos Moya, *Insensatez* (2004) and Rodrigo Rey Rosa, *El material humano* (2009), both of which take on the Central American experience of military repressive violence and its aftermath, including TCs. See also Michael Ondaadje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000), about the multilateral violation of human rights during the civil war in Sri Lanka in the 1980s and 1990s.

between literature and human rights becomes clear: fiction, like testimony, can accomplish the goals mentioned by Mansfield as they apply to the violation of human rights. My sample bears this out. Each novel provides a different point of view and experience, and each is related in one way or another to the violation of human rights and its remembrance, revelation, reminding, and at least partial resolution. One of the connecting lines between these disparate novels is that subjugation to state terror brings—directly or indirectly—catastrophic emotional (as well as physical) effects, even to those who are not direct victims; thus the novels uphold the value of human rights as a requirement for personal and social wholeness. In these texts, the violation of rights occurs in different contexts and assumes different forms, such as illegal imprisonment and torture in *Red Dust* and *El desierto*, internal exile in *Lengua madre*, debilitating fear in *El espíritu*. This does not detract from the shared implicit argument for safeguarding rights: that the principles of human rights are the same in all cases because they are universal principles.

In the chapters that follow I examine manners in which examples of fiction from South Africa and the Southern Cone, by recovering memory and demanding justice, accomplish ethical and political functions, including those outlined by Harlow, Hemer, and Mansfield. Even though the novels show the inevitable impurity of memory and the imperfection of justice, the texts are nonetheless powerful reminders of the necessity of both, and they add an aesthetic and subjective dimension to the more objective historical and journalistic accounts.

Chapter I, "Narrating Memory," examines how traumatic experiences are recreated in fiction by the generation that came of age after the latest repressive period.

Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* and Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* use conventional narrative modes (a memoir format and a courtroom drama, respectively) to explore issues of memory and justice in the New South Africa. In contrast to these formally conventional narratives, the South American novels—Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, and Carlos Franz's *El desierto*—employ unusual formats, hybrid genres, and incorporate non-literary and even non-verbal materials to tell their *historias* and recover forgotten experiences and muddled identities. This chapter addresses questions about the relationship between recollection and story/history, and how narrative represents and teases out traumatic memory.

In four of the five novels in my sample, a protagonist reluctantly comes back to his or her country of origin from voluntary expatriation. Chapter II, "From Exile to Nomadism," analyzes different implications of exile and return, and examines how the novels use the figure of the returning exile or expatriate to articulate a critique of their nations' democratic transition from a knowledgeable, cosmopolitan outsider's point of view.

All five novels comment on the shortcomings of the administration of justice in post-authoritarian countries. In Chapter III, "Imperfect Justice," I explore the tensions and imbalances between memory and versions of truth, the possibility of justice, the plausibility of reconciliation, and how these concerns shape individuals in post-dictatorship societies.

In contrast to the heroic characters deployed in the literature created in the spirit of resistance during the era of state repression, such as André Brink's *A Dry White Season*

(1979), Sipho Sepamla's *A Ride in the Whirlwind* (1981), or Marta Traba's *Conversación al Sur* (1981; *Mothers and Shadows*, 1986), fiction produced between the mid-1990s and the end of the first decade of the 21st century gives voice to middle-class, regular folks' experiences. The final chapter of my dissertation, "Legacies of Authoritarian Rule," examines how the preoccupations surrounding the political transitions and economic transformations in the Southern Cone and South Africa are represented from ordinary people's perspective. It specifically looks at the disappointment induced by unfulfilled promises made in the early stages of the transitions—both in terms of material improvement and equality, and in terms of justice.

Through these chapters I argue that literature of post-authoritarian societies (independently from the particularities of each case) has assumed responsibility for remembering history in order to prevent the repetition of atrocities, and that fiction writers assume both the right and the responsibility to question the discourses pronounced by official entities and reproduced by the media. This necessary probing attitude gives voice to those who are silent in society and in government, and prods the memory and the conscience of others. The works examined here also are eloquent examples of the interweaving of fictional text and historical context.

Chapter I: Narrating Memory

In the aftermath of widespread violence, such as that sustained in the second half of the 20th century during South Africa's apartheid regime and the Southern Cone military dictatorships, the narration of memories helps to comprehend both history and subjective experiences. Rather than to indulge in a nostalgic dwelling in the past, the purpose of writing and studying trauma narratives is to glean the implications of past experience for the present. To that end, this chapter examines the relationship between history, memory, and narration by investigating the role of literary representation in the production of collective memory, and the manner in which narrative techniques function as a rhetorical device to convey the message of the text and create meaning.

Fiction has the social function of intervening in our understanding and construction of reality—both past and present. As South African writer and literary scholar André Brink puts it, literature "attempt[s] to heighten the perception of [. . .] experience and intensify its texture [. . .] or, at the very least, to transform the experience [. . .] into something that can be grasped by the imagination in order to guard against its repetition" ("Interrogating" 20). Brink's statement, like his fiction, asserts a social and political function for literature: that of interpreting history and putting this knowledge to use for social and political causes, such as abolishing and preventing the repetition of unjust regimes like his own country's apartheid. Andrés Avellaneda goes even farther when he suggests a complete inversion of the conventional idea that conceives the historical datum as the origin of literary representation. History, according to Avellaneda, is not the origin of literature, but rather literature *creates* the language with which history can be interrogated. Within the social sciences there is resistance to granting literature a

privileged position for understanding historical and social phenomena. Rosemary Jolly describes this disciplinary attitude as "conceptual 'apartheid' between representations of violence in narrative form and the acts of violence to which those narratives refer" (6). The following analysis of the narrativization of memory in five novels intends to relax this non-productive separation by showing the interplay between memory and its verbalization in fiction—that is, the interweaving of history and story. These two terms are, after all, not distant nor necessarily antagonistic modes of inquiry; in fact, the two words are etymologically related: the Latin *historia*, from which both "story" and "history" derive, meant both fictional narrative and the account of actual past events—a double meaning that survives in the Spanish term *historia*, but not in English, where story and history often denote opposite meanings.

Like fictional literature, individual memory has been questioned on the basis of its partiality, subjectivity, and potentiality for distortion; however, more objective (i.e., verifiable) accounts of history can also introduce their own omissions and biases. Over the past decades we have seen what has been variously called a hypertrophy, explosion, surfeit, or boom of memory (Huyssen 3-9; Nora 9; Cerruti 22), which constitutes a response to the atrocities committed by human beings against other human beings, especially in the 20th century. The theories of collective memory are described in this dissertation's Introduction; in this chapter I only wish to point out that George Santayana's formulation, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," is a recurring notion that has inspired collective—although by no means universal—actions to keep alive traumatic memories as a preventive of reiteration. Santayana's dictum is at the center of Holocaust studies and resurfaces in the principles of the truth

commissions (TCs) established in the post-dictatorship Southern Cone countries and post-apartheid South Africa. The admonition to remember in order to not repeat is also imprinted in the name of Argentina's CONADEP (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas [National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons]) report: *Nunca más* (Never Again). This injunction and its terse formulation has been replicated by many social justice organizations around the globe, including in Uruguay, Colombia, and Guatemala. A corollary to the *Nunca más* demand is that amnesia—as well as its close relative, amnesty—is linked to injustice and the fear of repetition. TCs have attempted to solve this discursively by privileging truth over justice (as signaled by the generic name, truth commission) or promoting their truth-finding mandate as the best path to justice.

The primary texts examined in this dissertation—published several years after the institution or reinstitution of democratic governments in South Africa, Chile, and Argentina—illustrate important facets of the interaction between memory and narration. Works published after 2000 were chosen in order to go beyond protest and resistance literature written with urgent, clear, and present political intent in the thick of the struggles; instead, I focus on novels that remember and remind, and that see those struggles from a perspective granted by the passage of time, the official discourses of the democratic transitions and their contestation, and the doings and undoings of memory. The novels studied here—Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* (South Africa, 2004), Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* (South Africa, 2000), María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* [Mother Tongue] (Argentina, 2010), Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* (Argentina, 2011; *My Fathers' Ghost is Climbing in the*

Rain, 2013), and Carlos Franz's *El desierto* (Chile, 2005; *The Absent Sea*, 2011)—narrate traumatic experiences during periods of political repression, or the recollection and reconstruction of such experience. Each novel constitutes a singular gesture to the preservation of memory and against injustice, and explores how state violence causes trauma directly to its victims and the society around them, or indirectly to the victims' descendants. These works also illustrate the different ways in which fiction negotiates experience and its recall at the personal and social levels. The novels suggest that the recasting of events—either excessively or barely remembered, repressed, and even not personally experienced at all—is a necessary step toward the formation of the individual and communal self. Thus, the novels signal that one function of narration and memory is the reconstruction and development of identity. Through the characters' own and/or the previous generation's memories, stories, archives, and narrations, all these novels explore the reconstruction of truth and identity, and the manner in which the now adult children of victims and perpetrators remember their parents' experiences of oppression. All the novels reach the conclusion that the narration of memory is crucial for personal or national identity formation. Besides directly addressing the sometimes impossible task of gaining access to memory and disclosing past events, some of the novels ponder the implications of truth and its public or private revelation. Somewhat surprisingly, these implications are not always liberatory. For Eprile's protagonist, for instance, speaking out his memories is a matter of justice, but for Slovo's character Alex Mpondo, the recollection and enunciation of past events is frightening and re-traumatizing.

I have observed a difference between novels of each side of the Atlantic: the emphasis on either memory or justice. While the three South American novels highlight

the imperfect accessibility of memory, the two South African texts put an emphasis on questioning justice, especially in reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC and its report have inspired numerous secondary works—including legal, sociological, and political analyses—as well as artistic representations in the form of memoirs, novels, poetry, drama, film, and visual art¹¹. In contrast, the Southern Cone TCs have inspired fewer artistic renderings. In his comparative analysis of TCs, political scientist Onur Bakiner offers a theory from which I draw in order to explain the differences I've observed. Bakiner asks why some TCs have little social effects but significant political impact, while others have little political impact, but a greater social mobilization potential. He posits that the more control the decision makers (such as the government) have on the design of the TC, the greater will the TC's direct political impact be (in the form of implementation of its recommendations, for instance), but the indirect social impact (such as civil society and NGO and activism to disseminate findings or to monitor the implementation of recommendations) will be smaller. The reverse is also true: a more participatory creation of a TC will engender greater social mobilization around it, but the TC will have less direct impact on policy. Bakiner's theory helps to explain, at least partially, some of the differences I've observed between South Africa and the Southern Cone in terms of presence of TCs in culture and literature. The creations of Argentina's CONADEP and Chile's Rettig Commission were tightly controlled by their respective governments, and enjoyed no public input; the South African TRC, on the other hand, was created and implemented with greater social

¹¹ For memoir, see Antjie Krog's *Country of my Skull* (1999) and Krog et al.'s *There Was This Goat* (2009). For drama, see Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1998). For novels, see Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001) and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (2000). For film, see Ian Gabriel's *Forgiveness* (2004).

participation. The effect of this difference is that in the Southern Cone, both the Rettig Report and *Nunca más* had a stronger influence on policy (the immediate implementation of reparations in Chile, and the trial and convictions of five Argentine generals, for instance), but the social (and thus literary) effect was not strong. In contrast, the social mobilization (and cultural and literary) effect of the TRC was comparatively much greater.

In agreement with Simon Lewis, I suggest that a vital factor in the participatory character of the TRC is that many hearings were public and widely broadcast in the media, but the Chilean and Argentine hearings—like most TC procedures around the world—were held behind closed doors. Thanks to the intense media coverage, the testimonies in South Africa permeated society and its artists far more deeply than the less intense coverage of, and access to, the hearings in South America. Argentina's CONADEP report is an exceptional case. *Nunca más* became a national best-seller and has been translated into several languages (no doubt the name recognition of CONADEP's president, Ernesto Sabato, influenced its popularity). For Beatriz Sarlo, *Nunca más* is "the great book" of Argentina's transition to democracy, the country's book of memory. "Más que leído, *Nunca más* está frente a nosotros como un monumento de la memoria (*Tiempo presente* 150) [More than to be read, *Nunca más* stands before us as a monument to memory]. *Nunca más*, then, is a literary instance of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, explained in the Introduction. Yet, however psychologically and editorially shocking *Nunca más* was, it did not stimulate social mobilization.

In addition to examining the imbrications of history, memory, and testimony in fiction, this chapter examines how the narrative structures of the novels serve and interact

with their plots and ultimate meaning. For this analysis, Pron's and Andruetto's novels are particularly telling, for they display the most unusual narrative elements to convey ideas about the importance (and also the impurity) of memory. Their stories are enriched by new narrative techniques that confirm the privileged place of imaginative art in the formulation of discourses about the past.

Memory, Truth, Identity

Maurice Halbwachs, Shane Graham, Sidonie Smith, and Inés Dussel, among many others, have noted that memory is an essential component of individual and collective identity. Additionally, collective memory has a political dimension. With the exception of the later work of Sigmund Freud, such as *Civilization and its Discontents*, this is largely ignored by psychoanalytic theory. Despite having illuminated much scholarship about trauma and memory at the individual level, including seminal work by Cathy Caruth, and by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. Freudian theory fails to account for social dynamics on a broader scale, and does not lend itself to political analysis; it reveals little about the implications of collective trauma on society and culture. As Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith—among numerous other North American critics—assert, the "psychoanalytic model has been deficient, Western-biased, individual-centered, and thus elides cultural, institutional and political structures" (22-23). Halbwachs's work on collective memory, especially, is useful to fill the gaps left by the Freudian model of trauma and memory. By emphasizing the social context of individual memories and the centrality of the relationship between the individual and the group (where memories are expressed by each person), Halbwachs adds to psychology a sociological perspective (Crane 1376).

The relationship between memory (or forgetting) and power suggests that beyond the personal dimensions, memory is also a political and social concern, as the various TCs, and human rights theorists and advocates such as Tzvetan Todorov and Waldo Ansaldi, maintain. The preservation of memory forces society to fulfill its obligation to assume responsibility for what happened in its midst, to remember in order to not repeat, to establish a firm basis for a stable future polity, and to be an instrument in political struggles (Ansaldi 7-8; Bell 211). Artists and writers bear much of the responsibility for remembering and reminding, as the novels I analyze here demonstrate. Unlike historians, who typically do not write about their own experiences, fiction writers are not compelled to erase themselves and their own memories from their work. Literary production thus has the liberty to apply a personal point of view to interpret historical events. The result of these critical and creative impulses is the representation of memory with artistic freedom that contests official discourses and includes previously silenced voices.

Narration is the means for the conscious processing of experience, traumatic or not. As Elizabeth Jelin notes, narrative is how "the subject bestows meaning to the past" (16). From the literary perspective, narration is the process through which a writer gives readers access to others' experiences, including the author's own. Narrative can take the form of fiction or be non-fictional. Like the testimonies produced in the setting of TCs, fiction and personal memoir are a way to work with private and collective memory to confront trauma, and perhaps to heal. If, according to Elaine Scarry, war and torture unmake the subjects' world, including their language, then the remaking of the world can be accomplished through narration. This possibility alerts us to the close ties between

language, narration, and healing (Evangelista xxi; Nolan 148; *TRC Report I*: 112), and integrates psychoanalytic insights into the broader social significance of literature.

The conscious and verbalized recall of trauma can have beneficial effects as catharsis, according to Freud's psychological works, and it may also be instrumental in legal or official venues. The South African TRC melded the personal account with the official setting and "explicitly recognized the healing potential of telling stories" (*TRC Report I*: 112). These stories took the form of quasi-legal testimonies whose powerful thrust went beyond the individual vindication and affected the entire society. As Schaffer and Smith note, "a massive project of storytelling became the foundational event symbolizing the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid State" (65). Njabulo Ndebele writes that "the restoration of narrative [. . .] stimulat[ed] the imaginations [. . .] through voices that can go beyond the giving of testimony, towards creating new thoughts and new worlds" (28). Ndebele, a South African critic and fiction writer, then, sees the truth of testimony and experience as a creative force.

In *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson differentiate clearly autobiography, history, and the novel; these distinctions are useful to clarify the distinct demands of each genre and the expectations of their readers. There is no claim of superiority of one genre over another; rather, genres work differently with the same raw material of experience. Trauma narrative—whether testimonial or fictional—exposes the difficulties of incorporating extreme experiences into memory at the individual and collective levels, and has the potential to strengthen communal bonds (Smith "Narrating Lives" 564-66). Furthermore, trauma narrative may have an even broader effect—touching the state, civil society, and even international law, including the current human

rights legislation and theorization. Thus, trauma narrative has, in addition to a personal dimension, a social impact.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of narrating traumatic memory, a number of critics, such as Caruth, as well as some fiction writers, have cautioned against the potential of narrative to cause harm and retraumatize. This negative effect is noted as an exception by Antje Krog in *Country of My Skull*, and is illustrated in Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, where a main character—a former freedom fighter who became a victim of the police—is pressured in a TRC amnesty hearing to remember and recount the circumstances of his torture, an experience that forces him to re-live trauma. However, notwithstanding valid arguments against giving testimony in some cases, there is general agreement that victims' narrations of abuse are *potentially* conducive to personal healing and justice at the social level, and not *always* traumatizing. Each of the works examined in this study shows the traces of trauma both on the individual and on the collective around them, and speculates on how individuals and groups manage to overcome them.

Representations of Traumatic Memory in Five Novels

Each protagonist of the novels analyzed in this study displays a kind of personal memory that can be described as reluctant, ineffectual, absent, or excessive. Although each character experiences the same historical event differently from the other characters, the contents and contexts of their remembrances are always traumatic. Inasmuch as the memories refer to events of national consequence, their narration and transmission have social significance as well as an impact on individual identity formation. All the

protagonists put their memory to use to achieve some measure of justice, or to structure personal and social identity.

The two South African novels depict some of the traumas created by the apartheid regime and engage with debates about memory and justice, especially as formulated by the TRC. In Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, New York-based lawyer Sarah Barcant returns to her home town in South Africa to help her ageing mentor block the amnesty application of former policeman Dirk Hendricks for the torture of Alex Mpondo fourteen years earlier. Remarkably, Alex is not interested in the outcome of the procedure; nonetheless, he half-heartedly tries to cooperate with the lawyers' strategy to elicit the disclosure of the location of the body of Steve Sizela, Alex's friend and fellow prisoner, widely believed to have been killed by police commander Pieter Muller. Due to his lengthy interrogation under torture, Alex's memory is incomplete and confused, and he evidences some spatial and temporal disorientation linked to the trauma—what Caruth describes as "a break in the mind's experience of time" (61). But Alex is not only confused; he is also unwilling to turn his attention to severely traumatic events. In fact, he "hadn't wanted to attend the hearing—to revisit Smitsrivier—because he hadn't wanted to remember. The memory was being delivered, not in an ordered, structured form [. . .] but in jagged splinters. Images [. . .]. Sounds—those screams building up, battering his ears, the terror gripping him" (133). His unwillingness to remember that period of his life is understandable; what is not initially comprehensible is his indifference to the success or failure of his torturer's amnesty application. The key to this question has to do with the accessibility of memory and truth, as much as with fear and shame. Alex's attitude opens up interpretative possibilities that contradict a basic TRC assumption—namely, that

testimony is equal to healing and reconciliation. By presenting the issue of memory and testimony in an instance that is not only non-conducive to reconciliation, but is actually retraumatizing and potentially damaging personally and politically, Slovo's novel offers a counter-discourse to the TRC, as Shameem Black has observed. This is not only because old memories can become painful in the present, but also because of the implication of a hero's possible betrayal contained in such memories, which he may want to remain buried in oblivion and unknown to the public whom he, as an Member of Parliament and hero of the anti-apartheid struggle, serves.

Contrasting with Alex Mpondo's reluctant memory is the hypermnesia suffered by Tony Eprile's protagonist of *The Persistence of Memory*. Paul Sweetbread narrates his life from his childhood at the height of apartheid, through his service in the South African Defence Forces—with the resulting post-traumatic stress disorder—and as a witness in a TRC amnesty hearing. He is endowed with a picture-perfect memory that he considers not a gift but rather a "toxin" (13), for which he seeks relief with a psychiatrist. Paul gains some control over his excessive memory and the power to retrospectively chronicle his life, his family's life, and the events in his country as he witnessed them. He describes, mostly unfavorably, his own white, middle class, English-speaking South African society—a critical gaze that he often aims at himself, a compliant product of that society. He repeatedly criticizes what he sees as a national tendency to distort events: "History, memory, is plastic here in the R.S.A. You remember it the way you would have wanted it to be, not the way it was" (19). One example of the ability to remember the past in a positive light is Paul's mother's spin on the death of his father: "while fumigating the maid's desolate quarters, a man so deeply concerned about the comfort of future

domestics that he would put his own life in jeopardy to keep a bunch of unwashed natives safe from bedbugs" (50). This is how Mrs. Sweetbread disguises the fact that her husband had been having an affair with the servant and then probably committed suicide in the maid's room when she was dismissed by the outraged madam.

The amnesty hearing of his former commandant Captain Lyddie is the culmination of Paul's memoir, and inaugurates a stage in a life better adapted to the realities of post-apartheid society. Paul must confront and confess not only what he witnessed, but also how he participated in war atrocities. Particularly traumatic is his active, if unwilling, involvement in the massacre of returning rebel soldiers (during a cease-fire that Captain Lyddie opted to ignore), whose evidence the captain ordered his men to bury in the desert—literally. The "burden of consciousness" (247)¹² weighs heavily on Paul, not just because of his own actions, but also in view of his ancestors' implication in a system arguably more racist than those of the European countries whose anti-Semitic practices they escaped. Paul's grandfather, a Jewish immigrant, developed a successful business leasing typewriters to apartheid government agencies, which were busy issuing passes for blacks. This business provided stability and steady income to the Sweetbreads, for the grandfather would return to certain towns regularly with his machines "to make sure that the bureaucracy was functioning smoothly, typing triplicate forms that 'endorsed' the natives with tighter chains, creating marriage certificates and driver's licenses, writing its reports to be sent to Pretoria" (45). His family's compliance with the regime, and later his own participation in the armed forces, burden Paul's conscience to a pathological degree. His post-traumatic stress disorder is alleviated, but

¹² Although the formulation evokes J. M. Coetzee's "The Burden of Consciousness in Africa," Paul's meaning is closer to "guilt," a denotation that Coetzee explicitly rejects in his essay.

not altogether cured, by giving testimony before the TRC. Eprile's novel thus admits the enormous importance of assuming responsibility for one's actions and complicities, but at the same time acknowledges that just the admission of truth, despite the TRC's claims, is insufficient to bring about justice.

More problematic than beneficiaries' acceptance of, and complicity with, injustice, is abject collaboration. This is one of the wrongs that Carlos Franz's protagonist of *El desierto* tries to rectify by exercising her memory and speaking the truth. In 1993, Laura Larco returns from 20 years of exile in Germany to her old post as a judge in Pampa Hundida, a (fictitious) small town in the Atacama desert in northern Chile. Laura's is not the classic exile's long-awaited return to the homeland after the end of Pinochet's dictatorship, but rather her way of answering a persistent question posed by her daughter Claudia: "¿Dónde estabas tú, mamá, cuando todas esas cosas horribles ocurrieron en tu ciudad?" (12, *passim*) ["Where were you, Mamá, when all those horrible things were taking place in your city?" (8, *passim*)]¹³. The "horrible things" to which Claudia refers are the execution of twelve men, one daily, by the military detachment assigned to the town a few weeks after the 1973 coup. Although Laura has been writing a response in Berlin, where she is an academic, she decides that the only way to adequately answer her daughter's inquiry is to go back to Chile to face the past and the new generation's reaction—to both the country's history and to Laura's own conduct. Franz's is a novel about memory put in the service of understanding the present by confronting the past, and about innocent people's complicity and implication with injustice. In an interview with Miguel Mora, the author said that it is a responsibility of the new generation, in which

¹³ All English quotations of Franz's novel are from the translation by Leland Chambers, *The Absent Sea*, unless otherwise noted.

Franz includes himself, to ponder the best way to remember and to do justice. To undertake this reflection on memory and justice, the novel uses two moments as temporal focal points of consciousness: one moment that is remembered (the early weeks of the dictatorship in 1973), and the time to do justice (1993, when the Chilean transition is in full swing). By alternating between these two moments, the narration contextualizes the remembered past (the injustice), offers interpretations of the transition (the weak attempts to implement justice), and suggests implications for the future, including the attitude of national amnesia and even the possibility of revenge.

Among my sample of novels in which characters try to remember and come to terms with trauma, the one true amnesiac is the narrator and protagonist of Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*. Summoned from Germany, where he has lived for several years, to be present in what are expected to be his father's final days, the narrator returns to Argentina. Framed within the family drama and the return of the expatriated/prodigal son, is a secondary story: the recent case of Alberto Burdisso's disappearance and murder that besets the small provincial town of El Trébol, and that revives the collective memory of the terror and disappearances under the dictatorship, as well as of the later protests and demands for justice. The protagonist becomes aware of this anxious revival upon reading the local newspaper's reports of the case, where "la palabra clave aquí era 'desaparición', repetida de una u otra forma en todos los artículos, como una escarapela fúnebre en la solapa de todos los tullidos y los desgraciados de Argentina" (83) ["the key word here was *disappearance*, repeated in one way or another in all the articles, like a black armband worn by every cripple and have-not in

Argentina" (82)]¹⁴. Thus, the recent kidnapping and murder re-enacts the disappearances of the 1970s. Moreover, the town's reaction—a demonstration to demand the resolution of the murder case and the return of justice and security to the town, with the slogan "Contra la impunidad y a favor de la vida" (77) ["No to impunity and yes to life" (76)]—is also a re-enactment of anti- and post-dictatorship slogans of the 1980s. As the protagonist observes, eventually people were no longer claiming justice for Burdisso but were beginning to demand it for themselves. There is a double reflection in these public demonstrations: one is temporal, the other spatial. The present protests are a belated and pale reflection of the massive anti-Junta demonstrations in Buenos Aires in the early 1980s; at the same time the local demonstrations mimic the national ones. This does not ridicule the aspirations of the townspeople, but rather makes their predicament more relevant, as the small-town crime begins to look like a reflection of the traumatic national past, thereby showing how the past still dwells in living consciousness.

The protagonist of *El espíritu* is perplexed as to why his father kept a file of documents and newspaper clippings concerning the local crime. This question constitutes one of the novel's enigmas. The narrator-turned-detective senses that the Burdisso investigation may clarify a more important mystery involving his father. Hence, he digs into archival material like newspaper articles, police reports, and court documents, to reconstruct a past—both the recent crime and the distant epoch of leftist political militancy of the 1970s, in which his parents were actively involved but about which they have spoken little. These two connected plots reveal Pron's literary project as an investigative one: the discovery of the family's past in parallel with the investigation of

¹⁴ All English quotations of Pron's novel are from the translation by Mara Faye Lethem, *My Fathers' Ghost is Climbing in the Rain*, unless otherwise noted.

the Burdisso disappearance and murder. This case is presented with strong elements of detective story, with the crime eventually solved and the perpetrators called to justice. But because of the intertwining of the two investigations, Pron's novel exceeds both the detective fiction and the memory-recovery genre; it also connects the public sphere of a murder case investigation reported in public media, and the private family sphere where the parents' past is discovered. Both Slovo's *Red Dust* and Pron's *El espíritu* are in line with new detective fiction and political thrillers in the sense that they do more than simply use violence as consumer pleasure (Black 49-50): they issue ethical claims about memory and justice.

Pron's protagonist constantly questions the possibility and uses of both remembering and forgetting, even as the novel recognizes that memory is a major tool of research. The narrator links amnesia and trauma in a slightly different way than psychoanalysis would. For him, his amnesia is not the undesired direct result of trauma, but the consequence of the intoxication he provokes in order to forget the traumatic circumstances and fear generated in him and his sister by their parents' elaborate attempts to keep them safe. This perspective about forgetting is important because it posits an alternative to the psychoanalytic tenet. Instead of a direct trajectory of trauma leading to pathological, involuntary amnesia, *El espíritu* proposes that forgetting is the sought-after effect of drug intoxication undertaken expressly for that purpose. Amnesia, then, is the desired outcome, rather than a pathologic reaction to an extreme experience that needs to be alleviated with the professional help of the analyst. Thus, the protagonist of *El espíritu* contests Freudian dogma, and even the therapeutic power of the very psychiatric treatment prescribed to him, which he eventually foregoes in order to regain access to his

memories. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist acknowledges his intention not only to forget, but also to avoid any kind of responsibility by giving up his own home and opting to couch-surf instead: "Yo, simplemente, estaba de paso" (14) ["I was just passing through" (6)], he says detachedly, referring to a period of several years in his life. This aloof attitude is reversed over the course of his sojourn in his native country, when he recovers a large part of his memory, becomes more present and involved with his family, and reconstructs his identity.

Just as reluctantly as Pron's narrator, Julieta, the protagonist of María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, returns (also from Germany, also summoned by a parental crisis) to Argentina, where her mother, Julia, has recently died. Following Julia's instructions, Julieta reads the material contained in a box that her mother left for her. Those letters, photographs, drawings, and sundry documents reveal information about Julia's life and about aspects of the connections between herself, her daughter Julieta, and her own mother Ema, who raised Julieta. The "viaje a bordo de una caja" (205) [voyage aboard a box]¹⁵ takes Julieta back to her childhood and opens a window to the era around her birth in the violent 1970s, giving her a new perspective on the tense intergenerational relationships among the three women.

Julia lived hidden in a basement in Patagonia for several years during the Argentine dictatorship of 1976-83; she delivered her daughter Julieta there and, unable to care for the baby while in hiding, immediately sent her to live with her parents, Ema and Stefano. For various reasons, mother and child never lived together, even after Julia came out of hiding. Ema, Julia, and Julieta are the nodes of complex mother-daughter

¹⁵ All translations from *Lengua madre* are mine.

relationships devised by Andruetto to explore individual, familial, and collective trauma, including the phenomenon of *insilio*, or internal exile¹⁶.

The title of Andruetto's novel, *Lengua madre* (Mother Tongue) means native language. More specifically, it also refers to the oral and written intergenerational communication between Ema, Julia, and Julieta. As in Pron's text, language occupies a heightened place in Andruetto's novel as the means to convey information, affection, and memory. The letters are written in a familiar idiom, with a strong Argentine inflection that resonates intimately and thus contrasts with Julieta's language of everyday life, German, and the language of her research, English. The three-generational reconstruction that Julieta accomplishes occurs mainly through her grandmother Ema's voice, in the numerous letters that Julia kept and bequeathed to her daughter. This reconstruction is not only personal but also collective, for the state terror that forced the unusual family arrangement was a circumstance of national import. Julieta recognizes that, while her pain is real, she was not the only victim: "Ay, de la vida oscura, ay de las noches sin madre en el pueblo [. . .]. Vida suya y de muchos. Y sin embargo absolutamente suya, única. Es la reconstrucción de la memoria, pero ella no reconstruye sólo su memoria, sino la de muchos" (202) [Woe to the dark life, woe to the motherless nights in the village [. . .]. Her life, and many others'. And yet absolutely her own, unique. It's the reconstruction of memory, but she is not reconstructing only her memory, but that of many]. Julieta vacillates between the desire to remember and the desire to forget. This conundrum stands out as its own section of the novel: "Recordar. Olvidar. Recordar. Olvidar. / Recordar" (178) [To remember. To forget. To remember. To forget. / To

¹⁶ This topic is discussed in Chapter II.

remember]. Julieta finally settles for remembering and learning part of her mother's history. In the course of doing this she searches in the national history of the era when her parents were young and when she was born. Ultimately, by reconstructing her family's past, as well as her own, and by understanding their respective points of view and particular needs, Julieta sheds her resentments and forgives her abandonment.

Like Pron's character, Julieta gains self-knowledge and a deeper understanding of her family, and moves toward forgiveness. But unlike the protagonist of *El espíritu*, her investigation of the past is restricted to a data set that is strictly familial and private, not of public sources. Because of the transgenerational, intimate and material nature of Julieta's inquiry, *Lengua madre* deploys the concept of postmemory, a notion developed by Marianne Hirsch. Postmemory is "the relationship that the 'generation after,' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before [. . .], experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (5). This concept is illustrated by Julieta's awareness of her own memories and those of her immediate ancestors. Reflecting on her grandfather Stefano, an Italian immigrant who lost his family forever and has carried his pain ever since, Julieta believes that sadness, like other traits, is inherited. Her grandfather's experience "le dejó huellas. Ella no puede decir: la guerra, el exilio, la muerte, no tienen nada que ver conmigo" (63) [left traces in her. She cannot say, 'war, exile, death, have nothing to do with me']¹⁷. As Julieta considers her own history, she realizes the importance that choices made by her parents' generation have had for herself and her contemporaries, and the importance of

¹⁷ Stefano is also the name of the protagonist of Andruetto's eponymous 1997 novel about migration from Italy to Argentina in the early 20th century, and whose main character closely resembles the Stefano in *Lengua madre*. One wonders whether postmemory is also operative personally in Andruetto, whose father was, like these two Stefanos and millions of other Argentines' ancestors, also an Italian immigrant.

the circumstances surrounding those choices, i.e., the military dictatorship that destroyed so many lives and damaged or otherwise re-shaped many others. The journey aboard a box that Julieta undertakes is not only to her mother and father, not only to herself, but also to an era, historically and ideologically: the heady revolutionary days of the 1960s and 70s in Latin America.

Reconstructing Julia's history and accepting her political identity helps Julieta construct her own self in a new way. Importantly, she becomes integrated into something larger than her own moment: the genealogy of which she is a part. Echoing Shane Graham's comments on memory and identity, Corinne Pubill writes that identity construction is done, to a large extent, through memory and forgetting ("María Teresa Andruetto" 63). Like Pron's protagonist, Julieta accepts her mother's posthumous invitation to reunite when she understands that the items bequeathed to her are intended to help them find each other over time.

Novel Narrative Forms

Some of the novels studied here conform to certain major genres, while others fit less neatly. *Red Dust* is a court drama; *The Persistence of Memory* takes the form of a personal memoir. *Lengua madre* and *El desierto* can be classified (at least partially) as epistolary novels, for much of the narration occurs through letters. *El Espíritu de mis padres* has, quite self-consciously, elements of detective fiction, although it cannot be said that it is *only* (or mainly) a detective novel or even anti-detective fiction—a postmodern variant that subverts, especially in terms of the significance of the crime's solution, the traditional detective story (Nicol 6; Tani 321); its contents and philosophical

and political underpinnings surpass this genre. While the novels can be associated with a defined genre, some exceed their generic limits or combine modes of writing in new, imaginative ways. In this section I will examine how each novel's narrative structure and procedures function to bring about the authors' visions.

A Court Drama with a Conscience

Gillian Slovo, best known as a thriller writer, wrote *Red Dust* as a courthouse drama with a historical perspective. Generically, it is the most conventional of the texts in my sample. This, however, does not subtract either literary or ethical value from the novel; through *Red Dust* Slovo poses important questions about memory, truth, reconciliation, and justice in South Africa, and in particular about the TRC procedures—especially regarding their ability to heal and to re-inflict pain. Perhaps somewhat programmatically, each character represents an aspect of the topics debated in the country during the TRC era. Ben Hoffman represents the pragmatic view that truth, with the aid of the law, can lead to justice. His erstwhile student, Sarah Barcant, on the other hand, is skeptical of her mentor's optimism, as she harbors doubts about the possibility of attaining either justice or truth, much less both. The elderly Sizela couple represent the thousands of grieving South Africans who lost a loved one to the anti-apartheid struggle and have not been able to put their dead to rest. Alex Mpondo represents the vindicated former freedom fighter and victim of the police; he mistrusts his own memory and harbors doubts about his political integrity, which may or may not have been broken by torture; Alex hence raises questions about the ability and desirability of memory alone to reach truth. Finally, the old regime's police power and abuse are embodied in the two

former policemen, Dirk Hendricks and Pieter Muller, who admit their past actions and justify them to themselves and before the TRC.

Dirk Hendricks and Alex Mpondo enact the intimate connection between torturer and victim, as I have described elsewhere (N. Kaminsky "Twisted"). Their strained interaction in the novel's present is evidence of the persistence of past power dynamics years after their association is over. Ben explains this phenomenon as "the same bond that binds this country to its past. None of us are free of it. [. . .] We are all interconnected here" (151). This is because, according to Ben, both sides of the struggle considered themselves patriots fighting a "war". It is simplistic, however, to characterize the torturer-victim relationship as a national bond, and problematic to equate the military and moral power of the state and the rebels by calling their interaction a war. Ben does not enunciate this equation, but the novel's apologists for the state terror, Hendricks and Muller, do.

Red Dust is fact-based fiction that takes many details from real events. The one notable exception is recognized by Slovo in the Acknowledgements: Muller's application for amnesty would have been impossible in reality on account of the cut-off-date established by the TRC. Besides the manipulation of this fact for dramatic purposes, the rest of the novel, including the different attitudes of the participants in TRC proceedings, is realistic, even intensely mimetic. For example, in the novel, Alex recalls a:

young comrade's death whose corpse the Truth Commission investigators had dug up the other day. When they had gentled her out of her makeshift grave she was naked save for the plastic bag she had used to cover herself. She was curled in on herself, foetus-like [. . .]. And there, watching the exhumation, was the man who

had put her there and who had led the Commission to her impromptu resting place and who had looked down and who had said, with an admiring shake of his head, "She was a brave one, that one: she wouldn't tell us anything." (204-205)

Note the same details about the victim's position and how she covered herself, described in the TRC Report (TRC:II-543) by Commissioner Richard Lyster about the 1997 exhumation of Phila Portia Ndwandwe: "When we exhumed her, she was on her back in a foetal position [. . .]. Her pelvis was clothed in a plastic packet, fashioned into a pair of panties indicating an attempt to protect her modesty" (qtd. Graham 135). Note also the similarly admiring attitude of the interrogator, as reported by Antje Krog in *Country of My Skull*: "She was brave this one, hell she was brave. . . . She simply would not talk" (qtd. Graham 135). This mimetism can be explained by the nature of the TRC hearings: open to the public, amply reported in the media, and avidly consumed by the audience. The fact that the author, even if she lives abroad, pays such close attention to events in his native South Africa and incorporates such details into her fiction reveals the historical conscience of her novel.

The rich dialogues and internal monologues in *Red Dust* generate an ethical reality-based novel. Despite being a fast-paced courtroom drama, this narrative offers a non-simplistic perspective of complex nationwide dilemmas and, rather than giving answers, it opens up questions—about the relative values of truth, justice, national reconciliation, and the justifiability of amnesty—in a manner accessible to a wide audience inside and outside of South Africa. Slovo answers these questions mainly through her characters: The odious Dirk Hendricks is certain that complete truth will not be attained, but even Slovo's sympathetic protagonists, Sarah and Alex, are also skeptical

about the possibility of reaching truth. The novel criticizes the discourse of reconciliation for being unrealistic, and the amnesty procedures for allowing perpetrators to go unpunished, but does not entertain a single argument for amnesty or even forgiveness (which the character Ben Hoffmann would be in a position to voice). The novel was well received internationally by critics such as Victoria Brittain and Marina Warner, particularly for challenging some of the conceptions and political discourses of the TRC (Black 52). It was exciting enough for Australian director Tom Hooper to make a film based on it. For many readers outside of South Africa, *Red Dust* was probably their first encounter with the TRC. Yet in South Africa itself, judging for the paucity of reviews, the novel seems to have had little impact. Perhaps when it was published in 2000, it was still too early to take such a critical stance on such a respected institution as the TRC.

The Persistence of Conscience

Like *Red Dust*, Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* is (mostly) realist fiction. While the Author's Afterword states the fictional nature of the book, *Persistence* reads like a memoir, complete with a glossary and a map of the country—typical of South African literature meant for an international audience—which add a realist flavor to Eprile's work. Paul Sweetbread's narration covers the first 32 years of his life and his involvement in some of the country's most important events of the 20th century: several decades of apartheid as experienced by him and his family, the covert wars in Namibia and Angola, and the New South Africa, including the TRC. Like many memoirs, *Persistence* is divided into sections that delimit distinct periods: Book One (1968-87) covers Paul's childhood as a Johannesburg Jewish boy up to his induction into the South

African Defence Force (SADF); Book Two (1987-89) covers his army training and service in the SADF in Namibia; and Book Three (1990-2000) is about Paul's post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (a consequence of his experiences in the army), the TRC, and his redemption and adaptation to post-apartheid South Africa. The novel's main preoccupation, as the title unequivocally indicates, is memory, and also the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation.

While *Persistence* is not as focused on the TRC as *Red Dust* is, Paul's commentary on it is, like some of Slovo's characters', somewhat skeptical. He is not sure about the healing powers of revealing horrors, but believes that there is some justice in that revealing, and is "glad that the white South African should be forced to recognize what was done on his behalf" (223). The content of his description of the establishment and work of the TRC is informative and rather mainstream, although not many would describe it in such a sarcastic tone as Paul does:

With a negotiated settlement between two powers in a Mexican standoff, there could be no witch hunt of the police and army, no jail time for ex-Minister of Justice and Prisons Police Jimmy Kruger or the police spy and assassin Craig Williamson¹⁸. Instead, there is a daily performance of Jerzy Grotowski's¹⁹ live theater presided over by Archbishop Tutu beaming his tough beneficent love on us all. And this theater is recorded in the papers, on radio, video, and television, seared into the very souls of South Africans so no future generation can disbelieve in apartheid or the wars that have riven this land. (223)

¹⁸ Williamson was responsible for the assassination of Ruth First, Gillian Slovo's mother.

¹⁹ Polish playwright who was influential on anti-apartheid theater.

Paul's characterization shows that he is as informed as ever, but it also reveals ambivalence: On the one hand he suggests that the TRC is a show, but on the other hand he says that it is a necessary one. In contrast, a minor character in *Persistence*, history professor Kobus Koos Kannemeyer (a.k.a. KKK) is completely dismissive; he describes the TRC's activities as a "headlong pursuit of the ultimate vanity they dare call the Truth," (225) and bitterly remarks that "[t]his whole damn country is turning into one giant Apartheids Anonymous meeting, with everybody falling over themselves to confess their sins and parade their victimhood" (225). KKK's comment echoes the attitudes of some of Slovo's even less palatable characters—the former policemen Hendricks and Muller. But in contrast to the contestatory impetus of *Red Dust*, the ideology sustaining *Persistence* is one of conciliation. Its protagonist suffers from guilt for having participated in, or tolerated, apartheid's social and military atrocities, but his deliverance does not come from asking for forgiveness or confessing his sins, but through a long process of psychological adjustment—an internal, non-performative act. In *Persistence*, the TRC is the venue to expose the crimes of high level decision makers, not of regular beneficiaries, who suffer unobserved, unable to vent their contrition publicly. Predictably, the attitudes towards the TRC by the different characters favor their own interests, as KKK and Captain Lyddie show.

Paul's peculiarities and his conversational, witty narration offer much needed relief from the unrelenting historical gravitas characteristic of so many novels set in South Africa. Apart from his prodigious memory, Paul is unusual not only on account of his life experiences and his personality, but, importantly, by the *way* he narrates. One of the striking features of his narrative style is his irony and corrosive humor, which are

aimed at his country and its history, but often also at himself. For example, some time in the 1980s, an Army unit for which Paul is filming footage goes to a township to shoot a propaganda film showing soldiers having a preplanned "spontaneous" soccer game with black schoolchildren; they are met with reactions ranging from indifference to Molotov cocktails, and are asked to leave because their presence is upsetting the children. Paul wonders "whether we are going to form up a laager, Caspirs standing in for ox-wagons, and have our own Battle of Blood River with these schoolkids" (186-87). The historical and cultural references—the wagons' protective circle (laager) used by Afrikaners in their Great Trek in the 19th century, the armored military vehicles (Caspirs) used by the South African forces to suppress demonstrations in the 20th, the Afrikaners' victory over the Zulus in what became known, for graphic reasons, the Battle of Blood River in 1838, and echoes of school children pitted against apartheid police forces in the 1976 Soweto uprising—show Paul's historical sense of how the past bleeds into the present. The end of apartheid does not dull Paul's inclination to satire, as he demonstrates by commenting that his Windhoek brand beer is "brewed according to the German Purity Laws," while his friend's is a "miscegenated rum drink" (269) (a daiquiri), a joke poked at the racial conceits of the apartheid system in both South Africa and Namibia (a German colony whose capital is Windhoek [like the brand name of the Namibian-made beer that Paul drinks]).

In his vivid accounts Paul displays an extraordinary array of knowledge and a broad vocabulary. To describe how his body still reacts when he recalls an episode of his childhood, for instance, he uses a disconcerting mixture of medical and colloquial terms: "I need only reenter that stall on that distant sunny spring day in primary school to cause

my AV node to misfire all over the place and have my heart go pronking in my chest like an alarmed springbok, while patches of hives appear on my skin in eidetic verisimilitude" (16). He frequently and unnecessarily gives the Latin scientific name for species of plants and insects encountered in everyday life to show his perfect recall of everything he reads, whether entomology, botany, or anthropology, even using technical anatomical terms to describe a person to whom he is romantically attached, whose hand "from the knuckles to the styloid process [. . .] is childishly foreshortened" (263). Thus, the encyclopedic data that Paul cannot help but remember, instead of making him more attractive (as one would assume he hopes), renders him pedantic and alienating of the ordinary people with whom he interacts in the novel, even irritating the reader at times.

Readers may also be peeved by Paul's penchant for describing meals and cooking with the flair of a restaurant reviewer (he does enjoy cooking and eating). A typical depiction of a meal includes phrases like the "smell of sizzling fish merging with the odor of the herbs—thyme, sage, and French tarragon" (180). To his credit, Paul is conscious of this and can make fun of his own mannerisms; the miscegenated daiquiri mentioned above, for instance, he describes as having a "delicate floral body with overtones of diesel and treacle pudding" (266). Paul, then, conveys a realistic and critical view of his society with welcome dashes of humor.

The son of a pest exterminator, Paul is interested in entomology as much as in etymology, sometimes combining the two disciplines to issue social commentary. When he reflects on the words for "insects" in different languages, he draws an original sociolinguistic conclusion: "*nunus*, *goggas*, bugs, or *shekhetsim*. . . the same Yiddish word, interestingly enough, that *shikse* comes from. If you marry out of the faith, you are

marrying a bug" (48). An incisive observer of language usage that reflects his society, Paul makes comments that are both accurate and funny. For example, he accurately notes that South Africa:

is the land of the acronym. Even our nearest township, with its African-sounding name of Soweto, is an acronym for South West Township. Then there's Cosatu and Fosatu, not two children in an African fairy tale but the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the Federation of et cetera. There's the ANC and the CNA (one a political party, the other a chain of bookshops); the IDP, HNP, and CODESA; UNISA and UNITA, and so on, or as the Germans would write it, u.s.w. (80)

Perhaps because at school he was taught Afrikaans, a Germanic language derived from Dutch, Paul repeatedly makes observations about German. He observes, for example, that the word *gift* in German means poison, and he uses this knowledge to express his feeling that his "God- or gene-given natural endowment, a picture-perfect memory, was really itself a poison gift" (14). In addition to his extraordinary memory, Paul has great facility with word associations that reflect his culture: "All the corporal sees are the patriotic images of our *weermag* [army] in action. (How it sounds like Wehrmacht, the shock troops of another master race!)" (176). One final example of Paul's incisive sociolinguistic observation of the German language: "*Minderwertigkeitsgefühl*—trust the Germans to make 'feelings of inadequacy' into a single word, bulky and ponderous as a tank, intimidating enough to inspire the very condition it describes" (200). Paul's linguistic proclivities are entertaining but, more importantly, through them Eprile's novel comments on South African society both during and after apartheid.

As a child, Paul had often accompanied his father to his jobs exterminating pests. As an adult, he frequently uses insect metaphors, especially to describe himself, his experiences, and the "flypaper of my memory" (69). At times he sees himself as "nothing but a chitinous husk, invertebrate, a dung beetle resting from his toils" (150), and he foresees his own death as comparable to that of a poisoned insect's. These insect metaphors of himself show not only an attachment to the memory of his father, but also the character's perception of himself and of South African white society in general as something unlikeable—not only by the majority of South Africans, but by international spectators as well—, parasitical, dependent on their servants and exploited laborers, and utterly inconsequential.

If Eprile's novel persists in the reader's memory it is not only because it describes the traumatic events of an era, but because the narrator's voice so vividly deconstructs that epoch and the society that permitted those events to happen. The author uses dry humor to describe dramatic situations and unlikeable characters (Paul sometimes included among them). Eprile's intent is to criticize apartheid by remembering and teaching, rather than simply giving a commonplace depressing account of its evils. The author accomplishes this through a protagonist who cannot not remember, who acknowledges his implication in the system he criticizes, and who does so through measured humor. Paul's agile, witty, self-deprecating mode of narration contrasts with the solemn, but not altogether humorless, voice of the two narrators of Carlos Franz's *El desierto*.

A Steel-Edged Memory

The epistolary sections of Franz's novel, which appear italicized in alternate chapters, are parts of Laura's letter written in 1993 to her daughter Claudia. In the letter, Laura recounts the events that beset her and the town of Pampa Hundida shortly after the coup in Chile twenty years earlier. The letter attempts to answer Claudia's question, "¿Dónde estabas tú, mamá, cuando todas esas cosas horribles ocurrieron en tu ciudad?" (12, *passim*) ["Where were you, Mamá, when all those horrible things were taking place in your city?" (8, *passim*)]. Interrupting the letter are the chapters narrating the events that occur when Laura returns to Pampa Hundida to her old post as judge, which she abandoned when she went into exile twenty years before. Laura comes armed with her lengthy written response, but intends to try to *show* rather than *tell* her answer to her daughter. Upon arrival at the desert town, she reencounters her former husband Mario, the townspeople and their political leaders, as well as her own daughter, who has come as a political activist to demand justice for actions perpetrated two decades earlier. Laura's reencounter with her native country, and Claudia's encounter with the nation that she considers her own (although she was born and raised in Germany), are the occasion for an outsider's critique of the Chilean transition and of certain facets of Chilean society and traditions. The novel's commentary of the early stages of the transition is about the politics of adaptation and selling out for political expediency, the cynical opportunism that contrasts with Claudia's idealism (as well as with that of Salvador Allende's socialist project), and the political and economic exploitative side of the ancient syncretic Catholic-indigenous religious beliefs in the festival of the *Diablada*, the Andean festival where street dancers dress up as the devil (*diablo*).

While Laura's letter narrates the 1973 events in the first person, the parallel 1993 plot is narrated in the third person by—we learn towards the end—Mario, a journalist and, significantly, an aspiring novelist. He speaks for Pampa Hundida, sometimes voicing a collective consciousness in the first-person plural: "nosotros, los que tenemos la vanidad de figurarnos que somos la voz de nuestra ciudad, su coro" (461) ["we, the ones who are vain enough to imagine that we are the voice of our city, its chorus" (368)]. This collective consciousness is one of the many metaphors in the novel, representing the Chilean citizenry and their attitudes—including their fear, submission, silence, and complicity with respect to the coup, the dictatorship, and its aftermath. *El desierto*, prodigal in metaphors, cannot but be interpreted as a national allegory of trauma, collusion, and adaptation. The narrator describes the town itself—a symbol of willful blindness and complicity, of tradition trying to burst into postmodernity—as situated in a "dirección perpendicular a la carretera Panamericana (o a la realidad)" (14) [direction perpendicular to the Panamerican Highway (or to reality)" (9)], an appropriate image for its many incongruities.

Laura repeatedly likens her internal turmoil and her memory to Major Cáceres's purebred horse, whose frantic remonstrance in a sweltering trailer she first heard the day the military detachment arrived in Pampa Hundida just after the 1973 coup: "la bestia que pateaba y bufaba y relinchaba, ansiando —como mi memoria, o como *otra cosa* dentro de mí misma— salir" (109) ["that beast which was kicking and snorting and whinnying, absolutely frantic—like my memory, or like something else inside me—to get out" (86, translation modified)]. Cáceres's agitated horse, an apt metaphor for Laura's conscience, is also the actual animal she rides in flight across the desert, and is fair game for Laura's

frequent word play. At the moment of her escape, the desire of this purebred (*purasangre*—literally, pure blood), was to "comerse el freno, y desbocarse hasta reventar la voluntad que lo había azuzado y contenido, hasta reventarse el corazón mordido, y rodar sobre la pampa, y allí sí, por fin, ser el potro de pura sangre" (325) ["swallow the bit, and bolt until he had broken the will which had always dogged him and held him back, until his bitten heart would burst, and then to roam the pampa and there at last become the colt of pure blood" (260)]. Indeed, the horse eventually kills itself in its mad race away from its master, Major Cáceres, and becomes a mass of flesh and blood, "pura sangre," as Chileans would say colloquially: a whole lot of blood.

Laura's trans-Atlantic return voyage to her native country marks not only the geographic distance between Europe and Latin America, but also the temporal and mental distance between Laura's comfortable present in Germany and her complicated past in Chile. Her flight from Munich to Santiago is "en dirección contraria al reloj (en dirección a nuestro pasado)" (13) ["in a counterclockwise direction (and in the direction of our past)" (8)]. The voyage also signals an important change in outlook and involvement with the world: Laura understands that she is executing more than a spatial displacement, that she is trading the "aparente armonía de su cátedra de filosofía por el torbellino polifónico de la fiesta donde había aceptado juzgar lo incomprensible. De la filosofía a la fiesta" (15) ["apparent harmony of her professorial chair in philosophy for the polyphonic turmoil of the fiesta where she had agreed to hand down judgment on the incomprehensible. From philosophy to fiesta" (10)]. While Laura's return to Chile may reflect the disoriented experience of some returning exiles, it also represents the country looking at itself critically from outside in order to come to terms with its traumatic past.

Leland Chambers's English translation of the novel's title as *The Absent Sea* appropriately takes on the metaphor of absence that runs through the novel and that is embedded but more muted in the original *El desierto* (The Desert). The absence refers to the sea that, according to a character in the novel, used to exist a million years ago between the Andes and the coastal range, and has since become the Atacama desert. Absent are also the indigenous peoples who were exterminated during the conquest and colony, or assimilated into the republic, and whose religions and traditions melded with Spanish Catholicism to become the syncretic belief system celebrated in the *Diablada*. Missing are of course Chile's thousands of people disappeared by the dictatorship, dozens of whom were buried in mass graves in the Atacama desert. All these voids point to a more general one: mnemonic absence. This is what the novel's main argument is against.

Laura was tortured (although not as brutally as others, she concedes) by Major Cáceres, who used a wooden ruler with a steel edge to beat her into submission before raping her. The materiality of the ruler is transformed into symbol by Laura, who attaches to it all kinds of metaphoric meanings and cruel word games. The ruler was "su instrumento de medida, con el que [Cáceres] me había medido (y con el que me estaba enseñando una nueva ley [. . .])" (264) ["his instrument for measuring, the one he had measured me with (using it to teach me a new rule, a new norm [. . .])" (210)]. The metal-edged ruler produces "la canción del acero" (290) ["the steel song" (232)], because by inflicting pain with its steel edge (*canto de acero*) it makes the victim sing, i.e., *cantar*, which colloquially means to give information, confess, or denounce under torture. Laura recalls bitterly "el momento mágico cuando ya había cantado más alto que el canto del acero y había delatado dónde estaba el prisionero" (293) ["that magic moment when I had

sung more loudly than the song of steel and had revealed where the prisoner was" (234)]. Cáceres's choice of this form of torture illustrates Elaine Scarry's observation that everyday objects, even those that normally offer comfort, can, terrifyingly, become instruments of torture.

Cáceres's repetitive reference to "aquel cuyo nombre no puede decirse, porque significa 'el que trae la luz'" (28) ["that being whose name cannot be pronounced, because it means 'he who brings the light'" (21)] denotes the planet Venus, for its appearance in the sky announces the dawn. But the Bringer of Light figure is recycled several times over. The morning star is also known as Lucifer (an appropriate moniker for the diabolic Major), the fallen angel cast out of heaven (thus the unmentionability of its name). Importantly, Venus was the Roman goddess of love. Cáceres uses these multiple meanings and images to share his knowledge about astronomy and to refer to his and Laura's relationship, perversely transfiguring a notion of erotic love into the intimate torturer/rapist-victim relationship. Laura, for her part, appropriates the meaning "bringer of light" to signal the enlightening force of knowledge and discovery of herself, the light shed by memory and narration on her actions and their implications.

Laura's acknowledgement of her own powerlessness and abject complicity, narrated in her letter, is central to her sense of who she is and her ability to face her daughter, her own conscience, and the collective conscience of Pampa Hundida. Even though she was powerless to defend the persecuted men, and was pressured by the town into acquiescing to Major Cáceres's torturous whims, she *feels* guilty for allowing the Major to drag her into a game where he had all the power and she had none (even if she managed to pretend that she was entering into negotiated agreement that would be

honored, although she should have known better). But Laura's feeling of guilt begins before she accepts the Major's pact: the very day of the coup (22). Her "inexplicable sensación de culpabilidad" (31) ("inexplicable tingling of guilt" (23)] comes from realizing that although she belongs to the supposedly independent Judicial power, she herself "representaría inevitablemente al nuevo orden" (31) ["would inevitably be representing the new order" (23)]. It is not until the very end of the novel that Laura realizes that her feeling of guilt is just another maneuver of power: "La culpabilidad de las víctimas, [. . .] la más oscura forma en que el poder logra perpetuar sus afrentas" (450) ["The culpability of victims [. . .] the most obscure form though which power manages to perpetuate its insults" (361)]. Through Laura's sense of culpability and her eventual analysis of this feeling, Franz's novel confronts issues of powerlessness, complicity, and guilt.

Like Paul Sweetbread in South Africa, Laura—and through her, the novel and its author—uses her well-developed sense of irony to criticize current Chilean affairs, especially what she perceives as the half-heartedness and complacency of the transition, foremost exemplified by the selling out of advocate Tomás Martínez Roth. After hearing his arguments for abandoning the legal process against Cáceres, she asks him, "¿Se dio cuenta de todo esto al mismo tiempo que el ministro le ofrecía una candidatura a diputado?" (311) ["Did you realize all this at the moment when the minister offered you the candidacy of a representative in Congress?" (249)]. She also sarcastically chides her former mentor, the current Minister of Justice, for bending his principles and yielding to the Church and the Army; thus, she shows her mocking disdain for the cozy relationship between the new democratic government and the recent regime. If she is critical of the

country, and aims her irony against Chilean society, she is no more lenient with respect of her own moral standing; when she, now Judge, encounters the prostitute who 20 years before had hidden an escaped prisoner in the brothel, Laura realizes "la paradoja que este reencuentro entre la puta y la jueza actualizaba: de entre ellas dos, aquella en la que se pudo confiar fue la puta; y en cambio, la jueza había fallado, o lo que era lo mismo, había sido medida, y su medida había sido la traición" (301) ["the paradox that this new encounter between the prostitute and the Judge was embodying once more: that between the two of them, the one who could be trusted was the whore; on the other hand, it was the Judge who had come up short, or what amounted to the same thing, who had been measured and she had measured up to betrayal" (240, translation modified)]. Cáceres's irony is more cruel. When Laura confronts him because he didn't fulfill his part of the pact (to liberate the prisoners in exchange for her "visiting" him), he replies, "'Pero no, Laura, acá, fíjate bien, están acá, en esta pampa', e indicaba su ausencia en la ausencia de la pampa: 'repartidos, espolvoreados, el polvo ha vuelto al polvo. [. . .] Cruzaron [la frontera], sí. Y un cóndor me los trajo de vuelta. Tenemos una excelente relación con la inteligencia vecina'" (319) ["'But no, Laura. Here. Look closely, they are here, on this pampa.,' He was suggesting their absence within the absence of the pampa: 'distributed, spread out, sprinkled. . . dust returned to dust.' [. . .] They crossed over, all right. And a condor brought them back to me. We have good relationship with our neighbors' intelligence" (255-56)]. This is Cáceres's poetic way of referring to his own perfected practice of blowing prisoners to smithereens, and to the infamous military intelligence alliance, Operation Condor, created for the purpose of sharing resources for political repression and terror among several South American countries (Kaiser 5).

Devious Cáceres plays with the sounds of words to equivocate his meaning and confound his victim. When he tells Laura that he knew she would come back to "honrar nuestro pacto" (64) ["honor our pact" 50], she is not sure whether he said "honrar" (to honor) or "amar" (to love); in another episode, she is not sure whether he said "para que tú me hicieras justicia" ["so you could do me justice"] or "Para que tú me ajusticiaras" (69) ["So that you could execute me" (54)], a play with the similar sounds but very different meanings of two terms with the same root—justice. Laura herself is very aware of the relationships between words, and she repeatedly remarks that "la palabra hogar significa también 'hoguera'" (235, *passim*) ["in Spanish the word for 'hearth' also means 'bonfire'" (186, *passim*)] (as well as "home"), drawing attention again to the common etymological root of words with very different meanings.

The neurotic repetition of utterances is a prominent narrative device in *El desierto*. Claudia's question, "¿Dónde estabas tú, mamá, cuando todas esas cosas horribles ocurrieron en tu ciudad?" (12, *passim*) ["Where were you, Mamá, when all those horrible things were taking place in your city?" (8, *passim*)] is one of the most noticeable reiterations, appearing some two dozen times throughout the novel. Others are "su medida había sido la traición" (19, *passim*) ["her measuring then had been her downfall" (14, *passim*)], pointing to Laura's bad conscience for having betrayed, although Chambers's translation does not make this betrayal explicit in his rendering of "traición" (betrayal) as "downfall". Similarly reiterative are the description of Mario's appearance: "labios gruesos, incluso mórbidos y hasta vagamente femeninos, que habían terminado por dominar el mentón varonil" (33, *passim*) ["the thick, soft lips, vaguely feminine, even, that had ended by dominating his masculine chin" (25, *passim*)]; and the mention of

Venus, "the Bringer of Light," whose other name we may not utter, and variations of this trope. The compulsion to repeat certain phrases signals an obsessive attention to a detail, the persistence of memory, even an inability to move forward and change one's focus. Laura's obsessive repetition associated with trauma, described by Freud, is perhaps a way of countering the amnesia criticized in the novel. In the end, by confronting the truth, mother and daughter are liberated: now able to break the trauma-memory-obsession cycle, they leave Pampa Hundida, and, presumably, move on.

The novel's management of the fate of guilt-ridden Cáceres (who returns to Pampa Hundida seeking—and receiving—his own punishment) is an example of the postmodern aesthetics of undecidability and multiplicity. The narrator tells us that there are different versions of Cáceres's end, and the Major himself asks Laura to punish him. The historical version, based on the death certificate signed by Dr. Ordóñez, describes an unidentifiable body, perhaps run over by a vehicle, left on the side the road and then half-devoured by animals. Another version, appropriate for Pampa Hundida's spiritual background and the fact that Cáceres disappeared at the culminating point of the *Diablada*, is the mythical version: the Major did not die, but was taken away from the camp by the religious leader's dancing "devils," who gave him a disguise and blended him with the multitude, where he remained at large, but also a chastised prisoner. "Ése es su castigo: el limbo de la impunidad en donde no hay absolución ni condena" (468) ["That is his punishment: the limbo of impunity in which there is neither absolution nor condemnation" (372)]. This mythical version condenses a sociological view of Chile, which in following the impulse to impart justice but failing to punish perpetrators, must realize that society harbors evil elements in its midst, and that Chileans must live with the

humiliating knowledge that justice is not attainable and that abuse of power continues to threaten the nation. But the ending of *El desierto* also suggests that the absence of absolution or condemnation is a punishment of sorts for perpetrators of human rights abuses.

Documentary Fiction

Compared to the relatively conventional narrative techniques used in the novels by Slovo, Eprile, and Franz, María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* employ a variety of techniques and elements not often found in novels. The narrative strategies displayed in these two novels constitute distinct responses to personal and national traumas still present—a generation after the 1976 military coup—in the Argentine collective psyche. The two novels' fragmented and variegated narration performs, rather than relates, ideas about the inherent incompleteness of memory and the difficulty of achieving unified knowledge. At the same time, both texts assert unequivocally the centrality of memory for the construction of identity.

Andruetto is interested in putting pressure on, and expanding the limits of, a genre in order to generate new, vigorous forms of writing (Pubill "María Teresa Andruetto" 63). Indeed, *Lengua madre* not only pushes the limits of the novelistic genre, but also blurs the border between fiction, autobiography, and non-fiction. Echoing and simultaneously qualifying Julieta's idea that "[l]a creatividad nace de la imaginación y la imaginación es la forma artística de la mentira" (31) [creativity is born out of imagination, and imagination is the artistic rendition of a lie], Latin Americanist critic

Corinne Pubill understands that fact and fiction meld in Andruetto's creative processes in order to access and express a deeper truth. This fusion and confusion between truth and fiction is patent in the semi-autobiographical tenor of *Lengua madre*. As she tells Pubill in their interview, Andruetto was born in 1954 in the province of Córdoba, Argentina, and became a leftist movement militant in the early 1970s. Seeing that the parastatal repressive organization AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina [Argentine Anticommunist Alliance]) was targeting workers, academics, and students like herself, she went into hiding in the Patagonia town of Trelew (where her character Julia finally settles). Andruetto tells Pubill about having to keep a low profile to avoid detection, and of suffering from loneliness and isolation during those years. After the end of the dictatorship, Andruetto learned that her landlords had hidden their son in the very house where she rented a room. The writer is keenly interested in the relationship between fiction and life, and explains that in *Lengua madre* she inserted actual photographs from a personal album to represent fictional characters because she was drawn to the confluence of the private, the social, and the historical fact. During her years in hiding Andruetto received letters that arrived by means other than the postal service, most often via a long-distance truck. This real-life detail is reproduced in *Lengua madre*, like much else told in the novel (such as the author's mother's attitude, which resembles Ema's when she scolds Julia for being so outspoken about her political views). Although the relationship between Julia and Andruetto is not one of identity (i.e., they are not the same person and belong to different universes—the novel and real life), the fictional characters are created with materials from the author's experience and those of her friends and acquaintances.

Lengua madre, then, is a textual and visual mosaic made with both factual and fictional pieces.

The pieces that form the mosaic include letters, photographs, drawings, pamphlets, and emails, in addition to the third-person narrative. The artifacts that Julia left for her daughter in the box serve to elicit both Julieta's private recollections and the realization of the existence and importance of the collective identity of the 1970s, which she is too young to have experienced and too distant to have noticed. The letters from friends and relatives received by Julia, which constitute the bulk of the novel, are usually not dated, nor are they in chronological order, but the reader—both the fictional reader Julieta, and the actual reader of the novel—can situate them in time by cross-referencing allusions with historical events from 1976 through 2005. As Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Professor Pampa Arán remarks, the letters divide the body of the novel into fragments, just as the body of memory is fragmented: "Textos en el texto, cuerpos en otro cuerpo, memorias en la memoria" [Texts within the text, bodies in another body, memories inside memory]. The combination of the third-person narration with the letters, Arán correctly observes, has the rhetorical effect of a polyphony—a piece in which multiple voices and perspectives can be heard. Additionally, this structure allows the novel to articulate ordinary daily life—conveyed by letters from Julia's parents, Ema and Stefano—with art—the novel *Lengua madre*. Andruetto's text has a visual dimension consisting of segments in different fonts (to distinguish Julieta's present-time narration from the material she reads and reflects on), and the intercalated photographs, drawings, and facsimiles of telegrams, emails, brochures, and other documents. Figure 1 is a sample page from the novel showing three different narration modes: the third person narrative in

the present (at top, in standard font); a letter from Julia to Julieta (in italics); and two photographs, one of Ema and Julia from 1974, and one of Julieta ten years ago; the two photos suggest that things change but also stay the same.

This graphic mosaic structure also highlights the fragmentary nature of personal memory that contrasts with the neat unitary narration of history and most realist fiction. As Pubill observes in "Insilio," this hybrid text recovers an identity fragmented by pain, loss, and isolation. An intelligible image emerges when the fragments that form the mosaic are seen together,

an image that becomes part of Julieta's identity and part of the reader's experience. The novel's recuperation is double: Julieta's recovered identity to which Pubill refers occurs in the fictional universe of *Lengua madre*, while Julia's private reality and the recovery of a historical circumstance is made public in the real world where the novel is read.

Lengua madre's vertebral column is Julieta's narration as she encounters the objects in the box of memories and experiences being back in her country. These objects function as personal *lieux de mémoire*. Pierre Nora's notion of memory sites is conceived

Al final de la caja, no lo había visto, hay un papel doblado, escondido, bajo el cartón del fondo que dice:

*Querida hija, como hablamos recién por teléfono en la que creo fue nuestra despedida, hubiera querido revisar estas cartas y estos papeles con vos, una tarde de estas últimas de la vida, aquí en casa. De cualquier modo, sé que en algún momento leerás todo. Que si estás leyendo esto, ya habrás leído todo. Estoy segura de que verás cada cosa y la pondrás en su justo lugar. Ojalá tu juicio para conmigo no sea tan duro. Además de pedirte perdón por todo lo que no fue, quisiera decirte algo: no sé qué pasó ni por qué no pude, pero yo **quise** ser tu madre y quise ser muchas otras cosas que no fui, pero lo que quiero decirte, hija, en realidad es que vos sos todo lo que yo quise ser.*

Julia



Figure 1. Sample page from *Lengua madre*

as public places, objects, or occasions of remembrance to which entire communities have access and that signal a large-scale event to be memorialized. Even though Julieta's box is of a personal nature, it functions as a site of remembrance for her as well as for the public reading the novel.

The inclusion of personal texts, in particular the photographs that sprinkle the novel, provide the mediation between generations that Marianne Hirsh considers a crucial element of postmemory: images, personal items, stories. As Julieta learns about her mother's personal history through textual and pictorial artifacts, she is able to understand her parents' and grandparents' past and the impact of their circumstances on her own life. The letters received by Julia (mostly from Ema during the period when Julia was in hiding, but also from later periods) constitute a narrative thread juxtaposed to the narration that describes Julieta reading them. The letters and other texts contribute to develop plot, reveal an era, and define the characters. The technique is reminiscent of W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, where photographs—supposedly of the protagonist and of the places the narrator visits—are interspersed with the narration of the protagonist's life. The intention in both Andruetto's and Sebald's novels is to create a sense of material reality.

While private and individual, Arán remarks, this reality is a metonymy of a social process of identity and memory. Even the reader's memory is interpellated from the moment we see the date of the first telegram, January 1976, because of the significance of the historical and social context: that year is immediately associated in Argentina with the latest military coup; January is two months before this event, when social and economic chaos were at an algid height. Widespread fear is part of this historical context (for even before the military takeover the paramilitary repressive forces had been active

assassinating and disappearing targeted political militants and their families), and is evoked in a number of letters both verbally and graphically in bold font: "la dirección es **sólo para vos / ustedes**, no se la den a **nadie**" (22, emphasis in the original) [the address is **only for you**, do not give it to **anyone** else], writes Julia to her parents. In a letter to Julia, her friend Adriana describes how she ran into Ema and when Adriana inquired after Julia, Ema "quedó medio cortada, no pudo 'explayarse' [. . .], me dio a entender que estabas missing. [. . .] Todo muy bien, salvo el ambiente que estaba un poco cálido (tanquecitos en la calle, toque de queda y esas cosas)" (46) [was somewhat taken aback, she could not 'elaborate' [. . .], she hinted that you were missing. [. . .] Everything all right, except that the atmosphere was a bit warm (little tanks on the street, curfew, and such)]. On 5 November 1976, seven months into the dictatorship, Ema writes in a state of panic: "Julia, te pido un poco de cordura, **por favor no te vuelvas**, haceme caso, no podemos tenerte acá, es peligroso, seguro que alguno se enteraría. Después hablamos, pero **TENÉS QUE QUEDARTE AHÍ EN TRELEW**, más al sur si querés, pero aquí **JAMÁS, JAMÁS**, anoche me enteré de cosas que te harían correr peligros que ni te imaginás" (112-13) [Julia, I beg you to be cautious, **please do not come back**, listen to me, we cannot have you here, it's dangerous, someone could find out. We'll talk later, but **YOU MUST STAY THERE IN TRELEW**, even farther south if you want, but here, **NEVER, NEVER**, last night I heard about some things that would put you at a risk that you can't even imagine]. These are all recognizable sentiments associated with the latest Argentine and Chilean dictatorships, uttered in hushed voices by real people at the time, and frequently represented in literature about that period²⁰.

²⁰ See, for example, *La casa de los conejos* (2008), by Laura Alcoba; *La mujer en cuestión* (2003), by María Teresa Andruetto; *Una misma noche* (2012), by Leopoldo Brizuela; *A quien corresponda* (2008) and

Beyond the historical and social references and implications, Julieta begins to see the letters as a polyphonic musical score, and herself as the player or singer that renders them comprehensible, interpreting not only what is written in the letters, but also the quality of the handwriting and all that goes unsaid. Through the knowledge imparted and the memories recovered by means of the items bequeathed by her mother, Julieta is able to re-interpret her family's and her own past, and by doing this, she is transformed: she understands better the political convictions and dynamics that led to her mother's *insilio*, Julia's struggle to make the right decisions to preserve her own and her daughter's lives, and the stress that Julia's decisions inflicted on her parents' life through the many years of raising Julieta. Most importantly, this understanding leads Julieta to forgive her distanced mother, and to be at peace with herself by finally admitting that Julia did not lack love for her.

Arán correctly perceives that this collage of a novel aspires to be a synthesis of languages, and this is why it incorporates non-verbal language like photographs and drawings. The non-verbal texts, besides lending verisimilitude to the novel, make it very visual. At the same time, Andruetto pays close attention to verbal language and recovers a sociolect that can almost be *heard* when reading the novel. For instance, Nicolás was "en aquel tiempo novio o, como solía decirse, compañero de su madre" (16) [back then her mother's boyfriend, or *compañero* as they used to say]. Julieta's grandfather Stefano sprinkles his letters with Italian, and mixes "tú" forms—almost never used in Argentina—with the regionally standard "vos". Ema's letters, in particular, reproduce

No velas a tus muertos (1986), by Martín Caparrós; *Jamás el fuego nunca* (2007), by Diamela Eltit; *Memorias del río inmóvil* (2001), by Cristina Feijóo; *Kamchatka* (2004), by Marcelo Figueras; *La vida doble* (2010), by Arturo Fontaine; *Villa* (1995) and *Ni muerto has perdido tu nombre* (2002), by Luis Gusmán; *El fin de la historia* (1996), by Liliana Heker; *Dos veces junio* (2002), *Museo de la Revolución* (2006), and *Ciencias morales* (2007), by Martín Kohan; and *Conversación al sur* (1981), by Marta Traba.

with perfect pitch an Argentine mother's oral and epistolary expression. Thus, to the mosaic of textual fact, fiction, and history, Andruetto adds visual and auditory elements that add realism and materiality to her novel.

Julieta is a literature scholar. As such, she analyzes some texts by deconstructing them even to the level of the grammar. This is not merely professional deformation, but a personal interpretative strategy. Observing a photograph of a child standing next to a blackboard that reads "*Esperemos con fuerza el nuevo año. Diciembre de 1976*" [Let's await with strength the New Year. December, 1976], Julieta's reaction is:

No sabe por qué ese saludo de fin de año le parece un ruego, esconde algo de desesperación. Tal vez sea por la palabra: *Esperemos*. No, la palabra no, más bien el modo del verbo. No es un modo verbal que se use para ocasiones como ésta. Tal vez lo lógico hubiera sido 'Esperamos' o 'Deseamos' . . . Sin embargo puede leer claramente el subjuntivo: *Esperemos. Esperemos con fuerza. Esperemos con fuerza el nuevo año*. El subjuntivo es el tiempo del deseo y del ruego, piensa, prestando atención a la fecha: *diciembre de 1976*. (43-44)

[She's not sure why that end-of-year greeting seems to her like a supplication, it hides some desperation. Perhaps it's because of the words: *Let's await*. No, not the words, but rather the verbal mood. It is not a verbal mood used for such occasions. Perhaps the logical thing would have been 'We wish' or 'We hope' . . . But she can clearly read the subjunctive: *Let's await. Let's await with strength. Let's await with strength the New Year*. The subjunctive is the mode of desire and pleading, she thinks, noticing the date: *December, 1976*.]

Julieta's linguistic observations stem from her professional literary interests and the importance of the written word in both her academic and private life. Her mother's letters were a highlight during Julieta's childhood; she waited anxiously for them, her heart pounding when she spotted the mailman. But suddenly, "un día, de manera brutal, decidió olvidarlas, [. . .] no sabe a qué sitio habrá ido a parar lo que su madre escribió para ella" (41) [one day, brutally, she decided to forget them, [. . .] she doesn't know where her mother's letters to her might have ended]. That was perhaps the day when Julieta started drifting away from her mother, to whom she had been very attached, even though they had never lived together.

In her academic life, Julieta studies women writers who are unjustly forgotten or unrecognized. It appears that she knows literature better than she knows life, that she experiences life through literature. She realizes with some alarm that she knows so much about Doris Lessing's character Maudie Fowler, but in contrast, she does not know how her own mother died. Similarly, she is more familiar with Manuel Puig's characters than with her father (who, like Puig and many of Puig's characters, was also born in General Villegas). Julieta's choice to experience life indirectly through literature differs sharply from her mother's choices, which condemned Julia to not being able to experience life fully when she was hiding in a basement for several years. Julieta's preference for experiencing life through literature can be interpreted as her conscious or unconscious distancing from hurtful situations, in particular from what she perceived as her mother's lack of affection, evidenced by Julia's ultimate decision to not live with her daughter. The character Julieta thus blends life with a large dose of literature. Similarly, the author Andruetto combines real life (much of it, her own) and creative writing.

The Parents' Detective

The factual basis and the investigation of the past characteristic of *Lengua madre*, are also features of Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*. Due to the preponderance of autobiographical elements in *El espíritu*, including the coincidence of the vital statistics of the narrator and the author (Tala 116), the term *autofiction* to indicate autobiographical fiction in the first person (Lejeune xii, Smith and Watson 259-60) seems an appropriate generic definition of this text. Pron calls *El espíritu* a non-fiction novel, and adds that it is probably his last ("Las autobiografías"). The epilogue declares that, while the events narrated are mostly true, this work is not autobiographical or testimonial. The epilogue speaker seems to be the author, but the use of one of the narrator's mannerisms—calling the city of Rosario "*osario," for instance—blurs the distinction. What is unquestionably factual is one of the two narrative lines in the novel—the Alberto Burdisso murder case²¹.

The murder is one of the two investigations that form the core of *El espíritu*. The second investigation is that of the past of the protagonist's parents. The protagonist-narrator sees himself as a detective or a character in a detective novel, and reaches the grim understanding that "todos los hijos de los jóvenes de la década de 1970 íbamos a tener que dilucidar el pasado de nuestros padres como si fuéramos detectives y que lo que averiguaríamos se iba a parecer demasiado a una novela policíaca que no quisiéramos haber comprado nunca" (142) ["all the children of young Argentines in the 1970s were going to have to solve our parents' pasts, like detectives, and what we would find out was

²¹ For examples of newspaper reports of the case, see *La Capital* (http://www.lacapital.com.ar/ed_impresa/2010/6/edicion_597/contenidos/noticia_5620.html), *El Litoral* (http://www.ellitoral.com/index.php/id_um/31440), and *El Trébol Digital* (<http://www.eltreboldigital.com.ar/index.php?s=nD&id=1325&sID=7#.U2hE1XZUiSo>).

going to seem like a mystery novel we wished we'd never bought" (152)]. However, upon reflection, he rejects this notion because he realizes that telling his father's story as a policier would mean classifying it within a system of genres, and this would betray the man's struggle to challenge conventions when he was young. The stories the narrator has to tell contain a mystery, a hero, a pursuer and a pursued, and they could have been told as detective fiction. Yet he realizes that he must tell the story in a different way, "con fragmentos, con murmullos y con carcajadas y con llanto y que yo tan solo iba a poder escribirla cuando ya formase parte de una memoria que había decidido recobrar" (185-86) ["in fragments, in whispers and with laughter and with tears, and I knew I would be able to write it only once it became part of the memories I'd decided to recover" (198)].

After repeated mentions of his amnesia, this is the first time the narrator shows a desire for, or the possibility of, remembering; significantly, this desire is linked to his wish to tell the story. This is a reversal of the notion underpinning *testimonio*, where memory demands to be told and narration follows. Here, the character wants to narrate, and to do so he must prod his memory. So he assembles a narrative with the appearance of "una historia personal e íntima que evitase la tentación de contarlo todo, una pieza de un puzzle inacabado que obligase al lector a buscar las piezas contiguas y después continuar buscando piezas hasta desentrañar la imagen" (143) ["an intimate personal story that held something back, a piece of an unfinished puzzle that would force the reader to look for adjacent pieces and then keep looking until the image became clear" (153)].

This option, the narrator surmises, is better than the traditional detective genre that, according to him, almost always gives the reader the erroneous belief that crimes are

always solved and remain enclosed in the book, and that the world outside the book follows the same principles of justice of the genre, and should not be questioned. It is the traditional detective fiction, with its neat narrative structure of crime-investigation-revelation (and presumably punishment by state institutions, i.e., justice) that the narrator of *El espíritu* rejects. His narrative is closer to anti-detective fiction—a subversion of detective fiction that employs the genre's established framework (crime-investigation-justice) but radically changes the resolution by rendering it failed, incomplete, or non-conducive to justice (Tani 321-23). Thus, Pron's novel not only narrates two mysteries and their investigations, but also functions as literary criticism of a genre with which it claims both similarities and ideological differences.

Most of the philosophical underpinning of *El espíritu* has to do with memory and its relationship to the present, and how the past—even events not experienced personally but lived by our ancestors—molds our present; in other words, postmemory. The meandering, often incomplete, sometimes excessively detailed narration style of *El espíritu* reflects the narrator's own unstable memory and his trajectory to a more meaningful existence and fuller relationship with his family, with which he tries to reconnect and the country that he rejects. This trajectory is charted from Part I—centered on the protagonist's return to his native land and the arousal of his curiosity by the documents about the murder case that he finds among his father's papers—through Part V, where the father recovers his health, the protagonist recovers a significant portion of his memory, decides to write this novel, and meditates on philosophical and literary issues such as transgenerational relationships, memory, and fiction. Toward the end of the novel the long and awkward title is explained: to the narrator, his father represents

other parents whose actions and spirit should not be forgotten because "su espíritu, no las decisiones acertadas y equivocadas que mis padres y sus compañeros habían tomado sino su espíritu mismo, iba a seguir subiendo en la lluvia hasta tomar el cielo por asalto" (186) ["their ghost—not the right or wrong decisions my parents and their comrades had made but their spirit itself—was going to keep climbing in the rain until it took the heavens by storm" (198)]. It is the honoring and preservation of his parents' convictions and struggle that the protagonist sets out to discover and then record in this text. The title of the novel's English translation, *My Fathers' Ghost is Climbing in the Rain*, is a fair literal translation of the Spanish title, but is, more precisely, the last line of Dylan Thomas's "I Fellowed Sleep" (which makes the Spanish original title itself a translation of D. Thomas's line). The poem is an oneiric voyage to dead ancestors and a tribute to the speaker's dead father. Throughout the novel, but especially in the Epilogue, the narrator urges the reader to do what he did; that is, to remember and investigate who our ancestors were.

The many modes of writing in *El espíritu*—personal story, police and forensic report, legal and administrative document, legal testimony, police blotter, newspaper articles and announcements, village chronicle, letters, dreams, film & TV programs, drug package insert, historical account, corrected manuscript, ekphrasis, and eulogy—create at least two effects. First, as in Andruetto's novel, this multiplicity of textual types produces the impression that the narration corresponds with reality, for many events are documented. Secondly, the novel conveys a sense of depersonalization and distancing of the narrator, a reluctance to give only his subjective version. Yet despite the abundance of factual documents throughout the novel, the intensely private viewpoint predominates,

especially the character's feelings for his parents, his intimate experiences such as his psychotropic drug-induced amnesia, his disdain for his native country, his fears and insecurities, and his dreams.

The narrator seems erratic, even unstable, as he himself acknowledges repeatedly. His mnemonic unreliability is conveyed, apart from his own admission of natural poor recall and drug-induced amnesia, through his multiple and changing modes of narration, language register, and affective tenor. He sometimes indulges in unrealistically detailed accounts of numerous dreams, or in long lists, some of which may be descriptive and relevant, like the names of authors and titles of books found on the family's bookshelf, while others, such as the colors of the book covers, are gratuitous. This obsession with detail contrasts with the apparent sloppiness evidenced by missing or non-sequential chapter numbers²². Whereas the narration of events of his own life is smooth, colloquial, and easy to follow, the narrative flow is interrupted by the transcription of official or published texts, such as poorly written newspaper articles that the narrator painstakingly and visibly corrects. Here I give one example, among several found in the novel: Part of an article is transcribed, prefaced by the narrator's comment that it "resumía la historia con una profusión de amarillismo y un florecimiento de comas innecesarias que recordaban a una flor apestosa" (110) ["summed up the story in a profusion of yellow journalism, littered with superfluous commas that brought to mind a fetid flower" (115)]:

«[. . .] en la casa de Corrientes al 438, que había comprado y puesto a nombre de él y de su ex [sic] concubina, hace años[,] y de la cual, [sic] había sido desalojado para vivir casi tirado en el garage. [sic]. / »[. . .] Desde hacía tiempo, otra mujer se

²² I have analyzed the implications of this elsewhere. See N. Kaminsky "Trauma".

quedaba con todo el dinero de su mensualidad, a cambio de compañías temporales[,] y[,] últimamente, hasta le había traído varias peleas. De hecho, Alberto hacía tres meses que no frecuentaba la casa de esta nueva 'compañera', [sic] porque había tenido un altercado, con golpes de puño, con el concubino de esta mujer, hecho que está asentado en la policía; (110-11, all chevrons, bracketed text, and slashes in the original)

[[. . .] in the house on Corrientes, number 438, which he had bought and put under his name and that of his ex common-law wife, a few years earlier, and from which he had been evicted and left to live practically abandoned in a garage.

[. . .] For some time now, another woman kept his entire monthly salary, in exchange for temporary companionship, and, recently, she had even gotten him into several fights. In fact, Alberto hadn't frequented the house of his new "companion" in three months, because he had had an altercation that came to blows with this woman's common-law husband, a fact that is confirmed by the police; (115)]

Although the English translation does not reproduce the editing marks intentionally visible in the Spanish version, it does, nonetheless, capture a slight whiff of the "fetid flower" character of the writing that so offends the narrator. He makes these "corrections" presumably to render the real-life articles more comprehensible, or, more likely, to make painfully obvious, through the brackets and sics, the deplorable writing skills of the reporters, and, by extension, the poor intellectual and cultural conditions in Argentina, and his own shock at them (a shock in fact experienced by many Argentines returning to

the country after years of absence)²³. Like the long list of titles on the bookshelf, the narrator inserts this obviously corrected article in order to *show* rather than *tell* how things stand in the country. This aspect is unfortunately lost in the English translation.

The many memory holes and the incomplete chapter sequence invite skepticism about the narrator's reliability. This fallibility contrasts with the attention he pays to language and his willingness to reproduce precise scientific terminology. This incongruence provokes questions as to the mental stability of the narrator, who at times indulges in lengthy medical writing such as the apparently verbatim transcription of a drug insert. In the following example, the narrator blends linguistic awareness with his own concrete medical condition: He transcribes "el trabalenguas imposible de los enfermos y de los médicos" ["the impossible tongue twister of the ill and their doctors"] from the literature accompanying one of his medications: "benzodiazepina, diazepam, neuroléptico, hipnótico, zolpidem, ansiolítico, alprazolam, narcótico, antiepiléptico, antihistamínico, clonazepam, barbitúrico, lorazepam, triazolobenzodiazepina, escitalopram; todas palabras de las palabras cruzadas de una cabeza que se niega a funcionar" (28) [*benzodizepine, diazepam, neuroleptic, hypnotic, zolpidem, tranquilizer, alprazolam, narcotic, antiepileptic, antihistamine, clonazepam, barbiturate, lorazepam, triazolobenzodiazepine, escitalopram*—all words in a crossword puzzle of a head that refused to function" (21, italics in the English translation; translation modified)]. Pron's intention seems to be to highlight the difficulty of gleaning meaning through the opaqueness of the technical jargon of the medical and pharmaceutical institutions, which he distrusts and of which he and his father, as patients, are victims. At the hospital, his

²³ See, for example, Tomás Eloy Martínez's *Réquiem por un país perdido* (2003).

father "yacía debajo de una maraña de cables como una mosca en una telaraña [. . .] y rodeándonos a todos estaban los ruidos del hospital y ese aire pesado que huele a desinfectante y a falsas esperanzas y que a veces es peor que la enfermedad" (31-32) ["was lying beneath a tangle of cords like a fly in a spiderweb [. . .] and we were all surrounded by the noises of the hospital and that heavy air that smells of disinfectant and false hopes and is sometimes worse than sickness or death" (25-26)]. The image of the fly/patient caught in the spiderweb of medical equipment illustrates both people's entanglement with the medical institution and the victimhood of the ill.

As Latin American literature scholar Pamela Tala observes, by insisting on his own unreliability and instilling perplexity in the reader, the narrator undermines the fictional pact because he destabilizes the opposition true/false. Furthermore, he "contaminates"²⁴ conventional literary language through a number of non-literary writing modes such as lists, transcriptions of records and reports, descriptions of corrupted evidence like blurry photographs, and the prescriptive language of medical data. This varied language use has several effects. One is that the narrator depersonalizes and distances himself, expressing his fraught relationship with the country and his family, as well as with his own mind and memory—which signals an identity dilemma. Also, this polluting language reminds us of the narrator's and his parents' rejection of convention and the narrator's desire to challenge readers to interpret for themselves. Of course there is the possibility that the author wants to share his delight at the sound of these strange, euphonic, polysyllabic words.

In a metafictional move, the narrator asks:

²⁴ This eloquent term is Alberto Moreiras's, quoted in Tala 129.

¿Cómo debía haber sido la novela que mi padre había querido escribir? Breve, hecha de fragmentos, con huecos allí donde mi padre no pudiera o no quisiera recordar algo, hecha de simetrías —historias duplicándose a sí mismas una y otra vez como si fueran la mancha de tinta en un papel plegado hasta el cansancio, un tema mínimo repetido varias veces como en una sinfonía o el monólogo de un idiota— y más triste que el día del padre en un orfanato. (135-36)

[What must the novel my father wanted to write have been like? Brief, composed of fragments, with holes where my father couldn't or didn't want to remember something, filled with symmetries—stories duplicating themselves over and over again as if they were an ink stain on an assiduously folded piece of paper, a simple theme repeated as in a symphony or a fool's monologue—and sadder than Father's Day at an orphanage. (144)]

In other words, the novel that the narrator's father would have liked to write is very much like the one the narrator wrote, which is Pron's *El espíritu*: short, fragmented, with missing chapters, full of symmetries and mirror images. Tala accurately describes the novel as mirrors reflecting the personal, the family, and the national histories, one *mise en abyme* after another, a perpetual search of expressive forms.

Indeed, as Tala remarks, reflections and symmetries abound in *El espíritu*, almost like a scaffolding that supports the plot. The first symmetry observed is between the disappearances of Alberto Burdisso and the disappearance of his sister Alicia during the dictatorship three decades earlier. What links the two disappearances, besides the fact that the victims were siblings, is the narrator's father, who knew both Burdisso and could prevent the murder of neither. As the older man searches in the folds of his memory for

his disappeared friend Alicia, the narrator searches for his father (another symmetry). These are pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that the protagonist imagines his father has made for him, a puzzle that must be recast on a "tablero mayor que era la memoria y era el mundo" (129) ["larger tabletop that was memory and in fact the world" (137-38)]. Another way to think of this is that memory is a fragment of the world, and as fragments of a whole, memory's pieces can be arranged to produce an image that makes sense. For Pron's novel to exist, it is necessary that the protagonist regain his memory and make discoveries that he can weave into a narrative.

The English translation inevitably loses something that is noticeable to readers of the Spanish version who are familiar with Argentine speech: Pron's novel is written in the Peninsular variety of Spanish. Lexical choices such as *fregadero* (kitchen sink), *autobús* (bus), *nevera* (refrigerator), *judías* (beans), *albaricoque* (apricot), *listín telefónico* (telephone book), and *gafas* (eye glasses), are understandable, but not usually uttered spontaneously by Argentines. This Peninsular inflection throughout the novel signals a consequence of exile that invades the text, and produces an estrangement effect. When Peninsular terms are used for Argentine cultural items, such as *filetes empanados* (breaded filets) instead of *milanesas*, or *barrio de chabolas* (shantytown) instead of *villa miseria*, and when terms with different meanings and registers like *coger* (in most places: to pick up an object; in Argentina: to fuck), are used throughout a novel set in Argentina with a one hundred percent local cast of characters, then the estrangement and distancing is multiplied. Certain grammatical vices of Peninsular Spanish like *leísmo* (the incorrect use of an indirect object pronoun instead of the direct object pronoun), or constructions more common in Spain than in the Americas, like a preference for the present perfect

over the preterit, also abound and surprise. Yet the narrator does recognize, understand, and is able to reproduce Argentinean speech, for all the other characters do speak in the local idiom. An official welcomer at the Buenos Aires airport offers, with perfect Argentinean grammar and lexicon, "¿Querés probar una galletita?" (24) ["Would you like to try a cookie? (18)], and the narrator's sister conjugates verbs in the style of the Río de la Plata ("No entiendo cómo no te acordás" [162] ["I can't believe you don't remember" (173)]). What is the reason for Peninsular usage by an Argentina-born writer writing a novel set in Argentina and about Argentina? I would suggest that, in addition to Pron's biographical reasons (he has lived in Europe for many years, currently resides in Spain, and in fact his spoken Spanish is closer to the Peninsular than to his native country's accent²⁵), language is a way for the narrator—and the author, too, perhaps—to establish distance from the native country, a lexical and cultural distancing that Argentine readers cannot fail to notice. Asked by Andrés Hax about this, Pron said that his narratorial language is not deliberate, but probably the consequence of living abroad for many years; furthermore, he remarks on the risk of sounding artificial if he had tried to imitate the oral Argentine idiom. Pron concludes that, "[a]nte de la incertidumbre sobre cómo deben hablar los personajes, los personajes hablan finalmente como hablas tu [sic]" [when in doubt about how the characters should speak, in the end they speak like you do] (my translation). Pron's narrator certainly speaks like his author, but Pron lets his other characters speak like themselves.

²⁵ This can be appreciated in the video of Andrés Hax's interview with Pron in "La literatura es una forma de participar en los asuntos de mi tiempo," http://www.revistaenie.clarin.com/literatura/ficcion/Patricio-Pron-entrevista_0_668333412.html, where Pron's Iberian contrasts with Hax's Argentine accent.

In addition to expressive and aesthetic considerations, and beyond the plot, the form of a literary work can respond to a political perspective. The political design becomes especially evident when authors, like Andruetto and Pron, overtly diversify and even subvert the genre. In an interview, Pron tells Carina González that, for him, form rather than the topic of a novel is where its political statement lies, and that the formal procedures in his books are an invitation to read and interpret the text differently. This echoes Andruetto's view that the revolutionary power of literature lies in the possibility of questioning (qtd. Pubill "Insilio" 149). It even harkens back to Julio Cortázar, who believed that "la novela revolucionaria no es solamente la que tiene un 'contenido' revolucionario sino la que procura revolucionar la novela misma, la forma novela y para ello utiliza las armas de la hipótesis de trabajo, la conjetura, la trama pluridimensional, la fractura del lenguaje" (qtd. Almeida and Parodi 515) [the revolutionary novel is not only that which has a revolutionary "content," but that which attempts to revolutionize the novel itself, the novel form, and to that end uses as weapons the working hypothesis, conjecture, multidimensional plot, fractured language] (my translation). Cortázar's prescription is clearly enacted in Andruetto's and Pron's novels.

What is the textual function of the preponderance of these unusual narrative elements in Andruetto's and Pron's novels? First, especially in Andruetto's text, the narrative technique gives voice to others—other characters, the community—who are not the narrator, so they can speak for themselves without the narrator's mediation and without dialogue. Thus, Ema's voice resounds through her letters to her daughter; although she has no speaking parts, her voice is heard clearly. In Pron's novel, the collective voice of El Trébol (including the police and reporters, notwithstanding their

poor writing style) comes to life through the newspaper articles and other documents found in the father's files. Carlos Franz's town Pampa Hundida speaks through the narrator in the first person plural, as if appropriating the plural voice of the town, or speaking as the chorus. The impression is that a collective voice is speaking of a collective memory, and the personal memory and postmemory of trauma finds a sounding board in the collective, which will remember after the individuals are gone, as Halbwachs asserts.

The second textual function of these unusual narrative techniques is to give a sense (but only a sense, never the certainty) of documented objectivity. Although *Lengua madre* and *El espíritu* are not documentaries, the narrative strategies they employ impart the feeling that they are fact-and-document-based stories. This perception should of course be read with cautious suspicion, but it nonetheless conveys the idea that the general experience is true, even if all the individual facts did not necessarily occur as told. In all, the deployment of these narrative elements make *Lengua* and *El espíritu* documentary fiction or autofiction, and personal accounts laid out for readers to find or create their own interpretations, just as Patricio Pron would have it.

Narrative Reconstruction from Trauma to Amnesia, from Memory to Fiction

As societies transition from violent state repression to democracy, victims, witnesses, advocates are an active part of the forces propelling the understanding of the past. The political transition to democracy elicits questions about the legitimacy and intentions of the search of truth, memory, justice, and national identity and reconciliation. Literature not only complements the historical discourse, but it also makes history more

intimately subjective and accessible to the public. Literary representation (fictional or otherwise) opens the past so that individual experience is communicable to the collective.

Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* traces a journey from complicity to trauma to coming to terms with one's own and society's responsibilities through testimony and acts of contrition. The novel comments not only on the injustices and abuses of apartheid, but also on ideas of reconciliation and reconstruction in post-apartheid South Africa. When Paul Sweetbread tells Dini "only half joking, that memory is itself a subversive act, she replied in all seriousness: 'The time for subversion is over. You've got to stop living in the past, Paul. [. . .] Now it's time to *build up* the New South Africa" (274). This exchange exemplifies some of the conflicts between memory as investigation of the past and as a means of reconstruction for the future; it also echoes the politics of forgetting embraced by some both in South Africa and in the Southern Cone.

Although, despite all its shortcomings, the TRC did more than any other TC to compel the citizenry to acknowledge the past, revise history, and invite conciliation, some of its assumptions and methods have been criticized. Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* challenges the TRC's notion of healing through memory and testimony by showing a case of re-traumatization and questioning the very possibility of access to the truth. Moreover, the novel suggests that old power dynamics persist even though the formal administration of power (i.e., government) has radically changed. The retrieval of documents and memories is akin to excavation of graves and exhumation of corpses, and this may have positive effects for society; however, the heroine surprisingly concludes that comforting a fellow human is more important than truth, which is sometimes undecidable and not necessarily the only mechanism for reconciliation. Yet overall, the very existence of a

novel that tackles these issues signals a function for narration outside the witness box, with productive ideological, and not only entertainment, uses.

Narration in epistolary form, is also how the protagonist of Carlos Franz's *El desierto* transitions from traumatic and ashamed memory to confrontation with oppression and her own implication in it. The novel insinuates that vengeance may be appropriate when the law fails to mete out justice. Franz's novel also advocates for the honest disclosure of history to the younger generation as the base from which to rebuild the nation. Discovery and knowledge are also central in María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, whose protagonists transition from ignorance toward knowledge, from amnesia to understanding, and to not only accepting but also employing the weight of transgenerational dynamics to complete their processes of identity formation.

All the novels examined here explore the possibility and benefits of elucidating the past to construct personal and social identity, and to restore interpersonal relationships at an individual or communal level. While their angles and some of their conclusions differ, read together these works are part, along with other representations (including non-literary forms), of a multi-generational jigsaw puzzle that illustrates a subjective historical perspective on events wrested from history and personal experience by literary fiction.

Chapter II: From Exile to Nomadism

In the 1970s and 1980s, the policing forces of the Southern Cone and, to a lesser though significant extent, the apartheid regime in South Africa, systematically relied on imprisonment, torture, and murder to stifle political dissent. Exile, another form of repression, directly affected hundreds of thousands of South Americans²⁶ who were expelled or fled because their lives were in danger. Some 40,000 South Africans left their country because of apartheid (Wren), many of whom joined the efforts of the African National Congress (ANC) abroad, including *Umkhonto weSizwe* (MK), the ANC's armed branch (Beinart 251; Ndlovu 413; Schleicher 5). Social scientists as well as literature scholars, such as Amy Kaminsky, Sophia McClennen, Sylvia Molloy, and Fernando Reati, have amply studied the phenomenon of political exile in Latin America. South African writers Breyten Breytenbach and Lewis Nkosi experienced exile personally, and have explored the subject poetically and in essays. Less dramatic variations of displacement not associated with authoritarian repression, however, have not received as much critical attention. Although voluntary expatriation may lack the romantic aura of the political persecution of those who flee to save their lives or liberate their nation, its psychological and social impact is represented in fiction, particularly in the literature of the democratic transitions and later, when economic and social circumstances stimulated significant waves of emigration from Latin America and Southern Africa.

South African Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer was, in addition to a writer, a prominent anti-apartheid activist. In regards to writers and exile, she was of the opinion

²⁶ An estimated 200,000-400,000 Chileans (Angell and Carstairs 148, 159; Stern *Reckoning* 36), 10,000-50,000 Argentines (Alconada Mon), and 300,000 Uruguayans (20 per cent of the country's population) (Roniger and Sznajder 25; Rowe and Whitfield 230).

that, "despite the 'self-disgust' the situation might sometimes evoke in whites, the necessary task of historical transformation is really best served by working from within the nation, rather than from a position of self-imposed exile (if one has the choice)" (Head 4). Among those who stayed in their respective countries during the repression, some view exiles as weaker and less courageous than themselves because they did not bear the brunt of dictatorship, but abandoned the struggle against it (Gómez-Barris). This resentment is clearly represented in fictional characters, such as Aurelia in Mempo Giardinelli's *Santo oficio de la memoria*, and Lopito in José Donoso's *La desesperanza* (see the Appendix for illustrative passages). Writers on both sides of the wall of exile can be the object of this kind of resentment. Among South American artists, the conflict between those who went into exile and those who stayed has been painful for returnees and has elicited much debate that has as much to do with ethics and politics as with literature. Perhaps this conflict stems from different conceptions of literature, including, as writer Alicia Borinsky has perceptively noted, from "falsas seguridades y la mezquindad de quienes creen que la verdadera literatura siempre se hace desde un adentro literal que invisibiliza a los otros y así completan, sin darse cuenta, la tarea de las desapariciones" (102) [a false sense of security and the pettiness of those who think that true literature is always created from a literal inside that renders others invisible and thus, unbeknownst to them, they complete the task of disappearance (my translation)]. Borinsky's commentary denounces the narrow-mindedness and meanness sometimes extended toward returning exiles, but also reveals the view that many exiles believe that those who stayed in some way collaborated or were complicit with the regimes. The bitter recriminations between these two sides made it impossible to maintain the civil and

nourishing discussion that Saúl Sosnowski wanted to facilitate in Argentina soon after the return of democracy. The intractable hostilities in Buenos Aires prevented the meeting from being held there, as the organizer explains in the proceedings of the conference finally held at the University of Maryland, where Sosnowski is a faculty member (Sosnowski *Represión*). This event lends credence to what the novels studied in this dissertation suggest: a certain distance is necessary for proper analysis.

In this chapter I compare the fictional representations of variations of exile, the return to the homeland, and the formation of the nomadic subject. I also examine the topic of *insilio* (internal exile) because it is so prominent in one of the novels studied here and is a phenomenon related to the political repression in the Southern Cone in the 1970s, with effects that go beyond the individual in hiding. The novels' authors experienced in their own lives various forms of voluntary or involuntary expatriation. South African writer Gillian Slovo reports in her memoir, *Every Secret Thing*, that she was sent to England for her own safety; she has returned numerous times to her native country, but has not made her home there. María Teresa Andruetto lived through *insilio* in southern Argentina, an experience she reproduces in literary form in *Lengua madre*. Carlos Franz and Patricio Pron are residents of Spain, and have returned on occasion, even if only temporarily, to their countries of origin (Chile²⁷ and Argentina, respectively). These writers have created works of fiction presenting their political visions and infused with their personal experience.

Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, Franz's *El desierto*, and Slovo's *Red Dust* challenge received notions of national

²⁷ Franz was born in Switzerland, where his father, a Chilean diplomat, was posted at the time. He is considered a Chilean writer, though.

identity, and question the conciliatory discourse of their respective countries' democratic transitions. Two separate observations guide my analysis of these novels: First, that during the transitions to democracy in South Africa, Chile, and Argentina, the figure of the returnee serves the function of providing an outside critical perspective on the condition of the country of origin. This critique encompasses the social, cultural and intellectual transformations undergone by the country as well as the processes of transitional justice, including notions of truth, the valuation of memory, and the possibility of reconciliation. *El desierto*, through the critical voice of its heroine, Judge Laura Larco, and the myriad instances of petty and grand corruption depicted, slams the gavel and passes judgment on Chile's transition. One of the judge's sharpest criticisms (trading justice for peace) is a trans-Atlantic echo of that leveled by critics such as David Attwell, Barbara Harlow, and Anthony Holiday, against the call made by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to forgive in order to achieve peace and unity. The political thrust behind Slovo's *Red Dust* and Franz's *El desierto* is to challenge the conciliatory discourse of their respective countries' democratic transitions. Whereas *El desierto* directly criticizes the timidity of Chilean post-dictatorship justice, *Red Dust* directly challenges the validity of some of the TRC's claims, the meaning and effects of the TRC proceedings, and even the possibility of achieving truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing. Chapter III will elaborate on these critiques; what I wish to show here are the similarities between the novels' protagonists (as returning exiles or expats), and how and why these texts issue criticisms of the respective national transitional processes through their characters.

The second observation guiding this chapter is that the novels' protagonists embody an emerging nomadic subject with little national connection and no desire for a national identity. Yet, despite this nomadic consciousness and resistance to national belonging, and notwithstanding the dislocations caused or deepened by living abroad and the disenchantments of coming back, the novels present the possibility of accepting a return. Not a triumphalist nationalistic reconciliation, but rather a tentative rapprochement between the collective inside the country and the individual who fled or was expelled. While a permanent return is possible, the novels imply that it is not an end in itself, but rather part of a process of recovery and reconstruction, an option that does not negate the individual's nomadism. The nation and the family they encounter undermine the characters' harsh critiques—namely, by generating understanding and the chance to forgive others and themselves. That is to say, a considered personal reconciliation.

Offering examples of renowned South American writers and political exiles (José Donoso, Manuel Puig, Cristina Peri Rossi, and Luisa Valenzuela), literary critics Ivan Almeida and Cristina Parodi argue that the practice of fictionalizing the author's own uprooting emphasizes and preserves individual over cultural identity, and permits them to adopt new self-definitions (518-19). Almeida and Parodi present this practice as a paradigm of nomadism—the formation of one's own space independent from the homeland. This observation about Latin American literature is in line with the more extensive theorization of the nomadic consciousness undertaken by feminist philosopher Rossi Braidotti.

In *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Braidotti proposes the figure of the nomad in the context of globalized, advanced capitalism, conceptualizing it as "a nonunitary and multilayered vision, as a dynamic and changing entity" (5). Given the fluidity and multiplicity inherent in the concept, the nomad is the backbone of Braidotti's overarching argument against nationalism, Eurocentrism, and "phallogocentric monologism" (24) because it resists "hegemonic, fixed, unitary, and exclusionary views of subjectivity" (58). In her analysis, Braidotti provides useful general distinctions between exilic, migrant, and nomadic consciousness, and their representations in literature. In her scheme, exile and migrant literatures are marked by the sense of loss or separation from the homeland²⁸. In contrast, nomadic consciousness bears no "predetermined destinations or lost homelands," (60) and resists permanent identities, in particular the national. Thus, the nomadic individual is free of most national ties and can create or recreate a home anywhere (45). This freedom from, or outright rejection of, national affiliation as a component of personal identity, is expressed in the novels studied in this dissertation. I rely on Braidotti's concept of the nomad in order to show how the nomadic attitude is assumed by voluntary expatriates, such as the protagonists (and the authors) of my textual sample. I recognize that Braidotti's conceptualization of the nomad is applicable only to a narrow privileged segment of the world's population that has the resources and agency to free itself, if

²⁸ This sense of loss of, and nostalgia for, the homeland can be observed in numerous fictional and autobiographical accounts of exile and forced displacement. See, in addition to the South American authors mentioned by Almeida and Parodi, the texts noted in the Works Cited of this dissertation by Mario Benedetti, Carlos Cerda, Hiber Conteris, Antonio di Benedetto, Ariel Dorfman, Arturo Fontaine, Martín Kohan, Marilú Mallet, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Tununa Mercado, Manuel Puig, Héctor Tizón, and Marta Traba. For South African fiction and memoir about exile and return, see the works by André Brink, Rian Malan, and Bloke Modisane.

desired, from restrictive, externally imposed national and ethnic identities, and to move about uncoerced. The characters that populate the novels I am analyzing here fall within this privileged group.

I interpret the national and territorial detachment and the nomadic tendency displayed by the four protagonists to be a rejection of the concept of national belonging as an obligatory constituent of identity. Moreover, the characters show—as Braidotti comments, and very apropos to truth commissions and the work of memory—that non-participation in national life may be a way of challenging some notions, but also of "preserving ideas that may otherwise have been condemned to willful obliteration" (59), such as skepticism about the liberatory power of truth, as Slovo's text suggests. Thus, the novels flesh out the disillusionments of the new democratic orders, while simultaneously representing the determination to protect the present and the future from forgetting the past and repeating it.

Exile, Expatriation, and Many Unhappy Returns

Before examining the novels that explore the issues of the return of the expatriate, it is necessary to define terms and make distinctions. First, however, I would like to point out the irony that the Southern Cone countries were once hosts to emigrants and people persecuted by inquisitions and pogroms, and later became exporters of exiles—often the descendants of these same immigrants. One of these exiled descendants of immigrants to Uruguay, Mario Benedetti, wrote copiously about the exilic experience in numerous notes and articles. In his fiction²⁹, characters experience the "seven plagues of exile"

²⁹ *Primavera con una esquina rota* (1982) and *Geografías* (1984), for example.

(pessimism, defeatism, frustration, indifference, skepticism, discouragement, and inability to adapt) that the author writes about in his nonfiction book, *El desexilio* (51-52). Ariel Dorfman, whose peripatetic life is a long, convoluted sequence of familial and personal exiles and migrations, also has written extensively about exile and return in *Heading South, Looking North* and *Feeding on Dreams*. Both South American writers, speaking from their own personal experience and as professional critics, depict exile as a tragedy that can barely be endured, borne only thanks to the hope of returning; both also note the difficulties of reinserting themselves into the place they used to call "home."

Exile is almost always associated with political persecution and violence that implement a banishment; an exile is almost always someone who has been expelled (Cortázar 60) or who has escaped in order to preserve his or her life from a nation that is no longer a structure that protects and nourishes, but which has become life-threatening. The term *exilium*, used by Romans to designate banishment imposed as punishment for political reasons, is associated with uprootedness, loss, non-belonging, and alienation from elements constitutive of one's identity and that provide a sense of stability and security (Mertz-Baumgartner "Introducción" 11, 15). Implicit in this definition is the importance of territorial belonging for identity and stability; otherwise exile would not be the punishment it is intended to be.

There are qualitative differences in the continuum between the forced exile suffered by targeted political dissidents, and the less traumatic voluntary expatriation undertaken in the absence of state terror, as Braidotti, A. Kaminsky, and Edward Said explain. Political exile and voluntary expatriation are extreme variants in a continuum of experiences of being away from the homeland. The relative importance of the following

three elements helps to distinguish between them: the strength of national identity, the predominant affect, and the attitude towards the idea of returning. For Said, nationalism (i.e., the sense and assertion of belonging to a place, a language, and a culture) is inextricably associated with exile (176). While those who leave their countries under compulsion tend to have a strong national identity (A. Kaminsky 29), the importance of national belonging tends to be less or is absent in voluntary expatriates (Braidotti 50-60), who often leave their countries precisely because they reject or are indifferent to the idea of nation in general or to their nation as presently constituted. This contrast is illustrated when we compare Dorfman's strong Chilean national identity maintained during his years of exile, and the virtually absent sense of national belonging felt by the protagonists—who are not exiles—of *Red Dust*, *Lengua madre*, and *El espíritu*. These voluntary expatriates feel liberated from the ties to place, family, and even language, a feeling sometimes interpreted as indifference or rejection of their country and their compatriots. Pron's narrator of *El espíritu*, in particular, eloquently exemplifies this feeling of disaffection that contrasts so much with the nostalgic affect of the typical exilic character.

The strength of national identity determines some differences in how political exile, on the one hand, and non-compulsory emigration, on the other, are felt. In *After Exile*, A. Kaminsky writes that for exiles, "national identity is very much about individual identity, forged in exile and in resistance to 'othering'" (29). A predominant affect governing the lives of exiles is the feeling of loss and nostalgia for the land, the family, the people, and the projects that they were forced to abandon (Cymermann; Dorfman; A. Kaminsky); Said characterizes exile as imparting a "crippling sorrow of estrangement" (173). Exile is experienced as violent separation and marked by the idea of

return. It is a parenthesis, in Nelly Richard's words, that separates the past (mystified by nostalgia) and the hypothetical future of a return to the homeland where past aspirations will be reencountered and the truncated projects will recover their meaning (147). Both A. Kaminsky and Richard note the pain and loss of separation, and also the frequent disappointment experienced by political exiles when they return. For those who emigrate voluntarily, in contrast, state violence practiced directly on them is not a motive, nor is return necessarily an objective; additionally, both trajectories (outbound and inbound again) tend to be less emotionally taxing.

Despite the negative associations evoked by the term exile, some authors have argued that this event can also have positive ramifications. The renowned—and exiled—Paraguayan writer Augusto Roa Bastos believed that distance provides a greater objectivity and thus stimulates creativity, even at the expense of cutting the writer off from local sources (Cymermann 525), a position diametrically opposed to that of Nkosi, who has asserted that "a writer needs his roots; he needs his people" ("Art" 93). Similarly to Roa Bastos, South African exiled Afrikaans poet and painter Breyten Breytenbach expresses his dislike for the romanticism attached to exile, the stereotypes of suffering and deprivation, and especially the demand for pity and that someone else assume responsibility; instead of dwelling in this misery, he highlights the creative opportunities afforded by the experience. For Breytenbach, exile provided "the motifs for my work: silence, death, transformation, shadows, ink, games, the void, dreams, immobility, interchangeability, essence, breaks . . . It has shown me that you can become a master of dreams—since you had to recreate loss and articulate the void" (79). But whereas both Roa Bastos and Breytenbach believe that distance from local sources can benefit artistic

creation, the former also sees a danger of alienation in this distance (Rowe and Whitfield 235). This issue of alienation and the physical and affective distance from the homeland are explored in the fiction analyzed in this dissertation.

Distance creates novel experiences—in the sense of both being new, and of being worthy of literary expression. As Professor Arán optimistically notes in her 2007 conference presentation, terms like exile, exodus, migration, and relocation imply a loss of the sense of belonging, but also open possibilities for new stories, for return, and for taking root. Distance is not necessarily and permanently traumatic, nor is return necessarily a happy experience, even if the ardently desired event marks the end of exile. Each of the novels in my sample shows a different aspect of the experience of being an expatriate and returning to the country of origin (which none of the protagonists call "home"), and offers a critical response to the local situations.

The third difference between exiles and expatriates is their attitude towards homecoming. When political exiles return, they usually do so with great hopes. However, as Dorfman and Martínez describe at length in *Feeding on Dreams* and *Réquiem para un país perdido*, respectively, they are often disenchanted by how they are received and what they find—i.e., when reality does not match their memories and expectations. The returning voluntary expatriate, in contrast, is more likely to have a critical and detached perspective of the nation—both at the time of leaving and of coming back. In a sense, their low expectations allow for a richer experience of discovery when abroad and also upon returning, as the four protagonists learn. Even for nostalgic exiles eager to go back to the place they considered home, the plagues of exile listed by Benedetti in *El desexilio* do not suddenly disappear when they do so. Rather, at this junction other plagues appear.

Benedetti coined the term *desexilio* to express the end of exile and the return to the homeland. Like many other returnees at the end of their countries' dictatorships, such as Dorfman, Martínez, and Osvaldo Soriano, Benedetti found that coming back home could be as difficult as living away, and that the return might seem like yet another rupture. The paramount difference between these two experiences is agency, which is present in the voluntary return but not when exile is imposed (*Desexilio* 9). While nostalgia is the dominant affect in exile, Benedetti has proposed that this feeling gives way to "*contranostalgia*," the peculiar nostalgia for exile while in one's own homeland (*Desexilio* 41) after returning from exile. This sentiment is sometimes associated with what several writers and critics have observed: the sensation of being exiled or a foreigner in their own countries. Dorfman describes this feeling in his memoir about returning to Chile, *Feeding on Dreams*. Another element of the malaise of the returned exile is the nostalgia for the country they remember, which contrasts with the country they encounter after years of absence, changed by the experience of authoritarianism, the economic policies and their social effects, and the sheer passage of time. The returned exiles' nostalgia for nostalgia, the renewed sense of dislocation (A. Kaminsky 117), is quite different from the sentiment felt by homecoming voluntary expatriates, who question their countries from a distanced perspective acquired during their time abroad, which was not marked by nostalgia but rather by a will to escape and sometimes even a sense of alienation from the homeland. This is a crucial difference. In the novels examined here, the three returning voluntary expatriates (Slovo's, Andruetto's, and Pron's characters) evidence this sharp detachment, even as they recognize certain sensations of "home" and recall memories of their childhoods.

Braidotti notes, however, that even for non-nationalistic nomadic subjects, territory (ancestral, of birth, or of residence, and whether tied to the concept of nation or not) is an important component of identity; physical and social geography are crucial for identity, and, in Braidotti's word, they "brand us" (32). I submit that this "branding" influences, among other things, our language and regional accent as well as our affective response to language. In *Lengua madre*, as the title (Mother Tongue) implies, Julieta displays a emotional response when she reads her grandmother's letters. But branding can also be refused, as Pron's character does; his refusal is expressed by not remembering or by rejecting symbols, memories, and knowledge (which, despite his best efforts, are still embedded in his psyche and emerge later).

In addition to the detached expat represented by Julieta, Andruetto's *Lengua madre* presents a special type of exile: *insilio* or internal exile, an expression particular to the Southern Cone and associated with the political repression of the 1970s. The term refers to the experience of those who did not suffer imprisonment or banishment, but spent the years of state terror living as pariahs within the borders of their own countries, in circumstances of isolation and incommunication that protected their lives but alienated them from society (Almeida and Parodi 513; Reati 185). Andruetto characterizes the phenomenon of *insilio*—which she experienced herself—as one marked by silence, invisibility, and fear (Pubill "Insilio" 146). *Insilio*, according to Andruetto, means to go metaphorically inside of oneself, and often physically to the interior of the country. Ironically, as a tactic to avert attention and avoid being taken and "disappeared" by the repressive forces, it is a form of self-disappearance (Pubill "María Teresa Andruetto"): another mode of *desaparición*, with somewhat more agency perhaps, but still prompted

by external danger out of one's control, like exile. Julia, one of the main characters in *Lengua madre*, suffers an extreme form of *insilio*—in response to extreme violence—that forces her to part from her newborn daughter Julieta, and defines their relationship for the rest of their lives.

A similar (but not self-imposed) South African counterpart is the legal figure of banning, a type of censorship that consisted of prohibiting its targets, usually political activists or artists, from speaking in public, publishing their work, or being with more than a small number of people at a time. Banning orders, like house arrest could be applied to people (like writers Breyten Breytenbach, Dennis Brutus, Es'kia Mphahlele, and Don Mattera, for instance) or to their work ("South African Exile Literature" 22; R. Thomas 275). Like house arrest, the practice of banning was common—by the end of apartheid 18,000 books had been banned (Gikandi 325)—, practiced openly, and its breach was harshly penalized; even writing a page could constitute a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment or even death ("South African Exile Literature").

Prodigal Returns

The analysis of the figure of the returning expatriate in four novels adds a layer of complexity to the study of post-dictatorship fiction. While in power, the repressive regimes not only forced opponents into exile, but they also created social and economic conditions that during the subsequent democratic dispensations would induce many people to search for better options abroad. The protagonists left their countries at different historical junctures and with different degrees of compulsion. In Slovo's novel, Sarah's emigration is the expression of her discontent with the apartheid government and

the white society of which she is part. For Andruetto's and Pron's characters the degree of compulsion is also minimal: both leave for Germany to pursue university studies; their exits manifest ambition and a desire to distance themselves from their native Argentina. In contrast, Franz's character Laura is the only one who resembles in any way a traditional political exile, for she has escaped the abuses and torture of the Chilean dictatorship's proxy in Pampa Hundida, Major Cáceres.

If all the protagonists' departures respond to a common fleeing impulse, their returns are also alike in that they respond to an ethical obligation toward their family or a close acquaintance. However, whereas for the three South Americans the outcome of their respective returns is the attainment of knowledge and an approximation to a personal and social truth, the South African character, Sarah, has a different experience. The South Americans all gain an understanding that leads them to a greater degree of acceptance and even to the possibility of forgiving their families (their preceding generation) for actions in situations imposed in their countries by their compatriots. Although the wisdom attained by these protagonists is of a private nature, it sheds light on a facet of the respective national histories that affected directly or indirectly thousands of people, and that in many ways continue to define each nation. In contrast, *Red Dust* presents a different perspective, all the more striking because it contradicts one of the tenets of the immensely respected TRC. Slovo's novel also differs from the rest of my sample in that the question of what really happened to Alex in detention remains unresolved: truth is never revealed. Despite the frustrating fact that the truth does not set her free, as the TRC would have it (Black 52), Sarah finally accepts that certain questions will remain unanswered and that truth cannot be determined. Thus, like other South

African novels of the 2000s (such as J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit*), *Red Dust* downgrades the importance of truth in favor of other values—solidarity, notably, as discussed in Chapter III of this dissertation.

All the protagonists examined in this study hold a negative or indifferent attitude toward their native countries, and vent their discontent when they return. Argentina's society and culture in the early 2000s are the object of Pron's character's disapproval. In contrast, Julieta in *Lengua madre* has little to say about the present, and instead focuses her critique on the politics of her parents' generation. In *El desierto*, Laura voices a scathing criticism of the 1990s Chilean transition, and in *Red Dust* Sarah poses important questions about the South African TRC. While they stand by their opinions throughout the novels, all four protagonists become more accepting of their countries and their families; this acceptance leads to a degree of personal and familial reconciliation and opens the possibility of a permanent return. This invitation to rejoin the fold, however, is considered guardedly, as by now, the four characters have assumed a significant component of nomadism in their identities.

What Kind of Country is This? From National Identity to Nomadism

Chapter I of this dissertation discusses the processes of memory and discovery experienced by the protagonist of Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*. But before those processes begin, the character must return to his estranged native land, a country to which he has no meaningful connection, despite his father's attempts to instill a sense of love for the homeland during childhood. The now-adult protagonist vaguely remembers certain things "que habíamos aprendido en una escuela

que no se había desprendido aún de una dictadura cuyos valores no terminaba de dejar de perpetuar" (19) ["we had learned in a school that had yet to cast off a dictatorship whose values it continued to perpetuate" (11)], such as national emblems like the flag or the image of a building of historical importance, but which symbolize "circunstancias con las que nosotros no teníamos nada que ver ni queríamos tenerlo: una dictadura, un Mundial de fútbol, una guerra" (19) ["circumstances that we didn't have anything to do with and didn't want to have anything to do with" (11-12)]—references to major national events from 1976 to 1982: the military dictatorship, the soccer World Cup³⁰ played in Argentina and won by the national team (to the delight and relief of the Junta), and the Malvinas/Falklands war that heralded the end for the military regime. It is clear from the outset that this character feels no attachment to the land of his birth. Only when he suddenly remembers his past, after avoiding it for eight years, does he fully comprehend his hatred for the country—which stems precisely from that dictatorship and its abuses—and his terror—the result of being the child of militants persecuted by that regime.

Like the other characters examined in this chapter, Pron's narrator returns to his country of origin displaying a distanced objectivity with which he delivers a critical assessment. His critique of the revolutionary politics of the 1970s is milder than Julieta's in *Lengua madre*, although his life, too, was affected by his parents' militancy. But *El espíritu* does not elaborate on specific mistakes by, or egregious contradictions of, the young revolutionaries; rather, it acknowledges that that generation failed to bring about the revolution it envisioned, without analyzing the failure or assigning blame. Instead of

³⁰ The importance of the 1978 World Cup for the Junta, and its appeal to Argentine nationalism are alluded to in other works of fiction such as Marta Traba's *Conversación al sur* (1981) and Tomás Eloy Martínez's *Purgatorio* (2008), and is one of the central themes in Martín Kohan's *Dos veces junio* (2002).

examining ideologies of forty years ago, as Andruetto's Julieta does, Pron's protagonist, like Franz's, focuses on the present situation of his country of birth.

And the present situation of Argentina is appalling to him. As soon as he arrives in the airport he has the impression that "el país se había montado en la montaña rusa y seguía dando vueltas boca abajo como si quien operaba el aparato se hubiera vuelto loco o estuviera en la pausa del almuerzo" (24) [the country itself had gotten on a roller coaster and continued twisting upside down as if the operator had gone crazy or was on his lunch break" (17)]. More than mere political disapproval of the impression that those in charge are out to lunch, what the character immediately senses is decline: a worn carpet, young men who look old, settled dust, the aged figure of a once famous soccer player. These seemingly unimportant first impressions foreshadow a more significant decay in the country's economy and culture, which the character attributes to the past few "gobiernos democráticos fracasados que solo habían servido para distribuir la injusticia en nombre de todos nosotros" (19) ["failed democratic governments that had served only to allocate injustice in all our names" (12)]. Thus, Pron's character is critical not only of the military dictatorship, but also of the mismanagement and corruption of the elected governments that followed. This sentiment is shared by all the novels examined in this study, and, I presume, by their writers. An analysis of the authors' biographical data exceeds the scope of this dissertation; however, the fact that all but Andruetto voluntarily live abroad seems to suggest that they, like the protagonists of their novels, disapprove of much of what has developed in their countries of origin after the (re)institution of democracy.

Pron's narrator's astonishment at the abysmal quality of official and even journalistic writing is noted in Chapter I of this dissertation; here I want to note his observation about his mother tongue: his bewilderment at the linguistic changes (over a period of only eight years) that make it difficult for him to understand what the people in a TV program about a shantytown police chase are saying. This bewilderment turns into horrified dismay when he sees subtitles for the poor people's utterances; he reasonably puzzles over "qué país era ése en el que los pobres debían ser subtitulados, como si hablasen una lengua extranjera" (159) ["what kind of country this was in which the poor had to be subtitled, as if they were speaking a foreign language" (169)]. The linguistic difference, a mark of extreme cultural distance between the very poor and the rest of the population, is the manifestation of a greatly widened cultural gap, likely a response to the emergence of the largest income disparity in many generations. This pronounced cultural deterioration accompanies the significant material impoverishment experienced by Argentina, which between 1990 and 2002 had a *negative* annual GDP growth of almost 15% (thanks to the above-mentioned injustice-allocating governments). This prolonged crisis prompted a significant emigration of people in search of employment and better living conditions elsewhere (Skidmore and Smith 457; see also Aschieri and Carello). This phenomenon appears in fiction, too, for instance in the novel *La profesora de español* (2005), by Inés Fernández Moreno.

Far from embarking onto a heroic return to the homeland—a country that for him "era igual que el abismo" (23) ["was just like the abyss" (16)]—the narrator of *El espíritu*, like the other protagonists, comes back reluctantly, briefly, and only in response to a family obligation. Yet in the end, as Tala correctly observes, the character discovers

that he has travelled not only from Germany to Argentina, but also from anomie and indifference to solidarity and compassion (132). He and other characters that inhabit the novels studied here come to understand their respective returns as a journey in which they attain some degree of reconciliation, or at least acceptance of their native countries.

Although Franz's Laura is unimpressed by the economic policies and new cynicism pervading her country, her reconciliation is with herself: she comes to understand that she was a victim rather than an accomplice of the military. Andruetto's Julieta learns new aspects of her family, and thus is able to appreciate her mother more fully. Eprile's Paul comes to terms with his participation in apartheid and in South Africa's covert wars by testifying against Captain Lyddie at a TRC hearing and through much internal work. Of all the protagonists, only Sarah does not come closer to forgiving her country, and in fact ends up more skeptical about the truth and reconciliation process than when she accepted to assist. The fact that four of these five protagonists are cosmopolitan, unsentimental, and non-nationalistic exiles or expatriates allows them to evaluate their countries knowledgeably and more or less objectively, and to issue a considered assessment of the nations' traumatic histories and current (that is, transitional) conditions.

The Sins of the Fathers

Julieta, the protagonist of María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, like Pron's and Slovo's protagonists, is not an exile but a voluntary expatriate—conceivably part of the emigration wave from Argentina of the early 2000s mentioned above. Yet, as the grandchild of an Italian immigrant and the daughter of Nicolás (exiled in Sweden) and of Julia (who lived in *insilio* during the dictatorship), Julieta is acutely aware that her life

has been marked by territorial dislocation. She feels empathy with these uprooted familiars, and understands that she too has been affected by their respective dispossessions of home, family, friends, and language. She senses that her father lost something when he was forced to flee the country, though she is unsure how much he lost; but "[I]o que sí sabe, de lo que está segura, es de que ella fue, por ese solo acto, despojada de su padre. Y ahora que lo piensa, le parece también que de su madre" (67) [what she does know, what she's certain of, is that by that sole act she was dispossessed of her father. And now that she thinks about it, it seems that of her mother too].

Another way in which Julieta expresses her dispossession is by noting that, although she and her father are from the same country, they are "extranjeros el uno del otro" (77) [foreigners to each other]—that is: strangers. As a young adult Julieta became "una mujer ambulante, sin territorio, sin patria, sin padre. / Sin padres" (60) [an itinerant woman, with no territory, with no homeland, with no father. / With no parents]. In this musing she (and perhaps the author) equates her deprivation of parents (*padres*) with the absence of a homeland (*patria*), thus articulating the metaphorical and etymological (and patriarchal) relation between the two words in Spanish. Julieta feels as distant from her *patria* as she does from her *padre*, who left the country when she was a newborn and never made any attempt to contact her.

To explain her lack of attachment, Julieta rhetorically asks herself how, if she didn't have a father, can she have a sense of belonging. It is difficult for her to forgive or even justify the actions of her father, an "ex militante refugiado en Estocolmo cuyas buenas intenciones no logran compensar su indiferencia, el abandono al que la ha sometido, el olvido de su madre" (213) [ex-militant who took refuge in Stockholm,

whose good intentions cannot compensate for his indifference, his abandoning her, his forgetting her mother]. Her father's questionable decisions are better understood in the context of the revolutionary ideology of the 1970s. Regarding these principles, Julieta is particularly critical of the notion that the collective good and political militancy comes before personal and family well-being. She rejects her parents' incomprehensible decision (or acceptance) of having a baby while they were so involved in the turmoil of the times, and their later inability or unwillingness to bring her up as a family. But Julieta realizes that her parents' errors were not theirs alone, but part and parcel of political militancy regardless of ideological content: "Reproches de este tipo nunca acabarán: revolucionarios de cualquier pelaje, a la vez voceros de las ideas y de los sentimientos más egoístas" (47) [Reproaches of this kind will never end: revolutionaries of any stripe, simultaneously spokespersons for the most selfish ideas and sentiments].

Julieta's disapproval of her parents' generation's political militancy is not unique. Latin American and South African literatures since the 1990s have explored this and other aspects of the revolutionary movements. Pron's narrator rebukes the leftist revolutionary movement Montoneros, for instance, for abandoning their followers (*El espíritu* 172, *My Fathers' Ghost* 183). Similarly, in Slovo's *Red Dust*, Alex remembers how "the collective had become more important than the individual—not just because it was one way of surviving all that pain. What was that slogan they used to chant at funerals? Don't mourn, mobilise" (171)³¹. Other works that examine critically the heady

³¹ In "Making History," Slovo also remembers this slogan in order to censure the TRC: "The defiant rallying cry, 'Don't Mourn, Mobilise', was succeeded by a new slogan: 'Revealing is Healing'. These were the words that were spread on banners and hung around the public halls that housed most of the victims' hearings of the TRC. They almost said 'Don't Mobilise, Mourn'." With this, Slovo illustrates the fragility of slogans, the ease with which catchphrase beliefs can be supplanted, twisted, and inverted—like truth, as the protagonists of *Red Dust* learn.

revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s are Luz Arce's memoir *El infierno* (1993) (*The Infierno*, 2004), Martín Caparrós's *A quien corresponda* (2008), Arturo Fontaine's *La vida doble* (2010) (*La Vida Doble: A Novel*, 2013), Liliana Heker's *El fin de la historia* (1996) (*The End of the Story*, 2012). Examples from South Africa include Nkosi's novel *Underground People* (2002), and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* (2000). All these texts, mostly written by individuals who were committed militants of the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s, criticize their erstwhile political organizations; several also explore the issue of betrayal.

By reading the letters kept by her mother, Julieta begins to understand, though not to agree with, the ideology that made her parents and their generation prioritize the collective over the private in order to build a better world. This idealistic attitude contrasts with the individualistic thinking of the 1990s shared by Julieta, who has no commitment to making the world a better place. Being apolitical, she notices and disapproves of the contradictions in the revolutionary ideologies of the 1970s that her own mother, a committed militant, embodied, in particular the contradiction between lofty ideals for the common good and intense personal selfishness—although she does not make the generalization that socialist ideals always engender egotism. Julieta particularly resents Julia's irresponsible act of having a baby in conditions of political persecution, abandoning her daughter, and not reuniting with her even when the danger was over. She is deeply hurt by the fact that political activism was more important than having a child. She concludes that, even though she has no interest in having children of her own, if she ever did have them, they would be more important than any revolution or ideal. Julieta's criticism of revolutionary dogmas and practices is based on their

devastating effect on the family, specifically on *her* family and herself. Her valuation is not of the family as a social institution, but rather an argument for the principle of the private responsibility of raising children once they are brought to the world. Julieta's positions—her apoliticism, her individualism—contrast with her parents, but is not unusual in the more cynical 21st century, where many young people are disillusioned with the failed revolutionary projects (and their leaders) of the second half of the last century. This disillusionment and apathy will be examined in Chapter IV of this dissertation. Despite the scathing critique of Julieta's parents' generation and of her own parents in particular, *Lengua madre* ends by allowing for the possibility of forgiveness and positive change, including a return.

Julieta left her country out of her own free will, under no compulsion, and through most of the novel shows little interest in going back for good. Her predominant affect upon returning is detachment—both with respect to her mother and to her country. But there is something artificial about Julieta's detachment. She is not innately apathetic; rather, she actively wills herself to be indifferent. She is moved by her mother's letters, but would prefer to live devoid of all emotion, she tells a friend, and to read that way too: dissecting books and messages—even her grandmother's and her own letters—as if they were merely texts to be read professionally. Perhaps as a result of the unsatisfying and disappointing relationship with Julia, Julieta has no desire for long-term relationships, and even her affair with her former boyfriend Diego, now married, is experienced at a superficial level. Julieta's detachment expresses itself also as indifference to nationality, both to her native country and to her country of residence, where she has many acquaintances but is not, and is not interested in being, assimilated. Although she has

lived in Germany for several years and speaks the language well, "no puede decir que Munich sea su casa, ni que Baviera sea su patria. Así es como ella se convirtió en una mujer ambulante, sin territorio" (60) [she cannot say that Munich is her home, or Bavaria her homeland. Thus she became an itinerant woman, without territory]. Julieta is ambivalent toward her native country, and considers it only in relation to other countries and languages: "Ama y odia este país ahora que hace años que vive en otro y habla a diario en otra lengua, ahora que hace tiempo que investiga en una tercera lengua" (61) [She loves and hates this country, now that she's been living for years in another and speaks daily another language, now that for some time she has been researching in a third language]. Unlike other Argentines she meets in Germany, she does not yearn to return. Moreover, being multilingual (speaking, in addition to her native Spanish, English in her academic work, and German in her daily life), she fits Braidotti's definition of the polyglot as a "linguistic nomad" (29, 41).

While Julieta recognizes the painful effects of exile on other people, she herself feels immune. Unlike her father, from whom everything was taken away when he was banished, Julieta does not feel deprived or, rather, *no longer* feels deprived. Her expatriation is voluntary, enjoyable and liberating at times (she has a nomadic consciousness), albeit tinged with a melancholic sense of being utterly alone in the world:

Por años le ha gustado extraviarse, cambiar de sitio, dejarse ir de un proyecto a otro, mudar de lengua y de país. Pero ¿hasta dónde podrá extraviarse y regresar cuando quiere a casa? ¿Hay alguna casa adonde pueda volver? Si se pierde, si se perdiera del todo alguna vez, ¿podría alguien llevarla hasta un sitio donde ponerla a salvo? Muertos su abuelo, su abuela, su madre, ya nada ni nadie podrá

encontrarla, ni hacer que ella se encuentre con la que era, con la que fue alguna vez, alma sobre la que se urdieron todas las Julietas que vinieron más tarde. Ya nada ni nadie tendrá amor suficiente para obligarla a desandar el camino que hizo perdida, para regresarla a su sitio. (181-82)

[For years she has enjoyed getting lost, relocating, floating from one project to another, switching languages and countries. But how far can she wander off and still be able to return home when she desires? Is there a home she can return to? If she gets lost, if she ever got completely lost, would someone be able to lead her to safety? Now that her grandfather, her grandmother, and her mother are dead, there is nothing, there is nobody to find her or make her encounter what she used to be, what she once was, a soul on which all the later Julietas were cast. Now, nothing, nobody, will be loving enough to force her to retrace the path she walked when she got lost, to take her back home.]

This passage expresses Julieta's internal turmoil and contradictions as well as her nomadic identity. Andruetto's *Lengua madre* thus illustrates the theory of nomadic consciousness through its main character. The passage foregrounds Julieta's pride of detachment, her understanding of exile, and her pleasure in wandering untethered—i.e., being a nomad—but also manifests a fear of getting lost and an almost childish desire to be rescued, simultaneously with the knowledge that she cannot be rescued because there is no one to do that. She acknowledges these contradictory feelings, yet is surprised when she discovers herself missing an "anclaje a una tierra, a una lengua que ha despreciado" (182) [anchoring to a land and to a language she has despised]. The novel does not resolve this unexpected and unfulfilled desire for connection, but does suggest

that resolution is possible. At the beginning of Julieta's journey, satisfying this desire would have been unthinkable, but at the end of the novel this option does not seem unreasonable. The conflicting impulses conveyed in the passage can be read dialectically: the fear of abandonment (stemming from childhood experiences) and the resentment against her mother may have aroused her wanderlust, but have not eradicated completely a desire to belong. This transformation and the opening of possibilities are two proposals of Andruetto's novel.

Emigration is a voluntary act for Pron's and Andruetto's characters. They both lack a strong national identity and territorial ties, and distance themselves from their native language. In this sense, they are instances of nomadic subjects corresponding to Braidotti's concept: the "nomad does not stand for homelessness, or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity" (57). This definition of the nomad seems to apply especially to members of the educated classes because it is "the prototype of the 'man or woman of ideas' [since] the point of being an intellectual nomad is about crossing boundaries, about the act of going, regardless of destination. [. . .] The nomad enacts transitions without a teleological purpose" (58). Braidotti's concept, she acknowledges, is not applicable to most individuals who move from one country to another because of life-threatening danger or poverty; rather, nomads are such because they desire the movement and identify with the world at large rather than with one nation. Julieta and Pron's narrator fit the description because they pursue an intellectual endeavor (graduate studies at European universities) and, not being constrained by national or territorial allegiances and rejecting fixity, they move away from what is familiar in order to forge their

identities and gain independent agency; this agency includes the capacity to decide whether or not to return to the country of origin.

Latin American literature scholar María Negroni asserts that one of the advantages of having lived in two countries is that it affords a kind of distancing from the reality of both places and makes it acceptable and morally valid to not get involved or take on any responsibility (30). This is certainly the attitude assumed by Julieta and even more clearly by the narrator of *El espíritu*. In this, too, Andruetto's and Pron's protagonists conform to Braidotti's characterization of nomadic consciousness, which "consists of not taking any kind of identity as permanent: the nomad is only passing through; he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help him to survive, but he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity" (64). This is precisely the attitude of Pron's narrator. When *El espíritu* begins, he has left his rented room in Germany and has been sleeping on acquaintances' couches, not because he is short of money, but because of the lack of responsibility this lifestyle entails; it is a way of disengaging himself from everything, of negating any kind of permanence or roots: "Yo, simplemente, estaba de paso" (14) ["I was just passing through" (6)], he reports. This appears to be a recurrent preoccupation of the author (not surprisingly, given his own lived experiences, as outlined in Chapter I of this dissertation), for he uses the same words at the end of a very similar description of couch-surfing in a different text, the 2010 short story "Una de las últimas cosas que me dijo mi padre" (59-60). Andruetto's and Pron's protagonists' identities seem to depend on the constancy of perpetual change and lack of anchoring. They also support Spanish-Uruguayan essayist Fernando Aínsa's observation that migrant and exile identities represent a desire to shed a territory and an

origin, and to build a different identity, and that this desire is stronger than the wish to keep a closed and well-defined identity that is impervious to any influence. This errancy of Latin American writers, in Aínsa's view, results in multiple loyalties (expressed as bilingualism and bi-nationalism). Yet another way to interpret this "bigamy"—as Dorfman calls this double allegiance in his memoir, *Heading South* (270), where he eloquently engages the themes of language and national loyalty and identity—is as absence of loyalties beyond one's immediate family or specific individuals: a lack of commitment expressed in the protagonists of the four novels examined.

From Center to Periphery: Stunning Dislocations

Having left the countries where they were born, raised, and educated as lawyers, the protagonists of Franz's *El Desierto* and of Slovo's *Red Dust* have become successful professionals in Munich and New York, respectively. Each returns to her native country early in the transition to democracy, responding to a moral obligation. After many years abroad, they each experience their southbound journey to Chile and South Africa as an enormous leap, one that they take dutifully but without the slightest joy. They return, temporarily in principle, to fulfill an obligation towards someone close, not a responsibility for the reconstruction of their native nations. It is possible to see in these two novels a criticism of the disorder and dissatisfactions provoked partially by apartheid and corruption in South Africa and the practical difficulties of resettling in Chile. However, the novels go against the grain, and instead of showing these protagonists as simply bitter professionals who have found a more comfortable home elsewhere, Laura and Sarah are given sufficient space to experience and resolve their own qualms; thus, the

novels help to validate positions that were not the most commonly held during the transitions to democracy: a critique of the insufficient redress of injustice provided by the new democratic governments.

During her twenty years in Germany, the protagonist of *El desierto* has made a comfortable living in Munich for herself and her daughter, Claudia (conceived in Chile but born and raised in Germany), and has changed her professional discipline from law to philosophy. Laura has no intention of even visiting Chile until she starts to write her response to her daughter's letter, which compels her to return mentally to the past and physically to her country of origin, where Claudia has relocated. Laura's reluctance to go back makes her, remarkably, more akin to the voluntarily expatriated protagonists of the other novels examined here than to prototypical returning exiles who eagerly wait to return to a country they have idealized—often to feel disappointed, as Dorfman and Martínez describe in *Feeding on Drams* and *Réquiem para un país perdido*. Laura's exit from Chile occurred shortly after Major Cáceres's traumatizing policing actions in Pampa Hundida at the onset of the Pinochet military regime. Although this fact would make her a traditional political exile (the only one in my sample), she, in contrast to so many real-life exiles, neither avidly awaits, nor feels too disappointed upon her return. Instead, Laura displays a remarkable absence of emotion, an indifference that grows to open disdain as she reacquaints herself with the country. She cannot hide her contempt for most people and some traditions—especially those of her own upper class—and does not hold back her sharp criticism of Chilean politics, in particular of the transitional justice during the first democratic government after Pinochet's exit. Her stature as a Chilean, a victim of the dictatorship, and a professional thinker, invests her with the authority to

narrate her experience, and the prerogative to critique the country. Despite this privilege, her perspective—ostensibly knowledgeable, professional, objective—provokes conflicts with the local characters, who respect her but resent her criticism.

What most troubles Laura is the spirit of compromise that she observes at all levels, especially in the conformist design of the Chilean transition. Nelly Richard analyzes in depth this design, and associates it with the appropriation and expansion of market economic policies and the promotion of a mass-consumption culture instituted by the dictatorship by design and that leads, in her view, to amnesia (31-35). Compromising in the face of the ubiquitous remnants of military and church power was customary (and the only perceived option) during Chile's transition. In *El desierto*, Laura is disappointed when she realizes that her former mentor has undergone a "lenta maduración en el escepticismo, en el realismo político, que le había impuesto la dictadura" (273) ["slow maturation in skepticism and the political realism which the dictatorship had imposed on him" (217)]. He, who had once been an admired beacon of justice and idealism, is now defeated and disenchanted, and collaborates with iniquity by putting a "máscara de legalidad sobre el hirviente, oscuro, borbotear de la injusticia" (283) ["mask of legality over the dark, seething bubbling of injustice" (226)]. This injustice is the result of the governing coalition's policies of amnesia and impunity; I will explore this topic more in depth in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

If the elderly Velasco, who suffered severely during the dictatorship (and is depicted initially in a sympathetic warm glow by his former student), has given in to the spirit of complacency and compromise that pervades the Chilean 1990s, this attitude is even more normalized in the younger generation, which grew up during the Pinochet

years. The young attorney Tomás Martínez Roth, who at the beginning of the novel has befriended Claudia and joined her idealistic campaign for justice in Pampa Hundida, also ends up proclaiming the motto, "Justicia, sí, pero en la medida de lo posible" (309) ["Justice, yes—but within the limits of what is possible" (247)], an echo of President Aylwin's much criticized compromise. The young lawyer's conciliatory explanation for giving up on his attempt to attain justice is commonplace and widely held in Chile, and is voiced also by the town Councilor Ordóñez: there is a pact negotiated by the parties to make the country governable and reduce the threat of another coup—a fear perceived especially in the early days of the transition, because the Chilean military had retained much of its power (Roniger and Sznajder 94). In other words, the transition could not withstand the joint forces of the military and the Church, should these institutions decide to act together, so it is necessary to give up justice in the name of peace.

Laura understands the moral and professional perils of accepting disappointment in order to adjust to the new dispensation. Sitting at the conference table with the town políticos, she perceives the danger of adapting to the local docility and accepting something less than complete justice. But besides the unsavoriness of becoming a judge with no faith in justice, Laura senses the stench of corruption when Velasco, in a single transaction, tries to buy both Martínez Roth and her: "Martínez Roth es un joven brillante, buen mozo y con ambiciones políticas. Podría tener un gran futuro. Una carrera formidable como diputado por la zona, por ejemplo. . . . Todos podíamos tener un gran futuro, Laura. Para ti, lo vislumbro [. . .]: un sillón en la corte" (286) ["Martínez Roth is a brilliant young man and he has political ambitions. He might have a great future. A terrific career as the elected representative for this Zone, to cite an example. . . . We all

might have a great future, Laura. For you, I envision [. . .] a seat on the Supreme Court" (229)]. Thus, Laura realizes with alarm and a touch of sadness that the fact that this overture comes from her once venerated mentor is a symptom of a widespread disease, and that her own integrity is threatened.

Besides a sharp critical eye on the political maneuverings of the transition and some habits of her country, Laura displays an ironic disdain for the national symbols and perhaps for nationalism itself. She accurately notes the national obsession with controlling access to places and locking them up. But more significantly, she surprises herself using "instintivamente [. . .] el tono de autoridad, la voz oficial de las ejecutorias y los interrogatorios, ese par de decibles extra que sustentaban la disciplina arcaica, el orden las jerarquías en su país" (136) ["the tone of authority [. . .] instinctively [. . .] the official voice of a writ of execution or interrogation, the extra decibel or two that nourished the order, the archaic discipline, the hierarchies of her country" (107)]. By ever so slightly raising her voice when she needs a subaltern to bend a rule in her favor, she reverts to traditional class dynamics that have no place in her current life in Europe.³² Her self-deprecating observation that the soldiers and she are "parientes consanguíneos en la familia de la ley y la fuerza" (131) ["blood relatives in the family of law and force" (103, translation modified)] is a reference to the motto on Chile's shield, *Por la razón o la fuerza* [by reason or by force], and thus she mocks a national symbol. The town Mayor Boris Mamani, an outsider too—paradoxically, because he is indigenous—also sarcastically notes that he wants to contribute to the protection of the town's traditions:

³² It is easy to automatically slip into old habits because they actually do expedite results. In Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory*, after threatening to call the police to quiet down a fight among servants, Paul acknowledges that he "reverted to type by invoking the hated apartheid authorities" (88).

"Para bailar con tanta fuerza se requiere esperanza, el sueño de un futuro esplendor" (165) ["To dance with such strength requires hope, the dream of a shining future" (130)]; and further, "para diseñar un futuro esplendor, se había metido en política" (333) ["to design a future splendor, he had gotten himself into politics" (266)], he explains. Mamani's sarcasm resides in his repeated allusions to a verse in the Chilean National Anthem: "Y ese mar que tranquilo te baña / te promete futuro esplendor" [And that sea that quietly washes your shore / Promises you a splendid future (my trans.)]. Laura's and Mamani's scorn, although repetitious, is subtle, unlikely to be perceived by anyone who does not know or who sincerely believes in the wholesomeness of those national symbols. Laura and Mamani, in contrast, are disabused of the goodness of blind nationalism: she, because the violence that changed the course of her life was done in the name of the nation; and he, because his people, the indigenous inhabitants of the area, were persecuted, abused, and dispossessed before being nominally incorporated—without so much as a consultation—into the great Chilean family that the transition government so fervently wishes to reconcile.

Echoing Mario Benedetti's observations about the difficulties faced by returning exiles to South America, Tony Eprile's review of Slovo's novel notes the feelings of displacement and alienation of the returned exile. An instance of this sensation occurs as soon as Sarah arrives in Smitsrivier: she observes, "this town in South Africa that was New York's polar opposite — a town where men walked slow and where the road to the east ran out into the desert [. . .] From Smitsrivier to New York. A stunning dislocation. A continental shift for which there could be no mental bridge" (7-8). Sarah's musing is remarkably similar to Laura's while flying to Chile, a voyage she likens to exchanging the

"aparente armonía de su cátedra de filosofía por el torbellino polifónico de la fiesta donde había aceptado juzgar lo incomprensible. De la filosofía a la fiesta" (15) ["apparent harmony of her professorial chair in philosophy for the polyphonic turmoil of the fiesta where she had agreed to hand down judgment on the incomprehensible. From philosophy to fiesta" (10)]. The contrast between the North where they live and the South from which they originate is intensified by the characters' own reluctance to make that journey.

Sarah soon notices changes in Smitsrivier: it is now more crowded; black people are free to be in places that in her time were for whites only; the town is also dirtier and less orderly. Yet some things have not changed: "the feel of the place" (13) is the same, Sarah's body recognizes. Like the Atacama desert on the other side of the Atlantic where Laura returns, the landscape in the South African Karoo is aridly unforgiving, its red color still evoking the blood spilled in the area (BBC), a "silent witness to all that butchery" (30)—a reference to the struggles between the native peoples and the European settlers. But more importantly, distance and distrust between races remain unchanged, evidencing the persistence of apartheid-enforced social dynamics. This is a South African counterpart to Laura's observations about persistent class dynamics in Chile.

While exile and return are not the main topics of *Red Dust*, Slovo uses this theme (one she knows from her own personal experience of exile and frequent returns to her country, as she describes in her memoir *Every Secret Thing*) to provide a knowledgeable outsider's view of South Africa, in particular of the TRC processes. Also, the novel registers (but does not comment on) the movement opposite to returning from exile—an important phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa: white emigration, which has achieved relevance in the last decade, as it is considered a damaging brain drain (Meyer

et al.). Like Paul Sweetbread's mother and her husband in Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory*, like so many unsatisfied South Africans (including, famously, J.M. Coetzee), Sarah's parents emigrated to Australia, a popular resettlement destination for discontented South Africans who have the means to leave their nation.

Both Sarah and Laura return to their native countries to answer an ethical call: Laura to answer her daughter's questions, and Sarah in response to her mentor's appeal to help in a TRC hearing. Unlike Sarah's mentor Ben Hoffman, who thinks that Sarah "should have come back permanently" (152), Laura's mentor, Benigno Velasco, cannot comprehend why she comes back to Chile from a comfortable life in Germany. Both mentors' views say more about them than about their brilliant students: they reflect Velasco's cynicism and opportunism so despised by Laura, and Ben's earnest commitment to his country's reconstruction. This enthusiasm, however, is not shared by any of the four protagonists who return to their countries: they all lack national attachment, see their countries with critical eyes, and feel no ethical calling to help in reconstruction.

Back From Exile

A retrospective nostalgia for the homeland and a prospective yearning to return are affects typically dominant in the exilic subject, and regularly featured in literature of exile. While South African exiles, such as Thabo Mbeki, Joe Modise, and Joe Slovo, returned to their country as victorious heroes, South American exiles and surviving ex political prisoners never shed their consciousness of their revolutionary projects' defeat, and found it difficult to adapt to the consumerist and superficial society of the 1990s and

2000s when they came back (Reati 186)³³. The difficulty of the return is, according to South African exiled poet Breyten Breytenbach, that "[a]n exile never returns. 'Before' does not exist for 'them,' the 'others,' those who stayed behind. For 'them' it was all continuity; for you [the exile] it was a fugue of disruptions. The thread is lost. The telling has shaped the story. You made your own history at the cost of not sharing theirs. The eyes, having seen too many different things, now see differently" (81). In *Feeding on Dreams* and *Requiem para un país perdido*, respectively, Dorfman and Martínez make similar observations about the disharmonies experienced when they returned to their respective Latin American homelands, Chile and Argentina. This disillusionment stems from changes undergone in the country, including unbearable remnants of the dictatorship and an aggressive capitalism that demolishes any hope for change (Richard 148 n. 2) but does not remedy poverty. Novelist Osvaldo Soriano, for example, returned in 1983 to an Argentina unrecognizable to him: "plundered, starving, humiliated" (qtd. Rowe and Whitfield 236). This sense of bewilderment and dislocation is poignantly illustrated by Pron's narrator when he first arrives in Buenos Aires, a sentiment made even more profound and frustrating as he reacquaints himself with the country that he left some eight years before. This character's puzzlement arises in part from changes in the country that are a result of the authoritarian regime's practices and its social and economic policies, as well as from the natural passage of time, which render the countries recognizable—barely—but quite insufferable.

³³ It is perhaps easier to return as a hero of the struggle than as an exiled member of a defeated movement, but being a hero does not guarantee easy re-entry. This is illustrated in André Brink's *Imaginations of Sand* (1996) in the character of Sandile, and in Norman Maake's film *Homecoming* (2005), about the return of three MK veterans to post-apartheid society and their labors to find their place in the new South Africa, in their families, and in their own political party.

Conclusion

Slovo's *Red Dust*, Franz's *El desierto*, Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, and Andruetto's *Lengua madre* use the figure of the returning expatriate to provide an external gaze to appraise post-authoritarian and transition moments in South Africa, Chile, and Argentina. Two different social and literary phenomena result from territorial distancing: One is the ability to articulate a national critique: the figure of the returnee serves the function of providing an outside critical perspective on the condition of the country in democratic transition. The second phenomenon posited by these novels is the emergence of the nomad subject, an individual with little national connection and no desire for a fixed national identity. It is fitting that this new figure begins to attain a place in social awareness in the 21st century, when so much—from capital to goods, from culture to information—traverses borders almost undeterred. There is no doubt that national borders are much less permeable to human voluntary movement than to more—financially speaking—liquid and transferable assets. Responding to this situation, the nomad subject is beginning to question more and more loudly the existence of such borders at all. Yet, despite the nomad's resistance to national belonging, the possibility of returning suggested by the novels implies that, while a permanent return is not an end in itself, it can be part of a process of recovery and reconstruction of history, memory, and identity necessary for reconciliation.

Chapter III: Imperfect Justice

Dealing with the Past

In the aftermath of widespread national traumatic events (especially those perpetrated by the state), national governments and supranational organizations such as the United Nations may scrutinize recent history to acknowledge and to understand those events. Official measures to provide a sense of fairness, redress, reconciliation, and/or an apology to the nation are often felt to be necessary during a transition from dictatorship to democracy. Transitional justice includes prosecutions, reparations, commemorations, and institutional reform (Gready 157-58), which are sometimes carried out through two distinct mechanisms: trials and truth commissions (TCs). The post-authoritarian elected governments of Argentina, Chile, and South Africa chose TCs as the principal means to investigate and acknowledge the gross human rights violations that occurred during the previous regimes. The study and theorization of human rights, the critique of TCs, and the examination law and justice issues associated with these institutions have been undertaken predominantly by legal and social and political sciences scholars. My comparative analysis supplements the connections—already made in other disciplines by, among others, Priscilla Hayner and Mahmood Mamdani—between the cases of South Africa and the Southern Cone. The goal of this chapter is to provide a literary perspective to the multifaceted discussion about memory and the redress of human rights violations perpetrated by—principally but not exclusively—state agents. I examine how the five novels in my sample address the equilibrium (or lack thereof) between memory, justice, and reconciliation, and how the treatment of these topics is different, depending on the

political circumstances and choices made by the transitional government and society in each of the three nations studied here.

Disparate interests shape the political decisions about how to deal with the past; all the stakeholders exert some degree of pressure regarding what form, if any, the reckoning with the past will take. While victims and human rights supporters demand truth and justice, the outgoing regime is anxious to avoid prosecution, and the new government is often intent on both consolidating the new democracy and forging national reconciliation and unity. According to Ellin Skaar's study of about 30 transitions, the choice of human rights policy—TC, trials, or nothing—depends on the relative strength of the outgoing and incoming governments. Trials are more likely to occur when the old regime collapses and there is a clear victor, while TCs are more likely when the relative strengths are similar. In negotiated transitions such as Chile's and South Africa's, the new administration might be cautious and less aggressive against the outgoing government, especially if the new government includes members of old regime. Fear of a military reaction that could endanger a fragile democracy often prompts options less radical than trials. Chile's conciliatory transition policies and Argentina's reversal of the trials and convictions of the high commands of the military Juntas (detailed in the Historical Background section of the Introduction) illustrate this vulnerability of new democracies. Skaar's analysis explains why Chile and South Africa opted for TCs only, and Argentina implemented both a TC and trials.

Trials, such as the Nuremberg trials after World War II, are considered victors' courts, and can only happen where there are clear winning and defeated sides. Argentina's first elected president after the 1976-83 dictatorship, Raúl Alfonsín, ordered the trial of

the highest ranking officers of the military regime. The most notorious defendants in the *Juicio a las Juntas* (Trial of the Juntas) were General Jorge Rafael Videla and Admiral Emilio Massera, who were sentenced to life in prison (Roniger and Sznajder 286 n. 49). However, a reversal of this act of retributive justice began in 1987 with the promulgation of two bills: *Punto final* (Full Stop), which set a short deadline to establish new trials, and *Obediencia debida* (Due Obedience), which exonerated repressors who acted following orders. The process of reversal of punitive justice culminated with President Menem's pardons in 1989 (Méndez 129-30; Portella 21; Roniger and Sznajder 70, 76). In a subsequent twist, these pardons were annulled 15 years later, and prosecutions of Argentine military repressors resumed (Hayner *Unspeakable* 46).

In Chile, trials would have been impossible, because the military Junta retained not only complete command over the armed forces, but also an aura of honorability when they stepped down, in conformity with the outcome of 1989 referendum that asked Chileans whether the dictatorship should continue. Pinochet's government, confident that they would win, had endorsed the referendum, and was consequently compelled to enforce the unexpected result. Although the military government was widely known to have committed thousands of human rights abuses, the self-amnesty declared by the armed forces in 1983 (Roniger and Sznajder 282 n. 12), their continued control of weapons, and even the high esteem with which they were held by a not insignificant portion of Chileans, protected the old regime from any legal action for many years, and even then these prosecutions did not touch the highest commands.

Instead of trials, the first post-Pinochet administration of Patricio Aylwin opted to establish a TC—the Rettig Commission—to investigate cases of death resulting from

state violence and to recommend reparations for the victims' families (Ensalaco 663-64, *Informe Rettig*, *Stern Reckoning* 88, 288). In 2004, President Ricardo Lagos established a second TC—Valech Commission—to report on imprisonment and torture of victims who survived (Ensalaco 656, *Informe Valech*, Richard 37, Roniger and Sznajder 97, *Stern Reckoning* 290). Despite these efforts (or precisely because of their design, as Bakiner explains), the potential for truth and justice in Chile is limited. This is due in part to the emphasis on unity and consensus placed by the Concertación governments, which were intent on protecting democracy from a new coup. As Jean Franco notes, Chile's reconciliation "depended on overlooking the crimes committed by the military. The amnesty decreed by Pinochet before he left the government and the limitations placed on the Rettig Truth and Reconciliation Commission and on the Valech report on torture, which could not name perpetrators, foreclosed a thorough examination of the past" (188). Fictional literature, such as that examined in this dissertation³⁴, attempts to expose the gaps and shortcomings of official decisions.

In South Africa, the possibility of trials was precluded by the balance of power resulting from negotiations between the last apartheid-era president, F.W. De Klerk, and the ANC. The country opted for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as the method to establish the truth and promote national unity after the dismantling of apartheid. One of the tasks of the TRC was to promote national unity and reconciliation. The commission, under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, linked truth to reconciliation through the argument that knowing the truth was necessary for creating a

³⁴ There are many other texts, such as Roberto Bolaño's *Estrella distante* (1996), *Nocturno de Chile* (2000), and *La literatura nazi en América* (1996); Carlos Cerda's *Una casa vacía* (1996); Ariel Dorfman's play *La muerte y la doncella* (*Death and the Maiden*) (1990); Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica* (remarkably, published during the dictatorship, in 1983).

new, unified, national identity. The healing of the traumatized nation would be achieved by establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature, and extent of the gross violations of human rights between 1960 and 1994; establishing the fate of victims and restoring their dignity through the narration of their account; devising reparations; facilitating amnesty to qualified applicants; and issuing a report that would include recommendations to prevent future human rights violations (*TRC Report*, Ross 236). The Amnesty Committee³⁵ of the TRC was tasked with considering amnesty in exchange for truth on a case-by-case basis (instead of the blanket amnesty sought by the outgoing regime).

Among the several unique features of the South African TRC is the explicit place for *ubuntu*, "the mainspring of the African humanist world-view, an attitude of tolerance and empathy grounded in the interdependence of the individual and the collective [...]: 'A person is a person through other people'" (Simpson "Tell" 248 n. 3). This principle stimulated and supported a relatively and unexpectedly peaceful and productive truth recovery process. The legitimacy of the new dispensation was based, at least partially, on acknowledging past violation of rights. Like CONADEP and the Rettig commissions before it, the TRC "employed a rhetoric of truth-telling to promote catharsis and healing" (Ross 235), but in contrast to the Chilean commission, the TRC did name names and demanded truth in exchange for amnesty. South Africa's celebrated TRC, designed to be an active part of the democratic and participatory construction of national history, was characterized by the transparency of its hearings, many of which were public and intensely broadcast in the media; its emphasis on the healing effects of storytelling and

³⁵ There were three committees in the TRC; the other two were the Human Rights Violations Committee, and the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee (*TRC Report I*: 267-93).

giving testimony; and "a radically new kind of justice" (Phelps 9)—that is, restorative justice that helps transform victims into survivors, situates them as part of a story larger than their own, and restores their dignity.

The main purpose of a TC is to find the truth or confirm widely held beliefs about past atrocities, and to record this history for posterity as an attempt to prevent its recurrence. In this sense, TCs function as devices for the preservation of official memory. The objective of a TC "might be described more accurately as acknowledging the truth rather than finding the truth," Priscilla Hayner writes ("Fifteen" 607), and this acknowledgement has a cathartic effect on society. TCs are generally seen as positive developments, accepted as an effective way to deal with past national trauma, and to implement conflict resolution measures or restorative justice. They constitute a formal acknowledgement that guards against denial and amnesia (Posel and Simpson 1, 9). However, no TC—not even the most celebrated one (the South African TRC)—is free of intense scrutiny and criticism of its processes, limitations, and results. One criticism is that the acknowledgment of the truth may function as an *alternative* to justice rather than *as* justice (Simpson "Tell no Lies" 221). This shortcoming is most evident when amnesties are involved, since amnesty precludes the possibility of prosecution and legal punishment.

These and other paradoxes and criticisms of TCs are addressed by scholars of various disciplines, as described in the Introduction. Because some of these criticisms are voiced in the fiction of the affected countries, they deserve a closer examination in this chapter. For example, Gillian Slovo's novel *Red Dust* questions certain aspects of the TRC's discourse and practices, including, especially, the option of amnesty. South

Africa's controversial provision of amnesty in exchange for full disclosure was a strategy to produce more information about gross human rights violations during most of apartheid. The perpetrators' confessions would make amnesia and denial of history more difficult, and the public acknowledgement of responsibility would contribute to prevent total chaos in the country (Graham 32), which was already experiencing unprecedented levels of violence, even as apartheid was being dismantled and the democratic transition implemented. Slovo's novel also questions whether truth and forgiveness can in fact generate reconciliation, and the notion—forcefully maintained by the TRC—that speaking the truth is a healing experience (a view also challenged by scholars [Adam and Adam 37, Dawes 395]).

In his criticism of the blindness to the structural violence of apartheid, Mahmood Mamdani comments that "[p]erhaps the greatest moral compromise the TRC made was to embrace the legal fetishism of apartheid. In doing so, it made little distinction between what is legal and what is legitimated, between law and right" ("A Diminished Truth" 60). This philosophical argument about the tensions between law and justice also appears outside of Africa: for instance, one character in Carlos Franz's *El desierto* reminds the judge that "no todo lo legal es justo" (147) ["not everything legal is just" (117)]. In other words, not all official versions (including laws) are necessarily true and generally beneficial.

Benita Parry has criticized most severely the "reconciliatory ideology and politics of accommodation" at the expense of optimizing socioeconomic structures, class, and material circumstances in South Africa. An analogous criticism has been leveled by Nelly Richard at the Chilean transition and its triumphalist celebration of neoliberal policies

and historical oblivion. What Richard analyzes at length in *Crítica de la memoria*, Franz's protagonist expresses in a terse, colloquial manner.

The above summary compares how Argentina, Chile, and South Africa have dealt with their historical trauma; it shows both similarities and differences in official discourses and actions. The study of fictional literature also finds similarities, connections and points of comparison between South African and South American authoritarian and post-authoritarian societies. In making comparisons and finding similarities, it is equally important to spot differences that bring out what is particular about each case, how this particularity is represented, and what it means. For instance, the difference between the public nature of the TRC hearings and the private character of the TC hearings in Argentina and Chile may have affected the extent of the public's awareness of the processes. Another difference is that, as Mamdani notes, the "link between conquest and dispossession, between racialised power and racialised privilege, between perpetrator and beneficiary" ("Diminished" 59) is paramount in South Africa, but not a major point in the Southern Cone's discussions and literary representations of the dictatorships and the subsequent period. (I do recognize that the issues of extermination, dispossession, and exploitation of indigenous peoples in Latin America is historically acknowledged [and even appear in Franz's novel], but they were not *systematized* and *legalized* by the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s in the way that the apartheid regime did; their roots are deeper and older than the mid-twentieth century, and start with the Spanish conquest). Yet another difference is the use of the concept and the term "reconciliation," prominent in both Chile and South Africa (and part of these two commissions' names), but avoided in Argentina. TRC deputy chair Alex Boraine

attributes this avoidance perhaps to the Christian connotation of the term and thus the association with the Catholic Church, notorious for its complicity with the Argentine dictatorship³⁶. The term benefits perpetrators more directly than it helps their victims (Boraine 79-80; Slovo "Making History"). This benefit was not unimportant in places where the perpetrators still wielded a significant amount of power (and arms), such as in Chile.

The truth commissions' final reports are the material result of their work. These documents have the potential to open up, rather than shut down, views of the history. They help to exhume rather than to bury the past; they are not—should not be—the final word but the first step in a process that is "an inverse reflection of the revenge cycle—a truth-telling cycle" (Phelps 120). An example of the continuing effect of a TC is in Argentina, where, partly because of the work of CONADEP and its report, the memory of the Dirty War is still extant. In the years after *Nunca más*, some military officers have told (or, perhaps more appropriately, confessed) their stories³⁷; legal cases involving abduction and illegal adoption of children born in captivity have been represented in literature and film³⁸, and are going through the courts³⁹; memorials to the victims of the Dirty War have been built; the laws *Punto Final* and *Obediencia Debida* were annulled by Nestor Kirchner's government; and court proceedings for torture and disappearance

³⁶ In sharp contrast, the Chilean Church was, for the most part, supportive of the victims of the dictatorship, as the work of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad attests. Monsignor Sergio Valech, who was to become the chairman of the 2004 *Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura*, had been head of the Vicariate of Solidarity (Stern *Reckoning* 290).

³⁷ See Adolfo Scilingo's confession of his involvement in the "vuelos de la muerte" (death flights, the practice of pushing drugged prisoners from aircraft into the Río de la Plata) and the complicity of the Church, as reported by Horacio Verbitsky in *El vuelo* (1995).

³⁸ For example, Luis Puenzo's film *La historia oficial* (1985).

³⁹ This is also thanks in great part to the work of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. See Arditti for an account of this movement.

have managed to go forth. *Nunca más* was even instrumental in the prosecution of the Juntas (Bakiner 108; Hayner "Fifteen" 604). At the cultural level, *Nunca más* has helped to construct a new master narrative that replaces that of the dictatorship. While doing away with the military's patriarchal and repressive discourse is a welcome development, it could be argued that, in creating a new master narrative in lieu of the old one, the commission's discourse becomes official, and becomes a ground of contestation too. This has been the case in South Africa, with respect to the TRC (Attwell and Harlow 3, Graham 32, Phelps 80).

Finally, all TC reports are descriptive, but do little to explain the reasons for the atrocities; in this sense, the TRC report "reads less as a history, more as a moral narrative" (Posel "What Kind of History?" 148). As such, it honors a vernacular form of culture and is useful for a general sense of what happened, but it lacks the power to explain why apartheid happened, and thus does not necessarily prevent the reappearance of other forms of abusive and unjust systems.

Unbalanced Trinity: Memory, Justice, and Reconciliation

A major objective of a new administration after authoritarian rule is to strengthen democracy and ensure that the nation is governable. Reconciliation is a concept often used to stimulate the desired national unity, which is to be attained through forgiveness and/or forgetting. The judicial form of forgetting is amnesty, but despite their common etymological roots and frequent association, amnesty is not equal to amnesia. A crime may be forgotten by the law, but this does not necessarily mean that the offence is forgotten by the victim. Because victims might find it difficult to forget and forgive

(especially if they don't consider this a religious duty, as the Christian-inflected TRC promulgated), amnesty is a contested proposition. Gillian Slovo, for example, attended the amnesty hearings of Craig Williamson, who had ordered the assassination of Slovo's mother, Ruth First. Slovo found that "one of the hearing's most distasteful features was the occasions when the victims were encouraged to forgive those who caused them such great harm. This [. . .] was a political compromise being turned into a forced embrace of old enemies, in which it is always the victims [who were] asked to make the greatest sacrifice" ("Making History"). Slovo resents the pressure to forgive a perpetrator in order to lubricate the wheels of political processes. Her novel *Red Dust*—based in part on her experience in Williamson's hearing—illustrates traumatic amnesia (but does not make a direct association between amnesia and amnesty), and brings to the forefront some other problems associated with amnesty. Moreover, the novel suggests that, even if amnesty is granted by a judicial body, forgiveness by an actual person is something altogether different, and that reconciliation will not be achieved by judicial acts and theological arguments alone.

In the early 1990s in South Africa, the outgoing and incoming governments negotiated a case-by-case amnesty procedure to be administered by the TRC's Amnesty Committee. In contrast, compliance with the Chilean military's 1983 self-proclaimed amnesty was considered a *sine qua non* for the transfer of power, indispensable to avoid civil war. This peace-protective mechanism may have worked at the political government level, but not for some citizens. As Amy Kaminsky notes, for victims and their families, memory *and* punishment of the perpetrators are necessary for attaining a sense of fairness. For society as a whole, memory is necessary to prevent a reiteration of the

excesses of the past, as *Nunca más* signifies. Besides being unjust because it favors perpetrators of rights violations and beneficiaries of unjust systems, amnesty does nothing to change the institutions and structures that perpetuate injustice and allow the abuse of power. Without retributive justice, many victims and their families are unable to bring closure to their suffering. The loss of memory in the form of amnesty implies missing the opportunity to obtain justice, as well as the potential danger of history repeating itself.

In South Africa, the political idea of national reconciliation was an element of the negotiations that led to the creation of the TRC. The founding Act of this institution calls on "the need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimisation" (*TRC Report I*: 8). The TRC promoted reconciliation as the practice of compassion and respect for the humanity of others, linking it closely to national healing and peace. Reparations to the victims and amnesty to the perpetrators were the official instruments to attain these conciliatory objectives (Attwell and Harlow 2); the philosophical bases were the principles of *ubuntu*, negotiation, and compromise. The TRC favored repairing dignity as a form of justice, and put forgiveness above retributive justice. For Chairman Tutu and those who shared his Christian ideology, reconciliation was of primary importance, even, at times, more important than truth. The TRC was subject to intense political pressure from the incoming ANC government, the leaders of which tried to prevent the publication of the final report upon learning that their armed movement was implicated in human rights abuses revealed to the commission [Bakinar 1]), Too much truth, in fact, was seen as endangering the project of national unity, as two other cases reported by Janet Cherry et

al. illustrate. The first is the subpoena of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, which was not realized due to the "fragile relationship between the IFP and the ANC," (26) as the legal summons of the Zulu leader was liable to intensify the violent animosity between the two parties. The second case is the South African National Defence Force's official complaint about the TRC's attempts to gain access to their documents. Some truths, these cases seem to be saying, are too inconvenient to reveal and can derail a peaceful process.

Through the TRC, South Africa sought restorative—as opposed to retributive—justice. Restorative justice, a conceptualization closely associated with the need to reconstruct society, is an attempt to affirm the dignity of victims (Rotberg "Introduction"). It "seeks not to punish but to restore relations that should never have been interrupted" (Todorov *Memory 2*) between former perpetrators and former victims⁴⁰. In contrast to the TRC report, in *Nunca más* the vocabulary of reconciliation is absent except in the part of the Prologue denouncing perpetrators who accused the commission of trying to impede reconciliation. Instead of an instrument of restorative justice, *Nunca más* was used to support the prosecution of repressors.

For many people, reconciliation means forgiving; for others, it means coming to terms with their own actions and omissions. Slovo's own sense of reconciliation is with the events, not with the perpetrators; in this sense the TRC was important because it

⁴⁰ The idea of reconciliation used by Todorov and almost everyone else assumes, as the prefix indicates, that there was a previous harmonic relationship that can and must be restored. I strongly question the idea that in South Africa there were ever sustained harmonic relations between racial groups; I thus favor the term conciliation over reconciliation to indicate that a new friendship is possible, without assuming that such amicable relationship ever existed before. However, given the overwhelming use of the term reconciliation, especially in the discourse of the South African transition to democracy, I use the term when alluding to established institutions and critics.

helped "a whole society reconcile itself to its past, without ignoring or denying it" ("Making History"). The idea of reconciliation with *what* happened rather than with *who* committed abuses appears also in Slovo's novel, where the author's questions are voiced by Sarah in her discussions with Ben.

If asked to make a choice between reconciliation and justice, the best that anyone can do is to strive to find an acceptable balance, although this probably means that both justice and truth will suffer losses. It is in this spirit of finding equilibrium that Harvard Emeritus Professor of Law Henry Steiner asks in his Introduction to *Truth Commissions: A Comparative Assessment*, whether there is "a golden mean, some 'proper' degree of collective memory appropriate for bearing in mind the cruelties and lessons of a troubled past, while not so consuming as to stifle the possibilities of reconciliation and growth?" (7). I cannot answer that, but in the following section I show how fictional literature addresses this question about balance between truth, memory, justice, and reconciliation with regards to historical trauma.

Truth Commissions and Literature

CONADEP in Argentina, the two Chilean truth commissions (Rettig in 1990, and Valech in 2004), and South Africa's TRC all issued official reports at the end of their assignments. CONADEP's report, entitled *Nunca más* (Never Again)—Argentina's "book of memory," in the words of literary critic Beatriz Sarlo (*Tiempo presente* 150)—became a best-seller in the country, and was translated into several languages, including Portuguese, Italian, English, German, and Hebrew, for consumption abroad (Crenzel). The TRC's seven-volume report, whose first five volumes were published in 1998, is

available in print and on the Internet. Yet it was the prominence of the TRC's broadcasted public voice and image during the first few years of democracy, not its report, that captured South Africans' attention and the world's admiration. By comparison, the South American commissions' work was not made public until it was consigned to a written report, by which time the commissions' work was completed. But beyond the recognition of the TCs and the consumption of their reports, how much weight does fictional literature assign to truth-telling, justice, and reconciliation? While a number of South African novels and films examine the TRC (for example, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (2000), Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001), and Ian Gabriel's film *Forgiveness* (2004), the subject of TCs is not prominent in South American literature (excepting, of course, the incarnation of *Nunca más* as a nonfiction book).

Each of the five novels examined in this dissertation considers a traumatic past and the possibility—or impossibility—of redressing injuries and achieving conciliation, but they explore diverse avenues for doing so and make different emphases. María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* conceives individual understanding and forgiveness through knowledge; Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* suggests the possibility of reconciliation with family; Carlos Franz's *El desierto* imagines the collective taking revenge; Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* uses the TRC as a venue for atonement and reconciliation; and finally, Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* departs from the expected in that it does not admit the feasibility of conciliation or truth, and instead offers solidarity as a basis for new relationships. In different degrees, the novels expose the tensions between memory and versions of truth, question the forms and the possibility of justice, and invite a non-specialized readership to ask about the meanings of

the truth, justice, and reconciliation touted by the transitional governments of Argentina, Chile, and South Africa.

David Attwell and Barbara Harlow write that South African literature after 1990 "emphasizes the breaking of silences, [. . .] the refashioning of identities [. . .], and the role of culture [. . .] in limiting or enabling new forms of understanding (3). What these critics say about South Africa—breaking silence, recreating identity, and the importance of cultural representation—can also be observed in some of the literature produced in the Southern Cone and published after the end of the dictatorships. This is in concordance with my main hypothesis in this dissertation—that fiction offers different interpretations of history that contest official discourses. The works examined in this study directly address the need to narrate memory, and the conflicts between memory and amnesia on one hand, and between justice and amnesty on the other. The novels exemplify the role of culture in the form of literature and offer a humanist understanding of memory contaminated with amnesia, and of justice degraded by amnesty—that is: impure memory and imperfect justice.

The novels in my sample ascribe different valuations of truth, justice, and reconciliation. This seems to roughly correspond with the prominence of these objectives in each country. Without being government mouthpieces, the novels' emphases represent at least some of the values voiced by new democratic official organs (national governments and institutions, including TCs) and the general public during the transitions. Argentines have tried to understand and deal with the past by engaging with memory work, as Elizabeth Jelin shows. Justice, conceived principally as retributive, was loudly demanded by the population, but took a circuitous path with ultimately limited

punishment. Reconciliation was never a significant component in the discourses of the Argentine transition. In contrast, for South Africa, restorative justice and reconciliation were the most important explicitly stated objectives; attaining these two values relied heavily on narration and acknowledgement of individual memory, especially in the context of the TRC. Finally, Chile de-emphasized both memory and justice so that national unity and governability could be achieved. The differences in emphasis in each country respond to specific political circumstances and choices. The relative weight of memory and justice are expressed in the novels in my sample.

While Slovo's novel takes on the problem of imperfect justice (criticizing the amnesty provision more than anything else) and traumatized, impure memory, Eprile's is about the inevitability of remembering. The Chilean counterpart, Franz's *El desierto*, suggests the possibility of collective, unofficial retribution as the only possibility of justice. In contrast, the two Argentina novels, Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Pron's *El espíritu*, are less focused on—perhaps less confident in—the workings of the law and justice, and delve deep into memory and coming to terms with the past. The three South American novels stress the importance of memory as a valid, if imperfect, tool to establish the truth, and suggest its necessity in order to smooth the path to reconciliation and to prevent the recurrence of atrocities. In the novels (all except *Red Dust*), the acts of remembering, investigating, and enunciating recollections help to channel the characters towards forgiveness when justice seems unattainable or is no longer possible. However, while the South African characters rely on official fora, the South Americans seem to have little formal recourse, or no faith in such a recourse. In all, the novels studied here acknowledge the importance of memory, the difficulty of dispensing complete justice,

but also represent individuals and nations moving toward conciliation with their societies and within themselves despite the shortcomings of judicial systems and human memory.

In contrast to the truth commissions' physically and morally ponderous versions of the truth embodied in their final reports, literary fiction works give accounts of individuals endeavoring to remember and reconcile different accounts. Fiction expresses ideas that are different from, and supplement, the official discourse, and thus offer reinterpretations of official history. Slovo's *Red Dust* proposes an alternative value to those promoted by the TRC, jettisoning the illusion of truth and justice, and settling for solidarity between individuals instead; that these individuals belong to groups that, because of racial considerations, were once in an unequal and hostile relationship, makes the point of solidarity more persuasive, even if expected. Yet this altruistic value directly contradicts one of the mainstays of the TRC—truth—because in order to act in solidarity, Sarah lies to Alex about what Hendricks told her regarding Alex's implication in the death of Steve Sizela. She takes this course of action because she "thought that this reassuring of Alex was much more important than the truth could ever be" (331). This interpersonal value becomes more relevant and practical than the truth, at least for the protagonists, Sarah and Alex. Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* suggests that memory and narration are necessary but insufficient to restore dignity and attain justice, and that the job of reconstruction of the South African nation has only just begun. Franz's *El desierto* criticizes Chile's official and tepid "justicia en la medida de lo posible" (justice to the degree possible) and extends its criticism of the transition to other aspects of Chilean society, such as its class structure. The two Argentine novels by Andruetto and

Pron focus on the recovery of memory, and do not comment on the country's transitional institutions except, in the case of Pron's text, to note deterioration in several spheres.

The general impulse of these novels is toward the balance sought by Steiner—between memory, truth, justice, and conciliation. Each novel shows different approaches to the attainment of justice: formal instances like the TRC in Slovo's *Red Dust* and Eprile's *Persistence*; versions of truth hidden in archives that help characters understand and attain a more equanimous view in Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Pron's *El espíritu*. Even more than *Red Dust*, Franz's *El desierto* proposes a satisfying personal confrontation with an individual oppressor, and hints at the possibility of revenge through non-official retribution for crimes committed during the dictatorship.

Whereas in the South American novels there is no mention of TCs, the two South African novels offer representations of the TRC and the debates about it. Both in her fiction and in her personal pronouncements, Slovo expresses that the TRC was not about legal justice and punishment, but rather that the Commission was merely the beginning of a process that was to be completed through the implementation of social justice projects (BBC). In the fictionalized courtroom scenes, Sarah's discussions with Ben and with Alex, and a shifting focus on the internal and externalized voices of perpetrators, victims, and other participants in the TRC hearings, *Red Dust* directly exposes the contradictions between truth, memory, amnesty, and justice. In this novel, the lawyers' discussions mirror the mid-1990s debates, such as those about the significance of the TRC and the meaning of reconciliation. Sarah wonders whether the TRC is about truth, and then answers, "Hardly. If the new rulers of South Africa think justice is complicated, well, they should know that the truth is even more elusive. So what else is there?"

Reconciliation? That's what the churchmen preach. [. . .] But I defy you to find reconciliation between the individuals either in this case or in a score of others" (318). Ben retorts that the TRC was never meant to be about justice; furthermore, he argues, the reconciliation the Commission advocates is not between individuals, but within the society as a whole. Seeing the dismal national crime statistics, and the divisions and hostilities that emerge in Smitsrivier since Hendricks's hearing, Sarah is skeptical about the feasibility of reconciliation. Ben reminds her that the TRC is the outcome of a negotiated settlement, but Sarah sees it as capitulation. In Ben's opinion, the TRC is "a chance [for the country] to heal itself" (38), a view very much in line with the official discourse of the TRC: the possibility of reconciliation, the healing power of telling the truth so often invoked by the Commission. But Sarah cannot abide the amnesty provision, which "seems to be a way of saying that the guilty can go free" (42). She points out the ritualistic and religious overtones and the performativity of the institution, noting that the amnesty hearing is a "baroque blending of court ceremonial, street party and revivalist meeting" (84). *Red Dust*, then, enacts an important debate that was present in the South African transition to democracy, with Ben's views reproducing the TRC's official discourse, and Sarah voicing some of the common criticisms of the commission: the religiously-tinged underlying philosophy and discourse, the pressure to forgive, and the enormously controversial question of amnesty.

The TRC amnesty hearing in which Paul testifies against his military superior, is the climax of Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory*. More important than the outcome of this procedure is the recognition of the protagonist's own implication as a white man in South African society and in his country's covert wars in neighboring nations. *Persistence*

is not particularly concerned with the possibility and form of retribution, but rather with achieving some sort of peace within, and among, individual South Africans through acknowledging the country's history (especially the violence, but also the beneficiaries of apartheid)—that is: conciliation. As if to highlight the difficulty of attaining peace after such traumatic past, Eprile shows his protagonist's anguish, and does not provide an clear path after such entangled past.

Regarding reconciliation, Carlos Franz's *El desierto* says little about the idea itself, but harshly criticizes the related spirit of compromise that has infused post-Pinochet governments. Like the South African novels, it is concerned with the attainment of truth and justice, and agrees with the TRC's notion that truth and memory can be healing (something the Argentine novels also suggest). In *El desierto*, Laura fled her country after being manipulated and tortured by Major Cáceres; for her, telling the truth is cathartic and an antidote to bitterness, and a gift to her daughter: Truth was "lo único que podría curarla, hacerla escupir y vomitar el odio ignorado que la envenenaba. Para que [Claudia] no tuviera que vivir como ella: veinte años o una vida con esa amargura en el alma" (452) ["the only thing that would cure her, would make her spit and vomit up the long-ignored hatred poisoning her. So that Claudia wouldn't have to live the way she had, twenty years or a whole lifetime with that bitterness in her soul" (363)]. While speaking the truth can beneficially purge a poisoned existence, truth can also be a burden, as Eprile's Paul knows; even when Laura brings her daughter to the place where "those horrible things happened" and is about to conclude her confession, she realizes that "quien exige conocer la verdad total de su pasado se arriesga a ser aplastado y destruido por el solo peso de esa verdad" (449) [whoever demands to know the total truth of one's

past risks being crushed and destroyed by the sheer weight of that truth" (360, translation modified)]. Indeed, in Franz's novel many characters choose not to remember or know the truth. Echoing Chilean politicians who advocate oblivion in order to move on with the country's business, Pampa Hundida's cunning and pragmatic Mayor Boris Mamani declares that forgetting is necessary, and that the people of his town have learned to forget so that they may dance (131). Opposing this policy of oblivion, Claudia, who is young and a foreigner, demonstrates an accurate perception of the Chilean attitude when she tells her mother that "parece que los únicos dispuestos a enfrentar el pasado en este país somos quienes no lo vivimos" (41) ["It seems as if the only people ready to face up to the past in this country are people who did not live through it" (32)]. Laura responds appropriately to this reasonable complaint, and accepts (in a tone reminiscent of the narrator of *El espíritu*) that sooner or later, "los hijos, con los que vivíamos para el futuro, nos impiden olvidar, nos empujan a la memoria con sus preguntas temerarias sobre un pasado que no vivieron" (48) ["our children, with whom we've lived for the sake of the future, prevent us from forgetting: they thrust us toward our memory with their rash questions about a past which they haven't lived through" (37, translation modified)]. Laura opts for giving her daughter the past that she demands to know.

Claudia's and Laura's comments about the young forcing on their parents the memory of a reality that they, the children, did not experience, is a variation of the notion of postmemory, which also appears in Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Pron's *El espíritu*. Pron's narrator, in fact, echoes Laura's musing when he says that, "Los hijos son los detectives de los padres, que los arrojan al mundo para que un día regresen a ellos para contarles su historia y, de esa manera, puedan comprenderla [. . .] pueden intentar poner

orden en su historia, restituir el sentido [. . .], y luego proteger esa historia y perpetuarla en la memoria" (12) [Children are detectives of their parents, who cast them out into the world so that one day the children will return and tell them their story so that they themselves can understand it [. . .] [,] can try to impose some order on their story, restore the meaning [. . .], and then they can protect that story and perpetuate it in their memory" (4)]. Thus, the three South American novels ask the young generation to assume the duty of safeguarding historical memory.

Carlos Franz, who was a lawyer before devoting himself to writing, has an interest in the relationship between justice and the law. His novel *El desierto* asks what happens when just people and the law are forced into acceptance of, and complicity with, injustice. Laura, the town's judge, is forced to cooperate with the military detachment that arrives in Pampa Hundida to install order and catch subversives. She does not raise an objection when she witnesses the martial court in which twelve prisoners—alleged subversives—are tried without evidence or due process. She realizes that, after the military coup, she herself would inevitably represent the new order, even though she belonged to the supposedly independent Judicial branch. At the court martial, Laura sits down when the sentence is dictated, aware that this act of sitting signals acceptance: "he callado, y luego me senté cuando debía quedarme parada. Con estos gestos he dado fe" (154) [I have kept quiet, and then I sat down when I should have remained standing. Those gestures have been my attestation of faith" (121)]. Much to her chagrin, she knows that she speaks the language—the language of the law—of the oppressor, and that this shared idiom implicates her: "Entender este lenguaje, compartirlo con ellos, es ya una forma fatal de implicancia, de complicidad. [. . .] Entrar en una discusión legal, con ellos,

será reconocerles el derecho a usar mi idioma, será reconocer al tribunal que parodian, acatar su corte, dar fe de que han decidido argumentar su fuerza" (152) ["To understand that language, to share it with them, is a serious form of legal implication, of complicity. [. . .] To enter into a legal discussion with them will be to admit their right to use my idiom, to acknowledge this tribunal although they are making a parody of it, to respect their court-martial, and to certify that they have determined to argue for their power" (120). Although in 1973 Laura is acutely aware of the signification of her acts and her omissions, she is unable to confront the power that she is implicitly, if unwillingly, endorsing.

It will be another twenty years before Laura has the opportunity and the capability to confront unjust power in her native country. Yet, by the time she is mature enough and the situation in Chile is no longer life-threatening, she is disenchanted with the law as a profession. Reflecting on her renewed position as judge in Pampa Hundida, she asks herself, in her characteristically sardonic tone, "¿a quién irían [los peregrinos] a pedirle sus favores, entonces? ¿A ella? ¿Qué tenía ella para ofrecerles a cambio? ¿Su justicia terrenal? Esa parodia, esa farsa donde el poder se disfraza de imparcialidad" (411) ["to whom would they [the religious pilgrims] go then to beg for their favors? To her? What did she have to offer in return? Her worldly justice? That parody, that farce where power is disguised as impartiality" (329)]. Laura weighs the relative values of faith and fairness, of religion and law, and of praying for favors and demanding rights that were asked of her twenty years before. She has no confidence that she could then, or can now, appeal to either earthly or divine law to address the people's demands for justice. As Chilean literary critic Rodrigo Cánovas notes, the judge and the Virgin are intercessors between

the community and the law; the law and the people's devotion seem interchangeable. The intercession asked by Pampa Hundida in 1973—that the judge save the twelve prisoners—meant that the young judge was to offer herself in exchange. This is how Laura entered into a complicit and intimate relationship with Major Cáceres, in plain view and at the behest of her town. Back then, she accepted what she felt was her responsibility as judge, not knowing that her sacrifice would not balance the scales of justice, that Cáceres as a military man could not possibly honor their off-the-record pact. In the idealist romanticism of committed youth, Laura could only persuade herself that she was serving justice. Thus, *El desierto* opens up for examination the impossible situation of becoming complicit with the oppressor in order to save the oppressed.

El desierto also questions Chile's post-Pinochet official acceptance of only partial justice. Of the Southern Cone novels studied here, only Franz's raises the topic of justice and retribution for state crimes in the new democratic dispensation, and criticizes the government's and the citizenry's complacency with the terms imposed by the outgoing military regime. In the novel, only the young dare raise their voices. Claudia and her friends wield signs with slogans "Justicia ya," "Poder Judicial, vergüenza nacional", and "No a la impunidad" (247) ["JUSTICE NOW," "JUDICIAL POWER: NATIONAL DISGRACE," and ["NO TO IMPUNITY" (196, emphasis in Chambers's translation)]. We hear echoes of these demands in Patricio Pron's novel, when the townspeople gather in a demonstration with the slogan "Contra la impunidad y a favor de la vida" (77) ["No to impunity and yes to life" (76)], a slogan that is itself a throwback to the protests against the Argentine dictatorship. In *El desierto*, Mario also senses that "aquí, como en Berlín, no serían los viejos sino los jóvenes quienes exigirían recordar ese pasado a

quienes preferían olvidarlo" (39) ["here, as in Berlin, it would not be the older folks but the younger generation who would insist on recording that past for those who would prefer to forget it" (30)]. Mario is possibly referencing the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and by extension to the massive demonstrations that contributed to the end of the autocratic regimes in Eastern Europe.

The differing views between the young and old coincides with the opposition between the primacy of justice and political expediency with which post-dictatorship societies have had to contend. One of the major criticisms aimed at the Chilean transition is its settling for "justice to the degree possible." *El desierto's* young and eventually corrupted lawyer Tomás Martínez Roth parrots Velasco's position, which the rookie attorney readily accepts. He explains to a skeptical Laura that he will cease to pursue the judgment of collective responsibility for acts during the dictatorship because the acceptance of a collective guilt would distort the transition's official historical version that the dictatorship was totalitarian and could therefore not be resisted. In other words, he is acting for the sake of a version of history, rather for the sake of legal argument. This argument, by the way, also exonerates Laura for collaborating with Major Cáceres under torture, because if the dictatorship was total, it follows that total obedience was legitimate. Martínez Roth correctly, if unimaginatively, concludes that the case against Cáceres is condemned to the dead end of due obedience. But, significantly, due obedience places the oppressor, Cáceres, in the same predicament as the oppressed: legitimately (or at least legally) unable to resist orders. The legal figure of due obedience also effectively stopped the trials for human rights violations of most military officers

(330 of 370 accused) in Argentina despite popular opposition to the *Obediencia debida* bill (Roniger and Sznajder 76).

Regardless of the legal soundness of Velasco's and Martínez Roth's argument, *El desierto* examines the claim that a trial during the transition is not the best course of action to expose the acts of compromising and surrendering to power during the dictatorship. While not resisting may have been a reasonable option or unavoidable for those who experienced the crushing power of military repression, some in the younger generation find it distasteful. Claudia reports, disappointed, that Velasco (an erstwhile admired law professor) now tells them that, "sólo podemos aspirar a una 'justicia de lo posible'. Incluso menos, pues lo posible puede ser demasiado. Dice que la pasión por la justicia social condujo al terror social. Y que por lo tanto, si queremos mantener a raya el terror, de ahora en adelante, es necesario pedir menos justicia" (230) ["we can only hope for a 'justice of the possible.' And maybe even less, since what is possible may still be too much. He says that the passion for social justice led to social terror. And consequently, if we want to keep terror in line, from now on it will be necessary to ask for less justice" (182-83)].

Velasco's complacent view is shared by a sizeable part of the political class in Chile, intent on consensus and compromise. In Claudia's bitter report on the change of a once uncompromising principled figure, Franz packs a few issues that preoccupy him in *El desierto*: President Aylwin's invocation of justice "en la medida de lo posible," (to the degree possible) (Cánovas 233; Lazzara 115; Richard 32; Stern *Reckoning* 403 n. 25) and the development of widespread cynicism resulting from the political pragmatism inherited from the dictatorship (not to mention the view that the victims of state terror

brought the repression upon themselves for fighting for social justice). The lawyers Martínez Roth and Velasco are not the only ones who compromise. The former mayor of Pampa Hundida warns Laura that legal action would not be advisable in 1993 because they have a governability pact. Laura comes to understand that her own integrity is threatened: how easy it would be to give into "el riesgo principal del retorno a la provincia, su amabilidad, su facilidad, lo fácil que sería acomodarse, reclinarsse en el respaldo, pensar como la mayoría. Arrellanarse en un escepticismo de jueza sin fe en su justicia" (162) ["the principal risk of returning to the province, its affability, its docility, the rapidity with which one could become accommodating, lean back in your chair, and think like the majority. And settle into the skepticism of being a judge with no faith in justice" (128, translation modified)]. She is troubled when she understands that the entire society has fallen hook, line, and sinker for "[e]l consenso, el alma de la transición a la democracia, su estilo y su cordura" (170) [[c]onsensus, the soul of the transition to democracy, its style and its reason" (135, translation modified)]. Particularly painful for Laura is seeing how her once-admired mentor Velasco has been tainted and blinded by this cynicism and in the end has chosen oblivion—to the degree possible. It is not uncommon to find this bitterness in recent Chilean fiction and political commentary, since various democratic governments since 1990 have made attempts to officially acknowledge past wrongs and to preserve memory, but have been unable, in most cases, to enact laws to seek retributive justice.

Conclusion, to the degree possible

Both in the South African and the South American contexts, despite (or perhaps because of) the shortcomings and failures of justice, there are strong tendencies toward reconciliation and forgiveness among national leaders and institutions. These inclinations are expressed in literature. Slovo's characters, Sarah and Alex, find peace with the past and solidarity between them. This is an unexpected turn in *Red Dust*, seeing that the protagonists are a lawyer and a victim of the apartheid regime, who in their official capacities and in their personal convictions value truth and justice. But Sarah is skeptical about reconciliation, and both she and Alex do not know or reveal the truth, and thus do not conform to the official discourse. Eprile's protagonist of *The Persistence of Memory* slowly and painstakingly is able to reconstruct his life and adapt to the new South Africa after confronting real-life brutes and his own internal demons, both personal and familial. Franz's Laura and Claudia eventually make peace with each other and with themselves, and come to accept the traumatic past that shaped their lives. Pron's and Andruetto's novels highlight the possibility and desirability of remembering, and the non-linear relationship between memory, truth, and reconciliation at the family and personal levels. The protagonists of Andruetto's *Lengua madre* and Pron's *El espíritu* strive to understand their parents and their parents' generation, as well as themselves, the heirs to that generation's decisions and subsequent traumas. Pron's protagonist reaches the conclusion that, "todos los hijos de los jóvenes de la década de 1970 íbamos a tener que dilucidar el pasado de nuestros padres como si fuéramos detectives" (142) [all the children of young Argentines in the 1970s were going to have to solve our parents' pasts, like detectives" (152)]. And in his geographic and discovery journey he not only finds out

who his father was, and how the previous generation operated ideologically, but he also finds explanations for his own life, such as his unreasonable fear and loathing for his country of origin and his amnesiac and unstable psyche.

All the novels studied here make a gesture towards the attainment of knowledge, but *El espíritu* and *Lengua madre* emphasize the intimate nature of this knowledge, whereas the other novels present a more political and collective striving for truth and reconciliation. All the novels acknowledge the difficulty of dispensing complete justice, but they also express that the act of investigating, remembering, and enunciating the recollection is a movement in the direction of reconciliation and forgiveness at the individual and national levels.

In this chapter I have compared regional emphases on justice and reconciliation (which is more intense in the South African examples) and on memory (which is more intense in the Southern Cone). South American literature has initiated a small trend, which I have not observed in South African fiction, of exploring ordinary people's complicity with the dictatorships and—a subject that has been taboo until fairly recently—of criticizing the revolutionary movements of the authors' parents' generation. The fact that South Africa and South American countries have not meted out ample retributive justice in the form of punishment by imprisonment has led to a certain degree of disillusion, even a sense of betrayal. What forms this disappointment takes, how the subjective experiences are represented, and what their effects might be on the quality of life of citizens, are studied in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV: Legacies of Authoritarian Rule

The justice and reconciliation promised by the truth commissions (TCs) in countries emerging from authoritarian regimes were just one aspect of the sense of hope and good will that ushered in the 20th century's last decade. In 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall heralded the Cold War's end and the onset of many totalitarian communist states' peaceful transitions to democratic capitalism. South Africa was transformed by a remarkable political transition that terminated formal apartheid and inaugurated democracy; Chile reinstated elected government after 17 years of military dictatorship; and even Argentina, which had been plagued by economic hardship for several years since its own brutal dictatorship's end, was enjoying a temporary economic boom. These historical developments created great expectations within each country, and optimism beyond their borders. However, like the unfulfilled TCs' promises—especially the thwarted and only partial justice discussed in the previous chapter—many of the pledges on which those expectations were based would not be honored.

During the new millennium's first years, some of the dreams of justice, democracy, and opportunity were frustrated, which engendered deep disillusionment. The historical and social sciences disciplines have recorded and analyzed these phenomena (Beinart; Skidmore and Smith; Thompson; Wilson). Literary fiction, too, has represented and interrogated the disappointment and subsequent cynicism that characterized the post-authoritarian generations and shaped their own sense of who they are as individuals, as a generation, and as a nation. South African literature and cultural studies scholars, such as Sarah Nuttall and Annie Gagiano, have written about this development and its cultural expression. So, too, have Latin Americanists Beatriz Sarlo, Francine Masiello, Nelly

Richard, and more recently, Elsa Drucaroff. Following these critics, and going farther into the 21st century, this chapter continues my probing of the interactions between art and history: how imaginative literature intervenes in shaping the historical and political consciousness, in the political praxis, and in the exercise of democracy; and conversely, how historical and political developments determine popular imagination's shape and content, and its expression in literary fiction. More specifically, the present chapter foregrounds a fundamental aspect (apart from the TCs' role, discussed in Chapter III) of the transitions in South Africa and the Southern Cone: the reaffirmation and expansion of neoliberal economic programs, how these policies betrayed some emancipatory promises of equality and opportunity proclaimed by the transitional governments, and their non-economic effects on society. The novels examined here are a narrativized critique of these events.

Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, and Carlos Franz's *El desierto* feature characters who return to their countries of origin after radical disassociation, and experience difficulties in reacquainting themselves with the changed social environments. During this process, they discover or reconstruct a part of their family history, which they come to understand as a fractal of the national history and as a key to themselves. The war-traumatized protagonist of Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* did not emigrate, and he must deal with post-traumatic stress, the significance of the TRC, and dramatic changes in the New South Africa, where he feels more ill at ease than he ever felt during the apartheid regime that was so repugnant to him. As a group, these novels show a world in transformation, and the efforts to reintegrate to their nation of birth (and

the refusals to do so) carried out by those who suffered trauma or fled. The social and psychological phenomena that emerged during the transitions—the tensions between memory, justice, and impunity; the crushed revolutionary ideals and the criticism of their dogmas and practices; the economic transformations with their attendant social changes that deepened difference rather than promoting equality—are scrutinized in these novels. A brief overview of the political-economic aspects of the transitions will help to situate the novels, for this era is their historical setting.

The Transitions in the Southern Cone and South Africa

Argentina's transition after the end of the military regime in 1983 was marked by two momentous facts. One, unprecedented, was the new government's decision to prosecute the military and police forces responsible for the disappeared. The second situation, not at all unprecedented, was economic turmoil characterized by hyperinflation and a ballooning and unpayable foreign debt. President Raúl Alfonsín's administration partook in the national jubilation over the dictatorship's demise by creating CONADEP (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, the National Commission for Disappeared Persons) and overseeing the trial of the Juntas. More or less simultaneously, the country witnessed economic chaos and widespread impoverishment, felt especially acutely by the middle class, which saw itself spiraling downward to poverty (Skidmore and Smith 103).

From her critical standpoint in Chile, Nelly Richard has written abundantly, incisively, and with undisguised disillusionment, about cultural manifestations in the Chilean transition. She characterizes this process as tainted by compromise, obsessed

with consensus, and marked by the victory market forces. In the country's recent history (i.e., post-Pinochet), she sees more continuity than rupture, because the newly elected administrations consolidated the transformations toward market economy implemented by the military regime. Indeed, the post-dictatorship governments' neoliberal economic programs represent an acceptance of, or a capitulation to, the project of Pinochet and the Chicago Boys—the U.S.-trained economists who were key to reshaping Chile's economic structure⁴¹ during the dictatorship and beyond (Valdés 38-80). As Luis Martín-Estudillo and Roberto Ampuero point out in their comparative study of post-authoritarian cultures: even though the dictatorship was politically (though not militarily) defeated, its economic program was embraced by subsequent democratic administrations. Richard notes that the alliance between political redemocratization and economic neoliberalism molded social discourses and practices that exalted consensus and national reconciliation, and aligned these discourses with political programs designed to quiet down the traumatic memory of the coup and the state of violence that followed. In Richard's view, through the globalized economy's celebratory language, during the new democratic dispensation citizens became consumers, and the public realm was stripped of the passion and resistance that had characterized previous eras. Instead, the public sphere was filled with "la uniformidad numérica de una lengua del comprar que sólo premia la rentabilidad monetaria" (62) [the numerical uniformity of a language of purchasing that rewards only monetary profit (my translation)]. The process of marketization of everything, described in Chile by Richard and Brett Levinson, was also questioned by John Comaroff in South Africa shortly after the 1994 election, and more recently by numerous others, such as Shane Graham, Greg

⁴¹ Of Argentina too (Trigona 384).

Mullins, and Steven Robins. In literature, this pervasive commodification is realistically depicted (and severely criticized in Franz's novel *El desierto*) as the exaltation of the joys of the market; Eprile's *Persistence of Memory* refers to a visible expansion of the market's reach, but is subdued in its criticism. The novel celebrates the emergence of a black middle class, but ignores altogether the persistent crushing poverty among the majority of blacks.

The unthinking embrace of consumption and the market contrasts sharply with the revolutionary ideologies that a mere one or two generations before were such a fundamental influence in the emancipatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s on all continents. Containing the spread of this radical ideology was the main justification for the dictatorships in the Southern Cone, and one argument loudly voiced by the South African apartheid government to suppress opponents. By the authoritarian regimes' respective ends, the two regions also had the commonality that each country had embraced, and was now expanding, the neoliberal model—the principle that the economy should be based on free, minimally-regulated markets and competition, open international trade, and structural reforms (including privatization) to reduce the state's role in social and economic issues (Edwards 265). Or, to put it in Benita Parry's words: the state "fulfills the role of capitalism's agents" (186). The inconsistency between rhetoric and practice is striking, especially in South Africa's governing African National Congress (ANC), which during the struggle and the transition professed a commitment to some form of socialism, and in some cases, of communism. Yet, as Thomas Koelble indicates, the ANC government's actions are in line with the globally dominant neoliberal paradigm. The same is true for Chile's Concertación governments, the party coalition in

power from 1990 to 2010 and since 2014, which produced two Socialist Party presidents, including, twice, the current head of state, Michelle Bachelet.

The acceptance and intensification of neoliberal economic policies by the new democratic governments is one of the most important criticisms leveled against them from the left. This is not only because this position is ideologically opposed to the discourse of equality and liberation (the confused term "liberal" notwithstanding), but, perhaps more importantly, due to an increase in poverty and a widening wealth gap that this economic model produced in each country. Many commentators—Shane Graham among them—maintain that in South Africa the rhetoric of reconciliation and nation-building *should* have been accompanied by material improvement, compensation, and rebuilding; the implication is that it did not. Disenchanted critics believe that the ANC abandoned its "commitment to socialism and the 'two-stage theory of national liberation', in which freedom would be followed by socialism" (Koelble 165). In a country where the vast majority of the population was subject for generations to degrading and inescapable poverty, and was promised a complete transformation, this abandonment is doubly conspicuous and painful. As Gillian Slovo observes (echoing the critique of the Chilean transition), the clear *political* change occurred without complete transformation in the balance of *resources* ("Making History").

When we consider South Africa's political transformation in the 1990s, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* comes to mind. Written in 1961, this book is about the process of decolonization and nation-building; the essays refer to the newly independent, mostly agricultural, pre-industrial Third-world nations. But before we dismiss Fanon's analysis as anachronistic (he is talking about mid-20th century decolonization, not about

21st century globalized neoliberalism), it is worth pausing for a moment to think about South Africa's democratization as a decolonization process, if only in terms of its government, its race relations, and its bourgeoisie. In "The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness," Fanon writes that within a new regime "there are varying degrees of enrichment and acquisitiveness. [. . .] Favours abound, corruption triumphs [. . .]. The party, which has become a genuine instrument of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the State apparatus and determines the containment and immobilization of the people. The party helps the State keep its grip on the people" (116). This could well be a description of the current ANC government, riddled with corruption and seemingly deaf to its least privileged constituents (Beinart 328-30; Robins 128; Thompson 284-90).

To be fair, in addition to legal and constitutional changes that commenced in the 1990s, in South Africa there have been undeniable infrastructural improvements, such as increased access to water supplies and electricity, and better educational facilities. However, despite these significant developments, South African society is still enormously unequal in terms of wealth—a situation hardly corrected by the emergence of a new black elite amidst widespread poverty suffered by the majority. The black elite and the various programs instituted by the government, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme, and most recently the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme, have also failed to stop high unemployment or remedy the country's low literacy rate. Moreover, the "black empowerment" policy, intended to reverse past imbalances, has created the impression that the benefits are concentrated in a

small clique of black, coloured⁴² and Indian individuals, but are not shared with the whole society. "In other words," writes Koelble with perceptible disappointment, noting the distance between words and facts, "the discourse of 'affirmative action' and 'black empowerment' [. . .] has replaced earlier notions of radical transformation" (165). That is to say, there has been a change in discourse without commensurate and generalized material gain.

Many South Africans have interpreted this situation as a sign that the ANC has abandoned the promises it made during the struggle and the electoral campaign (to the effect that they would create millions of jobs and houses, and promote an economy that would ameliorate poverty and inequality). Between 1996 and 2003 the austerity program cut spending and reduced the budget deficit, leading to high unemployment levels. When Koelble was writing his assessment in 2008, these problems remained unresolved. But the economic hardship is made still more vexing by the uneven development and wealth disparity, which is materially and visually evident in actual walls and barricades that separate and protect (now more than in the apartheid era) the rich from the poor (Graham 92). This widening income gap and the erection of walls around the affluent are not an exclusively South African phenomenon, as it has been occurring in many places around the globe.⁴³

In 2012, a labor conflict ending in a massacre exposed some of the new injustices, broken promises, and corruption that plague the ANC government, and reminded us how the political changes have failed to significantly change the lives of millions of South

⁴² In South Africa, person of mixed race, Khoisan, Malay, or Indian descent.

⁴³ The "gated community," an unprecedented but now fairly common phenomenon in Argentina is depicted in Claudia Piñeiro's *Las viudas de los jueves* (2005).

Africans. Marikana is a platinum mine near Johannesburg owned by a British corporation. One of the shareholding directors is Cyril Ramaphosa, now Deputy President of South Africa and, by all accounts, a very wealthy man. In prior decades, Ramaphosa had been a committed ANC leader, instrumental in the transition negotiations and, importantly, a labor union leader and founder of NUM (National Union of Mineworkers), which represented the Marikana workers in the 2012 conflict. But as a corporate director, Ramaphosa refused to negotiate with the strikers, and instead, successfully argued for repressing them. This police action resulted in more than 100 people wounded and 34 dead. The event also revealed that the mineworkers' living conditions (shacks without electricity or water) were not very different from apartheid times, when they were housed in all-male hostels. Just like during apartheid, the workers' families often live in distant villages and are dependent on the money sent to them by these men. One of the dead strikers' relatives describes life in their village since 1994: improvements provided by the ANC government include a rebuilt school, an asphalt road, a bus to transport children to school, and a new clinic. However, people still sleep on the ground and have no electricity or water supply (they drink from the same stream as their cattle); the bus stopped running after one year, and the clinic is too far to reach. Pensioners and the sick receive modest grants, and schoolchildren are fed at school, but most villagers have no real income, and rely on the men who migrate to work in the mines to send them money (Davies 30). Much of this account (the police repression, the workers' substandard living conditions, inadequate access to basic utilities and transportation) are disturbingly reminiscent of apartheid practices, and belie the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the current government.

A vexing aspect of this slower-than-expected transformation is the persistence of the inferior education for non-whites—an overt apartheid government policy, but the consequence of neglect in the current dispensation. According to South African documentary photographer David Goldblatt, the consequence of this neglect is that "many of the 'born-frees', children born to the New South Africa, are hardly better educated than those who grew up subjected to Bantu Education⁴⁴," with the resulting fewer chances to escape poverty, not to mention the sense of unfulfilled promises of social and economic improvement. The persistent inequality, poverty, inadequate education, and perceived lack of opportunities are conducive to the high crime rate and violence (including high levels of domestic violence and rape) that has plagued the country for the past two decades (Davies 30). Like the building of walls around the wealthy, crime increase during the transition is not unique to South Africa, and has been seen in many countries after transition to democracy, especially in "newly deregulated and emerging economies, once 'political' violence has decreased" (Simpson 247). Perhaps less fear of law enforcers (or of the ironclad connection between policing and the old regime), and the impunity facilitated by police ineffectiveness or corruption are contributing factors.

Crime may originate in poverty and inequality—economic factors—but it has non-economic, social consequences, especially when it is accompanied by rape and other violence practiced not for economic gain. In "Tell no Lies," Graeme Simpson explains that the growing crime and violence in the New South Africa "are in fact rooted in the

⁴⁴ Bantu education was the apartheid state policy that dictated that "natives" (i.e., black Africans) receive an inferior education to others—including coloureds—in accordance with the type of labor that they were expected to perform (Thompson 196-97).

very same experiences of social marginalisation, political exclusion and economic exploitation that previously gave rise to the more 'functional' violence of resistance politics" (246). Simpson also links crime to the sense of impunity generated by the amnesties granted by the TRC. Importantly, the fear of criminal violence has produced "a backlash against human rights, which are perceived as serving the perpetrators at the expense of the victims" (247). Simpson is referring to South Africa, but an enormous increase in crime and urban violence has occurred also in Argentina. The abduction and homicide case in Pron's *El espíritu* is both a reenactment of dictatorship-era disappearances and a realistic portrayal of current unprecedented criminal activity in this country (not counting the 1970s state and parastatal violence). The high levels of common crime has led to a widespread sensation of insecurity in the Argentine population.

Applying Fredric Jameson's notion of "crisis of historicity," Shane Graham has summarized the situation that concerns us in the 21st century: socially, the effect of postmodernity and neoliberalism (in the form of technology and consumerism) is to thwart memory and promote amnesia. Graham's comment can easily refer to any place on the globe, including South America. The social effects of consumerism have started to appear in South African fiction. For example, Tshepo, the protagonist of K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), is a young, college-educated, black man who chooses to earn his living as an upscale prostitute in cosmopolitan Cape Town. He lives ambiguously immersed in value contradictions where consumption constitutes society's new index of distinction, replacing race. He notes, for instance, that on a Cape Town dance floor, race, education, parentage, and political views are no longer

important. What matters is to be able to dance and look sexy, and what labels are displayed on one's clothing. Young people seem to want to experience "excess in a culture rapidly blurring the borders between the township and the northern suburbs" (35)—that is to say, the line between black and white. In Duiker's novel, it is difficult to pin down the Tshepo's convictions because his beliefs shift, and especially because of his ambivalence toward race, class, and identity. The puzzlement and contradictions that plague the protagonist, whose life has been upended by family and township violence, is precisely the point of the novel: Tshepo embodies the New South Africa: ambiguous, contradictory, unsure of its values, marked indelibly by the violence of the past.

The confusion in identity in South Africa is not limited to blacks. Another character in Duiker's novel, Chris, is a young coloured man recently released from prison, where he has served several years for murder. His description of the present-day Cape Flats (to where some 70,000 residents of District Six, a designated coloured area in Cape Town, were forcibly relocated by the government in the 1970s) is strikingly similar to how it was during apartheid. The only difference, in fact, is the superlative importance of the distinction granted by the conspicuous sporting of brand names. Chris pointedly displays the cynicism elicited by relentless poverty, remnants of racism, and the violence that links these two conditions: "I know I'm a fuck up. I was bred in the Cape Flats", a "growing ghetto" (154), an overcrowded, dangerous, unsanitary slum where violence is experienced from a tender age, where gang hierarchies are paraded on the street, and drugs are bought and sold. Here, hip hop is sung at the weekly funerals, and Chris's own could happen any moment. Astonishingly, funerals (which during the anti-apartheid

struggle were sites for political activism) are a chance to show off fashionable name-brand attire and check out the deceased's girlfriend. But more surprising than the new importance ascribed to dress and the access to the right labels, is how much has *not* changed since high apartheid: inadequate housing and urbanization projects, control and surveillance mechanisms, poverty, and, notably, frequent funerals due to regular violent deaths, not all of which can now be blamed on the police. *The Quiet Violence* illustrates that, despite dramatic political and legal transformations, and contrary to expectation, social conditions for the majority have not changed substantially.

What is new, but not necessarily unrelated to the country's violent past, is the phenomenon of xenophobic violence in South African townships⁴⁵ against other Africans. Owen Sichone interprets this as a symptom that "South Africa is a very unwell, unhealed and unstable land, one that must yet confront the unfinished business of post-apartheid reconstruction" (257). The attacks' targets are individuals from nations that once supported the anti-apartheid cause; but these immigrants are perceived as invaders who take South Africans' jobs. The anti-immigrant sentiment is indicative of instability, poverty, and discontent. Moreover, and more importantly, in places "where livelihoods are difficult to sustain, the sense of ethnic identity among the poor has become sharper as their sense of civil identity and citizenship has been disappointed by the failure of the new state to deliver a 'better life for all'" (Sichone 258). The media—and even some government officials—stoke the public's negative opinion of foreigners, representing them as criminals, sick, and violent (Kabeya-Mwepu and Jacobs)⁴⁶. Street language helps

⁴⁵ In South Africa, urban area set aside during apartheid for black or coloured occupation.

⁴⁶ The arts too, perhaps. See, for instance Neill Blomkamp's film *District 9* (2009), where Nigerians are portrayed as violent, cannibalistic, exploitative townships gangsters.

to cement difference: the term *makwerekwere*, a pejorative name for African migrants, means onomatopoeically, "babbler or barbarian" (Sichone 259; Nixon)⁴⁷. The difference between black South Africans and other black Africans is marked by language (and accent) and, disconcertingly, skin color (*Makwerekwere* are considered darker than South Africans, sometimes against all visual evidence). Ironically, President Mandela, the great anti-apartheid leader himself, married a kwerekwere: Graça Machel, a Mozambican! It is unclear how much economic difficulties and how much outright racism weigh in this xenophobia. But the tens of thousands of African foreigners (especially Zimbabweans, Nigerians, and Congolese) living in South Africa experience "political racism," a result, in Sarah Nuttall's view, of the failure of the anti-apartheid struggle to foster a pan-Africanist consciousness, or even international solidarity and respect for diversity (744).

The novels examined in this dissertation reflect some of the emerging preoccupations during the democratic transitions after authoritarian rule in South Africa, Chile, and Argentina. In what follows I explore how fictional literature from these areas has addressed troubling changes, on the one hand, and the absence of change, on the other, in the post-authoritarian, neoliberal societies that concern us.

Literature in the New World Disorder

El futuro no es nuestro (*The Future is Not Ours*) is an anthology of short stories by Latin American writers born between 1970 and 1980. The volume's editor, Diego Trelles, stresses in his prologue that the collected pieces are a response to the

⁴⁷ The term *makwerekwere* is possibly a 21st century neologism; it does not appear in the 1991 edition of the Oxford *Dictionary of South African English*. The first mention I've found of the term's meaning is in Nixon (2001).

misconceptions associated with the oft-repeated slogan that the future belongs to the young. The book's title contradicts that motto, and the anthologized stories illustrate the editor's observations: the present is bleak in terms of social justice, human rights, the environment, and the economic conditions for those least favored by the "neoliberal fundamentalism of a market currently in free fall" (xiv). Trelles assigns responsibility to the socioeconomic order (or disorder) for the pessimistic, cynical present, and for upending what has been long taken for granted in most of the Western world—that the new generation will do better than the preceding one. The book punctures the capitalist positivist notion that dictates that the young are rightly optimistic and can manage their society. This optimism is less and less justified, in view of the widely disseminated information about the wars, terrorist acts, economic imbalances, and extreme power concentration—especially military and economic power—in societies around the entire globe. While the present planetary situation is not a direct effect of the Latin American dictatorships, South Africa's apartheid, or of the respective transitions, those regimes eagerly promoted the economic policies that support this world order; moreover, the subsequent transitional governments did not change the general economic direction, even if the internal policies of human rights abuses were reversed and redressed, at least partially.

In *Los prisioneros de la torre*, literary critic Elsa Drucaroff analyzes the literary production in Argentina during roughly the same period as Trelles's anthology. Her examination of her corpus—some five hundred post-dictatorship fiction works published between 1990 and 2007—reaches conclusions about non-literary Argentine issues, many of which are not flattering to the older generations, in which the critic includes herself.

For example, like the protagonist of María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, Drucaroff detects a contradiction among the committed 1970s militants who, intent on building a better future for the national collective, neglected their own families' wellbeing, for this was considered the private realm (and therefore less important). She also finds that, because there is no longer a fully employed working class living in relative poverty but with dignity and enjoying decent education and healthcare, Argentine post-dictatorship literature no longer represents class struggle. Instead, she remarks, literature illustrates "más que lucha de clases, [. . .] clases en lucha" (*Prisioneros* 495) [more than class struggle, [. . .] struggling classes⁴⁸]. In *Post-Authoritarian Cultures*, Luis Martín-Estudillo and Roberto Ampuero seem to agree with Drucaroff. They posit that, during the 1990s, Argentine and Chilean writers—such as César Aira, Rodrigo Fresán, Gonzalo Contreras, Jaime Collyer, and Alberto Fuguet—focused on a different subject from the preceding literature. New fiction, in Martín-Estudillo and Ampuero's view, is about middle-class, isolated, cynical young people in a modern, democratic, and hedonistic society, concerned with the present, not with the past, and who are strongly influenced by American culture.

Nevertheless, I suggest that the works by Selva Almada, Claudia Piñeiro, Lucía Puenzo, and Guillermo Saccomano, for instance, contradict Drucaroff's and Martín-Estudillo and Ampuero's opinion about the absence of class struggle represented in post-dictatorship fiction. Class struggle may no longer be presented in explicitly Marxist terms, but there is much fiction and non-fiction about class relations, resentment, and difference. Drucaroff is right, though, about the unprecedented, widespread, and evident

⁴⁸ All translations of Drucaroff's quotations are mine.

impoverishment that horrifies the Argentine population. Many members of this society still nostalgically remember their entitlements as a large literate middle class whose basic needs were satisfied; many of those entitlements, which would have been considered privileges in neighboring nations, are now gone. Argentines used to consider an exception, rather than an everyday sight, the narrow sector of society that fell out of the state's safety net. That sector is no longer narrow.

It does not take a semi-outsider like Pron's narrator to notice Argentina's decay; this decline is so steep that even cocky Buenos Aires has begun to realize—much to its horror—that it is part of, and not so different from, Latin America. As Drucaroff puts it, we can now see a "Buenos Aires despojado de la ilusión de ser Europa, paisaje postindustrial del tercer mundo" (*Prisioneros* 497) [Buenos Aires stripped of the illusion of being Europe, post-industrial landscape of the Third World]. Beatriz Sarlo explains this third-world-ification process in *Tiempo presente: The Latin Americanization of Argentina* is not only due to the usual reasons (extended unemployment, greater insecurity, weakening of public action, and strikingly rampant inequality) but also because "aprendimos a vivir en una sociedad dual, aceptando que nuestro destino sea radicalmente diferente del de los pobres. Nos acostumbramos a que la sociedad argentina sea impiadosa. Ése es un verdadero giro en un imaginario que, hasta no hace tantos años, tenía al ascenso social como una expectativa probable para casi todos" (133) [We learned to live in a dual society, accepting that our destiny is radically different from that of the poor. We got used to an uncharitable society. That is the real turn in the imaginary of a society in which, up to not that many years ago, social mobility was a likely expectation for almost everyone (my translation)]. In other words, it is not the loss of economic

power, but the inequality in access to resources—and the indifference to this inequality—that constitutes the Latin Americanization of a country that, until recently, boasted not only of its European heritage but also of a vast and educated middle class.

Returning to Chile after many years in Germany, the protagonist of Carlos Franz's *El desierto* contemplates disapprovingly the cynicism, superficiality, and commercialism in the neoliberal society in her country. Franz's novel directly criticizes all levels of Chilean society—from the military, to the liberal professionals, to the uneducated poor—of different eras—from before Pinochet's takeover through the late 1990s. Chilean writer Darío Oses concurs with Franz in that, in addition to the trauma of the coup and the dictatorship, there is the trauma of the inrush of the market; he thinks that Chilean new narrative responds by offering a deeper, more complete and nuanced version of reality, an alternative to the superficial and stereotyped version of consumerism and superficiality proffered by the media. Despite his positive view of current fiction writing, Oses does sense that, in his country, literature has been censored because it dares to touch on topics that the public finds uncomfortable (Cortínez "Entrevista colectiva"). Oses's observation seems to confirm the conventional wisdom that Chile is economically liberal but socially conservative, i.e., there is great freedom of the market but not so much of thought (or memory, I might add).

Some of today's writers are concerned with the reenactments of old social dynamics, and the appearance of new—as well as the intensification of old—economic challenges and inequalities that plague these societies as they emerge from years of political repression. It is interesting that the outlook of 21st century novels is often more somber than during the periods of authoritarian repressive regimes. This may reflect a

change in attitude (from an idealistic faith in the possibility of change to the present skepticism about leadership) or the curtailing of state censorship (plus a liberalization of certain taboos, such as the criticism of revolutionary movements). Or it may respond to the sense that the social and ideological forces with which writers today contend (hyperconsumption, political apathy, contentment) are more subtle and ubiquitous.

South Africa: New Divisions and the Persistence of Old Patterns

South Africa's 1990s political overturn has done away with all legal racial distinctions that were the basis, justification, and daily experience of either oppression or privilege for all South Africans for centuries. Despite the fact that wealth continues to be concentrated among whites, race is no longer the only unequivocal determinant and indicator of rank; instead, status distinctions are now given by patterns of consumption, as the characters in K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* are aware. Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* also illustrates this change in the scene where Paul and Dini witness the novelty of racial integration in a Johannesburg bar. Paul explains, without issuing judgment, that race distinctions are giving way to the class or economic distinctions of a consumer society: "Consumer goods and the peace to enjoy them in, that's the great leveler. We're moving into a whole new set of distinctions: who has Nikes, who doesn't; who's well enough dressed to come into your shop or restaurant, who is not. It's going to be the color of your money that really counts" (271) (rather than the color of your skin). The section of the novel where this scene occurs is set between 1990 and 2000 (that is, during the transition and TRC era). While this part of *Persistence*—optimistic without being unduly triumphalist—makes clear that the past has caused

enormous damage to all sectors of society (and not just the most evidently oppressed), it does not question at any point that the wealthy are disproportionately white, or the health of a society that measures value by the brand name of one's shoes—in a place where many still have no shoes at all. It is also unclear whether or not Paul approves of these new distinctions; the novel takes for granted that a society divided by economic class is better than one divided by race, and does not inquire into the unfulfilled promises of the new dispensation, which had been at the helm for ten years when the novel was published in 2004.

While it is plausible that purchasing power is becoming more important than the color of skin, it cannot be said that this transformation has changed the entire social structure. David Attwell and Barbara Harlow are troubled by their perception that *social* relations remain largely unchanged. Old social dynamics endure, even as South Africans insist that apartheid is something of the past (Gagiano "South African" 97). Even in the TRC era, when large sectors of the nation were looking apartheid in the eye, condemning the system, and demanding that perpetrators acknowledge their abuses, old forms of social interactions persisted. Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* illustrates the persistence of unbalanced power relations that, years after apartheid's formal demise, allow former oppressors to continue inflicting pain and humiliation on their victims—and this in the midst of TRC hearings, which were designed precisely as a response to the abuses fostered by that unequal power structure. In *Country of My Skull*, her famous account of the TRC hearings, South African poet and journalist Antje Krog observes that a "torturer's success depends on his intimate knowledge of the human psyche" (95). Krog goes on to note that this knowledge allows the notorious apartheid security policeman

Jeffrey Benzien, during his successful amnesty hearing, to manipulate during his former victims "back into the roles of their previous relationship—where he has the power and they the fragility" (95). Rather than displaying shame and guilt, Benzien displays power by using his intimate torturer's knowledge of his victims to make them relive, in public, the shame of their betrayals (S. Lewis 37).

In *Red Dust*, this kind of power, twisted in previously unimaginable ways, also directs the relationship between Dirk Hendricks, the apartheid policeman now in jail and applying for amnesty, and his former prisoner, Alex Mpondo. Hendricks is explicit about the intimate relationship between the torturer and his victim: to do the job properly, he says, the prisoner "must become like your child. [. . .] Or your lover" (147), making no distinction between the intimacy of guard-prisoner, filial, and romantic relationships. Returning to traumatic events, as Alex does, without getting closer to the truth, can have noxious effects on the lives of the very people whom the TRC was set up to help (Dawes 395). In remembering, Alex returns to his past as a victim, and is thus once again, in the present, rendered vulnerable. Instead of being a site where healing catharsis occurs, the TRC hearings depicted in Slovo's novel are an occasion for perpetrators "to find new ways to torture their previous victims," in Shameem Black's words (52). This new opportunity for cruelty is obviously relished by Hendricks, who turns his plea for amnesty into yet another occasion to humiliate and shame his victim—but this time publicly—by insinuating that the information he extracted from Alex led to a comrade's death. In "South African Novelists," Annie Gagiano observes that, in Slovo's novel, the Hendricks-Mpondo relationship represents what Frantz Fanon called in *The Wretched of the Earth* "ineffaceable wounds" in the form of degradation. But despite his trauma,

experienced and re-experienced, Alex is still able to live a healthy and dignified life. Indeed, he does not remain in Hendricks's clutches to be his victim again, and refuses to accept the policeman's insinuations that Alex betrayed a comrade, or in any way acknowledge Hendricks's possession of truth. Yet whereas Alex's resistance signifies an enormous effort for him, Hendricks's nominal request for amnesty easily becomes an accusation (albeit a false one!) and Alex's reiterated punishment. This inversion of power positions (it is Hendricks who is the prisoner now, and Alex is testifying against him) is possible because some prior power structures are still in place—not in the law, but in individual psyches, in those "ineffaceable wounds" inflicted by a system and the individuals who enforced it.

The perverse intimacy between the perpetrator and a victim whose tormented memories and doubts are rekindled in the hearing, and the persistence of disabling control exerted by interrogators over prisoners, even decades after release, is just one example of the endurance of power dynamics. This kind of social relationship still holds sway in a nation where earlier forms of control persist subtly, often disguised. Moreover, in Slovo's novel the power dynamic not only manifests itself dramatically in the tension between the former policeman and his victim, but in simple daily interactions as well. Sarah observes this lasting pattern immediately upon returning to Smitsrivier, when she sees black men drinking and hanging out in an area that once had been reserved for whites only, but now of course is not. Yet, when one of the men notices her presence, he makes "an almost imperceptible movement which his companions nevertheless instantly understood. Their laughter was abruptly stanch'd as was their conversation and they moved together, cutting her out, [. . .] reminding her of such encounters endlessly repeated during her

childhood" (10). The scene exemplifies the subtle, everyday remnants of three hundred years of racial oppression. *Red Dust*, then, invites us to examine subtle but stubborn control mechanisms that perpetuate the old race dynamics in South Africa, despite the much celebrated and undoubtedly real political transformations, and despite the discourse about the liberating effect of truth- and peace-giving reconciliation. Much more forcefully than Eprile, Slovo reminds us that vigilance and debate are necessary in order to perceive and challenge old power dynamics not entirely eliminated in the transition. As we shall see, by comparison, the structures put in place or deepened by the South American dictators are even more strengthened in the renewed democracies.

Legacies of Authoritarianism in the Southern Cone

After being exiled for years in Europe and the United States, Ariel Dorfman returned to Chile in the early stages of the transition. He found that, although most Chileans wanted some acknowledgment of the human rights abuses committed by the military, they didn't want anything that would destabilize the new democracy and risk bringing back the military (Dorfman *Feeding*; also A. Kaminsky). Much to his disappointment, Dorfman found that Chileans felt that amnesia is the price for peace. This mixture of fear and complacency may be linked both to the real power that the military retained after the return to democracy (Pinochet was still the armed forces' commander in chief, and senator for life), and to the much advertised sense of economic well being—the Chilean "economic miracle"—that saturated the media, nationally and internationally. This "miracle," a term coined by Milton Friedman to extoll Chile's economic liberalization and unprecedented economic indicators, is often mentioned in

quotation marks because the result of the economic strategy came at an exceedingly high price. On the one hand, according to Macarena Gómez-Barris, the policies that enabled the economic transformation were directly linked to the repression: "The tortured body cannot be separated from the neoliberal turn in the nation, since it was through severe punishment that the military state imposed its multifold project of 'fiscal discipline,' free trade, flexibilization of labor, privatization of state enterprises, and reentrance into global capitalist economic structures" (76). Eduardo Galeano put it more succinctly: "People were being tortured so that prices could be free" (qtd. Avelar 79). In other words, the price of glowing macroeconomic indices was paid not only by the violently repressed, censored, and murdered citizenry during the dictatorship, but continues to be paid now by the most vulnerable sectors of society, who are told to fend for themselves rather than expect the state to provide basic material guarantees.

Franz's *El desierto* renders in fictional form some of Dorfman's factual observations. The novel criticizes the neoliberal economic system implemented by the military and not only continued, but also deepened, by subsequent coalition governments. *El desierto* also censures the conformist, non-confrontational design of the transitional administrations. Franz criticizes, in particular, the pact between the new government and the military. The protagonist voices Nelly Richard's analysis of the Chilean transition: that the limited democracy achieved in 1990 was the product of a mutually beneficial pact between the incoming political administration and the outgoing military (Richard 54). Neither the outgoing nor the incoming regimes wanted to upset their fragile ties of interdependence; the desire to not rock the boat had to do partly with the market, an expanding economy, and a strong business spirit promoted for years. Always with an

attentive eye trained on society, Richard links economic acquisitiveness with amnesia: "La fantasía de los productos del consumo globalizado se encargó de propagar la excitación de lo diverso y lo cambiante para fabricar olvido y desmemoria" (36) [The illusions of the products of global consumption spread excitement about variety and change in order to manufacture oblivion and forgetfulness (my translation)]. In the 1990s, business was good in Chile, and neoliberalism was triumphant. This sense of accomplishment that facilitates and demands proud consumerism that supports the system also appears in *El desierto*. Mario, Pampa Hundida's journalist and radio announcer, refrains from reporting certain news because he realizes, with a hefty dose of cynicism, that "no se dan malas noticias durante una fiesta. Es malo para el rating. [. . .] Y además, no les gustaría a mis avisadores. Antes me censuraba la dictadura y ahora los dueños, los avisadores. ¡El espíritu de los tiempos!" (391-92) ["We can't give bad news during a fiesta. It's bad for the ratings. [. . .] And besides, there's the advertisers. The dictatorship censored me before, and now it's the owners, the advertisers. Spirit of the times!" (314, translation modified)]. Here, Mario draws a direct lineage between the dictatorship and the new democratic capitalist state, illustrating Richard's claim that there is more continuity than rupture between the military regime and the democratic dispensation.

In *El desierto* the forces of globalized consumer capitalism play an important role in production and marketing of goods, as well as in the use, occupation, and transformation of space. Mayor Mamani's project demonstrates these transformations. His "Complejo de Adoración más grande del Continente" (158, 181) ["Largest Worship Complex on the Continent" (125, 143)] is no more than a form of exploitation of religiosity for the sake of tourist income; Mamani is keenly aware of this fact, being, in

addition to town mayor, a *curaca* (indigenous administrative chief), and also a respected spiritual leader. A more far-reaching project, in economic and social terms, is the cultivation of artificially irrigated exotic fruit trees and vineyards that enriches a few. Consider that these new crops are produced in the world's most arid desert by means of computerized irrigation (not actual farm labor), and sold out of season for prime prices in the United States. The young lawyer Tomás Martínez Roth, proudly and apparently without a trace of irony, tells Laura that this is "la cara más práctica de nuestro milagro. [. . .] Campos como éste son pura tecnología y apenas un poco de trabajo temporero, subcontratado" (181) ["the most practical face of our miracle. [. . .] Fields like this are pure technology and scarcely any labor, and even that is subcontracted" (143)]. It is not clear how much Martínez Roth is aware of the seamless blending of the religious and economic meanings of the term "miracle" in Chile, with its baggage of exploitation and inequality in both denotations; judging by the word's repetitions and the tone in the novel, the author certainly is aware. Martínez Roth is cognizant, in a business-oriented kind of way, of the economic transformations in the Atacama region: from 19th century saltpeter extraction, to late 20th century intensive, technology-aided fertility, to the "gold" of the 21st century—"servicios espirituales a un continente materialista" (182) ["spiritual services for a materialistic continent" (144)]. Laura is well aware of the ironic slippage from simple people's spirituality to crass materialistic greed, and notes that this new project for making the desert bloom was "la versión nueva de un delirio viejo como el desierto: la infinita multiplicación de los panes y los peces, de los nitratos y las sales, la utopía de una riqueza fácil, como el maná. Y al mismo tiempo la tentación de justificarse con el espíritu" (183) ["the newest version of a delirium as old as the desert: the hope of

an infinite multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, the nitrates and the salts, the utopia of easy riches, like manna. But at the same time, the temptation to justify oneself through the aid of the spirit" (145)]. The Chilean Miracle is multifaceted, indeed.

The Pinochet regime ushered Chile into the global market, and is credited, even by detractors, for better national economic indices. Argentina, in contrast, despite implementing similar measures, did not achieve miracle status; the dramatic expansion of economic inequity produced by neoliberal policies was cause for celebration. The economic model generated "nuevas formas de diferenciación y exclusión [. . .]. Aparecen nuevos pobres y excluidos que no existían antes" (Ludmer 26) [new forms of differentiation and exclusion. [. . .] New poor and excluded individuals who did not exist before, start to emerge (my translation)]. The increasingly visible difference and marginality associated with extreme poverty is glimpsed by the appalled protagonist of *El espíritu* when he watches a TV show where the unintelligible Spanish spoken by the poor is subtitled as if it were a foreign language. This is an extreme case of differentiating education and sociolect stemming from illiteracy, which, according to Rowe and Whitfield, "enforces non-participation in the dominant forms of national culture" (233) and therefore in politics, thus affecting the exercise of democratic rights. These functionally illiterate subalterns, who have become increasingly visible in Argentina, "disturb illusions of public tranquility linked to an image of democracy itself" (Masiello 24), in a similar way to that in which the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 exposed to the world the hidden and embarrassingly abject poverty in racialized sectors of the United States, one of the richest countries in the world.

Thus, similar neoliberal policies established by the military dictatorships had different effects on each side of the Andes. It is beyond this study's scope to determine the exact causes of these different outcomes (any number and combination of factors—specific strategies, commodity prices, sheer luck?—may have intervened). What seems evident is that the social effects manifested differently. In Chile, the new consumer society shielded itself from too much memory and a possible return to violence (Richard), while in Argentina the pauperization of the poor created an underclass with diminishing real access to political power and democratic participation⁴⁹. Francine Masiello sees a difference also in terms of literary production: according to her, Argentine writers undertook macro projects that expose the state's failures or review history in order to track the authoritarian legacy; they wrote allegories of the national history⁵⁰. On the other hand, Chileans⁵¹ have practiced the micronarration of the effects of the state on citizens' daily lives, including bodily violence (206). The *microcuento* is a form that effectively conveys memory fragmentation and societal atomization (often in the name of individualism) observed in Chilean society.

In addition to exposing the social and economic legacies of authoritarianism, 21st century South African and South American fiction is training a critical eye on the leftist movements and militancy; this questioning comes to a large extent from younger

⁴⁹ There was, nonetheless, a movement to take over, collectivize, and make productive again factories closed or abandoned in the deindustrialization process during Carlos Menem's presidency from 1990 to 1999 (see Trigona for a documentary of a case of this phenomenon; see also Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein's film *The Take* [2006]). This movement, however, does not feature in the novels I analyze here, nor have I seen it rendered in other works of fiction.

⁵⁰ For example, Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* (1980).

⁵¹ For example, Pía Barros, Alejandro Jodorowsky, and Lina Meruane.

generations who were not part of the movements⁵². According to literary critic Elsa Drucaroff, herself a young militant in the 1970s, the Argentine left did not admit its defeat and its errors until almost the end of the 20th century. Even more censurable for Drucaroff is the insistence on the innocence (i.e., not being a militant in a revolutionary group) of the disappeared that continued for several years after the dictatorship, "como si fuera necesario afirmar la inocencia de ciudadanos secuestrados, torturados y asesinados" (*Prisioneros* 196) [as if it were necessary to assert the innocence of citizens who were kidnaped, tortured, and murdered]. In her critique of Ernesto Sabato's Prologue to CONADEP's report, *Nunca más*, Drucaroff posits that the ideologeme "eran inocentes" [they were innocent] is the reverse of the "por algo será" [there must be a reason] muttered to justify such disappearances during the dictatorship. Interestingly, in present-day political organizations, revolutionary socialist ideology and militants' faith in the struggle are scarcely mentioned. An exception to this silence is H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio [Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence]), the organization of children of the disappeared. The group's members defend their parents' actions but decline to use euphemisms or equivocation, such as the inaccurate idea that the militants had taken up arms only to resist the military dictatorship, when in fact the stated objective of the guerilla was to take power and build socialism, and democracy was not necessarily the highest value, according to Drucaroff (*Prisioneros* 195).

⁵² A notable exception, in addition to María Teresa Andruetto, is the historian Martín Caparrós, who co-wrote with Eduardo Anguita *La Voluntad. Una historia de la militancia revolucionaria en la Argentina* (1997, 1998). He also authored *A quien corresponda*, a novel that demythifies the *desaparecidos*, critiques the politics of memory and forgetting, and laments the mistakes of the revolutionary movement (in which he, like Andruetto and Drucaroff, personally participated).

One criticism common to the South African and Latin American emancipatory movements is their high degree of dogmatism, an aspect of which was the privileging of the collective at the expense of the personal. In her memoir about her family, *Every Secret Thing*, Gillian Slovo—the daughter of the famous communist anti-apartheid militants Joe Slovo and Ruth First—is somewhat critical of her parents' movement, having experienced with her two sisters the devastating effects of their parents' political activism on their family. In her novel *Red Dust*, the hero, Alex, acknowledges how unprepared the anti-apartheid militants were: "When the police clamped down, almost every single one of them was picked up and none of them was properly prepared. They were all so young and so innocent. [. . .] They sheltered each other from reality, substituting for their parents' warnings fairy tales which they passed between them. Stories of their strength, their invincibility, the power of their collective" (134). Later, he bittersweetly reminisces about a period high on hope, boasting powerful slogans, but rigidly dogmatic. According to *Red Dust*, in South Africa "the collective had become more important than the individual—not just because it was one way of surviving all that pain. What was that slogan they used to chant at funerals? Don't mourn, mobilise" (171).

Note how similar this sounds to Julieta's musings on her parents' militancy in Argentina, in María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre*: "Cree [. . .] que para su padre y su madre los ideales, lo que ellos llamaban tan resueltamente 'la revolución', han sido asuntos más importantes que tener una hija" (114) [She believes that for her father and mother, the ideals, what they so resolutely called 'the revolution,' were more important than having a daughter]. This is one of the most salient contradictions Julieta finds in her mother's ideology, about which she feels quite derisive:

Podría escribir un pequeño manual de estilo sobre las miserias de una mujer comprometida, una militante en los setenta, más tarde una perseguida — escondida de sótano en sótano— que comete la inconsciencia de embarazarse en esas condiciones y años después, ya en democracia, cuando es más difícil para ella justificarla, una mujer que vive sola, una hija que olvida a su madre, una madre que abandona a su hija. Reproches de este tipo nunca acabarán: revolucionarios de cualquier pelaje, a la vez voceros de las ideas y de los sentimientos más egoístas. (47)

[She could write a little handbook about the miseries of a committed woman, a militant in the seventies, later persecuted—hiding in basements—who makes the irresponsible choice of getting pregnant in those conditions, and who years later, in democratic times, when it's more difficult to justify, a woman living by herself, a daughter who forgets her mother, a mother who abandons her daughter. This kind of reproach will never cease: revolutionaries of all stripes, at the same time spokespersons for the most selfish ideas and sentiments.]

The movement's valorization of politics over one's own family is, according to Julieta, what brought on her tragedy, and her own determination to live differently: "No le interesan los hijos; pero si los tuviera, está segura de que serían más importantes que cualquier revolución, que cualquier ideal" (64) [She's not interested in having children, but if she had them, she's sure that they would be more important than any revolution, than any ideal]. Julieta laments deeply, even as an adult, the lack of motherly love she received, despite the affection lavished on her by her grandparents, who brought her up. In a Munich museum she has often seen a painting of a young woman and her children,

and thinks that the sentiment of mother and child is beautiful, a joy which was not bestowed on her: "Esa alegría de madre, ella no la había visto nunca. / No se cansa de verla" (114) [That joy of motherhood, she had never seen before. / She does not tire of seeing it"]. Despite this apparent nostalgia for motherly affection, motherhood is not Julieta's choice. One might wonder, without questioning a woman's right to choose whether to have children or not, how much Julieta's decisions are determined by the traumas of her childhood, and how much these are also national traumas, as Pron's novel suggests, as I have explored elsewhere ("Trauma nacional").

Conclusion

In South Africa and the Southern Cone, concepts of nation and national identity are changing due to both internal factors (as a response to national, familial, and personal memories) and external factors (the unprecedented flow of products, information, and capital since the 1990s). National identity now encompasses not only the cultural, historical, and political particularities of place of birth or residence, but, increasingly, the relative position of one's nation and the individual in the globalized world. A paradox emerges: on the one hand, the planet is becoming more interconnected, more information flows faster, and cultural and commercial exchanges are celebrated (and sometimes called "diversity"). On the other hand, national, ethnic and religious identities are becoming more sectarian and exclusive; this is more obvious in some of the most embattled quarters of the planet, such as the Middle East and north central Africa. The unprecedented massive wave of migration into Europe in 2015-16, and the reaction to it, attest to the growing sectarian violence. Yet it also appears that in more peaceful, stable

areas, individuals are increasingly molding their identities based on their personal life choices and experiences, rather than on traditionally- and genetically-defined rules of belonging (routes rather than roots, in James Clifford's apt play on words).

In South Africa, racial identities and differences are downplayed, but, as Gagiano fears, "in our anxiety to resolve the fissures of apartheid's unjust 'separate development' ideal, the post-1994 scenario may involve enforced homogenisation instead — fusion, to replace fission ("Shifting" 812). Since the institution of a formally non-racial democracy in South Africa, people are asking themselves how their ethnic identity and loyalty fits with national identity and allegiance, displaying a persistence of exclusionary models of identity based on race and ethnicity. Fictional literature interrogates the meaning of these macro phenomena and the choices individuals make. The protagonist of Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* is emblematic when he asks himself: "Is it possible to feel South African and feel like I can draw inspiration from white South Africa, that I can identify with them? Is it possible to feel South African and not to always source my culture to a particular race group? Can I claim Afrikaans, Coloured tsotsi taal [gangster lingo], Indian cuisine or English sensibilities as my own?" (qtd. Gagiano "Shifting" 819). Duiker's characters of the late 1990s are beginning to experience and question the conflicting discourses of race and nation. While they believe in equality, they cannot help noticing that privilege is not distributed equally. This is not to say that South Africa is a post-racial society, since identity and exclusion based on ethnicity are still operative in post-apartheid society. As Sarah Nuttall observes in "City Forms," race in fact appears to be gaining importance precisely when legalized racism is abolished. During apartheid, racial distinctions (white, coloured, black) were essential for employment, education, and

wealth; during democracy, the politics of black empowerment attempt to reverse that dynamic. But, alarmingly, racialism is now taking the shape of xenophobia. Violence against certain kinds of foreigners—black Africans but not white Europeans—has erupted in the past few years. Neill Blomkamp's film *District 9* is not just an allegory of apartheid and its population removal policies (like the infamous removals of Cape Town's District Six and Johannesburg's Sophiatown), but is also a depiction of the current xenophobia, represented both in the negative portrayal of Nigerians, and the overwhelming desire of South African society in general, black and white, to remove the aliens from sight. Indeed, Mandela's and the ANC's discourse of non-racialism is being challenged in everyday actions in South Africa.

Andruetto's novel addresses directly the effect of the acts of one generation on the next, and Patricio Pron's text *El espíritu* is emphatic about the connection not only between childhood experiences and adult mental conditions, but also about that between national and personal trauma. Another cherished idea being scrutinized more carefully is the justice and innocence of the 1970s leftist militants and how their decisions may have helped to produce the South American dictatorships that eventually defeated them. This revision, which does not favor the left, is appearing both in fiction and in criticism. Andruetto's *Lengua madre*, which has some elements of this critique, is the example studied here, but Liliana Heker's *El fin de la historia*, Martín Caparrós's fiction and non-fiction, and Elsa Drucaroff's cultural and literary criticism are also evidence of this turn.

Conclusion: Truth-Telling Fiction

Instituted within the context of the Cold War, the South African apartheid government and the Chilean and Argentine military dictatorships explicitly aligned themselves on the side of capitalism and the United States. These regimes' purpose was to eliminate insurgent emancipatory and left-wing movements, to suppress dissent, and—in the case of South Africa—to protect the system of racialized labor exploitation. Through a strident anti-communist rhetoric justifying aggressive actions that often violated human rights, they imposed years of repressive rule implemented by military and police forces that sometimes operated clandestinely. The regimes' most egregious repressive methods—including disappearance, imprisonment, torture, execution, banning, and exile—were vehemently denounced worldwide by various sectors of society, including human rights activists, intellectuals of various disciplines, and artists.

Opposition to authoritarian rule manifested as political (sometimes armed) and cultural activism. Produced during and for the struggle against oppression, in exile or within the country, resistance literature is unquestionably political and plays a role in the emancipatory movements "alongside the gun, the pamphlet, and the diplomatic delegation" (Harlow xvii). The strongest commitment of resistance literature is political rather than aesthetic; for this reason its use has been questioned even by devoted supporters of anti-authoritarian efforts. For instance, South African activist Albie Sachs, and writers Lewis Nkosi, Njabulo Ndebele, and Wally Mongane Serote, were critical of the subordination of literary quality to political message—even though they were committed participants in the anti-apartheid struggle (Attridge and Jolly 2; Barnard 124; Clingman 640-41; Solberg 181). This is not to say, however, that all political literature

necessarily lacks aesthetic value, but rather, that when these works are produced in the thick of the struggle, the aesthetic is secondary to the political. The emphasis necessarily changes when the fight is over, but whether in times of peace or of upheaval, the best literature offers both elements in pleasing balance.

After the end of the authoritarian regimes, once the "rhetoric of urgency" (Barnard 124) had fulfilled the function of decrying state terrorism, politically-inclined fiction writers relaxed their focus on the struggle, and expanded their repertoire of topics. Yet even in democracy, and well into the second decade of the 21st century, some authors maintain a historical approach in their literary work⁵³. The five novels that constitute the core of my post-dictatorship literary analysis exemplify the diverse forms in which this long gaze back to the previous century's last quarter critically assesses the repression years, the democratic transitions, and present-day challenges in post-dictatorship life.

How similar were these three countries separated by vast physical barriers? The historical and political developments in Argentina, Chile, and South Africa are distinct, but share some features, as I have shown in previous chapters. More interesting is that in the three countries, the literature emerging after authoritarianism suggests that there is a dichotomy between the newly democratized states' official discourses, on the one hand, and popular and artistic interpretation, on the other. Hence, we can pursue two parallel lines of inquiry. First, how each state dealt with human rights abuses, memory, and justice. The second line of analysis is how imaginative literature has re-visited nationally traumatic events in fictional and autobiographical forms. In other words: What are the correspondences between the three countries? Also, how do the official and the artistic

⁵³ As late as forty years after the Argentine military coup on 24 March 1976, writers are still thinking of ways to understand the dictatorship (and publishing their insights). See Roffo.

visions *within* each country correlate? To answer these questions I use *ex post facto* literary responses to the human rights violations committed by the apartheid regime in South Africa and the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone, and their legacies. Five novels constitute my corpus: Tony Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* (2004) and Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* (2000) take on the South African experience of apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). María Teresa Andruetto's *Lengua madre* (2010) and Patricio Pron's *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia* (2011) (*My Fathers' Ghost is Climbing in the Rain*, 2013) explore the transgenerational effects and memory of national trauma in Argentina. Carlos Franz's *El desierto* (2005) (*The Absent Sea*, 2011) responds critically to Chile's recent history—both the dictatorship's abuses, and the shortcomings of the subsequent governments. All these texts contend with the aftermath of violent political repression in terms of memory and access to truth and justice, and respond—sometimes contentiously—to the official position.

While the five novels differ greatly in genre, style, and topic, they all refer to a past period of repression and trauma in their respective countries. Thus, their drive can be appreciated more fully when examined within the theoretical frameworks of human rights and of collective memory, particularly those elaborated by Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora. Additionally, Andruetto's and Pron's novels give literary expression to Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory. Theorized for the context of the persistent trauma of the Jewish Holocaust, Hirsch's theory has been usefully applied also to the consequences of state violence perpetrated by the military regimes of the Southern Cone (Nouzeilles 265, *passim*; Serpente 133-37; Szurmuk 261; Vezzetti 19, *passim*); it is most manifest in the generation following the one that engaged in revolutionary movements in the 1960s and

1970s. The members of this generation may suffer persistent emotional effects from their parents' persecution by state policing forces (as Pron's narrator shows).

In addition to the importance of memory, the upholding of human rights is an implied value advocated by my sample. In all these novels, state agents' abuse of power sets in motion events in the past that are recalled and that affect the narratives' presents. This violence is depicted most spectacularly as torture: of Alex in Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*, and of Laura in Carlos Franz's *El desierto*. A less spectacular effect of state terror is the internal exile into which Andruetto's character Julia is forced, which has lasting damaging emotional effects on her daughter, Julieta. In Pron's *El espíritu*, the 1970s practice of disappearance of citizens—militants or not—by state and parastatal forces is echoed in the main action in the 2000s, when the brother of a *desaparecida* is abducted (thus, disappeared for some time) and murdered by common criminals, and their home town re-enacts the demands for justice that first emerged on a massive scale during the Argentine dictatorship's final days.

As in any comparison, it is necessary to recognize both similarities and differences among the objects of study. It is pertinent to ask whether the three nations that concern us here developed differently in terms of memory, justice, and reconciliation after the end of the authoritarian regimes. Argentina, Chile, and South Africa all took measures to seek truth, impart justice, and ensure peace, but they pursued these objectives with different degrees of intensity and in different manners, according to their priorities and abilities. Influential actors in the political transitions applied pressure on the new governments to preserve historical memory (or encourage amnesia), to achieve justice (or permit impunity), and to promote national reconciliation (even at the expense of memory

and justice). While there are differences *between* the three countries in the official actions undertaken during their respective democratic transitions, there are also differences *within* each country between official acts and rhetoric, on the one hand, and artists' visions, on the other. More to the point: writers often question official discourse, and the novels I examine show some ways in which this is done. In what follows I sum up South Africa's, Chile's, and Argentina's inter- and intra-national similarities and differences regarding memory and truth, justice, and reconciliation. This summary highlights that the emphasis in each country is different: memory is of intense interest in Argentina, justice in South Africa, and reconciliation in South Africa and Chile.

Memory and Truth

As shown by the countries' respective truth commissions (TCs) and the numerous memorials established or supported by the national governments, truth and memory are officially and artistically very relevant in Argentina, Chile, and South Africa⁵⁴. The imperative to remember seems to be strongest in Argentina and weakest in Chile, where despite official recognition of the importance of memory of state violence, the country has also deployed influential politics of amnesia—closely linked to the neoliberal economic program and the promotion of consumption, according to Nelly Richard. Memory is of paramount importance in the five novels examined in this dissertation; but

⁵⁴ For example, the Apartheid Museum, the Hector Pieterse Memorial, the Mandela House, Constitution Hill, and Robben Island Museum in South Africa; Buenos Aires's Parque de la Memoria, and the many memorials erected on sites of clandestine detention centers such as "El Olimpo" and the ESMA (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada, the Navy's School of Mechanics). In Chile, the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Santiago, and numerous memorial sites throughout the entire country, such as the Memorial del Detenido Desaparecido y Ejecutado Político in Santiago's General Cemetery, the Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi (a former clandestine detention and torture center), and the memorial "Un lugar para la memoria de Nattino, Parada y Guerrero" (also known as "Las sillas").

in the realm of fiction, as in real life, there are several different takes: from the impossibility of memory in *Red Dust*, to the unavoidability and absolute necessity of memory in *The Persistence of Memory* and *El desierto*, to individuals investigating their parents' memories in order to explain their own lives in *Lengua madre* and *El espíritu*.

Slovo's *Red Dust* uses an amnesty application as a plot device to contest the facile and oft-repeated truism about the liberating power of memory and truth. In direct contradiction with the TRC, the novel questions first the possibility of reliable memory of trauma, and secondly, the possibility and the value of truth. A protagonist, Sarah, doubts that truth is the only road to freedom, as the TRC promulgated; instead, she chooses solidarity to reconnect with a fellow human (by, quite unexpectedly, lying). Sarah's option suggests that values other than truth must be considered when dealing with trauma. Sharply contrasting with Sarah's skeptical view, *The Persistence of Memory's* protagonist—plagued by memories of atrocities in which he participated or that he witnessed—reaches a conclusion contrary to Sarah's: memory cannot be suppressed, and can be used to attain justice. These two diverging positions on memory and truth reflect debates during the South African transition. While both authors are South Africans who have lived abroad for decades, they are attuned to the events in their native country; and like South Africans living in the country, they take different positions regarding trauma, memory, and justice. Because of her famous politically involved parents—assassinated Ruth First and exiled Joe Slovo—Gillian Slovo was perhaps more personally affected by the repression of apartheid; it is then not surprising that she would expect more dramatic and effective acts of redress than those offered by the TRC; her dissatisfaction in this regard is manifest in *Red Dust*.

While the South African novels have justice at heart, the Southern Cone novels in my sample are more concerned with memory and the transformations of personal identity vis-à-vis national identity. Like South Africa, Chile made national reconciliation a priority, but did so at the expense of memory and truth by limiting the mandate of the Rettig Commission and, in general, by strongly favoring consensus. It avoided vexing a military (with prosecutions, for instance) which maintained significant power over the fledgling democratic government. Franz's *El desierto* is an account of a meticulous memory and the catharsis experienced by the protagonist when she begins to voice her experience and acknowledge both her victimization by, and her complicity with, the military regime twenty years before.

El desierto's Laura forces herself to remember her trauma and enunciate her recall to respond to the questioning of her daughter, who is curious about, but not traumatized by, her mother's experience. In contrast, the children of the 1970s militants across the Andes, in Pron's and Andruetto's novels, were very much affected by their parents' decisions. Pron's *El espíritu* ranges from a meditation on the desirability and possibility of memory (appropriately, by a partial amnesiac), to the recasting of family and national traumatic experiences to reconstruct the younger generation's identity. Like Pron's novel, Andruetto's explores the past's burden on newer generations' psychology, a condition manifesting as amnesia, isolation, and refusal to assume personal responsibility.

Justice

Like pure memory, perfect justice is unfeasible, given that the conditions of possibility of justice are determined by the institutions that control the laws. Laws depend

not only on abstract philosophical concepts of fairness and goodness, but also on the values and contingencies of the moment when they are created or applied. Following the authoritarian regimes in Argentina, South Africa, and Chile, the newly-elected governments each approached the matter of justice differently, even in their working concept of justice. Retributive justice aims at punishment (such as imprisonment) through legal processes. On the other hand, restorative justice pursues the reconstruction and welfare of society, but does not intend to punish (Todorov *Memory* 61).

In Argentina, justice was conceived as retributive. The trials of the juntas undertaken early in the re-democratized country sought to punish the high military command responsible for human rights abuses. The Alfonsín government's drastic and overwhelmingly popular intentions were staunchly opposed by military coup threats and political pressure, and in the following years fizzled away into incomplete, inadequate, and unsatisfying outcomes, culminating in Menem's presidential pardons. (In a twist, these pardons were reversed early in this century.) (Hayner 46-47).

In South Africa, justice was conceived as restorative and was channeled through the TRC procedures, which were considered the appropriate and most effective means of conflict resolution. According to the commission, giving testimony restored victims' dignity, and truth would restore the country's social fabric. This restorative power depends on retrieving a comprehensive history of atrocities, and thus the TRC (like other TCs) served to acknowledge truth, memorialize the past, and provide moral redress to the victims (Posel and Simpson 1). The TC option, the only practical alternative, in view of the near impossibility of having effective trials, meant in effect that there would be no punitive justice (Simpson "Tell No Lies" 221). As TRC Chairman Desmond Tutu said of

the commission's hearings, "This process is not about pillorying anybody. It's not about persecuting anybody. It's ultimately about getting to the truth so that we can help to heal" (Reid and Hoffman). Withholding punishment in the name of "the greater moral justice of enduring societal harmony" (Rotberg "Truth Commissions" 9) prepares a foundation that is propitious for nation building. A unique feature of the TRC was its provision of amnesty in exchange for truth. This choice was the result of the transition negotiations and of the impracticality of opting for retributive justice by holding numerous criminal trials. Also in lieu of retributive justice, South Africa opted for reparations in the form of victims' monetary compensation, along with public recognition of their experience. While many South Africans were satisfied with these provisions, many others (both critical and supportive of the TRC) believed that the amnesty provisions simply meant letting the perpetrators go scot-free, as one character in Slovo's novel expresses.

Post-Pinochet Chile officially recognized past offenses by providing monetary reparations to victims of human rights abuses and their families. However, only recently have efforts been made at high levels to bring the military to court. Instead, the government concentrated its efforts on constructing a unified and prosperous nation. Chileans are deeply divided regarding the need to punish rights violations, as well as regarding the value of memory. The priority, rather, seems to be to maintain social order and economic prosperity.

The works in my sample comment in varying ways on the issue of justice. Eprile's *The Persistence of Memory* is satisfied with the TRC as a medium through which truth and atonement can be achieved. In contrast, Slovo's novel is strongly against amnesty and other TRC notions, including the liberatory power of truth and memory. In Pron's *El*

espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia, justice is ultimately served for the recent crime of abduction and murder, but the novel is silent regarding official redress for the state terror of the 1970s (except that the indirect cause of Alberto Burdisso's murder is the money from the reparation granted for his sister's disappearance!). Yet, despite not offering closure to the crimes against humanity, Pron's novel shows how, more than three decades after the dictatorship's end, the call for justice for the disappeared persists in Argentine society. Finally, Franz's *El desierto* hints that revenge may be the only possible act of justice in Chile.

Reconciliation

National reconciliation and unity figured prominently in Chile's and South Africa's official rhetoric, as the name of the latter's Truth and Reconciliation Commission indicates. In contrast, the concept of reunification did not receive much attention in Argentina. The five novels studied here intimate that reconciliation is important, but they do not simply repeat the official exhortation for unity. Slovo's and Franz's works do precisely the opposite: they question the motives and the very possibility of the drive for official national reconciliation.

Reconciliation is important at the personal (if not at the national) level for all the novels' protagonists: Eprile's Paul Sweetbread seeks to reconcile with himself and with his nation after acknowledging his complicity with apartheid; Slovo's Sarah doubts that national reconciliation is possible in her country, but shows solidarity with Alex and with her mentor. In Franz's novel, Laura sees through and despises the government's discourse of "justicia en la medida de lo posible" (230, *passim*) [justice to the degree

possible] (182, *passim*) and questions the nation's prediction of a "future of splendor" (266). Andruetto's and Pron's characters eventually achieve understanding, and possibly a glimpse of forgiveness towards themselves, their families, and their nation. The novelists' vision, then, does not necessarily match their countries' official vision and discourse.

Disillusionment and Criticism of the Transitions

Regardless of the emphasis on the different aspects (truth, memory, reconciliation) in each country, by nature or political necessity many objectives were incompletely attained. Retributive justice came late or not at all; self- and TRC-granted amnesties and presidential pardons in Chile, South Africa, and Argentina, respectively, gave society a sense of impunity; memory was stifled in the name of a bright, united future. Even TRC Chairman Desmond Tutu surprisingly expressed dissatisfaction with his own commission's results (Ross 236). These dissatisfactions are due in part to the political nature of administering justice and to memory's inherent character: it is partial, selective, and subject to the vicissitudes of the human psyche and to the need to adapt to present conditions. The novels studied here express their authors' various dissatisfactions, possibly shared by a significant portion of their countries' populations. These criticisms pertain to the inadequate administration of justice, the neoliberal economic programs that promote inequality, and—somewhat unexpectedly—to the shortcomings of the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 70s.

Red Dust and *El desierto* express discontent with the reality or illusion of amnesia, with the politics of reconciliation, and with amnesty—whether it is by

individual application in exchange for truth (South Africa), or self-decreed by the outgoing military regime (Chile). Franz's novel openly criticizes Chile's politics of consensus and oblivion, a critique voiced most loudly by the protagonist.

Besides TCs, transitional literature pays attention to the neoliberal economic policies instituted by the outgoing regimes and deepened by the subsequent elected governments; these programs helped the countries to integrate into the global economy and raise some economic indices; however, they produced more inequality, instead of the promised fairness, and carried a high social price. The novels by Franz, Pron, and Slovo express the disappointment felt by those who were promised not only justice and reparations for past abuses but also better, more equal access to resources for the aggrieved and their descendants. Pron's *El espíritu* tersely shows the appalling social and structural decay of a country that once prided itself on its large middle class and high level of literacy, its distinct possibility of industrial and economic progress, and its cultural heritage. Franz's *El desierto* reproves Chile's class privileges, and notes how the country's economy is tuned to capturing export and tourism capital that does not benefit the majority of its population.

The novels also express disillusionment with revolutionary utopias, particularly among the generation following the one that unsuccessfully fought for these utopias. A relatively new impulse in literature is the skepticism about the inherent innocence and good intentions of the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Slovo's novel gently rebukes the naïveté of the anti-apartheid armed movement. Andruetto's and Pron's novels criticize more strongly the choices and dogmatism of leftist militants of the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina, for rigidly prioritizing ideology over family, the collective over

the personal—choices that gravely affected their children for years. It is interesting that other Argentine authors of both fiction and nonfiction have also written critically about revolutionary groups, especially the armed guerrilla movement Montoneros; examples of fictional works that take on this topic are Miguel Bonasso's *Recuerdo de la muerte* (1984) and Martín Caparrós's *No velas a tus muertos* (1986) and *A quien corresponda* (2008).

* * *

Memory, despite its impurity, impels fiction to recover truth, question officialdom, write history, and try to prevent reiteration. The novels studied here respond to the partial achievement of the objectives promised by the architects of the Argentine, Chilean, and South African transitions, and illustrate how memory is impure and justice imperfect. All these works combine the political and the aesthetic: Regardless of whether the narratives are autobiographical or fictional, human rights (denouncing their violation or advocating for their protection) serve as a historical and philosophical framework that helps to make visible the intersections between politics, history, and memory, and between the ethical and the aesthetic aspects of culture. My sample confirms that literary fiction addresses issues of memory and justice, with the intention of maintaining the awareness of past horrors, in order to prevent their recurrence. But the works analyzed here also attempt to report and understand the present as the continuation of that history, rather than as a radical rupture with it, as official discourse has insisted. All five novels present the possibility—but not the requirement—of individual reintegration into the nation, but never support (and in fact, are suspicious of) state-fomented patriotism; they

appeal not to patriotic notions of blood lines but to the acceptance of being pulled into the community's fold by shared experience and transmitted culture.

Importantly—and disruptively—some novels, both in and outside my sample, also reevaluate the revolutionary and liberation movements, and criticize the shortcomings of the transitional processes. These two topics have been explored only in the past decade in South African and South American literature, and they merit deeper study. Other areas deserving further research are fictional representations of the betrayal of militants' ideas and groups, and of their collaboration with the enemy. *El desierto* approaches the subject directly: an individual is tortured and frightened enough to accede to the oppressor's demands, even if these demands go against her convictions and even her reason. Not quite as graphically and with no sexual element intervening, *Red Dust* depicts the intimate relationship between perpetrator and victim, and the complicity and guilt this relationship creates in the latter. Other Latin American novels and memoirs that have explored this moral conundrum of the victim-turned-collaborator are Luz Arce's *El infierno* (1993), Liliana Hecker's *El fin de la historia* (1996), and Arturo Fontaine's *La doble vida* (2010). From South Africa, Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples* (1995), Lewis Nkosi's *Underground People* (2002), and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* (2001) also open up the issue of complicity and abuse on both sides of the ideological divide. A theme that emerges in these novels is the human dimensions and costs of complicity, collaboration, and betrayal in the political and armed struggle. This conflict appears in real life, not only among the direct torture victims, but also within the general society subjected to repression. Andruetto has maintained that, "Si la dictadura se sostuvo fue porque una parte importante de la sociedad, por miedo, por conveniencia, por egoísmo, por bajeza, la

promovió, la sostuvo o la toleró con su aceptación y con sus múltiples, sutiles o explícitas formas de colaboración" (qtd. Pubill 65) [If the dictatorship endured, it was because a sizeable part of society—out of fear, convenience, selfishness, cruelty—promoted, supported, or tolerated it through acceptance and through the many forms, subtle or explicit, of collaboration (my translation)]. Trials and TCs focus on specific, demonstrable criminal acts, but broader issues of societal culpability, support, and complicity are not examined by TCs, and may take a longer time to surface and be enunciated. The issue of widespread social connivance has been taken up by Mark Sanders in his book *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*. This topic deserves a more detailed study than can fit within the bounds of this dissertation; I mention it, however, to point to further lines of study.

As a group, the novels analyzed in this dissertation are examples of the diverse and innovative narrative approaches to the literary dimensions of human rights, social memory, and justice in the aftermath of national trauma. Political history contextualizes fiction; conversely, fiction can add novel nuance to our vision of history and can address questions about the relationships between history, memory, and literature.

Appendix: Two passages that illustrate anti-exile resentment in Argentina and Chile

In Mempo Giardinelli's *Santo Oficio de la memoria*, Aurelia displays a defensive attitude toward her brother Pedro's return from exile to Argentina:

Pero claro que me gustaría verlo, por supuesto, ¿cómo no me va a gustar ver a mi hermano? Aunque eso sí, lo que yo espero es que no venga en pose de exiliado canchero ni se le ocurra dar cátedras de sufrimiento en el exilio. Eso sí que no se lo voy a permitir. Porque los tengo bien calados, a esos, yo. ¿Vos sabés lo que tuvimos que soportar en este país, en esos años, Raúl y yo? ¿Lo sabe él? Porque si no lo sabe yo se lo voy a decir, ni bien lo vea. Claro que tengo ganas de encontrarlo y darle un beso y toda la cosa, sí, sí, sí, muy bien, todo muy bien, pero ¿tiene idea él, nuestro queridísimo Pedro, de lo que significó el miedo, la censura, el sometimiento en esos años? ¿Sabe que nos tocaron el culo todos los días, bien tocadito, y no podíamos decir ni esta boca es mía? [. . .] Ellos estaban afuera y yo no niego que en el exilio la hayan pasado mal, pero la represión la sufrimos nosotros, los que la pasamos peor fuimos los que nos quedamos acá. Y especialmente los artistas. (324-25)

[Sure I'd like to see him, of course, why wouldn't I want to see my brother? But I definitely hope he doesn't show up like a snazzy exile or even think of lecturing about the torments of exile. That, I won't allow. I know those guys. Do you know what Raúl and I went through in this country those years? Does *he* know? Because if he doesn't know, I'll tell him as soon as I see him. Of course I look forward to meeting him and giving him a kiss and all that, yeah, sure, all right, but, does he, our

dearest Pedro, have any idea of the fear, the censorship, the submission we suffered all those years? Does he know that they screwed us over every day, well screwed, and we couldn't say a word? [. . .] They were abroad, and I don't deny that they had a tough time in exile, but it was we who suffered the repression; we who stayed are the ones who had the hardest time. Especially artists] (my translation).

Similarly, in José Donoso's *La desesperanza*, the poet Lopito remained in Chile and resents those who left and feel part of the "raza de los 'yo-estuve-exiliado-y-por-lo-tanto-soy-mejor-que ustedes'" (28) ["race of the 'I-was-exiled-and-am-therefore-better-than-you'"] but have no idea of the suffering endured by those who stayed:

Mucha cancioncita de protesta tralalá, tralalá, mucha novelita comprometida, mucha revistita incendiaria, mucho recital, mucha lectura de poemas, pero, viejo, nosotros nos quedamos aquí a resistir y a pasar humillaciones y hambre. Fue a nosotros que nos cagaron y tuvimos que aguantar la mecha y luchamos y nos persiguieron y nos jodieron mientras ustedes gozaban de becas y bailaban merecumbé con minas con las que aquí uno ni siquiera se atrevería a soñar. (100)

[Lots of little protest songs la la la, lots of committed novels, lots of inflammatory little magazines, lots of recitals, lots of poetry readings, but, buddy, we stayed on to resist and endure humiliations and hunger. It was us who they screwed over, we who took the heat, who struggled and were persecuted and fucked up while you guys enjoyed fellowships and danced merecumbé with babes that we wouldn't even dream of here](my translation).

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Verbitsky, Horacio. *El vuelo*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1995. Print.

Vezzetti, Hugo. *Pasado y presente. Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina*.
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Warner, Marina. "Scene Four: Red Dust by Gillian Slovo." *Open Democracy*. Web. 3
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Wicomb, Zoë. *David's Story*. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New
York, 2001. Print.

Wilson, Francis. "Addressing Poverty and Inequality." James and van de Vijver 177-84.

Wren, Christopher. "Uneasily, South Africa Exiles Return." *The New York Times*
12 Mar. 1991. *NYTimes.com*. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

NORMA KAMINSKY

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. Comparative Literature University of Washington, Seattle Dissertation: "Impure Memory, Imperfect Justice: A Comparison of Post-Repression Fiction Across the South Atlantic"	2016
M.A. Comparative Literature (Honors) San Francisco State University, San Francisco, Calif. Thesis: "South African and Argentine Narratives of Repression and Resistance"	2009
Doctor in Medicine Universidad Autónoma de Centro América, San José, Costa Rica	1987
BS in Health Sciences Universidad Autónoma de Centro América, San José, Costa Rica	1984

STUDY ABROAD

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile	Fall 2006-Spring 2007
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TEACHING

Comparative Literature , UW, 3 quarters	2012, 2014, 2016
Spanish , elementary and intermediate, UW, 19 quarters	2010 - 2015
Translation , UC Berkeley Extension - Translation Certificate Program	2000 - 2002

WORK EXPERIENCE

Freelance English-Spanish Medical Translator (Cape Town, South Africa; Berkeley, Calif.; Seattle, Wash.)	2002 - Present
Spanish translator (RWS Group, LLC, San Francisco, Calif.)	1996 - 2002
Instructor (various translation courses) University of California at Berkeley Extension - Translation Certificate Program	2000 - 2002
Freelance Spanish Translator (San José, Costa Rica; Richmond, Calif.)	1993 - 1996
Private Medical Practice (San José, Costa Rica)	1993 - 1994

Director of the Community Health Project, CEFEMINA - Centro Feminista de Información y Acción (San José, Costa Rica)

1988 - 1989

General Medicine Practitioner (Hospital Escalante Pradilla, San Isidro del General, Costa Rica)

1987

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- African Studies Association (ASA)
- American Literary Translators Association (ALTA)
- American Translators Association (ATA): Accredited Translator, English-Spanish
- Northwestern Translators and Interpreters Society (NOTIS)

HONORS AND AWARDS

Macfarlane Scholarship in the Humanities	2015-16
UW Graduate School Fund for Excellence and Innovation (GSFEI)	2014
SFSU Department of Comparative Literature Honors	2009
SFSU Edward B Kaufman College of Humanities Scholarship	2006, 2007
SFSU Society for Classical & Comparative Studies Travel Scholarship	2006
SFSU Scholarship for Overseas Study	2006

PUBLISHED ARTICLES

- "Trauma nacional, amnesia personal en *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, de Patricio Pron." *Revista Estudios* 31 (II 2015): 1-14.
<http://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/estudios/article/view/22656/22851>.
- "Southern Discomfort: Two Novels of the Southern Hemisphere." *Portals* 6 (Spring 2008).
<<http://portalsjournal.com/2008/kaminsky.html>>.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- "The Globalized World: A Critical View from the Southern Hemisphere." 113th PAMLA Conference, Portland, Ore., 6 November 2015.
- "Trauma nacional, amnesia personal en *El espíritu de mis padres sigue subiendo en la lluvia*, de Patricio Pron." Coloquio Internacional entre literatura y medicina. Universidad de Costa Rica, 10 September 2015.
- "Mujeres que se enfrentan a la memoria." 130th MLA Convention, Vancouver, B.C., 9 January 2015.
- "Twisted Truth and Reconciliation in Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*." African Studies Association 57th Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, 21 November 2014.
- "Pervasive and Perverted Discipline: Retrospectives of the Argentine and South African Repressive Regimes." 128th MLA Convention, Boston, 4 January 2013.
- "The Positional Identities of Ariel Dorfman." 110th PAMLA Conference, Seattle, 19 October 2012.
- "La pregunta de la novela negra, la historia en sus ojos." 7th Spanish Matters Colloquium, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Wash., 13 April 2012.

- "Las visiones de Roberto Arlt y Nathanael West y la insoportable insignificancia del ser." 6th Spanish Matters Colloquium, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Wash., 8 April 2011.
- "Dos novelas del hemisferio austral." 11th Conference of Hispanic and Lusophone Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Santa Barbara, 28 February 2009.

SERVICE AND VOLUNTEER WORK

- University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senator; Judicial Committee, 2015-2016
- University of Washington Center for Human Rights: volunteer translator for the Unfinished Sentences project (<<http://unfinishedsentences.org/>>) since 2013.
- Northern California Translators Association (NCTA): Director, Continuing Education, 2008 - 2010

LANGUAGES

- Spanish: Native
- English: Near native
- French: Intermediate, reading ability
- Portuguese: Intermediate, reading ability