Restoring Memory in Recent Novels and Films from Argentina

by

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A Dissertation

In

Spanish

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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December, 2016

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. John Beusterien, as well as the other members of my committee, Dr. Jorge Zamora and Dr. Natalia Matta-Jara for their support, counsel, and advice in this process. I would also like to thank my wife, Stephanie, without whose support I could not have finished, and our families and friends that have been a constant strength to me.

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Abstract

Contemporary scholars agree that the revival of cultural memory concerning the horrors of the twentieth century in the Argentine memory began with *kirchnerismo*. The ongoing academic discussion about Argentina's more recent past, however, has largely ignored the way that the past traumas of the country have influenced the revival of collective cultural memory. This dissertation examines two novels and two films from twenty-first century Argentina. Each pair of novels and films offers a version of history while also offering a reflection on the results of memory, years after the events remembered occurred. The primary academic contribution of the study is to demonstrate how the two novels and two films shape cultural memory and in turn create a new Argentine cultural memory in which the memory of pain caused by social trauma has created a secondary memory.

Chapter two focuses on the theories of cultural memory and trauma and how they relate to the Argentine experience. It examines two manifestations of secondary memory: postmemory and prosthetic memory because, instead of future generations having a postmemory that is born into the history of the past trauma, most Argentines share a prosthetic memory. Amy Kaminsky defines post memory as the memory that develops from silence as a way of understanding trauma of the past and generally emerges in subsequent generations that have a tie to the trauma but did not experience it themselves. For Kaminsky, prosthetic memory develops through the products of post memory, such as in art, music, literature, or film, and is generally seen in outsiders, that is, those that are not directly connected with the traumatic event. In the Argentine case, those that were

alive during the trauma itself, present the effects of postmemory, because the initial memory was wiped clean through government intervention and societal cleansing of the past. The advent of holocaust studies initially linked theories of cultural memory and trauma. Even though the Argentine case of trauma and the cultural memory shares some points of contact with the holocaust, the theorization of trauma in the Argentine case differs due to the wiping clean of collective memory primarily through quick trials and later silencing. The dissertation is a contribution to the field of cultural memory studies because it illuminates how the altered process of collective memories in Argentina produced a uniquely defined prosthetic memory in novels and films in subsequent generations.

Chapter three analyzes secondary memory and is divided into two sections, each discussing a specific novel. The first section discusses *The Promised Hell: A Prostitute of the Zwi Migdal* (*El infierno prometido: una prostitute de la Zwi Migdal*) (2006) by Elsa Drucaroff. In *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*), Drucaroff presents a version of the white slave trade in Argentina. Her version of events serves to bring together her Argentine audience and helps it to recall traumatic events and thus overcome that trauma. She also uses commonly-known Judeo-Christian religious stories to make her reader sympathetic with a personal narrative. The second section discusses *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*) (2012) by Leopoldo Brizuela. Brizuela presents the way in which events in the present can remind the reader of similar circumstances in the past and thus generate an obsession with those previous events. This obsession then leads to a search for meaning in those events and in turn a way to overcome their trauma.

Chapter four focuses on how cultural memory and trauma are addressed in Argentine film. This chapter is also divided into two sections. The first section discusses *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) (2006) directed by Adrián Caetano. Caetano's presentation of a detainee during the Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso*), also called the Dirty War (1976-83), plays on Bazin's idea of film as "social documentary" in that it presents a representation of what society desires to see about past trauma. The second section discusses *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) (2004) directed by Alejandro Agresti. This film presents the ways in which the traumatic past is rediscovered in the present through the technique of using a small Argentine coastal town as setting. Agresti presents different social groups and a regional perspective to represent Argentina in coping with the past.

Chapter 1
Introduction

One of the most influential ways that Argentines have sought to deal with the memory of the horrors of the twentieth century is through artistic mediums. The few examples in literature and film that presented the events and results of the Dirty War in the 1980's and early '90's such as: *Artificial Respiration* (*Respiración artificial*) by Ricardo Piglia while in exile in Spain in 1980, *The Official Story* (*La historia oficial*) (1985) directed by Luís Puenzo, and *Night of the Pencils* (*La noche de los lápices*) (1986) directed by Héctor Olivera, helped to keep the past from being erased completely in the minds of Argentines, but until the conditions in the present reawakened the memory of the past en masse a majority of Argentines chose to avoid the subject rather than deal with their own memories and roles in those events. This reawakening led to a resurgence in literature and film that dealt with the horrors of the past.

María del Cármen Castañeda Hernández views memory as an abstract that materializes in literature and other art forms and thereafter becomes part of the collective cultural memory. This idea helps to understand the important role of novels and films in the revival of cultural memory in Argentina and serves as a basis for the focus of this dissertation. Also important in this discussion is the rise in the regional and individual nature of the films of the New Argentine Cinema movement. By centering on individual, local, and regional problems and then relating them to the global society, they have brought individuals back into the discussion of memory and in so doing have contributed to the discussion of the past and the restoration of that past to the collective cultural memory (Amado 18-19).

The novels and films presented in this dissertation are examples of the ever growing list of filmmakers and novelists that have embraced the past in an effort to portray and understand it within the culture that allowed it to happen at the time, ignored it for years after in an attempt to move beyond its horrors, and that now seeks to recover it and understand why it happened, what role each individual had in it, and how each individual allowed it to happen, no matter how passive his or her involvement may have been in the horrors at the time or in the forgetfulness since. This new generation of filmmakers and novelists relies on the memory of the previous generations to create its own secondary memory.

Argentina's history has been filled with bloody frontier battles, fights between political factions, hidden slavery, financial troubles, and ruthless dictatorial governments that waged war on their own citizens. At the beginning of the twentieth century some horrors carried over from the end of the previous century. One of these horrors that had a major impact on the culture at the time was the case of the white slave trade.[1] The subsequent silencing and forgetting of the trauma of the white slave trade, have generated a similar effect of secondary memory as later traumas within the cultural memory.

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[1] The white slave trade is the name given to the Jewish prostitution rings in Latin America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, principally in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay.

Though this slave trade tended to be only within the Jewish community, it was known by the national leaders and simply ignored by them because of disinterest or often because they were paid by the organizations to allow the abuses to happen. The Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso*), also called the Dirty War (1976-83), which occurred towards the end of the twentieth century has had the most profound effects on Argentina and its cultural memory.

As Argentina did not directly participate in either of the world wars, for most of the twentieth century there was no great external enemy. Perhaps as a result of this lack of participation in foreign wars, many of the political fringe groups that never had much standing in Western Europe and the United States took hold in Argentina. These groups that attracted those that were on the fringe of society in Argentina, like those that were considered the rabble of Argentine society such as the poor and a disproportionately high number of Jews, continued to grow until they often gained political power or at least enough followers to get the attention of the ruling classes. Ruling classes sought to eradicate these social political movements (Moya 19).

As a result of this continual fight between these growing groups and the ruling classes, the twentieth century had many domestic terrorist plots and bombings, and resultant responses by the ruling classes in what they said were attempts to restore order. These ruling classes, which included the elected officials, the wealthy, and the military, believed these plots were at their worst in the 1970’s. Following another military controlled government - a fairly common occurrence in twentieth century Argentina as the constitution allowed the military to take control whenever they felt that the president and other elected officials were unable to control the problems in the country - Argentina returned to a fully democratic government in 1973 and again allowed the Peronist party to run a candidate in national elections. Juan Perón, the former president who had been in exile in Spain since a military coup removed him from office in 1955, returned to Argentina to once again run for president. Perón and his party had been prohibited since the coup.

On the day of Perón's scheduled return, the two major Peronist factions, one far left and one far right, that had become continually more divided since their leader had been removed from office, met at the international airport in Ezeiza. The right-wing Peronists fired on the leftists and Perón's plane was redirected to the aeroparque in Buenos Aires. The division between the two sides of the Peronist movement continued throughout Perón's presidency, which ended abruptly when the popular president died in office July 1, 1974. The right-wing faction of the Peronist movement was staunchly anti-communist and socialist, while the left-wing faction supported these movements. During Peron's exile, he was able to keep both sides united in the hope of his return. The division between the Peronist left and right continued to grow after Perón's death when his third wife, known as Isabelita, who had served as vice president under her husband, took over as chief executive. Isabelita gave more extensive powers to the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA) originally created by her husband and headed by the minister of social welfare, José López-Rega. López-Rega was also known as "el brujo" and often called the "Rasputin of the Pampas" for the influence that he seemed to have over the Peróns and Isabelita in particular. The AAA under Isabelita and López-Rega battled those they deemed subversives. This battle between the government, which represented the more rightwing Peronist movement, and the groups that had been labeled subversives, which were the farther left Peronists, would later lead to the overthrow of the democratic government by the military on March 24, 1976 (Lewis 126).

Under this new military government (1976), the work of identifying and imprisoning subversives became the principle goal. In order to reach their goal of eradicating all subversive groups from Argentina, the military began the Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso de reorganización nacional*) which allowed them to remove anyone accused or believed guilty of subversive activities from their homes, workplaces, schools, or even the street and hold them without any official charges.

Though the government sought to pacify the public by saying that those that behaved properly had nothing to fear and by perpetuating the idea that the Argentine society was divided into “friends and foes,” these government-sanctioned acts of terror served instead to promote fear of the government itself among the Argentine citizenry (Kaiser 2005, 28). From this fear emerged a new set of terminology that referred to the clandestine imprisonments and mysterious captures. The public began to call those that were taken by the government the “disappeared,” because no one seemed to know where they had gone. The common citizenry was unaware of their whereabouts, though they were often fully aware that there were clandestine concentration camps throughout the country; and the police, military, and other government officials denied any knowledge of anyone that had not been officially arrested. This time period was also referred to as the Dirty War (1976-83), because the military government perpetuated the idea of an internal enemy, the subversive groups, that were a bigger threat to Argentine stability than their own dictatorship. The term Dirty War has also since come to refer to the war that the military government waged against its own citizens that it said it intended to protect by removing all subversives.

Since the end of the *Proceso* or Dirty War, there have been multiple ways that the country has tried to recover. In the early 1980's the government enacted laws that allowed all but the generals in charge during the *Proceso* to escape prosecution. Later governments granted amnesty to all military personnel that had participated in the Process of National Reorganization, including the commanders-in-chief that had overseen the capture, torture, and murders of approximately 30,000 Argentines. A trend of willful ignorance and forgetfulness also existed among the Argentine citizenry in the years following the return to democracy. It became almost taboo to talk about the horrors that had occurred. This willful ignorance began to change among certain groups in 1995, when children of the disappeared formed the group H.I.J.O.S. (*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*) (Sons and Daughters for the Identity and Justice against Forgetfulness and Silence), though the population at large mostly continued to maintain a collective silence. Following the financial crisis of 2001 and removal of President De La Rúa by popular movements in Buenos Aires, many that had tried to forget the nation's horrific past, began to see similarities between the national situation at that time and the events that had led to the military takeover in 1976 (Fiorucci and Klein 1). This growth in concern continued and helped propel Néstor Kirchner to the presidency in 2003. Kirchner had run on a platform of promised prosecution for the military leadership of the Dirty War.

Kirchner followed through on his campaign promise by pushing congress to repeal the amnesty laws and again prosecute the military leadership shortly after taking the oath of office. Though there are questions about how much Kirchner and congress have actually fulfilled the national expectations based on his promise, following their initial actions to complete campaign promises, a revitalization of cultural memory began in Argentina. The intentional ignorance and willful forgetfulness that began during the return to democracy in 1983 slowly changed into a desire to remember as Argentines began to seek to understand their horrific national past.

This dissertation examines the ways in which two novelists and two filmmakers have sought to deal with the revival of the horrors of the twentieth century in the cultural memory since the advent of *kirchnerismo* in Argentina. It explores how the novels and films alter collective cultural memory. Astrid Erll's *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* serves as a guide to the field of cultural memory studies and this thesis because of its contribution to the understanding of cultural memory and the ways media affects it. *Cultural Memory Studies* purports to give an overview of what the field of cultural memory studies entails. In it, Erll discusses the importance of the contribution of fiction to cultural memory itself. She says that literature and film "simultaneously build and observe memory" and present the past based on views and opinions in the present, thus changing the way these past events will be viewed in the future (Erll 2008, 391).

In her other edited book about cultural memory *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, Erll discusses the idea of memory sites, which are physical places and places in time that alter the memories of the cultures in which they occur. In this second book, Erll further presents the idea that memories only become a part of the cultural memory when they are disseminated and shared through symbols that over time become universal. These symbols can range from words and phrases to physical artefacts and include media such as literature and film.

Ana Amado, in her study of Argentine cinema and politics, specifically presents the role of the symbols of media in both observing and building memory in Argentina. She discusses the role that novels, films, and other media played in the previous accounts told by the military in the 1970s. “The social process of elaboration of the past mobilized a stage of different symbols in the seventies, with narratives that gathered the political experience of the soldiers from the seventies expressed in testimonial literature, novels memories, fictional films, and documentaries” (Amado 17). She then goes on to relate how the politics of the 1990s impacted a revival in the accounts that contradicted these previous versions of history and began the cultural and political shift in the view of the past that was furthered by groups like H.I.J.O.S. (17).

At the turn of the century, the children of the disappeared became more prevalent in the production of film and literary contributions. This rise of the youngest generation to be directly affected by the events of the Dirty War, as well as the economic and political climate of the time led to the rise in interest in the past and the revival of cultural memory. Because of the early importance of literature within Argentina (*Facundo* by

Domingo Sarmiento), its role in defining Argentine cultural (*Martín Fierro* by José Hernández), and its continued relevance in the promotion and preservation of cultural memory, and the resurgence of film as a medium of cultural memory recovery with the New Argentine Cinema movement, these two media are treated specifically in this dissertation. The dissertation analyzes examples of the two ways in which novelists and filmmakers have approached this revitalization of cultural memory in Argentina. That is, they either offer a version of the past set in the time they occurred, either based on biographical or autobiographical accounts of those that had endured the horrors personally or completely fictional accounts based on real events or situations; or they approach the results of the memory of those past events years after they occurred. This second type either presents the feelings of those that were children during the horrors or the feelings of those that were adults and had either been in a detention center or had a loved one that was. This second type often has a tone of lament as these characters seek to understand the past based on their own experiences at the time and the lasting affects the events have had on their lives since. The characters represent the feelings in Argentine society of wondering why no one did more at the time. This idea of the two ways that literature and film present the past, either past as past, or past as present, stems from Verena Berger's idea of two cinemas.

Berger's two versions of cinema about the *Proceso* are those based on documented events but are complete works of fiction like *Garage Olimpo* (1999) directed by Marco Bechis, and those that are based on actual events and actual people like *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) (2005) directed by Adrián Caetano

(Berger 25). Berger states that “The fictional cinema dedicated to the representation of the disappeared has basically two sides: the fictionalized narrative based on facts but without an actual documented base and the narrative that draws upon the record itself” (*El cine de ficción que se dedica a la representatción de los desaparecidos tiene basicamente dos vertientes: la narración que ficcionaliza a partir de hechos sin una base documentada en concreto y la narración que recurre al documento*) (25). While Berger’s assessment of these two types of films is accurate, she leaves out the films that deal with the past in the present. That is, she only deals with those films that seek to recreate a version of the past while leaving out those that show the effects of that past in the present. This dissertation deals with the films of the past set in the past, both the complete works of fiction and those based on actual events as a single type and also includes the films that deal with the effects of the past in the present, whether complete works of fiction or based on actual events as another type. The same phenomenon is also explored in literature. In this way, this dissertation seeks to provide a view of the secondary memory in Argentina, and its continued influence on the culture that has created it and that it in turn continues to alter and influence.

Chapter two explains why the recovery of cultural memory is essential to the recovery of Argentine society from the trauma of its past. The chapter discusses each of these in turn, but also recognizes that they are interrelated. The selection of theory presented in this dissertation seeks to show how and why cultural memory often seeks to suppress certain memories and how and why these same memories are recovered and preserved. The theory presented includes the cultural memory theory of Astrid Erll, Aleida Assmann, and Jan Assmann, as well as the film theory of André Bazin and Robert Cardullo, and the trauma theories of Antonius C. G. M. Robben, Amy Kaminsky, and Jens Andermann.

Chapter three analyzes secondary cultural memory in two novels. The analysis in this chapter focuses on Jan Assmann's definition of cultural memory as depending more on the ways our society and culture teach us to perceive the past than the actual recollection of the events as they occurred. María del Cármen Castañeda Hernández's view of memory expressed earlier also serves as a base for understanding the role of literature in the revival of cultural memory in Argentina. The chapter is subdivided into two section, each one focusing on a specific novel.

The first novel discussed is *The Promised Hell: A Prostitute of the Zwi Migdal* (*El infierno prometido: Una prostitute de la Zwi Migdal*) (2006) by Elsa Drucaroff. In *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*), Drucaroff presents a version of the white slave trade in Argentina (1860-1939). Drucaroff's version of that past serves to bring together her Argentine audience by recalling the more recent past of the Dirty War through the presentation of the lack of control for one's own life and by evoking Judeo-Christian religious stories and thus giving her otherwise culturally separated audience equal understanding.

The second novel is *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*) (2012) by Leopoldo Brizuela. Brizuela, instead of looking at the horrors of the state sponsored disappearances, tortures, and murders during the *Proceso* (1976-83) in their own time, seeks to represent the memory of those events and their effects years later. Brizuela presents the way in which events in the present that remind of similar circumstances in the past can generate an obsession with those previous events, much like the political and economic turmoil at the turn of the twenty-first century led Argentines to again reflect on the conditions that led to the military take-over. Though these two novels are set nearly a century apart and discuss different horrific events in Argentina's history, both explore the dangers in intentional ignorance of those events. Indeed, as Drucaroff states in an interview with the periodical *Página12*, the cultural structure of Argentina that has the deeply ingrained idea of "it must be for something" and "it was not for nothing" relates to every horror in Argentine history, no matter the era in which it occurred.

Chapter four focuses on how Argentine film addresses secondary cultural memory. The principle argument in this chapter relies on the theory of André Bazin as social documentary as revisited by Robert Cardullo. Cardullo presents this Bazinian theory much like Castañeda Hernández's and Jan Assmann's ideas of cultural memory. Film does not present the reality of the past, but the version that society wants to see, much like a dream or hallucination. While a dream or hallucination may present false versions of reality, they in fact occur and therefore are a version of reality and memory. In the same way, films are versions of reality that influence the cultural memory because they present a palatable version for the society and culture that creates them. This chapter is also divided into two section, each one discussing a specific film.

The first film discussed is *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) (2006) directed by Adrián Caetano. Caetano presents the conditions in an Argentina detention center during the Dirty War in *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*). Caetano's focus on the viewpoint of the detainees, instead of putting his audience in a third person point of view or that of the captors, helps to build the Bazinian idea of the dream-reality. He presents the audience with its deepest fears about the Dirty War, an innocent detainee accused of wrongdoing and unable to provide any information to justify his release.

The second film is *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) (2004) directed by Alejandro Agresti. In *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*), Agresti presents the results of the memories of the past and intentional forgetfulness on the present. The small coastal village of the film symbolizes Argentina itself. The characters and events in the film represent various social groups within Argentina. As the characters go through their various processes of recovering their past, they represent an idealized version of the diversity of Argentine society and its own revival of memory sparked by the turmoil of the early twenty-first century.

Both films are a part of the New Argentine Cinema movement, a movement that began in the 1990’s when those that were children at the time of the *Proceso* came of age and began to seek their own voice and an understanding of their national past. This new generation of filmmakers that drove the movement dialogued with their society within themes like memory, poverty, and exclusion (Amado 18-19). As presented earlier, these regional, local, and individual problems serve as a basis to help understand the global society in its quest to recover the collective memory of the past. They thereby return the discussion of memory to a personal level, and give a visible version of the discussion of the past and the restoration of that past.

This dissertation will rely principally on the definitions of cultural memory according to Astrid Erll, Jan Assmann, and María de Cármen Castañeda Hernández as well as Bazin's theory of film as social documentary to show that the novels and films discussed, along with the other current works that they represent, have become symbols and have helped to stimulate the collective cultural memory within Argentina by restoring to it that which had been forgotten.

The concept of cultural memory originated with Maurice Halbwach's studies on *mémoire collective* (Erll 2008, 1). Erll in *Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction* focuses on a broad understanding of the term cultural memory. She states that cultural memory is "the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" (2). Erll further discusses the idea of *lieux de mémoire* both in the work already mentioned and in *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* where she discusses the "Indian Mutiny" as an example of a contested *lieux de memoire* of British colonialism in India. These *lieux de mémoire* or sites of memory, she explains, refer to physical places as well as moments in time such as the Holocaust for Jews, 9/11 for the United States, or the "Dirty War" for Argentina (Erll 2008, 2) (Erll 2009, 109). Erll further discusses cultural memory in this second work as "premised on the idea that memory can only become collective as part of a continuous process whereby memories are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts that mediate between individuals and…create communality across both space and time" (1). The symbolic artefacts discussed in this dissertation are novels and films. These novels and films serve as a liaison between the individual and the collective, and create Erll's required "communality across both space and time," in that they place their audiences into the situations of their characters and provide a personal understanding of both the events presented and their effects on society as a whole.

This idea presented by Erll as well as the definition of cultural memory presented by Jan Assmann in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance and Political Imagination* serve as the basis for the discussion of this dissertation. Assmann states that cultural memory refers to “one of the exterior dimensions of the human memory” (Assmann 5). He further explains that while memory is generally believed to be within the brain of the individual, the contents of memory, the ways in which those contents are organized, and the length of time they last are not actually a matter of internal storage but rather of the “external conditions imposed by society and cultural contexts” (5). In other words, the “external conditions” of society and culture influence memory of the past more than the actual recollection of the events themselves. According to Assmann, the conditions of memory that most influence cultural memory are threefold: mimetic memory, the memory of things, and communicative memory merge almost seamlessly. Assmann states that mimetic memory refers to action and develops through the imitation of others. The memory of things creates the concept of comfort, practicality, beauty, and identity as those things reflect how we view ourselves. Communicative memory refers to language and the ability to communicate. When these memories combine to hand down meaning within a cultural group, it generates cultural memory. Cultural memory then is the area where mimetic routines take on more meaning than what is inherent in them to become rituals; things become symbols, icons, representations, etc.; and words also become greater than their innate meaning (5-7).

In this dissertation, the representatives of all three forms of memory are the novels and films discussed. They seek to mimic or recreate the occurrences in the society. As audiences read or view them, their routine take on greater meaning because they become participants in the revival of memory within the culture. The novels and films thus become symbols of that society and memory, and their words take on new meaning as they begin to have greater influence on the cultural memory.

Assmann's definition informs the idea of cultural memory set forth in the study of the two novels and two films because they are representations of all three of Assmann's forms of memory essential to cultural memory. Castañeda Hernández's notion of individual memory also informs how to understand the way memory works in these works because it presents the idea of individual memory, that forms part of our consciousness and constitutes the essence of our identity, as something abstract that can materialize in literature and other art forms and thus converts into collective memory and cultural memory (118). When the memory of an individual thus materializes, it can change the collective memory by becoming part of the communication. It thus becomes a part of the cultural memory which Assmann says feeds tradition and communication, without it there are no infringements, conflicts, innovations, restorations, or revolutions, which are all "eruptions from a world beyond the current meaning" (8).

This dissertation also looks more fully into the symbolic meanings of events in twentieth century Argentina as recorded in novels and films and their resultant effects on Argentine society as a whole. In order to understand the symbolic meaning within Argentine society, it is also important to know the usage of certain phrases that appear regularly within the novels and films discussed. Phrases like: *Algo habrá hecho* (he or she must have done something), *por algo será* (it must be for something), *no fue por nada* (it was not for nothing), and *nunca más* (never again) are universally understood within Argentina and those familiar with its history to refer to the horrors and ideas associated with the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (Process of National Reorganization). These phrases have become symbolic of all of the horrors associated with the *Proceso*, just as the films and novels have become symbols both of the past they seek to portray and the present that seeks to understand that past as Castañeda Hernández stated in reference to *On a Same Night* (118).

The *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* led to the disappearance, torture, and murder of approximately 30,000 Argentine citizens at the hands of their own government. Though these phrases associate specifically to the *Proceso* in Argentina, they are not exclusive to Argentina. They have taken on specific meanings there that go beyond the words themselves to refer to a specific period of time and specific horrors of the past within the national cultural memory. The memories of these events therefore both feed and are fed by the ways in which the events are portrayed in novels and films. The words and phrases, the places and people become more than what they essentially are. For example, the ESMA (*Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada*) (Navy Petty-Officers School of Mechanics) which was one of many detention centers for the disappeared in Argentina during the *Proceso*, is now the *Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos* (Memory and Human Rights Space). It is a museum to the memory of the *Proceso* and the atrocities against human rights that occurred as a result. In itself the ex-ESMA is now nothing more than old buildings that once housed a naval school, and at one time a detention center, but memory has made it more than that to represent a period of horror and all the lives lost in that period. It has become a symbol that is both a result of the cultural memory of the past and now contributes to that memory beyond the significance of the buildings themselves. In the same way, the phrases mentioned and the novels and films discussed are symbolic of those periods of horror.

Chapter 2

Secondary Memory in Twenty-First Century Argentina

In order to explore the nature of cultural memory with regards to the horrors of the twentieth century in Argentina, one must understand both cultural memory studies and trauma theory. Because this dissertation explores specifically the importance of novels and film in their contribution to cultural memory, especially the secondary memory in Argentina in the twenty-first century, it discusses both novels and films in their relation to that secondary memory. This chapter explores cultural memory, and the idea of secondary memory, and trauma theory in order to present an understanding of them in general as well as how they relate to the Argentine experience. The studies discussed in this chapter form the basis of the use of cultural, and secondary memory in this dissertation. As cultural studies in general, and cultural memory studies in particular continue to grow as fields of interest, there will likely be many more definitions of cultural memory and its application to the fields that study it, but for the purposes of this dissertation, these are sufficient as they deal with cultural memory in media, its relation to trauma, and the effects media has on the development of cultural memory.

Trauma studies is particularly important to the Argentine case and also discussed in this chapter. As Argentina initially deviates from the expected psychoanalytic expectations for coping with largescale cultural trauma, only to eventually go through each step deemed necessary for recovery, the study of how this occurred and how it has been presented furthers both the psychoanalytic and academic study of trauma.

The primary academic contribution of this dissertation is to demonstrate how the two novels and two films herein presented as examples of their respective fields shape cultural memory and in so doing create a cultural memory that builds a version of the past in which the country has overcome its trauma and moves forward.

Cultural Memory

The study of cultural memory has long been linked to the study of past trauma. Traumatic experiences tend to leave a profound mark on culture and are either suppressed by the society in which they occurred or are made into a symbol for the society to move forward. In order to better explain the link between cultural memory and trauma this section presents how these are often defined in study. One of the most prevalent theorists in cultural memory studies in recent years is Astrid Erll.

Erll in the introduction to *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* states that “cultural memory is not the object of one single discipline, but a transdisciplinary phenomenon. There is no such thing as a privileged standpoint or approach for memory research” (Erll 2008, 3). Erll further explains that the study of cultural memory is very diverse, as well as being disjointed, because it is based on cooperation among different disciplines (3). One of the most important and most used ideas in cultural memory studies is that of collective memory (3). While memory itself is based on cognitive processes in the individual, collective memory is more of a metaphor that involves two different concepts of culture. One “sees culture as a subjective category of meanings contained in people’s minds” while the other “sees culture as patterns of publicly available symbols objectified in society” (4-5). These two levels on which culture and memory intersect involve the very literal sense of the individual cognitive process of remembering as well as that of the socio-cultural contexts and their influence on memory (5). This second level includes medial ways of presenting memory, including monuments, literature, film, etc. Both of these levels of memory contribute to the building and continuation of cultural memory. In the Argentine case specifically, many survivors wrote their personal memory accounts of their experiences in detention centers as novels. Some of these stories later came to the big screen. In other cases, authors and cinematographers used the ideas behind these accounts to create their own fictionalized versions. As the field of novels and films has grown, they have influenced the collective cultural memory and helped to revitalize interest in the horrific periods in Argentina's past that they present. The cultural integration of these early accounts has also led to the emergence of accounts that seek to present the effects of that past on present day Argentina.

Erll further points out that these two levels are only distinguished from one another on the analytical level, because they continuously intersect in practice. Individual memory does not exist independent of culture, nor is there truly a collective or cultural memory detached from the individual (5). The continual intertwining influence between the memory of the individual and that presented in media and socio-cultural contexts shape one another. These are what Erll says may be conceived as Maurice Halbwachs', the creator of the modern idea of collective memory, *points de vue* on shared notions of the past (5). These shared notions of the past come together from varying groups with different points of view of that past to form one cultural memory. Cultural memory is subject to change as time passes and different aspects of the past become more important to the individuals and media, and its influence changes and it is changed by other influences within the socio-cultural and individual contexts that make up the levels of memory spoken of by Erll.

Erll presents cultural memory as interdisciplinary throughout the text by the essays of its many contributors. Aleida Assmann in her “Canon and Archive” in the volume utilizes the definition of culture of Jurij Lotman and Boris Uspenskij which states that culture is “the memory of a society that is not genetically transmitted” (Erll 2008, 97). A. Assmann explains that culture “transcends the individual life span” and links the past, the present and the future (97). In her discussion of memory, she uses the relationship between remembering and forgetting on an individual neurological level to help explain the same relationship in cultural memory. She explains that memory capacity is limited by neural and cultural constraints on the individual cognitive level and that a similar dynamic exists on the social cultural level. She says that forgetting “is part of social normality” (97). As new information is added, some old information is forgotten.

A. Assmann outlines two forms of forgetting, *active* and *passive*. She explains that *active* forgetting involves intentional acts like trashing and destroying and that while these acts are necessary and constructive, they can be “violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority” (97-98). *Passive* forgetting involves non-intentional acts like losing, hiding, dispersing, neglecting, abandoning, or leaving behind. These objects are not destroyed and may later be recovered or “discovered by accident" (98). A. Assmann discusses how these two forms of forgetting also have their counterparts in memory, "The institutions of active memory preserve the *past as present* while the institutions of passive memory preserve the *past as past*" (98). Assmann refers to active memory as the *canon* and passive memory as the *archive*. In Argentina, the memory *archive* of the Dirty War occurred during the post-dictatorial period where presidential pardons annulled early quick trials, and a desire to move on created a cultural taboo that caused a self-imposed silence. When the younger generation came of age, it rediscovered these moments from the past and brought them back into the active memory or *canon* of Argentine cultural memory by presenting the horrors in novels and film.

According to A. Assmann, the active cultural memory "is built upon a small number of normative and formative texts, places, persons, artifacts, and myths which are meant to be actively circulated and communicated in ever-new presentations and performances" (100). This "cultural capital of a society" is "continuously recycled and re-affirmed" and thus gives those "artifacts" that have made it into the active memory "a lasting place in the cultural working memory of a society" (100). These "artifacts" are what A. Assmann says make up the cultural canon of a society, thus reaching a level of "sacred texts" within the society. The "artifacts" that are not a part of the active cultural canon, but are kept in a passive way as a cultural reference memory, A. Assmann calls the "archive." She further explains the dynamic between these two forms of memory. A. Assmann explains that the archive, or passive cultural memory, "is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past" (102). This archive, then, is only useful so long as it continues to provide a basis of knowledge about the present in the future. Once it has become outdated, either simply by the passage of time or by the changing of power and thus becoming compromising instead of useful, the archive loses its "political function and relevance, transforming [it] into a heap of rubbish" (103).

> Cultural memory, then is based on two separate functions: the presentation of a narrow selection of sacred texts, artistic masterpieces, or historic key events in a timeless framework; and the storing of documents and artifacts of the past that do not at all meet these standards but are nevertheless deemed interesting or important enough to not let them vanish on the highway to total oblivion... Emphatic reverence and specialized historical curiosity are the two poles between which the dynamics of cultural memory is played out (101).

This dynamic between memory and forgetting in their active and passive forms guides and contains the cultural memory of a society. According to A. Assmann this dynamic continually plays out even though there is no set of rules to truly know ahead of time what will be forgotten or excluded from the cultural memory. She also points out that the canon and the archive are open and "allow for mutual influx and reshuffling" (106). This reshuffling continually changes the canon of cultural memory based on the goals of the society at any given time.

Jan Assmann discusses the importance of memory itself in his "Communicative and Cultural Memory." He says that memory is "the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity)" (Erll 2008, 109). In Argentina, the *Proceso* sought to remove the identity of the "subversives" through disappearances and denials. The later self-imposed forgetting further caused an identity crisis. Though many still remembered the fear of the *Proceso*, the reluctance to discuss it made it seem more of a distant dream than an actual historical period. Assmann discusses three levels of memory as it relates to identity and time (109). Those three levels are the *inner level*, which is "a matter of our neuro-mental system. This is the individual or personal memory. The next is the *social level*, where "memory is a matter of communication and social interaction" (109). J. Assmann's third level is the *cultural level*. He outlines the history of this level through psychoanalysis as collective memory and art history as social memory. Though these beginnings have led to the current study of cultural memory, the term and specific field of cultural memory has developed only over the past twenty years (109-110). He also explains the current field of cultural memory and labels it a "kind of institution" (110). This institutionalized memory, Assmann states, is "exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms" (110). He states that these symbols "may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another" (111). Like A. Assmann, Jan Assmann relates the cultural memory with the individual memory. He states that "[o]ur memory…exists only in constant interaction not only with other human memories but also with "things," outward symbols" (111).

In explaining how cultural memory works with time J. Assmann states:

> The cultural memory is based on fixed points in the past. Even in the cultural memory, the past is not preserved as such but is cast in symbols as they are represented in oral myths or in writings, performed in feasts, and as they are continually illuminating a changing present. In the context of cultural memory, the distinction between myth and history vanishes (113).

This means that the investigated and reconstructed past is not as important to cultural memory as the past as it is remembered by the society or group. This remembered past "reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as 'ours'" (113). This distinguishes cultural memory from "knowledge about the past," as knowledge, according to J. Assmann, "has no form and is endlessly progressive," while memory must also contribute to a sense of identity (113). For Argentines, the period of forgetting created a memory void. They knew about the past, but until its return to prevalence, it did not form a part of the active cultural memory. J. Assmann closes by stating that "[t]ransitions and transformations account for the dynamics of cultural memory" (117). Memory moves from autobiographical and communicative to cultural and within cultural memory from the forgotten or periphery to the forefront (117). This has occurred and continues to occur in Argentina.

In Erll's own contribution to *Media and Cultural Memory* titled "Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory," she states that "[c]ultural memory is based on communication through media" (389). Erll specifically outlines the roles of fictional media, such as novels and feature films, and their "power to shape the collective imagination of the past in a way that is truly fascinating for the literary scholar" (389). She also points out that this phenomenon can be somewhat alarming for historians. Erll observes that the changes in media, especially with regard to the internet and social media, which she calls a "space-bound media of circulation, which can reach large audiences almost simultaneously, make cultural memories today and are forgotten tomorrow" (390).

In reference to the role of literature in cultural memory, Erll says that it allows for a first and second-order observation. That is that it gives the illusion of glimpsing the past while also being “a major medium of critical reflection” on the “very processes of representation” (391). According to Erll, “[l]iterature is a medium that simultaneously builds and observes memory” (391). Literature presents the events of the past to its audience, while also providing a view of that past based on the views and opinions in the present. These presentations of the past then affect the way in which that past is viewed in the future. In order for literature or film to have this affect, they have to reach their audience. Erll states that those films and novels without an audience “may provide the most intriguing images of the past,” but they will not affect memory cultures (395). According to Erll, the film or novel itself is not necessarily memory-making, but the context in which it is presented. Everything that is established around the release of a film, Erll uses the examples of two German historical films *Der Untertag* (2004, *The Downfall*), about the last days of Adolf Hitler, and *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006, *The Lives of Others*), about life in the German Democratic Republic, to illustrate this phenomenon. The other medial representations that preceded the release of the films and helped to create discussion and hype before their debut, also helped to establish them within the cultural memory. In this way, literature and film can affect both the individual and the collective memory (396). Erll points out that the memory-making effect of these types of media “lies not in the unity, coherence, and ideological unambiguousness of the images they convey, but instead in the fact that they serve as cues for the discussion of those images, thus centering a memory culture on certain media representations and sets of questions connected with them" (396). In other words, it is not the media itself that becomes a part of the cultural memory, but that they provide a means to return the events they convey to the present discussion, and thus become themselves a part of that discussion for their portrayal of those events. In this way, the discussion, and in turn the cultural memory itself is altered based on the presentation of the media that initiated the resurgence of that past to the social conversation in the present.

Erll further discusses the relationship between media, experience, and memory in *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. In the introduction to this volume, Erll and Ann Rigney state that media "provide frameworks for shaping both experience and memory… in at least two interconnected ways" (3). They present the idea that the forms of media they present – spoken language, letters, books, photos, films – can act first "as instruments for sense-making" (3). When acting in this role, "they mediate between the individual and the world" (3). When acting in the second role, "as agents of networking, they mediate between individuals and groups" (3). These forms of media can therefore provide a way to make sense for the individual or group that creates them, as well as provide a means whereby those individuals can present themselves to a larger group. These ideas of the mediation of media work into the idea presented by Erll and Rigney of cultural memory. They state that:

> cultural memory is itself premised on the idea that memory can only become collective as part of a continuous process whereby memories are shared with the help of symbolic artefacts that mediate between individuals and, in the process, create communality across both space and time (3).

These “symbolic artefacts” can be anything that holds a significant meaning in the memory of individuals that later pass that meaning onto the larger group, thereby creating that “communality across both space and time.” When the artefacts pass from the meaning solely for the individual to the meaning for the group, they become a means through which to present, promote, and continue collective or cultural memory. Erll and Rigney’s purpose in this work is to “provide a bridge between the social dynamics of cultural memory and the dynamics specific to the ongoing emergence of new media practices” (5). As new media practices emerge, the potential exists for a much wider scope for cultural memory. There is also the potential danger that these new media practices could create further division among certain groups that had viewed themselves tied to a specific culture. The emergence of the internet and social media, for instance, allows for once disparate groups to feel united behind a similar way of thinking, while becoming less linked to those immediately around them. Erll and Rigney state, however, that the essays contained in the volume, “make clear the fact that the ongoing production of cultural memory in and through the media is mixed up with the political and social forces which orchestrate memories” (10). For them, then, a combination of political, social, and even cognitive, phenomena work to create cultural memory.

Jan Assmann further looks into the emergence of new electronic media and its role in what he refers to as “a new cultural revolution” in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. J. Assmann defines his usage of cultural memory therein as referring to “one of the exterior dimensions of the human memory, which initially we tend to think of as purely internal” (5). Assmann outlines four areas of the external dimension of memory, one of which is cultural memory. His first dimension is “mimetic memory,” which refers to action. This entails the learning of behavior through imitation as well as the use of instructions. The next dimension is “the memory of things.” This represents the idea of objects as representations of ourselves. The next dimension Assmann speaks of is “communicative memory.” This involves language and other forms of communication, which Assmann states as necessary in order to formulate an individual’s consciousness and memory. Lastly, Assmann addresses cultural memory, which he states “is the handing down of meaning” (5-6). This final dimension defined by Assmann, is where the other three merge “almost seamlessly” (6). This is the dimension wherein, “mimetic routines take on the status of rituals,” where things become symbols and icons, and where language transcends the simple meaning of words, to take on a symbolic meaning for a particular group. This last area, especially with regard to the written word and books, is the focus of *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*.

Assmann explains that the “invention of writing opened up the possibility of an all-encompassing, revolutionary transformation of this external area of communication” (8). Writing is particularly important in the study of cultural memory according to J. Assmann, because “cultural memory coincides almost completely with whatever meaning is circulating within the group,” and through writing, this meaning takes on an increasingly independent and complex “existence of its own” (8). He also explains that it is only through writing that a memory can extend from the individual to the cultural.

As this dissertation focuses on the media of literature and film and how they contribute to the revival of cultural memory in Argentina, understanding the relationship between these two media is essential. Literature and literary studies have long contributed to the dissemination of memory and its understanding both because of their longevity and their acceptance within academic discourse. The role of film in cultural memory has been somewhat more difficult, because it has often been seen as an adaptive medium instead of its own separate entity.

Walter Bruno Berg said of film: "One of the fundamental problems with film as a medium continues to be its relationship with the other media, especially with literature" (Berg 127). He goes on to say that film is often viewed as an adaptation of literature instead of it being viewed as a separate medium that contributes as much to understanding and cultural memory as any other. While he does not view it as a mere adaptation, Berg does acknowledge the link between literature and film, and relates it to the link between literature and Opera. He says that though they are clearly separate and distinct media that each deserves analyses in their own right, opera, he states, "*is* literature"[2] (127). Berg suggests that film be considered its own cinematographic category and not only an adaptation medium (127). In Argentina, the link between literature and film is of heightened importance with regards to the present revival of cultural memory as they have been the principal media of expression for the rising generation that has sought to recover the traumatic past in an attempt to better understand their present. Of particular interest in this link between film studies in its own right and its relation to cultural memory studies, are the works or André Bazin and their "revisitation" by Robert Cardullo because they treat film both as a separate medium and discuss its place in a socio-cultural context.

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[2] Italics in original

Cardullo's *Cinema as 'Social Documentary': The Film Theory of André Bazin, Revisited* is important in understanding the film theory of Bazin with regards to cultural memory, because he revisits and seeks to explain Bazin's idea of 'truth' in cinema. Cardullo states that Bazin is "the first name that naturally comes to mind" when "the idea of 'truth' encounters that of 'cinema'" (34). Indeed, Bazin stated in "Every Film is a Social Documentary" that "[t]he realist destiny of cinema… is fundamentally equivocal, because it allows the "realization" of the marvelous" (40). For Bazin, this is "[p]recisely like a dream" (40). Bazin further states that "in a sense, cinema cannot lie, and every film can be considered as a social documentary" (40). He conditions this "social documentary" aspect of cinema on the extent to which each film satisfies the "dream desires of the masses" thus becoming in itself, its own dream (40). As an example, Bazin presents the Cinderella myth and its place in American culture. This myth creates the hope that secretaries will find "the one and only modern, urban Prince Charming who will sweep them off their feet" (40).

In Cardullo's analysis of this theory of Bazin, he emphasizes the dream aspect of Bazin's theory. Cardullo supports Bazin's theory that 'film cannot lie' because though it does not document reality in itself, it does present the desires of "the collective unconsciousness," and therefore, like a dream, presents the desires behind them. Cardullo states that "[d]reams are not real, but the desires behind them are" (Cardullo 36). Bazin discusses the desire of the public, as a sort of void that producers of film seek to fill (Bazin 2008, 40). Cardullo explains this desire as “not something repressed, waiting to be expressed, but a sort of ‘hole’. It has no existence of its own, but comes into being in the very process of its being formed” (Cardullo 36). In referring to the “collective unconsciousness” Cardullo enters into the area of collective and cultural memory. While on the one hand Bazin and Cardullo seek to specifically explain the role that film plays for its public, their explanation of film as “social documentary” also helps to propel their theory into cultural memory studies. Like Bazin’s dream and Cardullo’s collective unconsciousness, cultural memory is not something that is real on its own, but the desire to remember is. The cultural phenomenon to seek out the collective past, understand that past, and to perpetuate and spread it for the understanding of the larger masses works much like Bazin’s film as “social documentary.”

Taking Bazin’s theory of the film as “social documentary” one step further into cultural memory studies, we can say that film is a cultural documentary. In the same way that Bazin’s “social documentaries” present a dream or desire of reality, films that deal with cultural trauma, both those that present the events in their time and the ways in which the results of that trauma is dealt with in the present, give a version of events as the public wants to remember them, or how it hopes it can be in the future. The films do not present reality in and of itself, but that version of memory that the public most desires at the time the film is produced.

Eduardo de la Cruz, in his “Memoria(s), cine y sociedad: miradas del cine argentino,” relates the idea of film presenting histories and stories that make up the historic memory of the groups or communities within a society (709). While de la Cruz does not directly state that he is following Bazin's theory of film as "social documentary," the ideas he presents of Argentine film, coincide with Bazin's theory. De la Cruz says that the stories or "filmic discourses" permit the rediscovery or revelation of diverse points of view about events in the history of the people, as well as becoming a part of the "collective imaginary" of the distinct social groups (709). De la Cruz also states that the images presented by a film, helps to access the "way of being" of a country and gives another possibility of knowing how memory functions in said society (709). In this way, de la Cruz's analysis of Argentine cinema is similar to Bazin and Cardullo's analyses of cinema in general. As de la Cruz looks at film from a specific area, Argentina, instead of viewing global cinema, he narrows the scope of the film as social documentary. Instead of presenting film as presenting some universal idea or desire, de la Cruz looks at the various groups that make up Argentine society and shows how film presents the different points of view of those disparate groups within Argentina. For de la Cruz, film is a way for societies to discover their past. "Film as social discourse constructs a foundation from which to say the unsayable, from which to present in images that which society, sometimes, cannot see or hear" (710). Cardullo and Bazin referred to this unsayable as the collective unconscious or the 'hole' within the collective memory that was made visible through film. The main issue that de la Cruz says Argentine cinema seeks to explain is how that society allowed "the establishment of horror" for eight years (710). For many years, the "unsayable" in Argentine was the horrors of the previous century in general, and more specifically the horrors of the military government's Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso*).

Trauma

The role of trauma within the transdisciplinary phenomenon of cultural memory studies was viewed perhaps most thoroughly in the twentieth century with holocaust studies. Antonius C. G. M. Robben states that "holocaust studies and psychoanalysis have stated forcefully that the mourning of mass violence is postponed by denial and repression so that time can wear off the most devastating experiences before working through of past losses can begin" (122). While this is certainly true of holocaust studies and in many instances of the trauma of mass violence, the Argentine case is a bit different. As Robben further states, "in Argentina, the most painful memories were confronted immediately and a narrative reconstruction set in motion before the military dictatorship collapsed" (122).

Robben also notes the different ways that various groups sought to recover in Argentina. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo continued their weekly march, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo sought their grandchildren, and military officials attended masses to "remember their fallen comrades and praise the victory over the revolutionary insurgents" (121). He also notes the formation of the new human rights group H.I.J.O.S. that was created by the children of the disappeared when they reached young adulthood. This new group developed a unique way to protest known as *escraches*. These protests consisted of finding the home addresses of former military officials that had participated in the *Proceso* and publicly shaming them to their neighbors for their actions (Druliolle 260).

In discussing these various ways of dealing with the past, or what Robben refers to as the “ongoing conflicts of memory construction,” he seeks to show that they are “surface manifestations of unresolved traumas about past atrocities in the bosom of Argentine society” (Robben 122). The relationship between memory, violence, and trauma for Robben is one of both coexistence and contradiction. “The forgetting of violence is inextricably linked to the remembrance of violence because traumatic experiences are characterized by the inability to be either completely recalled or completely forgotten” (122). Robben seeks to show that repression is not an inevitable first step in coping with trauma of mass violence. He explains that in the Argentine case repression was not the first step toward working through those past losses, but he does point out an important phenomenon within the Argentine cultural and social memory. He presents the different approaches to dealing with the trauma in Argentina and the “diverse social memories” that emerged as a result (122). These diverse social memories, a result of selective forgetting and selective remembering, “led to a polyphonic social memory that changed and expanded over time” (122).

This polyphonic memory within Argentina has led to multiple perspectives when remembering the past. Whereas the memory of the holocaust in the western world is one of terrible atrocities that is remembered in museums and memorials around the globe, there remain opposing views in Argentina often expressed through the phrases “algo habrá hecho” (he or she must have done something), “no fue por nada” (it was not for nothing), and “por algo será” (it must be for something). These phrases, often repeated in reference to the Dirty War, express the continued idea of the two devils in Argentina. This idea of the two devils acknowledges the evils of the military government and the atrocities that occurred under its direction, but also holds that these government atrocities were necessary to eliminate the other devil, the various terrorist groups that had existed in Argentina in the 1970s and whose existence the military used to justify its actions.

Robben mainly uses psychoanalytic theory to discuss the relationship between trauma, memory, and repression. Psychoanalytic theory, one of the many fields that has contributed to cultural memory studies, explains this relationship in two ways. One deals with recurrent thoughts and the recreation in nightmares and psychoses as attempts to deal with the traumatic experiences. The other approach emphasizes a progressive withdrawal from the memories. While one of these deals with selective remembering and the other with selective forgetting, Robben presents both as a part of dealing with the past trauma. He explains that the diverse social memories developed in Argentina, are results of both ways of dealing with these past trauma (124). What Robben refers to as “diverse social memories” could also be diverse manifestations of the cultural memory.

Robben seeks to point out that the Argentine approach to dealing with the past trauma of immediately prosecuting the guilty in a very public trial removes it from the psychoanalytic argument that a period of repression is essential in the recovery process. However, the same Argentine government and public that demanded these early trials, did pass through a later period of forgetting. Indeed, Argentina used both forms of forgetting as described by A. Assmann, that of active and passive forgetting, in the 1980s and ‘90s to deal with the trauma of the Dirty War, and had done the same thing throughout its history with trauma. Following the public trials after the return of a democratically elected government, subsequent governments passed laws to undo the actions of those court decisions. This very active form of forgetting was meant to help the country heal. The government passed laws that had the added effect of causing the Argentine public to repress their own memories of their shared trauma. They, in a sense, lost those memories amidst the attempts to forgive and forget. This is A. Assmann’s passive forgetting. While it is true that the way Argentina initially dealt with its trauma is different from the majority, the later forgetting that occurred in subsequent decades shows that they are not a total exception to the psychoanalytic norm.

This deviation from the norm within Argentina is explored by Amy Kaminsky in *Argentina: Stories for a Nation*. Kaminsky looks at the internal perception of Argentines with regard to the horrors of their past, as well as the worldview of the Dirty War trauma. She says that to those in the U.S. and Europe the military dictatorship in Argentina in the 1970s and ‘80s “was just another in a series of calamitous governments that have plagued the continent since independence” (158). This view of the Argentine dictatorship as merely another typical calamitous government like all the others in the continent not only affected international opinion, but within Argentina itself. Though this view did change over time and journalists and others began to tell about the horrors, “knowledge of the Dirty War was attenuated, interrupted, and censored” in Argentina and internationally (158). Kaminsky also explains that the true tension in Argentina was between knowing and not knowing about the fate of loved ones that disappeared. She says that that tension "is more or less willed comes from the actual fear of reprisals, but also from the struggle to convince oneself that one is living in, and is part of, a sane, civilized world" (159). This struggle within Argentina led to the emergence of the specialized phrases and terminology with regards to the Dirty War. These phrases, mentioned above, sought to explain how this horrific situation was possible in "a sane, civilized world."

Kaminsky does note that the military government that worked to suppress all dissent, or even supposed dissent, did underestimate the impact of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. For the most part, instead of removing these women as it did with all other "subversives," "it chose ridicule as its primary weapon against the women who gathered every Thursday in a square bordered by the nation's symbols of political, religious, financial, and cultural/historical power" (159). This ridicule of the "white-kerchiefed mothers" did not have the desired effect and their marches became a symbol of hope for Argentines during and after the end of the Dirty War. According to Kaminsky:

> The actions of the mothers both intensified international scrutiny of the behavior of the state and provided another image of Argentina for the world. Moreover, they provided a visible and appealing alternative to the junta in the struggle over the meaning of proper Argentineity (160).

This other image of Argentina had as much an effect in Argentina itself as it did on the world. These mothers and their weekly march became a symbol to Argentines and the world of Argentine identity or "Argentineity." They allowed for the dissident view that perhaps what was happening was not for a good or even justifiable purpose, but were instead the actions of "a brutal dictatorship and a dysfunctional nation" (160). In this way, according to Kaminsky, "[t]he international image of Argentina during the Proceso is not the face of a dictator, but rather the face of resistance" (160-161). Kaminsky points out that in other nations, such as Chile or Nicaragua, the dictatorships continue to be viewed internationally as the face of their dictators.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina began the dialogue of hope that had been all but destroyed by the government of Isabel Perón and the military junta that deposed her in 1976. Even after the return to democracy in 1983 and the early prosecution of those deemed guilty, elected governments in Argentina attempted to silence that dialogue through legislation purported to further the healing process of the nation. This desire to silence the past had a lasting effect on Argentine cultural memory and all but removed that past from the worldwide cultural memory. While this dissertation focuses only on the Argentine experience of recovering cultural memory, that the national movement to forget created a worldwide forgetting shows the widespread effects of selective forgetting.

Kaminsky also notes the relationship between the Holocaust and the Dirty War in Argentina in her article "Memory, Postmemory, Prosthetic Memory: Reflections on the Holocaust and the Dirty War in Argentine Narrative," While she readily notes that to most of the world, "the comparison may at first seem unacceptable," because the Holocaust is considered a singular horror meant to eradicate a people (105). Kaminsky notes, however, the DAJA's (Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations) calling of the Argentine juntas actions as genocidal, because the attempted actions to annihilate the 'negative other' "should be understood in terms of its perpetrators, not of its victims" (105). In other words, because the military did label Jews as part of the problem during its *Proceso*, though it did not have as profound an impact on the Jewish community in Argentina as Europe's from the Holocaust, this labeling of them and intent to eradicate them, should be considered genocide.

Kaminsky notes further similarities between Nazi Germany and the junta controlled Argentina in stating:

> Tapping into an undercurrent of anti-Semitism in Argentina's national culture, the junta brought to the prosecution of the Dirty War a military ethos indebted to and admiring of Nazi practice. It did so in a manner that was more pronounced when its victims were Jewish…Not surprisingly, then, it is Jewish writers and artists who depict the ways that the campaign against so-called subversives during the Dirty War incorporated Nazi techniques and practice (106).

Kaminsky notes that specific types of torture were inflicted on Jews while in the military's concentration camps, as well as the use of Nazi language, terminology, and symbols (106). The torturers in the concentration camps ensured that the Jews would make a link between them and the Holocaust. Though different forms of psychological torture were used on everyone, the specific attempts to single out Jewish captives and cause them to recall the Holocaust, reinforces the continued relationship between these two horrific events among the Argentine Jewish community.

Kaminsky uses the link between the Holocaust and the Dirty War though to support her arguments about memory, postmemory, and prosthetic memory. She uses it to "tease out the kind of memory available to those of us lucky enough not to have experienced either of them directly" (107). By presenting this link, she is able to create a framework of memory for those that did not experience the horror directly, but have a form of secondary memory of those events. Postmemory is one form of secondary memory that Kaminsky addresses.

Postmemory, for Kaminsky, is a form of secondary memory that "emerges in the face of silence" (107). It is an intergenerational phenomenon that emerges because of the silence of those that directly experienced the horror and the future generations that both are and are not a part of that history. The stories that are told about the traumatic events are only told in part. The horror is suppressed, and often talked about in "a half-understood language" (107). Kaminsky's term "prosthetic memory" is not intergenerational like Postmemory, but rather "a call to others to take on a memory that was never fully developed, or that was cut off from consciousness by official silence during the time of state terror and unfounded fears of increased instability afterwards" (112). This means that those that were not taken, but lived through the period of state terror take on this prosthetic memory. They develop a memory of the time without ever having personally experienced the horrors themselves. It is "a manufactured memory that can be strapped on by those who lived through the era without acknowledging what was going on around them" (113). Because they did not acknowledge it at the time, they avoided making conscious memories of their own. According to Kaminsky, these are the ones that "expose the nation's common past to the light of day for those who were there but who lived in the sunny world outside the torture centers" (113). These prosthetic memories are the literary texts and other forms of artistic expression that seek to keep the memory of that past in the nation's memory.

In both *Argentina: Stories for a Nation* and "Memory, Postmemory, Prosthetic Memory," Kaminsky uses examples in trauma literature and film to present her position. Her analyses of novels and films serve to show how memory, Postmemory, and what she terms prosthetic memory, are coming together within Argentine cultural memory to deal with that past trauma. In "Memory Postmemory, Prosthetic Memory," for example, she analyzes the novel *Daughter of Silence*. The novel deals with the silence about the Holocaust. The silence in the title refers to the silence of the generation that wishes to simply move on from the past trauma. This silence inadvertently results in the Postmemory of the subsequent generations, and the novel itself is for Kaminsky an example of the development of prosthetic memory for the reader.

> The novel ends inconclusively…This startling ending implies the traumatic interpellation of the reader into the demands of prosthetic memory…the reader is enjoined to make sense of it, to complete it by taking on the responsibility of a memory that was proscribed by the dictatorship but that is now presented as a moral imperative (Kaminsky 2014, 116).

This taking on of a memory that is not one's own is also present in Argentine literature and film about the nation's past trauma. The silence of the 1980s and '90s helped to produce the postmemory of the generation that formed H.I.J.O.S. and that same generation has produced novels and films that have helped to create and perpetuate Kaminsky's prosthetic memory. Through that prosthetic memory, new groups take on the memory of that past trauma and continue the social discourse that will lead to a true recovery from the traumatic past.

Jens Andermann also approaches the subject of memory and trauma in “Placing Latin American Memory: Sites and the Politics of Mourning.” Andermann notes that the “memory boom” in Holocaust remembrance has served to somewhat sideline Latin America in European and Anglo-American memory studies (4). Andermann proposes that the site-specific memorials that have emerged in Latin America, with a specific focus on the Southern Cone and Brazil, have served as “a form of cultural and political resistance against the trade-off between memory and oblivion” that was proposed by the “democratic transitions” in the region (4). These sites served to remind of the past, while focusing on the “act of atrocity” when prosecuting the military governments. They ignore the political agendas of the *desaparecidos* and the military that tortured and killed them. “By erasing the political agendas the *desaparecidos* had fought for, even as it claims to remember them as individuals, the regime of democratic transition has internalized dictatorial terror as a mode of subjectivity” (4). Because they only acknowledge the “act of atrocity” that occurred in the sites, and not the politics behind them, they in a way condone and, as Andermann says, internalize those acts as an acceptable means of subjectivity.

Andermann does note that in many instances, these sites “have proliferated not just in urban centers but also in provincial towns and villages, often on initiative of local activists” (5). Andermann also presents the need felt by many “memory activists” to gain control of the sites of terror from postdictatorial governments in order to preserve them as memorial sites. These memory sites, or “counter-monuments,” as they are called by Eduardo Maestripieri, seek to continue the memory of the horrors of the past, not as something distant and easily consigned and forgotten to the past, but as a living part of the collective memory. Andermann notes that they have also helped to create more of a dialogue between scholars of memory studies, and the architects, painters, landscapers, and other creators of the sites themselves (6). He also states that many of these sites have “incentivated theatrical and cinematic responses,” which ties them not only to the memory of those that endured their horrific pasts, and the postmemory of those of the later generations that have formed their memory based on the selective forgetting of the previous generation, but also the prosthetic memory of those that will only experience any of the trauma through third hand accounts in literature, film, and other media (Andermann 6; Kaminsky 112).

While trauma and film theory are each an essential part of the argument of this dissertation, the focus is on how they join into a productive transdisciplinary field of cultural memory studies. The trauma that Argentina continues to deal with, as well as its multi-faceted nature that stems both from the armed guerilla movements of the 1970s and the military’s Dirty War, have left a social, cultural, and psychological hole as described by Cardullo and Bazin. The new group of novelists and filmmakers that has emerged to fill that hole in order to give Argentines the cultural understanding that they desire in order to recover from the trauma of the past.

Chapter 3

Twenty-First Century Novels and Collective Memory

Literature has long played an important role in cultivating and circulating cultural memory. In Argentina this began early in national history. Since Sarmiento's *Facundo*, Argentine literature and Argentine history were linked. That same literature has helped Argentines understand their own history in an effort to deal with the violent past of their nation. In her analysis of Leopoldo Brizuela's *Una misma noche*, María del Carmen Castañeda Hernández writes that literature serves as a way of understanding events and gives significance to those events in order to relive the traumatic experience[3] (Castañeda Hernández 126). Astrid Erll expresses this same idea with her statement that "[l]iterature is a medium that simultaneously builds and observes memory" (Erll 2008, 391).

This chapter will present Elsa Drucaroff's *The Promised Hell: A Prostitute of the Zwi Migdal* (*El infierno prometido: Una prostituta de la Zwi Migdal*) and *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*) by Leopoldo Brizuela. These novels are examples of the two principle ways that the past has been presented in Argentina. *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno* prometido) by Drucaroff is set in the early twentieth century during the white slave trade. Drucaroff presents the past in a way that restores to the national cultural memory aspects of the past that have been forgotten, either due to time or as a purposeful effort to force national healing, in order to help cope with those horrors of the past. *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*) takes place in the twenty-first century and looks back at past horrors and their continued effect on the present. By setting his story in the present and looking at the recovery of the past, Brizuela uses an individual version of his audience's experience to show the recovery process in Argentina as a whole.

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[3] Translation is my own throughout.

Cultural Memory and Religious Connections in *The Promised Hell: A Prostitute of the Zwi Migdal* by Elsa Drucaroff

Elsa Drucaroff in *The Promised Hell: A Prostitute of the Zwi Migdal* (*El infierno prometido: Una prostituta de la Zwi Migdal*), answers the question of how her version of the past can help Argentine society as well as using symbols throughout the novel that both her Jewish and Christian Argentine audiences can understand. Drucaroff was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1957. She is a professor of Spanish, literature, and Latin and gives seminars at the College of Philosophy and Letters at the University of Buenos Aires. She has also recently completed a doctorate with the college of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. She has published works on philosophy, women, and the horrors of twentieth century Argentina, *El último caso de Rodolfo Walsh*, a crime novel in which the protagonist is one of Argentina's greatest crime novelists searching for the truth about his daughter's fate following an encounter between a small group of *Montoneros* and the military (Huergo), and *Conspiracy against Güemes*, a novel that explores the historical events and conspiracies against the Argentine hero that kept the Spanish from regaining control after the fight for independence (Muslip). Her interest in the past has progressed from the fight to keep independence to the late twentieth century. As more information has come to light about the secrets of espionage, torture, and murder that took place throughout the twentieth century, authors like Drucaroff have investigated the historical accounts in order to discover commonalities in the horrors of the past and help a once disinterested public – a disinterest born more of fear than apathy – explore what happened so that there can be a greater understanding of how Argentina got where it is today.

In *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*), Drucaroff gives a fictional account of a young Eastern European Jewish girl sold into the white slave trade in Argentina. The white slave trade, or *trata de blancas* in Spanish, was prominent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. European women, most often girls under age twenty, were taken from their homes, often under false pretenses such as promises of marriage and a better life, to parts of the world where prostitution was either legalized or tolerated by the national governments. The women taken were generally poor and frequently from the impoverished Jewish communities of Eastern Europe.

For Argentina's Jewish community that experienced the Dirty War very differently from their gentile compatriots because of the purposeful links to Nazism and the Holocaust, the history of anti-Semitism in Argentina throughout the twentieth century contributes to their particular memory of the traumas throughout that history (Kaminsky 2014, 106). Though that anti-Semitism is unacceptable today by the majority, understanding it can help to further link the Jewish and gentile communities to help them all better understand the more recent shared trauma of seeking to overcome their shared past.

Drucaroff uses both familiar stylistic techniques and symbols in *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*) to create unity between her two target audiences, Argentine Jews and Argentine gentiles. In her novel Drucaroff employs the poetic style known as chiasmus. Chiasmus is prominent in ancient Jewish poetry as well as being part of the classic Greek and Latin traditions and is familiar to both Jews and educated gentiles, Drucaroff's target audiences. Chiasmus is "the use of inverted parallelism of forms and, or content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component" (McCoy 18). Drucaroff begins her novel with the young Jewish woman, Dina, writing in her journal about three roses that her Aunt Jaique had given her. One of the roses was red and the other two were pink. To Dina, the two pink roses were more beautiful than the red one, however, the red rose opened before either of the pink roses and suddenly the ugliest of the three became the most beautiful. Dina's story continues until its climax when she escapes through the brothel window. This is the moment in which Dina's story begins to move away from the central strategic point. The epilogue finishes with an account that returns to the original journal entry of three roses. Two letters arrive at the old brothel address on Loria Street in Buenos Aires, one for Brania, Dina's former madam, and one for Rosa, Dina's fellow prostitute. Neither of the two women resides at the address. The reader learns that Brania had had to again take clients after Dina's escape to help Grosfeld, the *Cafiche* that owned the brother where the three women worked, earn the money that he was required to pay to the mutual association. After the association was taken down by the government, Brania had continued to work until she could pay for Grosfeld to flee to Montevideo. She followed him soon after, and so was not in Buenos

Aires to receive her letter. Rosa had also had to increase the number of clients she took each day to help make up for her missing companion. By the time her letter arrived, Rosa was a permanent resident in a syphilis asylum. Though it is not stated directly by Drucaroff, Rosa seems to have contracted the disease due to the increased clientele and the subsequent decrease in cleanliness and care given to her to protect her health. No one else was present at the old address to receive the letter and it was therefore returned to its sender in Los Angeles, California. The journey of Dina's letter becomes the reflection of her original journal entry about the three roses. In this latter case, Dina is the red rose, originally less beautiful than the two pink roses, Brania and Rosa, but the only one to open, or escape her fate of simply being a rose cut from its bush.

The symbols employed by Drucaroff come from the common religious texts of Christians and Jews, the Christian *Old Testament* and the Jewish *Tanakh*. By presenting the story in this way, Drucaroff employs a readily understood religious canon to better help her public understand the archived causes and the complexity of a single phenomenon without removing it from the whole. As this memory is in A. Assmann terms "not genetically transmitted," Drucaroff makes it understandable for the whole community, and thus to make the case of white slavery in early twentieth century as well as make her audience aware of horrors of the more recent past.

Though *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*) relates a very specific instance of terror in early twentieth century Argentina, the discussion of that instance, and the healing that understanding it brings, can help with more recent horrors, specifically Argentina's Dirty War. Understanding the phenomenon of terror within a group that is more or less isolated, at least with respect to cultural differences and the tendency to occupy a specific socio-cultural place, and at times an actual geographic location, or that is separated from the general society of its country of residence, can lead to a recognition of the phenomenon of the concentration camps, the torture, etc. that existed under the guise of protecting the country from subversives. The phenomenon of "he or she must have done something" that accompanied the disappearances and the tendency to endure and at times embrace that other "sewer" that was the torture of fellow citizens in the name of peace, can be better understood if a light is first cast on the "sewer"[4] of legalized prostitution to reveal its hidden secrets.

Drucaroff, in an interview with the periodical *página12,* stated that Argentines are in a nation whose cultural structure is one of "it must be for something," and its companion of "it was not for nothing." According to Drucaroff, these two statements are two sides of the same coin. These ideas come from the idea that there is a right to torture, kill, and rape, like the military did with guerillas and other victims during the Dirty War. The only way to justify the belief that the government and military had that right is to say that "it was not for nothing." For Drucaroff, this phenomenon of believing in a right to torture creates an idea that one must have "innocent" added to the word victim in order to join the cause for that victim. In relation to the white slavery of the early twentieth century recounted in *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*), Drucaroff says the same mindset exists. If we say those poor young women were tricked, then we can feel sorry for the poor souls that were enslaved, died, or were locked away in syphilis asylums. If we say, however, that the girls chose, or they had some margin of choice between the miserable existence that they lived in their hometowns, and they preferred to earn lots of money as prostitutes to that existence, then what happened to them is not so bad. The mindset creates the idea that if they knew, then they deserved their outcomes, horrible though they may be, and only if they were tricked into prostitution without any prior knowledge could they be called victims (Friera). This phenomenon is part of the cultural forgetfulness in Argentina with regards to the last century. According to Antonius C.G. M. Robben, because traumatic experiences can neither be completely recalled or forgotten, this forgetting of violence, both on an individual and societal level, is “inextricably linked to the remembrance of violence” (122). It is that cultural forgetfulness that Drucaroff seeks to confront in *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*).

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[4] St. Thomas Aquinas compared the city's brothels to a palaces sewer. They are an unpleasant but necessary part of life.

In order to confront the problem of cultural forgetfulness with regards to the last century, Drucaroff takes a portion of that forgotten history and tells it in a way that she perceives will speak to all of Argentina’s diverse cultures by means of something more understandable to all Argentines, religion. Because of the prominent role the Catholic Church played in the country for many years, though the state did not officially adopt the Catholic religion, the constitution obligated the state to support Catholicism, Catholic principles and faith are widely known and understood (Ghio 25). The importance of the religious comparison is related to the idea that Drucaroff addressed in her interview with Friera and is evident in her choice of symbolic representation and stylistic technique previously addressed. In biblical stories, the victim is not always so innocent, but that does not take away the fact that there still is a victim. Even those that sometimes choose something less desirable in order to reach an end only do so after they have been victimized by someone that controls the situation. These cases are results of decisions made because of the situations that victimized them in the first place and not a case of "it must be for something" nor of "it was not for nothing." The Jewish prostitutes that were enslaved in Argentina were victims of two cultures, the Varsovia/Zwi Migdal and the national Catholic culture of Argentina. This phenomenon is reflected in Drucaroff's novel as government officials that espouse their Catholic faith frequent the brothel and abuse the women therein. Most of the Jewish community of Argentina did not tolerate the occupations of pimps and prostitutes, therefore, it was the Catholic majority of Argentina and that Jewish faction of the Varsovia/Zwi Migdal that continued and permitted to continue the practice of enslaved prostitutes.

In Drucaroff's interview with Friera, she tells the history of the Zwi Migdal's origin so that the audience not already in the know can understand that it was not just a Jewish problem and not only that one group was to blame. As the main Jewish population was intolerant of the Jewish pimps that exploited Jewish prostitutes and even excluded them from worship in the synagogues and burial in Jewish cemeteries, it was, according to Drucaroff, Catholicism that tolerated prostitution. The Catholic supported government of Argentina, as well as many other culturally Catholic countries, used the teachings of early church fathers like St. Thomas Aquinas to justify legal prostitution. In the case of the Jewish enslaved prostitutes, the Catholic culture of Argentina looked the other way.

In order to reconcile the victimized culture with the cultures in control, first there needs to be some common understanding. Everyone has to recognize that the problem is not of some other group or that "it must be for something" or that others are mostly responsible. There has to be a point from which to begin so that all can relate to the victims and attempt to understand the why of the distant past in order to understand the whys of the more recent past a little better.

The Promised Hell (*El infierno prometido*) follows the story of Dina, an adolescent Polish Jewish woman. Dina is raped by a male classmate at the onset of the novel after he finds her alone in the woods writing in her diary and Dina tells him that she liked something that he had written for one of their classes. He violently pushes Dina to the ground and then he, Andrei, climbs on top of her violently trying to lift her skirt. Dina tries to understand how the encounter with her classmate could have changed so quickly while she tries to stop him (Drucaroff 24). This story of a daughter of Israel raped by a gentile corresponds to the biblical story of Dinah (Dina)[5], daughter of Jacob, who was also known as Israel, and her mother Leah. When Dinah went out to see the "daughters of the land," she was seen by Shechem (Sichem), the son of Hamor (Hemor) the Hivite who was a prince. Shechem took Dina and "lay with her and defiled her." Shechem fell in love with Dinah and spoke kind things to her and requested of Jacob that he be allowed to marry her. In the continuation of the story of the biblical Dinah, her older brothers find out about the rape of their sister and they kill all the men in Shechem's country while they recover from circumcisions, which Dinah's brothers had said would be required for Shechem to marry Dinah (Genesis 34) (Bereishit 34)[6]. Drucaroff's Dina on the other hand, gets neither love from her rapist or revenge for her rape. Drucaroff's Dina is seen as guilty by her entire village, among Jews and Poles. Her shame is increased even more by the treatment of her own family that now sees her as undesirable and unworthy of a good marriage, her duty as a Jewish woman. Dina's treatment is reminiscent of that attitude during the Dirty War of he or she must have done something and related to Drucaroff's statement that one must be truly "innocent" in order to actually be a victim (Friera). In Dina's society, where she was doubly discriminated against for being Jewish and a woman, her version of events counted for little, much like those labeled "subversives" by the military government.

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[5] As Drucaroff writes to a Jewish and Catholic audience, the differences in spelling of names between the Torah and Douay-Rheims (Catholic translation) of the bible will be given the first time each is used. As those from the Torah are more widely known in other English versions of the Bible, they will be used as the common spelling thereafter.

The next parallel and contrasting story is the story between the biblical Isaac and Rebekah (Rebecca) and that of Dina and Hersch Grosfeld. In the story of Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham, Isaac's father, does not want his son to marry a Canaanite (Chanaanite) woman and commands his servant to return to his native country to find a wife for Isaac. Upon arriving at his destination, the servant meets Rebekah and after seeing the sign that he had requested of Jehovah, he requests of Rebekah's family that she be permitted to go with him to marry Isaac in his master Abraham's promised land. After getting the permission of her brother, he being the oldest male in the house and therefore its master, Rebekah accompanies Abraham's servant to become Isaac's wife. The two prosper and live a happy life (Genesis 24) (Bereishit 24).

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[6] References are given for both the Christian Old Testament and the Jewish Torah to further show the link between the two religious cultures.

In Drucaroff's version, Grosfeld is seeking a "wife" in a city near Dina's village and asks a female friend for help. That friend is the cousin of the matchmaker in Dina's village. The matchmaker of Dina's village then visits her house to tell her family about Grosfeld and his offer. She tells the family that Grosfeld was in a hurry and didn't have the time to look in every village for a wife, however, he wanted to marry Jewish girl. In this version, Grosfeld plays the part of Abraham and Isaac and the matchmaker is the servant that helps search for a wife among Grosfeld's own people, because he cannot find one among the Argentine gentiles where he lives. Dina's mother parallels Rebekah's brother that puts conditions on the marriage between Dina and Grosfeld. Dina then is Rebekah who accepts the marriage and travels with her new husband to "Canaan," Buenos Aires. Dina's mother, knowing that she could no longer marry her daughter to a man of her village because of her dishonor, makes the arrangements with the man, Hersch Grosfeld, to marry Dina and take her to Buenos Aires to give her a better life. After all of the marriage arrangements are agreed upon by Grosfeld and Dina's family, and Grosfeld accepts Dina's mother's requirement for a local Rabbi to perform a ceremony before they leave, Grosfeld takes Dina away to her supposed promised land. Dina already suspects that her promised land is more of a promised hell, the place and the life that her village, her family, and she herself believes that she deserves for her dishonor.

Another parallel between Drucaroff's novel and important stories from the bible is Dina's captivity. One of her own, a Jew carries Dina away to a Gentile nation as a captive. This corresponds to the many biblical stories of the Israelites two kingdoms, the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, being carried away as captives to various gentile kingdoms like Assyria, Babylon, and ultimately being scattered by Rome after an unsuccessful rebellion. In the biblical stories, it is often failed or ill-advised alliances that lead to conquest and captivity. Dina, like the Jews, becomes a captive in Babylon, a fate which she has been told she deserves; much like the prophets told the people of Israel and Judah that they would be lead away for their wickedness. The major difference in this correlation is that Dina was a victim of her gentile neighbors and not complicit with them as were her ancient progenitors.

Along with the biblical stories of captivity, are stories of Israelites gaining favor in the royal courts of their captors, such as Daniel, Hananiah (Ananias), Mishael (Misael), and Azariah (Azarias)[7], and Queen Esther. Drucaroff's Dina also gains some favor with Brania, the Madame of the small brothel where Dina and one other girl are forced to work long hours with little possibility to advance and no chance of escape. In all of these cases the captives were able to gain some favor with the captors, the great difference between the two situations is that the Israelite captives were able to rise to high positions in the governments of their captors, while Dina could only become a slightly more trusted captor who was allowed to exchange her tokens for some cash and purchase a few more items of clothing, mostly lingerie as she would not need any street clothing for her job other than that required to go shopping for more lingerie.

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[7] Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are the three that were put into a furnace but did not burn and are often known by their Babylonian names of Shadrac (Sidrach), Meshac (Misach), and Abed-nego (Abdenago).

Drucaroff continues to evoke significant episodes from the bible when she recounts Dina's escape from the brothel. The plan of escape is explained in part by Vittorio, a young Argentine man who initially visited Dina while pining over his ex-fiancée. Vittorio tells Dina that she should just escape. She already knows how to open the window, and the street is right outside, so he will wait for her outside (Drucaroff 193). This escape plan and the subsequent escape from the brothel correspond to the biblical story of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho that helped Israelite spies escape prior to the Israelite conquest of the city. In the biblical story, Joshua (Josue), leader of the Israelites following the death of Moses, sends two spies to Jericho. The spies meet the harlot Rahab who hid them in her home from the king of Jericho. When night came, Rahab helped the spies escape through a window on the outside of the wall. Rahab only requested that the spies swear by Jehovah that they would not destroy the house of her father when they conquered the city (Josue (Joshua) 2-6) (Yehoshua 2-6)[8]. The biblical story in which a gentile harlot hides Israelite spies and helps them escape through a window is a mirror for the story of Dina's escape. In Drucaroff's version, a gentile man helps a Jewish prostitute escape from her own house prison through a window.

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[8] This is one instance where the Douay-Rheims translation of the English bible differs from other versions and the Torah conserves the original Hebrew names. As an English version of the Torah is used, the name in the text of this paper will remain in the more common English translation and the three versions are only given in this citation.

The anarchist organization that acts as spies in the Vittorio and Dina's different destinations along their escape route also corresponds to the Israelite spies of the biblical story. The anarchists inform Vittorio and Dina of the police movements and the activities of the Varsovia in the search for the two "fugitives." Just as the Israelite spies helped the harlot Rahab escape the city just when it was being destroyed because she had hidden them and helped them escape, these "spies" help the prostitute Dina escape from the city in which her world was destroyed. Vittorio's friend Samuel is another example of the parallel between the Israelite spies and Vittorio, Dina's savior. Samuel is a non-practicing Jew, and it is he that helps the pair more than anyone else on their journey. Samuel also gives the pair information about his anarchist contacts throughout the country and sets that network in motion to ensure a secure escape. The organization of spies fits well with the biblical story, but the idea of a Jewish anarchist was not solely Drucaroff's. Moya in her discussion of stereotypes addresses the participation of Jews in the anarchist movements of the early twentieth century in Buenos Aires. She talks of a Julio Herschenbaum who was a Russian-born furniture maker arrested in Buenos Aires in 1905 for participating in an anarchist demonstration. According to the records, Herschenbaum was the first Jewish anarchist to be deported for his activities because he had failed to "withdraw from subversive activities," which he had promised to do a year earlier (Moya 28). The idea of a Jewish anarchist, therefore, comes from historical accounts of the anarchists of the early twentieth century. There were also many Jews numbered among the subversives in the concentration camps of the Dirty War. This link between the story of Argentine white slavery, the anarchist uprising and subsequent government retaliation is an important link between this early terror of Drucaroff's novel and the later terror of the government's war against its own people in the latter part of the twentieth century. This link shows that Drucaroff's full intent is not just to give an account of this singular situation among the marginalized Jewish population of early twentieth century Argentina, but to link the phenomenon of white slavery to the latter historical terror from which the entire nation continues to recover.

After Dina's escape, the pair actively flees from those that wish to return her to her captivity, particularly Doctor Tolosa, a national judge. This wicked man in Dina's life whom she refers to as her "Angel of Justice" is much like the Pharaoh of the Exodus story. Though Tolosa did not consent to Dina's escape, and would never have done so due to his cruel affinity toward the young Jewish girl that he liked to physically and sexually abuse in their sessions far beyond what she generally endured from her profession, he does chase after her seeking to take her back into captivity. Vittorio in this case becomes somewhat like Moses who led the Israelites, represented again by Dina. There are multiple near misses between the fleeing pair and the judge that recall the Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea being temporarily shielded from Pharaoh's forces by a pillar of fire from heaven (Exodus 14) (Shemot 14). The decision to dispose of the judge's body at the end by sinking him into a corrosive pool also recalls the armies of Pharaoh being swallowed up in the Red Sea after the Israelite nation had safely crossed on dry ground.

Before the judge's final fate, however, he has a last encounter with Dina that evokes the biblical story of David and Goliath. Judge Tolosa is a Goliath. Not only is he much larger in physical size that Dina, but he is a political giant in Argentina. Dina is like the young David of the biblical story. She is much smaller physically than her opponent and has no standing in the nation. Dina, like David in the biblical tale, is a person of no consequence when facing this giant and what seems like imminent doom. Just as Goliath challenged the Israelite army to send out a champion to face him prior to his encounter with the young David, Tolosa threatened the Varsovia organization in his own anti-Semitic war to try to get his own Jewish prize, Dina. At the final confrontation between the young Jewish girl and the Argentine political giant, it seems, just as in the biblical story, that the giant will kill the young Jew without difficulty. David, in preparation for his encounter with Goliath, had gathered five smooth stones and placed them in his shepherd bag. The Philistine giant mocked the Israelite "champion." Goliath saw the young boy David as nothing and mocked and threatened him saying that he would feed his flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field. As Goliath approached David, the shepherd boy reached into his bag and pulled out one stone. Placing the stone in his sling, he flung it, embedding the stone in the giant's forehead. David approached the fallen giant, removed his sword from the sheath and cut off Goliath's head with his own sword (1 Samuel 17) (Shmuel I 17).

In the case of Dina and Tolosa, the Goliath confronts his David after having tracked her across the country. Vittorio had just left the small cabin where the fugitive couple was awaiting their opportunity to escape into the Argentine wilderness, and Dina thought that she should lock the door when Tolosa kicked the door open and burst into the room. Judge Tolosa brought his own brand of threats to frighten and intimidate Dina. This champion of the nation saw himself as the “hand of God” that had come to punish the young Jew whom he saw as deserving a divine punishment simply for being a Jew. Dina at first stood hypnotized by the giant’s gaze and he threw her to the floor with a single push telling her that he would kill her among other threats. He even told her that killing a Jewish whore wasn’t a crime, but that the law requires her to die. Dina cowered away and looked around her to try to find something with which to defend herself. Just as the biblical David found the small smooth stone in his shepherd’s bag, Dina grabbed a railroad bolt and threw it at her own Goliath. She hit the judge in the forehead, knocking him back. Dina then ran to Vittorio’s bag, found the pistol inside, and shot the judge to ensure her Goliath could no longer hurt her. David had used Goliath’s own sword to ensure the giant was dead. Dina used her lover’s pistol to kill her giant. In both cases the giant’s death gave the young Jew a new life. David’s new life was in the royal palace of King Saul as a court musician and eventually as the king of all Israel. Dina finally had opportunity to escape the judgments brought on by that afternoon in the woods when the acts of a classmate left her condemned by her family, friends, community, and herself.

The final chronological parallel in Drucaroff’s novel corresponds to the first story of the biblical account (Genesis 2-3) (Bereishit 2-3). The flight of Vittorio and Dina into the Argentine wilderness is like the story of Adam and Eve being expelled from the Garden of Eden that God had created especially for them. In Dina’s case, she and Vittorio decide to escape the “garden” in which they had found one another and begun their new life. They leave the “garden” to enter an unknown world where they will have to work hard to make a living and adapt to the more rigorous life. This new life does, however, offer greater possibilities for the pair than they could ever have had in the “garden.”

The most comprehensive parallel between *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*) and Judeo-Christian scripture is that of the exodus. The Israelite exodus from Egypt and subsequent years wandering in the wilderness before being allowed to enter into their Promised Land corresponds with Dina’s entire life. The Egyptians were eager to remove the Israelites from their land after the series of plagues. The Israelites were laden with the riches of the land leading up to their flight. Dina’s life has two separate exoduses. The first “exodus” is Dina’s escape from Poland after she is raped by her classmate. In a way, when Dina marries Grosfeld and begins her first journey, she escapes a captivity, that of the glances and judgments of her Poles and Jews of her own village that had blamed her for her rape, and for the Jewish population, she was seen as unworthy of a good marriage. In this episode, Grosfeld is like a Moses who comes to negotiate the release of Dina from her captivity. Like Moses on the mountain, Grosfeld also gives a set of rules by which the girls that he is taking to a new life must follow (Exodus) (Shemot).

When the Israelites first arrive at the land that Jehovah has promised them for an inheritance, Moses sends out twelve spies to discover the Israelites ability to conquer and occupy the land. Only two of the spies returned with a favorable report for the Israelites.

Hoshea (Osee)[9] and Caleb knew that with the help of their God, they could take the land. The other spies were frightened and reported that the Israelite could never take the land (Numbers 13) (Bamidbar 13). In Drucaroff's novel, Grosfeld tells the girls to watch for the groups that sought to prevent young women being brought into the country to enter the world of prostitution. Two of the girls, Dina and Rosa, are allowed to enter while the oldest of the three brought by Grosfeld, Sara, is discovered and turned away. Dina enters her promised hell, which can also be viewed as a period in a wilderness of her own leading up to her second exodus with the help of a new Moses, Vittorio. The Israelites time in the wilderness prior to being allowed to enter the Promised Land was due to the nation underestimating and disparaging Jehovah. Dina's second captivity in her own wilderness was not because she disparaged or underestimated her God, but because she underestimated and disparaged herself. Just as Jehovah had forbidden the Israelites of the first generation after the exodus to enter the Promised Land because they had not believed he could help them conquer the nations then occupying it, Dina did not allow herself to think of escape until Vittorio helped her destroy her own guilt. The wilderness, or second captivity, in which Dina lived from the time of her rape, that she believed to be a punishment from God because of her guilt, is finally alleviated when she realizes, with Vittorio's help, that she is not to blame to the wickedness of a Polish boy that raped her. Finally, she begins to think of her own promised land and not only the promised hell with its angel of justice that she had believed she deserved.

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[9] Hoshea or Osee is later called Joshua or Josue in the English translations and Yehoshua in the Hebrew Torah. He is later the leader that sends in spies to investigate Jericho.

Dina's second "exodus" is her escape from the brothel. A boy from the world that has held Dina captive enters her life and offers her an escape. That Argentine boy, Vittorio, becomes a kind of Moses for Dina. The young prostitute that had lived with the idea that her imprisonment was justified, and even a natural consequence of her actions, could now leave with her jewels and money that she had earned, at least a portion of it, just as the Israelites had carried away Egypt's treasures. Dina escapes with her Moses and has to endure a new wilderness, Patagonia, in order to reach a new promised land. The correlations abound in this episode. Like the Egyptians under Pharaoh's leadership pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea, Tolosa directs the national police force to search for Vittorio and Dina and he himself pursues them to a small Patagonian village. Moses parted the Red Sea so that the Israelites could cross on dry land and the Egyptians drown when they attempted to follow them through the Sea. For Dina and Vittorio, the Red Sea is the village of Huahuel Niyeu. The small village is the last stop on the railway and becomes the point in Dina's story where she must either make her final escape or be recaptured and returned to her life of captivity. After killing Judge Tolosa, the small group assisting in the fugitives' escape devises a plan to dispose of the judge's body that echoes the biblical destruction of the Egyptian army. The group submerged the body in a hidden pool filled with a white liquid that disintegrated the body naturally and just as there was not one left of the Egyptians, there would remain nothing of Tolosa.

Dina's journeys and their relation to the Israelite exodus is not unique to her case. Dina is only one example of the Jewish diaspora. The Jews have had to "escape" many times from the "promised lands" that have become more like promised hells for them.

Since Egypt, that was originally a place of refuge for Israel and his family hoping to escape a famine in the land, to Judea, that became a hell when the armies of Caesar came to destroy them, to Europe, where they were rejected, persecuted, marginalized, killed, and the attempt was even made to erase them from existence, the Jews have had to leave their lives and seek a new land where they could receive the life promised to them. After leaving Poland, Dina abandons the security of her family, but she would thereafter have greater opportunities to prosper. In Argentina, Dina had money, but at the cost of her freedom. When she left the security of money that could earn in the brothel, Dina had to enter a world with greater promise but without certainty. Like the Israelites that wandered from place to place in search of prosperity and freedom, Dina wandered from place to place in search of exactly the same things.

Drucaroff creates a syncretic narrative experience between two cultures by merging the forgotten and recuperated past of each into the same storyline. *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*) does not attempt to vilify one portion of Argentine society for something that has long been forgotten by the national culture. Drucaroff attempts to recreate history in a way in which all parts of society can feel that they are identified so that everyone can comprehend and rethink the past in the present. Drucaroff’s purpose, then, is to create a cultural memory for the entire population. For her the most important thing is not to recreate an exact historical account of all the guilty and all of their flaws, but bring Argentine society together in order to draw this one historical point of white slavery out of sociocultural forgetfulness, and give it meaning. By restoring this one historical point to its place in history, Drucaroff is also able to draw a comparison with more recent tragedies, not only for the Jewish population that took part directly in this instance, but also for the Christian population that had allowed it to continue for decades because it was able to justify the prostitution with religious teachings. The success of the novel does not lie in its recreation of the reality of the Jewish white slavery of the early twentieth century, but that it represents that history in a way that restores the event to the cultural memory. By drawing this comparison with the more recent trauma of the Dirty War, *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*) serves to both bring a previous horror out of history and help to better understand the trauma still felt by the more recent horrors. It becomes a symbol that, as J. Assmann explains, "may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another" (J. Assmann 1).

Dina is not the typical example of the Jewish women in the Argentine white slave trade. She is said to be less desirable than Rosa as she appeared more Jewish and less like the European ideal that Argentines sought to reflect, but her life parallels with the biblical Israelites that both Jews and Christians in Argentina can understand and into which they can all then insert themselves for an even greater comprehension. Only after understanding and speaking in an understandable way about this past in which young women were enslaved under the control of a power that controlled even their lives, can Argentines, Jews and Christians, understand their own more recent past in which a powerful government with control over the lives of its citizens exercised its power to disappear at least 30,000 of those citizens. Those citizens where imprisoned in concentration camps, tortured, killed, and even had their bodies buried in hidden mass graves or dumped like waste over the ocean to hide their deaths for years, all because they “deserved it” for being subversives. Just as Dina had her exodus from the idea of “it must be for something,” Argentine societal culture has begun to emerge from that idea into a promised land of liberty, justice, and peace with its own past.

These young women had few opportunities in their communities. They were not encouraged to continue their education far beyond the basic abilities to read and write, and were encouraged to marry young and remain at home while their husbands went to work. These young women were not given many opportunities in their own communities, as women were often seen as inferior to men or more in need of male protection. They were also not highly regarded in the community at large due to rampant anti-Semitism which bred a belief that all Jews were inferior and therefore the women were not worthy of even the most basic respect. For the young women in these communities, the promise of opportunity abroad was a strong draw to accept the offers from the men and women that came to their communities looking for girls. For the families of the young girls who could barely afford to feed their families, the payments received for marrying off their daughters without much question, helped to maintain them and meant they would have one fewer mouth to feed. Some of the women that were taken were aware of their fate, but others held out hope that their fate would be different and truly believed that they would have a loving husband and better life.

A number of the women were taken to Western Europe, others to Asia, but most were taken to South America, principally Argentina as it had the most favorable atmosphere for prostitution (Guy 1988). This fact in and of itself is not particularly important, but this time period was relegated for many years to the selective forgetting spoken of by Robben and is therefore linked to its selective remembering (Robben 122).

In Argentina, the very powerful organizations that controlled the brothels paid for the cooperation of the politically powerful. Government officials, judges, and police looked the other way and ignored evidence that these girls were not willing participants, but sex slaves. Not only did these officials not prosecute the brothels and organizations for many years, but they were often customers of the brothels, large and small, where the women were enslaved. The few attempts that were made to “help” the women were regarding the health of the prostitutes and were regularly harsher toward the women than the organizations that “employed” them or the men that paid for their services. These attempts, required prostitutes to be registered as such with the government and get regular health checks. Prostitutes often sought to avoid registration as it meant they would be closely monitored and punished for circumstances outside of their control that many of them, with little knowledge of the local language, barely understood. Groups did exist throughout Europe and in the areas where the white slave trade was known to exist that made an attempt to help the women. These groups would look for possible victims of the white slave trade in the large port cities and question everyone they deemed suspicious. They possessed little real power or influence, however, and could only take the girls away from their captors and send them back to their countries of origin. In their home countries, the girls would face even harsher conditions than they had before leaving. Having failed at marriage, for as far as anyone in their small villages wanted to believe the girls had left to be married, the women would be seen as unmarriable and face a lifetime as social outcasts. Their fate would likely be worse if anyone were to discover the true nature of their "marriage" once they returned as they would be seen as immoral and therefore a stain on both their families and communities. The sad truth and perhaps the greatest horror of the white slave trade is that once the girls were away from their homes, the best opportunities they had lay with their captors (Guy 1988).

When the community at large in Argentina refused to shut down the prostitution rings, the ethnic communities, principally the Jewish community of Buenos Aires, took what action they could to punish the guilty. Pimps, or *Cafiches,* and prostitutes were barred from attending synagogues and were not allowed burial in Jewish cemeteries. Instead of caving to the pressures of being shunned by their communities the *Cafiches* banded together to form mutual aid societies. These mutual aid societies were sanctioned by the government with the idea that they would provide aid to outlying groups that did not fit in with the main stream Argentine society at the time. In reality, however, some of these societies functioned more like organized crime and were allowed to continue their operations as long as the right people were paid to look the other way. The principle mutual aid society for the prostitutes and *Cafiches* in the Jewish community was originally called the Varsovia Jewish Mutual Aid Society. The Mutual Aid Societies of Argentina were set up to help marginalized groups. They were officially recognized by the government. The Varsovia was a Jewish group named for the place of origin of many of its members, Warsaw, Poland. The group changed its name to Zwi Migdal after the Polish envoy in Argentina filed an official complaint regarding the use of Warsaw as the name of a group whose practices were unacceptable to the main Jewish population. The

Varsovia (Zwi Migdal) collected fees from its members to fund synagogues and cemeteries for all of its members as well as to pay off government officials, judges, and police in order to get permission from the right people to continue their practices unhindered. The name of the organization was later changed to Zwi Migdal in honor of one of the founding members (Guy 1992).

Several critics have brought attention to the legalized prostitution in early twentieth century Argentina and particularly the white slave trade. While the projects of these authors is different, their goal is not only to bring to light the horrific conditions in which these women lived and worked, but also to help others recognize the complicit nature of the community at large. Donna Guy approaches the historical accounts of the white slave trade from the perspective of the plight of women in a society that saw them mostly as objects with little importance in society, at least the lower classes of women that worked in the sex trade. Wealthy women were more highly regarded though they were still often viewed as inferior to men and in need of moral, physical, and even emotional protection. Claire Solomon’s concern is more focused on the Jewish aspect of Argentina’s white slave trade. According to Solomon, anti-Semitism among Christian officials was a major factor in the lack of action for many years. Both of these authors, among others, have helped to bring the horrors of the white slave trade to a wider audience. Both women are concerned that not enough has been done to discuss the underlying societal causes of the white slave trade and each raises good points in their discussions of what has and has not yet been addressed. In this chapter, the main concern of the white slave trade is its relation to the pattern of terror of twentieth century

Argentina. Drucaroff's goal in *The Promised Hell* is not to create a new narrative of the white slave trade or even to address the problems of the old narrative; instead, she presents the horrific circumstances in order to create a pattern of terror that interconnects with more recent incidences, in particular Argentina's Dirty War. This link is somewhat easier for the Jewish community, because of the particular treatment of Jewish captives of the military, but Drucaroff attempts to link the Jewish plight during the white slave trade, particularly complicit nature of government officials and the lack of freedom of the women.

Drucaroff, perhaps in part because she is Argentine and because she herself wishes to understand the distant past in order to give context to the more recent past, creates a historical novel that deals with the past in an understandable way that allows it to transcend the basic story of a Jewish prostitute. That is to say it becomes a representation of the terrors of twentieth century Argentina, including the most recent horror of the Argentine Dirty War. Nearly all Argentines are descended from European immigrants with hardly any racial mixing. Argentines do, however, have great pride in being Argentine. Drucaroff does not attempt to confront the idea of a national Argentine identity directly, as do many other historic novels, but instead she attempts to reconcile the Argentina of the past with the modern nation in an understandable way for all Argentines. For Drucaroff, the most comprehensible way to make the terrors of Argentine history understandable to all Argentines, Jew and Gentile, is through shared religious culture. Even the least religious of Argentines is aware of the Biblical stories that are a part of the strong Catholic cultural history of Argentina. In order to reconcile the past with the present, Drucaroff must identify the past within a context that remains understandable in the present. The Argentine past, in the case of *The Promised Hell* the history of white slavery, has to be presented in this way in order to reconcile it with the present. A present that is a product of nearly a century of dictatorships, deaths, and disappearances, followed by a great forgetting and ignorance of that past due to the official stories and programs meant to control the cultural and social memory of the Argentine people throughout much of the twentieth century. It is that same social and cultural memory with which Argentines must now reconcile in order to understand the present. The new awakening and remembering of the past of which Drucaroff is a part, is meant to not only remember the horrors of the past, but to truly make the phrase *Nunca más* (Never again) a reality. In Argentina, the phrase *Nunca más* is used to refer to the desire to never again allow the horrors of the last military dictatorship that disappeared, detained, tortured, and murdered approximately 30,000 Argentine citizens as part of its *Proceso de reorganización nacional* (Process of National Reorganization) in which the military juntas sought to eradicate all leftist opposition.

Drucaroff's ability to novelize this portion of national past about a marginalized population in such a way that it can unite two groups that are often at such odds is only one of the great things she does in *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*). The other great accomplishment of the novel is the restoration of a long forgotten cultural memory. This second accomplishment is just as important as the first, if not more so, because it is part of a larger movement to restore the terrors of the past to cultural memory. In restoring the past to cultural memory, Drucaroff and those other authors can help to heal the wounds of the past that were long left exposed because of a desire, both officially through government programs and culturally, to forget the horrors of that past. Even Drucaroff's title, *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*), can relate to the period of the Dirty War. Dina believed that she deserved her imprisonment because of her supposed guilt in her own rape. Argentines believed that the Dirty War's victims were somehow guilty enough to deserve imprisonment, torture, and death simply on the slight chance that some of them might have actually been members of the terrorist groups that opposed the government (Friera). Drucaroff's choice to make Dina's saviors a group of anarchists is poignant in that it contrasts well the prominent cultural beliefs of Dirty War Argentina. Drucaroff's Anarchists are helpful and diligent in assisting the fugitives escape a wicked system that was supported by a complicit government that preferred to allow young women to be enslaved rather than upset the status quo of the time. The sociocultural attitude during the Dirty War was that anyone that opposed the government must be at least sympathetic to some terrorist group and therefore deserved whatever punishment the government decided. In a way this attitude caused the entire Argentine population to be as complicit with the horrors as Tolosa and the police force that pursued Vittorio and Dina were with the Varsovia.

By paralleling her novel with biblical accounts and contrasting her account with the more modern horror of the Dirty war, Drucaroff is able to bring two distinct and coexistent cultures to a greater understanding of one another and allows for a new dialog and understanding of the horrors of the Dirty War. As Drucaroff addressed in her interview with Friera, Argentines believed that the horrors of the Dirty War were justifiable because its victims somehow deserved to be taken, tortured and killed. The idea that a victim of torture must also be labeled as innocent in order for the torture to be unjustified helped fuel the years of willful ignorance about those horrors. The phrases “algo habrá hecho” (he or she must have done something),”no fue por nada” (it was not for nothing), and “por algo será” (it must be for something) perpetuated the continuation of the cultural ignorance in Argentina. This ignorance was not one of lack of knowledge of the horrors of the past, but rather an ignorance of not wanting to remember that past.

The desire to ignore the events of the past out of a desire to heal the nation, created an extended period of cultural forgetfulness that cannot simply be erased. For Drucaroff, one important step in the recovery of that forgotten cultural memory is a uniting of the Argentine people. The lack of unity among the various cultures that have made up Argentina’s population is a major factor that has led to the ideas of “he or she must have done something” and its equally divisive companion statements. In order to recover the forgotten memories of those past horrors, Argentines have to begin to think of themselves as one people with a common culture and history. Drucaroff’s push to unite the population by addressing the religious commonalities in two major immigration populations of Argentina, Jews and Christians, combined with the representation of shared guilt among those that controlled the prostitution rings and the Jewish white slave trade of the early twentieth century with those that were either clients or simply looked the other way while young Jewish girls were abused and deprived of freedom, help provide a deeper comprehension of the equally shared responsibility for the horrors of the more recent past.

Recovering the truth about the horrors of the past helps to restore cultural memory and bring together the varied cultural groups within the country into a single culture. It restores a sense of community in a place where suspicion of one’s neighbor and where many were willing to denounce even their closest friends to avoid suspicion of themselves by a government determined to weed out the subversive elements that it believed present in the population. Though the government officials admitted that there existed a possibility of innocents being taken, there continued to be a strong denial that it ever happened (Kaiser 2005, 26). The population became so ingrained in the official denial that even years after the end of the Dirty War the belief of the two evils, the government and the terrorist organizations that they supposedly sought to eradicate by taking control of a government believed incapable of properly addressing the problem, still persisted. There existed a supposed guilt in society toward everyone that disappeared. As Drucaroff said, one must have “innocent” added to the word victim in order to join the cause for that victim. The idea that a victim is only truly a victim when he or she is completely innocent in every way together with the notion that none of the disappeared was completely innocent held by the majority of the population, helped to continue the cultural forgetfulness years after the horrors had officially ended and democracy had returned.

The desire to ignore personal guilt had long lasting effects on cultural memory that have only just begun to be understood and mended. The laws of amnesty passed by the government and the purposeful repression of painful memories forced the traumatic events to be forgotten, but there was also unintentional forgetting as that past was neglected and lost. It has since been in a sense rediscovered as younger generations seek to reconcile with the trauma of the past instead of choosing to ignore it. Drucaroff's contribution is one of presenting the past in order to remind her audience of the real horrors that happened and the chance that it could happen again. Leopoldo Brizuela in *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*) presents how the past continues to affect the present as well as the struggle that comes with restoring previously repressed memory.

Individual and Cultural Memory in *On a Same Night* by Leopoldo Brizuela

Elsa Drucaroff's *The Promised Hell* (*El infierno prometido*) uses religious stories, shared belief systems, and an understanding of that shared culture to build the case that the horrors of the past are also shared by all, whether any single individual or group is directly involved in them or not. This approach is meant to bring people together to see one another as equals and to show that while individuals or groups experienced horrors in different ways, all are victims whether we would call them all "innocent" or not. Leopldo Brizuela chooses to use a different approach to the past in *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*). Instead of relying on religious symbolism and shared beliefs, Brizuela relies on memory itself to help his reader remember his or her own involvement in the horrors of the past, no matter how passive.

Brizuela, through the memories of his protagonist, Leonardo Diego Bazán, shows that all were in certain aspects both victims of the past horrors and complicit in them. By following his protagonist's process of recovering memory, Brizuela leads the reader to remember where he was when he heard of a neighbor being taken or when he first thought back on his own fear that the horrors of the past could return. The individual memories of Leonardo Bazán, guide the reader to view the world in the same way that the protagonist does and thus explore his own return to remembering the past. In this way, Brizuela uses the memory of his individual protagonist to represent the collective Argentine memory and show the tie between more recent happenings and the long forgotten events of the past. Brizuela presents the individual memory of his protagonist, and the process through which he remembers his own suppressed trauma, thus showing his readers a view of the cultural remembering occurring in Argentina. By doing this, Brizuela ties together Erll's two levels of memory, that of the cognitive process and the socio-cultural contexts both which influence memory, and relates them to his audience (Erll 2008, 3-5).

Brizuela, a native of La Plata, Buenos Aires province, Argentina, studied literature in the University of La Plata. He is a novelist, poet, translator, and has worked as the resident writer for the Banff Center for the Arts in Canada as well as the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. His works include *Tejiendo agua*, which he wrote at age 17 and for which he later won the Premio Fortabat in 1985, *Inglaterra. 'Una fábula'*, which won the Premio Clarín de Novela in 1999 and the Premio Municipal de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, and *'Lisboa. Un melodrama* in 2010, as well as many other stories, poems, and novellas. He has also translated works by many authors. Brizuela is renowned as an accomplished singer and pianist as well (el Economista). *On a Same Night*, the novel herein discussed, was published in 2012 and won the Premio Alfaguara that year.

While *On a Same* Night is not Brizuela's first or even his most rewarded novel, it is his contribution to the restoration in Argentine cultural memory and an example of the process of remembering that has occurred in recent years to restore the horrors of the past to that cultural memory. Assmann's definition of cultural memory states that the past is based more on external forces than on an individual's own internal storage (5-7). At the start of *On a Same Night* Leonardo has long since forgotten the events of his past, much like the Argentine citizenry as a whole has willfully ignored and forgotten the horrors of its shared past. Leonardo only remembers and is even returned to his own past because of things that occur in his present. He remembers because those elements of memory mentioned by J. Assmann: actions (external occurrences), things (external objects), and words (those said by others in response to the actions and things surrounding an individual); begin to take on greater meaning than what is already assigned to them. These actions, things, and words link in Leonardo's mind to similar but unrelated actions, things, and words in his past and thereby become symbols of those parts of that past Leonardo remembers and leads him to want to remember more. Castañeda Hernández's analysis of *On a Same Night* states that literature serves both as a way of understanding events and giving significance to those events in order to relive the traumatic experience (J. Assmann 126). *On a Same Night*, therefore, takes on more meaning that the actions it relates, the thing that it is, and the words it contains. It becomes for its reader the literary reliving of the past actions of its main character, and a symbol of those actions in the present and of memory of the past. Through this reliving of memory that character begins to understand those events in his past.

By focusing on the process of remembering in his main character, Brizuela thereby promotes understanding of events more universally experienced and suppressed, particularly the disappearances during the Dirty War. These more universal events encompass those in Leonardo's life, that is to say, the events in Leonardo's past are a small portion of the events of the Dirty War and his process of remembering in the present is similar to the collective process of cultural remembering in Argentina. Brizuela's novel, therefore, as Castañeda Hernández points out, is both a result of its cultural societal surroundings, as a work of fiction that seeks to bring understanding to the new cultural phenomenon of a search for the past in the present, and becomes a representation and symbol for that culture and society to understand its own process of remembering the past. The collective Argentine memory of the past helped to create the novel and the novel has the ability to affect and change that collective memory to create a new understanding of that collective and cultural memory within the same society that helped to create it. In the same way the novel that Leonardo seeks to write within *On a Same Night* is both caused by events within his own life and begins to affect his individual memory as he researches to bring it to fruition. Leonardo's process to remember within the novel is a representation of the collective process to remember the shared past in Argentina.

The structure of *On a Same Night* is a map of Leonardo's personal process of remembering. It represents the collective process of collective cultural remembering within Argentina. Its division into four sections: *Novela* (Novel), *Memoria* (Memory), *Historia* (Story) and *Sueño* (Dream), shows Leonardo's own progression of understanding his past, ending in a complete obsession with that past. His understanding of that past eventually overcomes and invades his dreams as he tries to cope with the new knowledge he has gained. Castañeda Hernández in her analysis of Brizuela's novel, "Trauma y ficción: *Una misma noche* de Leopoldo Brizuela" says that "memory is the capacity to obtain, collect, preserve, and recover information." She goes on to point out; however, that we cannot say that memory is a true reflection of events as they actually occurred. We only remember fragments of what actually occurred that the mind combines in order to create the illusion of one continual series of events (118). This idea of memory also helps to relate the Brizuela novel to the greater collective and cultural memory of Argentine society. Within the novel, Leonardo combines the fragments of his own gradually recovered memories into a continual series of events that he had forgotten years before. In a similar way, novels and other forms of media have led the collective Argentine society to explore its own memories, reconsider its stories of the past, and become collectively obsessed with that past (118).

On a Same Night is part of the new fictional movement in Argentina that began during the presidency of Néstor Kirchner in 2003. After President Kirchner annulled the so-called amnesty laws, many of the children of the 30,000 disappeared, the name still used to describe those that were taken, tortured, and killed by the military dictatorship from 1976-83, began to write a new form of fiction. This new fiction has autobiographical elements, both of the authors themselves and of Argentine society at large. These stories were based on the experiences of their parents and others in the concentration and detention camps, as well as the experiences of the Argentine citizenry's continual attempt to recover from the horrors of the Dirty War in the years since (Pifano 94). *On a Same Night* continues this style of autobiographical fiction. Though Brizuela's novel is not based on real events or experiences in the author's own life or those of any one particular person, his protagonist, Leonardo Bazán, is based on Brizuela himself, and the process of remembering within Argentina as a whole.

Through Leonardo, Brizuela is able to present his own experience of learning to cope with his nation's past. Leonardo's experiences also provide a mirror of Argentine society that manages the memories of those past horrors that have returned to the forefront of memory after years of attempted forgetting; a forgetting that occurred on an individual level in an attempt to move on from the fear and suspicion that had engulfed the nation during the Dirty War and on a national level as the government endeavored to implement laws and procedure to aid in recovery from that past. These laws and procedures resulted in a forced ignorance of just how horrific that past had been by officially pardoning everyone involved in those horrors and further led to a collective forgetting that the events had occurred.

One of Brizuela's greatest contributions to the discussion of the process of remembering is that he does not narrate past horrors directly. Instead of narrating real experiences of the horrors in the clandestine detention camps of Argentina during the Dirty War or even telling a fictional version of those experiences, Brizuela chooses to tell the story from the perspective of memory. Ramos describes Brizuela's novel as different because it does not focus on seeking to recount the past or list the events as they happened (Ramos 189). That has been done many times over. In Brizuela's novel, memory, and the way that the fragments of memory are recovered and recombined into an imperfect whole, is much more impactful within the novel itself than the actual events ever were and therefore has more impact on the readers. The presentation of Leonardo's recombination of his memories in an attempt to understand his own past reflects Argentine society's own process of remembering and learning to understand the events of the past by recombining individual memories and collectively shared memories into an imperfect whole. Leonardo's own process that begins with the desire to recover the memory of a single night in his past, a process triggered by events, things, and words in his present, propels his search for information of the resultant events in his past; events that he had long forgotten. Although those events seem to have had little impact on his life when they occurred, the slow process of remembering builds beyond a mere desire into an obsession that he must know what happened and why he allowed them to happen at the time and allowed himself to forget them since. Leonardo's selective forgetting of this past event is part of A. Assmann's active and passive forgetting (Erll 2008, 97-98). It is not clear whether Leonardo actively or passively forgot that night, but his recovery of the events is a combination of active and passive remembering.

Like his creator, Leonardo Bazán is an accomplished author. He lives in La Plata in his childhood home to which he returned in order to care for his aging mother after the death of his mother's female roommate whom she found dead one morning; his father had died years before. Leonardo is already a renowned novelist when he begins his latest project to tell his own version of the Dirty War and thereby join the growing movement of young novelists seeking to recover that past. *On a Same Night* traces Leonardo's efforts to discover the story that he seeks to write in his own novel. The opening statement of the novel, "Si me hubieran llamado a declarar" (had they called me to testify), is repeated multiple times throughout the novel though its meaning changes as Leonardo gradually recovers more memory of his past and his own and his family's role in it (Brizuela 13). The first use of the phrase "Had they called me to testify," alerts the reader that something will happen that is worthy of remembering so that the reader can testify of that incident. As the story continues, and Leonardo is reminded of another episode from his own past, the phrase becomes a declaration that not only refers to Leonardo’s own experiences but relates to the feelings of the Argentine people as a whole as they remember and seek to understand their shared past. The phrase, when internalized through the reader’s own process of remembering, causes the reader to think on the *Nunca más* (Never again) trials. *Nunca más* is the popular name of the original civil trials of the former military government. They began with the decree of President Alfonsín, the first elected president after the military returned control of the government to democratically elected officials, that the military would be tried for their crimes during their *Proceso*. The trials ended with the sentence on December 9, 1985 (Causa 13). The pseudonym comes from the final statement of fiscal Julio Strassera in pronouncing the sentence.

The phrase and Leonardo’s process throughout the novel thus causes the reader to remember specific cases of disappearances that he either knew of or had heard about at the time, and to consider what he thought of those cases at the time, what he has thought of them since, and what he might have said concerning them if he had been called upon to testify.

One night, when returning home late, Leonardo notices some men standing in the street as if they are waiting for someone. Leonardo recalls a rumor that he had heard from a friend about a home robbery where the thieves had awaited someone outside his apartment late one night. They then followed him in as he entered his home. Leonardo scares himself so thoroughly with this story that he quickly opens his door and rushes in locking the door behind him before he can be followed. It is not until the next morning, when Leonardo is confronted by his neighbors from across the street about whether he had seen anything the previous night that he learns that the men he had seen and feared might follow him into his home had trailed the son of his next door neighbors, the Chagas family, to their house, followed him inside, and robbed the family. When Marcela Chagas comes to speak with him, her words trigger a long forgotten memory of a similar night from Leonardo's childhood.

> -Nos entraron ayer, a la madrugada.
> Así dice, "nos entraron", sin aclarar de quién habla, y como si nunca hubiéramos dejado de hablar sobre ese tema.
>
> -They broke in last night, early in the morning.
> That's how she said it, "They broke in," without clarifying who they were and as if we had never stopped talking about it. (18).

The words "nos entraron" combined with the revelation from the neighbors across the street that they saw a van with *Policía Científica* written on the side lead Leonardo to recall the similar experience on a similar night from his own past in 1976 when other officials came into a house with a father, a mother, and a son. "*Un hijo. Un padre. Una madre*, recordé" (I remembered a son. A father. A mother.) That house was his own childhood home, that son, Leonardo himself, and that father and mother, his parents (19). This is a case of passive remembering. The "objects" in this case are the events of a night in 1976. Leonardo "discover[s] by accident" the memories he had long since lost (Erll 208, 98).

An event in Leonardo's present that triggers a long forgotten memory from his past is reminiscent of the same effect that recent events have had in Argentina itself. The

Argentine economy that had been weak and on the brink of collapse for many years finally crashed in December 2001 and President De La Rúa left office amidst scandal and an uprising of distrust of government and doubt of its ability to remedy the political, social, and economic issues facing the nation. The subsequent nationwide instability revealed in widespread looting, protests, homelessness, unemployment, and fatal encounters with police triggered memories of almost thirty years before when the armed forces took control of the national government due to instability and began their plan to reorganize the nation and weed out any factions it deemed a danger to that plan. Though a resurgence of memory about that past had begun in the mid '90's with the coming of age of the children of the disappeared and the formation of H.I.J.O.S. (*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*) (Sons and Daughters for the identity and Justice against Forgetfulness and Silence) by those children, the recovery of the national memory truly began to surge with the tragic period of unrest and economic instability of the early 2000's (Druliolle 265). Like Leonardo, the nation began again to want to remember its past, and like Leonardo's own process of remembering in *On a Same Night*, the process to recover that national memory has been long and sometimes painful as Argentines have learned and remembered hard to recognize, and even harder to accept truths.

Leonardo begins to reflect on the night in 1976 when he was thirteen years old, and men entered his parents' home. Leonardo had previously only remembered that military officials had entered his home, separated his parents to ask them questions, and that he had sat at the piano and played Bach during the ordeal. The chapter settings reflect Leonardo’s process to remember that night and the events that it set in motion in the subsequent months and years. The chapters jump between 2010, the current year in which Leonardo is seeking to remember the night from his past in question so that he can take that experience and use it to write a novel about the experiences of the Dirty War, and 1976-77, beginning at the night in question and continuing the story through its aftermath. That night and its aftermath affected Leonardo in ways that he had long since forgotten but that he now seeks to remember while becoming more and more fixated on precisely what he had forgotten. Leonardo states at the end of the first chapter “Porque nunca he sentido aquella noche más cercana; más cercano su horror” (Because I have never felt that night closer; never its horror closer) (26). This statement shows just how much Leonardo was affected by the recent events in his neighborhood and foreshadows the next chapter that is set more than thirty years before, in 1976, during the Dirty War. Similarly, Argentines went through a process of remembering their shared past when events caused them to reflect on the parallels between the economic and political trials of the more recent past and those that preceded the takeover of the Isabelita Perón led government deemed inept by military officials at the time. This process of remembering, though not the same for every individual, was triggered by the same events in the then present and is similar enough to be called a collective process. Leonardo’s own process, a result of events in his own life, represents that collective process. In Kaminsky’s terms, Leonardo’s postmemory of those events based on the years of forgetting, returned to his active memory. This event can in turn serve as prosthetic memory for the reader to better understand the complex reactions to the Dirty War, both at the time and in the years since its end.

In 1976, a different family had lived at the chalet next door to Leonardo and his family. The Jewish family Kuperman consisted of Felisa, a widowed mother, and her two daughters, Diana, the elder of the two who practiced law out of her home and worked for the very powerful Graiver family, and Ruth, the younger daughter that admired her older sister. The Kupermans come under suspicion because of Diana's work with the Graiver family. She works as a secretary for Jaime Goldenberg, a lawyer who is the right hand of the leader of the Graiver family, David. The Graiver family owns and operates the largest paper mill in Buenos Aires. Their company supplies the paper for the largest national newspapers. Though the military government says that they are under suspicion for giving money to subversive groups, the story later reveals, when Leonardo reads the testimonies of the Graiver family in the *Nunca más* trials, that the government pushed the family to sell the company to a group of national newspapers in order to better control every aspect of the press. That same Argentine press, completely taken and suppressed during the *Proceso*, became an outspoken proponent of the repeal of the amnesty laws and subsequent trials of those that it had obeyed and supported when in power. While the press, therefore, has contributed to the recovery of cultural memory in Argentina, it has not been as influential or as important as forms of popular media discussed in this dissertation.

Leonardo's first venture back into his version of that night in 1976 is a perfect example of Castañeda Hernández's statement on memory. Leonardo remembers only bits and pieces of the past and only begins to have his memory open up as he links those bits and pieces together into some form of unbroken whole and becomes more and more obsessed with the precise proceedings of that night and the subsequent events that it set in motion. Leonardo further questions how he had forgotten so many details about that night and the events of the following months.

Leonardo's process of recovering and piecing together scenes and occurrences in his own past into a more complete memory represents Castañeda Hernández's analysis of memory as abstract individual memory that materializes in literature and other art forms and thus converts into collective memory and cultural memory (118). Triggered by the break in at the Chagas' home, Leonardo's memories become a part of his identity. Those memories change as he slowly recalls more and more about the night years before when a similar break-in occurred in his neighbors' home and he is able to piece together those scattered bits of memory into a more complete whole. According to Castañeda Hernández, Brizuela searches the Argentine collective memory in order to expose the reminiscence of the irremediable past and at the same time establish the immediate present (119). Brizuela uses Leonardo's memory of his own past in order to show just how unreliable the collective memory of the horrors of the past is and to link it to the present in which the nation continues to recuperate. As Argentines continually and collectively reclaim and link together more and more fragments from their shared past that past becomes more real and relevant whether or not the memories formed from the fragments are completely accurate to the events of the past.

Brizuela's best description of Argentines' relationship with their past is Leonardo's statement when he first goes back into his memory to 1976. When speaking of the reaction throughout the neighborhood the day following the night that now sears in his memory, Leonardo says that the parents in the neighborhood, all of whom were born between 1915 and 1925, believed that they had created the national life they now enjoyed and that they all want to believe that the *Proceso*, the military government's national reorganization and attempt to completely eradicate all opposition, cannot happen without them (Brizuela 39). This statement also gives a basis for the later dilemma within the Argentine collective cultural memory where each individual that was alive during the Dirty War and those born between the end of the *Proceso* and the period where the horrors of the *Proceso* returned to the forefront of that collective cultural memory, must evaluate his own role in those events and his own reasons for forgetting the horrors of the past.

Just as each person believed he had a part in the *Proceso*, whether or not anyone actually knew or was willing to admit to himself what was really occurring, following the period of national recollection of the horrors of the past to the present memory, each Argentine had to assess his part in that recovery of collective cultural memory that he, along with his fellow countrymen, had attempted to forget in the twenty years between the return to democracy and the election of President Kirchner and his revocation of the amnesty laws. This collective forgetting of the *Proceso* began out of prudence in an effort to move forward as individuals and as a nation. That prudent forgetting then became habit as continued efforts to forget the nationwide fears those events led to a collective forgetting and suppression of all things related to the horrific events of the *Proceso* themselves (Medina Bustos 43).

When Leonardo goes to Buenos Aires to meet with his friend Miki, he asks the question that many Argentines found themselves asking as the horrors of the *Proceso* began to resurface. “Pero yo, ¿por qué me callé?” (But me, why did I say nothing?) (36). For Leonardo, this question first related to the break-in at the Chagas as he struggles to answer why he never reported it. But as he contemplates the reason that he has become so interested in the night of the break-in, Leonardo remembers more details about the similar night from his childhood that he had long since forgotten. Just as he has remained quiet about the night the Chagas’ home was invaded, he remembers his silence years before. As he begins to remember more of what he had either passively forgotten or actively suppressed over the years about the night in 1976, Leonardo also begins to question why he had decided to remain quiet about those events at the time and for so many years thereafter. The critic, Jens Andermann notes that the same question arises for Argentina as a whole with respect to the rising generation and has resulted in a similar “memory boom” to the one referred to by Andermann regarding the Holocaust (4).

When a second break-in occurs at the Chagas’ home only a few days after the first, the Chagas family decides to leave the neighborhood for good. This decision to leave the neighborhood leads Leonardo to again think about a time thirty years before when the Kupermans abandoned the neighborhood after repeated harassment and insecurity. The Chagas moved in to the house shortly after the Kupermans left. Leonardo begins to remember how friendly his family, especially he and his mother, had been with the Kupermans and how his father mistrusted them because of their Jewish ancestry. Leonardo's reflections on his father's attitude toward the Kupermans and what that attitude and the actions it may have led him to could have meant to the Kupermans leaving the neighborhood recall the stories that he had heard as a child about his father's time spent as a student in the *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* (ESMA) (Navy Petty-Officers' School of Mechanics). His father, a poor young man from the province[1], was awarded the right to study at the ESMA along with many other young men at the time. This opportunity, considered an honor for these young men who would otherwise not have had many opportunities for education in a nation where very few ever rose above their station, meant a good education and training in useful skills that would lead to later sustainable employment and the prospect of rising above their stations as merely provincial residents unable to contribute to the nation as a whole and therefore considered expendable. Though his father studied at the ESMA in the 1930's and the night in question occurred in the 1970's, that education in the ESMA included learning complete respect and obedience to military authority. This idea of respect and obedience becomes more important to Leonardo as he remembers more details about the events from that night when men with apparent military ties entered his home. When he remembers this important detail, that the men that entered his home had military ties, Leonardo also remembers that his old neighbor across the street, Cavezzoni, the grandfather of the neighbors that had identified the van on the street as a police vehicle the night men robbed the Chagas' home, had been an instructor at the ESMA. Leonardo's father likely reported any suspicious neighborhood actions to Cavezzoni and viewed him as his superior officer in all things related to the *Proceso*.

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[1] Because Buenos Aires is the name of the federal capital as well as the province in which it is located, people from the capital refer to the area outside its city borders as the province. Those from the province are often considered less educated, poorer, and less important than those from the federal capital itself by whom they are often referred to as *cabecitas negras* (little black heads) as a derogatory term for their less fortunate circumstances.

Leonardo recalls that his father welcomed the men in on that night in 1976, where had previously believed it to be more of an invasion like what had happened at the Chagas' home. As he begins to remember more details, he comes to the conclusion that his father's military training, where he had learned to obey every order given to him by his superiors, had played a far more important role in that night than he had previously realized. Leonardo's father had welcomed the men because they were like him. They had all been trained by the military, and though he had not been a combat soldier, he knew when he was simply to obey.

The idea of due obedience is not new in Argentina. President Carlos Menem, the second president elected following the return to democracy in Argentina, enacted a law called *Ley de obediencia debida* (the Law of Due Obedience). While this law was intended to help the nation recover by pardoning those that had only participated in the horrors of the Dirty War because they had received direct orders from their military superiors to do so, it inadvertently led to everyone from the highest generals to the lowest privates in the military to claim that they were all carrying out orders, no matter how horrific their deeds had been and how involved they had been in the disappearance, torture, and murder of fellow citizens. Because for most of the twentieth century Argentine law required mandatory military service for all young men, the initial attempts to find everyone who took part in that horrific past implicated a large part of the citizenry. The later attempt to excuse the lowest in rank that had to obey according to military regulations, however, led to everyone involved in any way excusing himself from any fault. Menem’s government later did extend a pardon to all military personnel throughout the *Proceso*. President Kirchner and the Argentine senate later repealed all of these amnesty laws.

As the research for his novel transforms into a true desire to remember exactly what occurred thirty years before, Leonardo stops writing and begins more intently researching the fates of his former neighbors. As he remembers further details about that night, Leonardo recalls that his father accompanied the men into the back yard. Leonardo at first wonders why his father would have gone with them, but as he remembers more details, he recalls having gone to the back yard himself only to see a makeshift staircase that his father had placed against the wall that they shared with the Kupermans. Later, Leonardo even remembers that he climbed the makeshift staircase and saw his father kicking the Kupermans’ back door open so that the group could enter the house. At the time he remembers these details, Leonardo believes that his father participated because of his previous training and the attitude of obedience and respect that it instilled with him. Leonardo believes that the men, one of them likely an officer, told his father to assist them and his father, being a good soldier, complied.

When Leonardo's recollections lead him to seek out and call Diana Kuperman in order to ask her about her time imprisoned in the concentration camps, the conversation between the two presents the difficult balance between remembering and forgetting. Leonardo, who is new to the search for the past, seeks to fill in the holes in his own memory of the past. He had successfully suppressed that past for years, and as a well-adjusted adult has begun his search. Diana Kuperman, however, like many other victims of trauma, did not have the same luxury of easily forgetting. Mari Ruti in her contribution to *The Ethics of Remembering and the Consequences of Forgetting* addresses the difficult battle between remembering and forgetting in an account of a French woman that was brutally raped. The woman, Susan Brison, sought justice against her attacker, and though he was sentenced, she was not able to "put [her]self together again" (O'Laughlin 30). Diana's reluctance to speak of the past contrasts Leonardo's belief that her story can help him put himself back together. Diana, like Susan Brison, had already realized that she could never truly put herself together again without doing so "for the first time" (30). Diana's incomplete recovery from a car accident due to being moved between detention camps and finally kept in a "cero por cero" (zero by zero) is her constant reminder of the past that she wishes to forget presents the feelings expressed by the Argentine government during the 1980's and 90's. The continued belief was that the best way to move on from the past was to forget and forgive, as is the case with many post traumatic events that are suppressed and then changed over time by selective remembering among various groups (Robben 122). Leonardo, in this situation, represents the younger generation that began to have their own public voice with the creation of H.I.J.O.S. in

1995. Diana represents the old mentality and Leonardo, the new. Leonardo's search leads him to request the records of Diana's testimony in the *Nunca más* trials. Though Diana's story of being taken from the hospital and never fully recovering from her injuries as a result is fictional and not tied to a specific person, many have testified of this kind of psychological and physical torture during the *Proceso* (Causa 13, 120).

The ESMA has become an example of A. Assmann's active memory. It preserves the memory of the past in the present, a memory that was for a time lost to the past. After Leonardo learns that Diana was likely held in the ESMA, the very place where his father had studied years before and where there is now a museum to the memory of the disappeared, he decides that he must find a way to visit the museum in order to better understand both Diana Kuperman and his own father. The location of the former Navy Petty-Officers' School of Mechanics (ESMA) was officially donated to the families of the disappeared by President Néstor Kirchner on March 24, 2004 when the entire complex was dedicated to the memory of the disappeared. The donation included the old mechanic school and the area that had been used as a clandestine detention and concentration camp located in the old Casino de oficiales (officers' club), where military officers had gone to relax when not on duty. Leonardo's search to understand his father as well as his and his father's role in Diana's detainment and Diana's reluctance to again recall her own experiences represent the difficult balance in Argentina since the return to democracy in 1983. Since that time, Argentine governments and its citizenry have balanced remembering and forgetting the horrors of the "Dirty War." Just as Leonardo believes his visit to the ESMA will help him to understand his father and therefore the events of the night that has returned to the forefront of his own memory, the dedication of the ESMA, as the first official act toward remembering, has kept the memory of the past in the Argentine public sphere.

Within the novel, the ESMA serves as a memory site and as a catalyst to help Leonardo recover more of his own memories of the past. Leonardo asks his friend Miki, with whom he had previously discussed the break-in that triggered his initial interest in his father and Diana Kuperman's past and whose mother is a director at the museum as a member of one of the groups to whom the site was donated, if he can arrange a special visit for him. Leonardo only tells Miki that he wants to visit the museum he can see where his father attended school. When Miki agrees to take Leonardo to the museum, Leonardo tries to hide his enthusiasm at finally seeing the school. Because Miki's father was one of those that was disappeared, tortured, and likely killed by the dictatorship, Leonardo fears that showing too much enthusiasm will offend his friend and cause him to revoke the invitation. Internally, however, Leonardo's excitement grows at the idea that he will finally be able to understand his father. A university class that Miki teaches has a special visit to the museum already scheduled where they will be allowed to go on a more extensive tour than the average tourist and he invites Leonardo to join them. Leonardo truly desires to understand his father's compliance with and participation in the break-in at the Kupermans' thirty years before. Instead of gaining the understanding he had expected, Leonardo gains a greater insight into his father's mindset as a whole. When the company's guide tells them that students that attended the ESMA while the clandestine camp was in operation were often invited to keep watch over the prisoners at night, Leonardo must rethink his perception of his father as a forced but unwilling participant in that night (236). The use of the word invited leads Leonardo to realize that while his father had learned to diligently obey orders during his time in the ESMA, no one ordered him to participate that night, but they had instead simply invited him to participate in the break-in at his own neighbor’s home and his father had chosen to participate. Leonardo’s father, instead of being someone that had simply followed orders out of respect and a supposed due obedience, had been a willing participant in the event that had begun to haunt his now adult son. This realization leads to a mental break for Leonardo. Leonardo’s rediscovered his personal memories that he had lost within his own memory *archive* so quickly that he could hardly cope.

His own recovery of memory and the resultant break down, one that recalls the fear and horror that occurred in Argentina during the economic crash of 2001 that led to Argentina’s own recovery of forgotten memory, also led his mother to quickly remember and fear what might be. When he returns home in the early hours of the next morning, after spending many hours at the museum and lost in his own thought, Leonardo climbs the stairs to his apartment on the second floor of his childhood home, his mother lives on the first floor, absent-mindedly taking off his clothes on the stairs along the way. Leonardo is so lost in his own thoughts he doesn’t consider how his discarded clothes might appear to anyone else. Often when disappearing someone from his home, the military would ransack the home leaving clothes, furniture, and other things deemed not valuable strewn about and taking anything of value with them. Leonardo’s clothes left on the stairs could appear as though he had been taken and the house ransacked in a similar way.

Much like present events had led individuals in Argentina to begin to link those events to his individual similar memories of experiences in the past and combine those memories into an ever greater whole on that individual level, and then begin to link his memories to the collective cultural memory in Argentina, Leonardo realizes that he is not alone in his process of remembering. A strange dream fills Leonardo's sleep. In his dream, he follows his father over the wall in the backyard using the makeshift staircase that his father had built. He then follows his father and the other men into the Kupermans' house. When Leonardo follows his father up the stairs in the Kupermans' house, he realizes that instead of being in neighbors' home, he is now in the ESMA surrounded by the young petty officers training to be military mechanics. One of the young men realizes that Leonardo is a stranger at the school and Leonardo watches in horror as a much younger version of his own father is invited to participate in a ritual where Leonardo will be sacrificed to complete his young father's acceptance into the ranks of the Navy Petty-Officer Mechanics. At the moment when Leonardo is about to be ritually sacrificed, his mother's terrified shouts from the stairs break his dream and he suddenly awakens confused about what he has just experienced and worried for his mother's safety. His mother, having seen his clothes along the stairs and a light still on upstairs, thinks the worst, that someone has abducted her son in the night. In her panic, she begins to climb the stairs calling to her son in the hopes that she is wrong. Because of her age, she only makes it partway up, but her panic reveals to her son that she too had begun to remember the horrors of the same night thirty years before that has haunted his thoughts since the break in at the Chagas' home. His mother has also begun to remember and make a more complete whole from the memories she too had forgotten. With this one realization, Leonardo comprehends that his memories, while still somewhat distorted and incomplete, are only a part of the collective memory that he shares with his mother. Castañeda Hernández states that we only remember fragments of what actually occurred and the mind then combines these fragments in order to create the illusion of one continual series of events. Leonardo now understands the incomplete nature of his memory and that of his mother.

The almost active forgetting that occurred years before, turns into an active search to recover the memory in order to bring it from his own personal "archive," into a more readily accessible "canon" to use A Assmann's terms (Erll 2008, 98). The final chapter of the book is simply a black rectangle. This rectangle is a symbol for the reader of many aspects of both actual historical events associated with the horrors of the past and the story of Leonardo Bazán. According to Castañeda Hernández the blackness suggests the horror and the tragedy of the memories of a night that will mark the protagonist forever (120). In addition to this meaning, the rectangle also appears like a redacted page in an official document, forever hiding its secrets from the public that is trying to find as many pieces of its past as possible in order to better understand and form a more complete and accurate version of the past in its collective memory. It therefore shows the reader that though the recollection memory can be triggered by more recent events, such as the break in at the Chagas' for Leonardo or the economic crisis of 2001 for the Argentine citizenry, the truth about the past can never truly be known through memory because it will always be fragmented, imperfect, and distorted. Castañeda Hernández's statement that we only remember fragments of what actually occurred in the past and that the mind combines these fragments in an attempt to create a continual series of events, only to create its illusion instead, means that Leonardo nor the reader will never truly know what happened, why it happened, or how he allowed it to happen. Castañeda Hernández further states that that memory, imperfect and distorted as it is, can be affected by literature and art (118). Though Brizuela avoids truly making a statement about his own beliefs of that past, his own autobiographical protagonist does discover that he too is guilty. Although Leonardo saw his father assist in the break in of his neighbors' home, he never said a word about it to anyone, not even his own parents. Over time, he even forgot that he had seen anything happen that night or in the months following, even forgetting that his neighbor, Diana Kuperman had returned home after that night. In this way, Brizuela presents the idea of shared guilt without actually saying that all Argentines are guilty together of the atrocities of the past. Brizuela, through his protagonist, appears to cast blame at himself instead of seeking someone else to blame. He seems to say that he too is guilty, along with everyone else, not because he actively participated in any of the disappearances, tortures, or murders, but because he too remained quiet during the horrors and continued that silence for years after even to the point of an almost active forgetting and ignorance that the horrors ever occurred. The events and search that they induced led Leonardo to search his own memorial "archive" to return those events to his "canon."

Brizuela's novel attempts to create a link to the past in the present that will resonate with his reader and with his public, the Argentine citizenry, as a whole. While Brizuela does not cast specific blame on anyone, his hinting at a shared guilt by everyone, including those that were too young to actively participate in the *Proceso*, continues the idea that all are victims of the past as well as guilty parties. This idea also continues that of Drucaroff that one does not have to be completely "innocent" to be a victim. He also shows, through Leonardo's realization that he shares his attempt to link his present to events in his past with his mother, that the memory he is attempting to recover will lead to a greater understanding of his own role in that past. As he links together more of the fragmented details of his past and create with them a continual series of events, he must also realize that his memory will only become more complete when it is in turn combined with his mother's fragmented memories. By internalizing Leonardo's realization, Brizuela's reader can also realize that his own memories of the horrific past are incomplete and that he must combine his fragments of memory with those of others in order to build and create a more complete series of events and thereby a more complete collective cultural memory. Brizuela plays with the relationship between Leonardo's and his mother's memory, the postmemory that Leonardo has since developed, and the reader's prosthetic memory in order to present a more complete version of the past. He calls on his readers "to take on a memory that was never fully developed, or that was cut off from consciousness by official silence during the time of state terror and unfounded fears of increased instability afterwards" in order to recover that part of the memory that has been lost (Kaminsky 2014, 112).

Though Brizuela's novel discusses a different time period than Drucaroff's, the late twentieth century versus the early twentieth century, and they approach their narrations of the past in very different ways, Drucaroff uses a more direct fictional approach, using a character that was directly involved in the horrors she relates. Brizuela, in turn, explores the past through the memory of his protagonist in the present. Each narrates different historical events: the white slave trade of young Jewish women in Argentine brothels versus a story of a single night during the *Proceso*. Nonetheless, each author attempts to fill the gaps that exist between the fragments of memory of the Argentine citizenry. In doing so, both authors use postmemory to restore a deleted, forgotten, and ignored history. Both authors contribute to the collective cultural memory by presenting those parts of the past that are shared, at least and necessarily in part, by all Argentines. Drucaroff's use of the common religious culture and Brizuela's use of the shared memory serve to remind their readers that Argentina is not divided by the past but united by it. And though on the surface Drucaroff's story seems to be about a much more distant past in Argentine history, her novel reminds readers that the only way to ensure that the validity of the statement "Never again!" is to not repeat the hollow expressions "it must be for something," "he or she must have done something," or "it was not for nothing." Instead, the novel urges Argentines to come together through a more complete personal and social memory.

Chapter 4
Twenty-First Century Films and Collective Memory

Film, like literature, has played an important role in the cultivation of cultural memory in Argentina, especially since the 1990's and the beginning of what is called New Argentine Cinema (*Nuevo cine argentino*). A new generation of filmmakers pushed this new cinema that distinguished itself from previous generations of Argentine film by dialoguing with society and politics within themes such as memory, poverty and exclusion. In these discussions, filmmakers presented local or regional issues and related them to a global society (Amado 18-19). This cinematic movement coincided with the generation that had been children during the last military dictatorship reaching adulthood and taking part in the discussion. In spite of the lack of discourse about this time period during a majority of their lifetimes, or perhaps because of it, many in the New Argentine Cinema movement chose to tell the stories of the dictatorship and the disappeared. The role of film in the cultivation of Argentine cultural memory that has increased since the 1990's with the advent of the New Argentine Cinema movement and films such as *Ojos de fuego* (Eyes of Fire, 1996), *Historias breves* (Short Stories, 1995), and *Nueve reinas* (Nine Queens, 2000) that seemed to predict the coming economic and political crisis while most continued to deny that there was any issue (Andermann xi). Other films in the movement, such as *Garage Olimpo* (1999) and *Los rubios* (2003) approached the remaining questions of the horrors of the past. The filmmakers that make up this movement, led principally by those that were children during the last dictatorship, have strived to make Argentine culture and history a major aspect of their films by engaging the current social issues in Argentina as well as the difficult relationship with the past (Andermann 156).

Argentina's economic woes of 2001-2002, and their resultant unrest and political ramifications[2] revived interest in the horrors of the past and served to propel the New Argentine Cinema into the mainstream. The focus on films about the actions of the last military dictatorship of the twentieth century and its lasting effects on Argentine culture and society grew as the Argentine public sought ways of remembering that terrible past, a desire boosted by President Néstor Kirchner's rescinding of the Full Stop Law, and other laws that had provided amnesty for the military officials responsible for the disappearance, torture, and murder of approximately 30,000 citizens during that last military dictatorship. In order to understand the difficulties in the present, Argentines began to look more intently at their past.

The two main ways in which literature, film, and other media have approached the memory of horror are to present firsthand versions of those past horrors and to look at the ways in which the characters within the film (and the Argentine public of which they are an example) deal with their own memories of the now distant past in the present. This idea is based on Verena Berger's review of films that depict events of the Dirty War. She states that the two types of film are those based on documented events but that are works of fiction, and those that are based on autobiographical accounts (Berger 25). However, Berger does not discuss the films that deal with the past in the present. Because, as this dissertation makes clear, both types, those that deal with the past in the past and those that deal with the past in the present comprise cultural memory. According to Eduardo de la Cruz in his article "Memoria(s), cine y sociedad: miradas del cine argentino," cinema helps to rediscover or reveal diverse points of view about the past (de la Cruz 709). The points of view discussed in this dissertation, that of the past in the past and the past as it effects the present, both help to revive Argentine cultural memory and recover from the traumas of that past.

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[2] President Fernando de la Rúa was forced out of office during political protests and riots in December 2001. In the following weeks, several political figures were temporarily to the presidency until Eduardo Duhalde completed de la Rúa's term. Duhalde called for a special election in the beginning of 2003 here Néstor Kirchner was elected by default when former president Carlos Ménem withdrew from the race.

This chapter is divided into two sections, each one discussing a film that presents one of the main ways filmmakers have approached memory. The two main ways that filmmakers within this movement have portrayed the dictatorship and its Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso de reorganización nacional*) are showing the horrors of the past in that past, that is they portray some version of the fear, torture, murder, and psychological effects set during the *Proceso*; and showing the results that the *Proceso* has had on the Argentine people in the years since the return to democracy in 1983, that is they present characters and situations in the present where people continue to deal with the effects of their experiences during the *Proceso*. The first film discussed, *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) (2006), is an example of the first type of approach. It seeks to present a firsthand version of the horrors during the *Proceso*. In *Chronicle of an*

Escape (*Crónica de una fuga*), Adrián Caetano portrays the real events within an Argentine detention center during the Dirty War according to the point of view of the film's principle protagonist, and strives to give an accurate and entertaining depiction of the horrors that occurred therein. The second film discussed, *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) (2004) written and directed by Alejandro Agresti and produced by Patagonik Film Group, approaches the memory of horror from a view of its results in the present. While Agresti's characters are fictional, they represent various groups that experienced those past horrors in different ways. In this way, Agresti presents his Argentine public with a reduced version of itself in order to present hope in the future. Agresti also seems to suggest that it is not necessary to fully discuss the horrors experienced by the victims of the *Proceso* in order to recover in the present.

Because Argentina is a nation of immigrants, many of whom have maintained cultural and political ties to their countries of origin, Argentine culture has always been somewhat of a mixture. Buenos Aires itself has different sectors where the various immigrant groups settled. The New Argentine Cinema movement has focused on being Argentine in the new century by presenting scenes from their shared history and the struggles they face together in the present. One key element in many of the films included in the New Argentine Cinema movement is the portrayal of the Argentine dictatorship. By showing the Argentine public the horrors perpetuated on the Argentine citizenship by that dictatorship, and the impact it continues to have on Argentine society and culture and has had since the return to democracy in 1983, these filmmakers have begun to create a sense of what it means to be Argentine based on those shared experiences.

Kaiser states that our knowledge of a certain topic and our own experiences with respect to that topic influence the way in which we read or interpret a text (Kaiser 2010, 112). Just as individual experiences can influence in this way, so too can the shared experiences of forgetting and remembering. The New Argentine Cinema movement tends to present to the local (Argentine) audience that can in turn apply greater significance than a more global audience could (112).

Adrián Caetano's *Chronicle of an Escape* as a Social Documentary of the Events of the Argentine Dirty War

Chronicle of an Escape (*Crónica de una fuga*) is based on the experiences of Claudio Tamburrini when he was held captive in the Seré Mansion in the pueblo of Morón in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Tamburrini presents an autobiographical account of his capture, time in captivity, and subsequent escape in the book *Pase libre – la fuga de la Mansión Seré*. The screenplay is based on the account in *Pase libre*, however, the director, Adrián Caetano, also traveled to meet Tamburrini in Stockholm, Sweden to learn more about the events presented by Tamburrini in his autobiographical novel. While in Stockholm, Caetano met both Tamburrini and Guillermo Fernández, another of the captives and the one that orchestrated the escape from the Seré Mansion. The two men helped Caetano keep the film as close as possible to the actual events of the captivity and escape (Levy). Caetano's presentation of the film attempts to give his audience the illusion of actual events. This presentation provides suspense that captures the prevalent fears during the *Proceso* throughout Argentina, not only among those within the detainment centers, but the citizenship at large.

Caetano is an experienced director, writer, and producer with many feature films, documentaries, TV movies, and short films to his name, including a film about Néstor Kirchner that was left incomplete in 2012 after disputes between the producers and Caetano. The film finally debuted on television in 2013, though Caetano was not as pleased with the result (Ayerdi). Caetano describes himself as not “ultrakirchnerista,” but there does seem to be admiration for the former president and especially the kirchnerist movement to bring to light the horrors of the past in an attempt to help Argentina recover from the cultural and emotional effects that they have had on Argentine society.

The subject matter of *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) is important to the discussion of cultural memory and its recovery in Argentina. The film debuted in 2006, 30 years after the military coup that ousted then President Isabel Martínez de Perón and took control of the government ushering in the period of terror known as the Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso de reorganización nacional*) or the Dirty War.[3] That same year, 2006, marked a period of reawakening for the Argentine citizenry that had tried for years, both publicly with laws passed to sweep that horrible past under the rug, and privately as the people ignored the horrors of that past, to forget.[4]

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[3] In this chapter, both Dirty War and *Proceso* will be used to reference this period.

Caetano's task was therefore not only to follow Claudio Tamburrini's account and to create an artistic artefact, a film, that educates and entertains. 2006 was a year filled with marches of remembrance as well as the first time that a sitting president of the nation, Néstor Kirchner, received a representative of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo. Because of this meeting, as well as Kirchner's repeal of the Full Stop Law (*Ley de punto final*) that ended all prosecution of military personnel that had a role in the actions during the *Proceso* and the Law of Due Obedience (*Ley de obediencia debida*) that excused all former military personnel from action done as a result of commands of superior officers, the Madres felt that they were finally being heard and they ceased their weekly marches of resistance to the government on January 26, 2006 – the Madres continue to march for other social causes every week. The events that began 30 years before were once again fresh in the minds of Caetano's viewing public. He had the task of both doing justice to the story already told in the novel by Tamburrini, and retelling it in a way that the public could understand and embrace. Although this is not the first Argentine film to address these themes, Caetano approaches them in a new way. He delicately incorporates elements of suspense and horror into an already hot topic. Caetano makes his audience feel what the captives feel with camera angles that put the audience in the position of another prisoner. He gets his audience's adrenaline pumping through his suspenseful retelling of the events while continuing to entertain (Cristiá).

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[4] Though there had been minor movements since 1995 with the founding of H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio), a group formed by children of the disappeared in order to recover some of that lost and hidden past, and even more growth in interest after the economic crisis of December 2001, the true beginning of this awakening was in 2003 when Nestor Kirchner was elected principally on his platform of bringing the former military dictators to justice and removing the laws of amnesty passed in the 1980's.

This film seeks to accurately portray events as they happened to the main protagonist, Claudio Tamburrini, however, like all forms of art, this portrayal is limited in its scope and influenced by the social and cultural demands at its time of production. Robert Cardullo, in his essay on cinema as 'social documentary,' revisited the film theory of André Bazin. In this essay Cardullo notes that cinema in part functions so that we can believe "that what we see on-screen is true" (36). He goes on to note, however, that this does not mean that cinema reproduces truth, but that it creates believable illusions (36). That is to say that the realism portrayed in film will never be a complete portrayal of the events as they occurred, even when the film is based on real events as recorded by those involved. In continuing his reevaluation of Bazin's theories, Cardullo presents the idea of film, and other photographic forms, as "a hallucination that is also a fact" (36). He explains this idea of Bazin by stating that while the content of a dream or a hallucination may be false, it is a fact that it was dreamed or hallucinated. Cardullo, therefore, says that those dreams, and films, point to an 'unconscious truth' within us. Because films are a product of the culture and society in which they are created, every film can be viewed as a social documentary in that it documents the desires of the collective unconsciousness that created it (36).

In the case of *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*), and indeed the New Argentine Cinema movement as a whole, that unconscious truth is not related to a dream or hallucination, but to memory, both collective and individual. *Chronicle of an Escape* follows the memories of an individual as they relate to the increased interest in the topic of the "disappeared" in Argentine society as whole. In his attempt to create a film that is as close as possible to the actual events as experienced by Tamburrini and his co-prisoners, Caetano not only presents the memories of those few men, but contributes to the ongoing social commentary surrounding the reemergence of awareness in those past horrors. It indeed "documents the desires of the [Argentine] collective unconsciousness" by giving the Argentine people what they subconsciously want to see. Caetano, in presenting an already well-known story of capture and torture at the hands of oppressive government agents, must keep the interest of his audience. To do this he employs foreshadowing to help his audience know and understand what is ahead while creating suspense in a way that causes that same audience to still wonder if the outcome they expect is even possible. This use of suspense to both create an expectation within the film and recall to memory the rumors of detention camps and torture fulfills the role of cinema according to André Bazin. According to Bazin, film is meant to fill a social and cultural void for its audience (Bazin 2008, 40). According to Robert Cardullo, this void is a desire that is "not something repressed, waiting to be expressed, but a sort of 'hole'" that does not exist on its own but "comes into being in the very process of its being formed"

(Cardullo 36). Caetano's suspense fills that "hole" created by the years of selective forgetting causing his audience to recall its own feelings of fear and confusion during the actual events of the *Proceso*.

The film begins with someone pointing to a house from a car window and then being quickly shoved back onto the floor and punched repeatedly. The next scene presents a soccer match where Claudio Tamburrini is a goalie. Claudio directs his team as the opposing team prepares for a penalty shot. When Claudio misses the goal, thus losing the game for his team, he is shown in the fetal position in front of the goal. Claudio seems disappointed and dejected at having lost the game. The scene then changes as the audience becomes spectators of the terror caused by the police and military at the time. As Claudio showers in a still stunned silence and walks home, the audience sees Claudio's mother lying on the floor of her home, in a similar position that her son had been after missing the final save of the match. The police that have come for her son mock her and force her to remain in this position as they question her about her son's supposed subversive activities (Cristiá). By presenting the striking image of Claudio's mother shortly after showing the protagonist himself in the fetal position and his accuser being forced down into the same position on the floor of one of the infamous Ford Falcons of the secret police of the period, Caetano creates a foreshadowing for the audience. These contrasting and yet complimentary scenes serve to inform the audience of Claudio's pending imprisonment at the hands of the same police that have his mother cowering on the floor. In the same way that Claudio is unable to adequately protect the goal from his opponents on the soccer field; his mother is unable to adequately protect her son from being taken or "chupado." [5]

These opening scenes present the many facets of the horrors of the *Proceso*. Claudio, denounced by a mere acquaintance that has been tortured to the point of becoming a "quebrado,"[6] represents those that were innocent. Caetano also presents the other victims of the horrors. Claudio's mother, also innocent of any wrongdoing, suffers both for her son and for asking questions while the men search for evidence of Claudio's supposed guilt. Caetano even presents Claudio's accuser as a victim of his situation. The man has negotiated for his own survival. These same scenes, reflected again during Claudio's captivity in the Seré Mansion, thus suspending the ideas of heroism and villany (Kaiser 2010, 119).

On day 119 of Claudio's captivity – the day count is indicated throughout the film – one of the guards enters the room and tells the men that they will be doing chores around the house. Claudio and a prisoner known as el Gallego are told to dress to go downstairs. The two men are then shown in the kitchen with two guards. A World Cup soccer match plays on a television in the background. The guards invite Gallego to sit down to eat while Claudio washes the dishes. Claudio, remembering Guillermo's words from the previous night that he will escape, sees an opportunity when one of the guards leaves his gun on the table near Gallego. The two prisoners exchange glances in a type of conversation where Claudio tries to argue for attacking the guards and Gallego argues that it is not a good idea. The tension rises between the two until Argentina scores a goal and all four men begin to cheer AR-GEN-TINA! The soccer match in and of itself is not the important part of this later scene, just as it was not the most important part of the opening scenes. Claudio's disinterest in the match, however, does show just how much his interests have changed since the day he was first taken captive. Though Claudio's, and indeed everyone in the room's, team has scored, Claudio's reactions still seem to give a sense that he has missed an opportunity, just as he had in the opening scenes when he missed that final goal. When the two return to the room they share with the two other long-time captives, Claudio confronts Gallego to ask why he refused to help escape in the moment. Gallego argues that it never would have worked and the four men return to a tense quiet that mimics Claudio's own quiet tension in the locker room following his final soccer game. The presentation of these soccer games serves as well to immerse the audience in the scenes. In the opening soccer game, we, as audience members, can immediately relate to and even cheer for Claudio. Though we don't yet know his story or what role he might play in the coming story, he is the goalie and at the center of the action. We can feel his disappointment at missing the goal, and become interested in his story because of that already established relationship between the soccer star, Claudio, and the fans, the film audience.

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[5] "Chupar" was used at the time to describe what the military and secret police did when finding someone accused of subversive activities. The accused were then taken to "chupaderos," clandestine torture centers where the "chupados" were kept and "interrogated" by electrocution and other forms of torture to get more information about their activities and the names of friends that were also guilty of subversive behavior.

[6] A "quebrado" was someone that broke under torture. They spoke, gave names, and often began to collaborate with their torturers to avoid further abuse (Kaiser, 119).

Later, when Claudio has an opportunity to attempt escape, Caetano presents his audience with a duel focus. The audience desires to continue to follow Claudio and know what he will do, but there to know the outcome of the soccer game. Though the outcome is already a part of history and the outcome will not change, it does draw in the audience to be just as interested in that part of the action as the silent argument between Claudio and Gallego. When the tension breaks with the cheering of AR-GEN-TINA, that immediate change also serves to provide a moment of respite for the audience before returning to the room-cell and the growing suspense of the coming attempted escape. This moment in the film also reminds the audience of the actual events that form the base of the action. In this way, it acts as a further social documentary and brings the actions presented from the “collective unconsciousness” into a conscious remembering (Cardullo 36).

Prior to his capture, Claudio had been a philosophy student and the goalie for his soccer team. When he returns home after the soccer match where he missed the final goal and thereby lost the game for his team, he has no idea of what awaits him. The audience, however, because of the way Caetano has presented and linked the previous scenes and because of the pre-existing knowledge of the past and the stories of the disappearances, can deduce Claudio’s impending capture and subsequent imprisonment somewhere in one of the detainment camps of the period. The “police” in his home were those tasked with finding and capturing or “chupando” subversives.

Caetano's presentation of Tamburrini's story moves quickly to fill the memory void of the audience with regards to what happened in the Argentine detention centers. The filmic dream, or nightmare in this case, presents the Argentine audience with the efficient nature of the "police" tasked with disappearing subversives and the helplessness of their victims. Following his capture, Claudio's captors take him to a detention center in the Seré Mansion. There, the ineffective nature of the "chupaderos" keeps him captive. An acquaintance, seen in the opening scene pointing out Claudio's house from a car window, had given Claudio's name in an attempt to prolong his own life and in the hope of allowing his friends that actually did belong to groups accused of subversion escape capture. The acquaintance, known only as Gitano[7] throughout the film, claims that Claudio possesses antigovernment materials and a mimeograph machine used previously to make antigovernment materials for subversive groups. Claudio, who knows nothing of any subversive activities and had never even knowingly communicated with anyone supposed guilty of subversion, is truly innocent. Because he could not actually tell his captors any useful information, however, Claudio remains in the detention center. His captors could have disposed of Claudio quickly, but fortunately for him, they keep him alive even after his own "interrogations"[8] and the later capture of the man that had actually supplied the mimeograph reveal that Claudio knows nothing and had never been involved in any subversive activities. They do not, however, grant his freedom. Very few of those proven to have been wrongfully accused of subversion ever regained their freedom.

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[7] The guards at the Seré Mansion only call their prisoners by nicknames based either on origins, some physical characteristic, or, as in Claudio's case, by something that sets him apart from the others. Claudio's nickname, Almagro, is from the soccer team for whom he is a goalie.

Most of the truly innocent within the detention centers suffered the same fate as their fellow captives, disappearance, torture, and ultimately, death. Generally, only those that could either prove their innocence or give names, places, and information about subversive groups and their plans regained their freedom. Because Claudio truly knew nothing prior to his capture, had no contact with anyone that could prove his innocence, and his accuser and fellow prisoner continued to insist that he was indeed that one with the mimeograph, his captors continued to believe Claudio too important to leave. It is important to note here the daily count that begins on Claudio's first day at the mansion. The count begins on Claudio's first day when he is first "interrogated." It goes slowly at first as the audience sees the count of each new day for the first few days of Claudio's captivity. Later, as the days surely begin to blend for Claudio as well, the count increases and only days where there are important changes, such as moving to a new part of the mansion, appear. Towards the end of the film, the count again slows, showing each day, thus foreshadowing to the audience that something very important will happen. This also serves to increase the suspense of the film.

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[8] Throughout the terrible period of the "Guerra Sucia," the military made sure to never mention torture or murder. When a prisoner was taken into "interrogation," it was simply understood that he would be tortured for information by being attached to exposed wires and electrocuted, having their heads submerged in water until they nearly drowned, or being burned with cigarettes, among other torture tactics in an attempt to force them to divulge information about their co-subversives and not simply asked questions

The suspense of the film and its attempt to accurately portray the horrors of the "chuapadero" contribute to its success and its ability to revive the fears of its audience. It also helps to reveal the unconscious memories of its audience by not showing any explicit scenes of torture and death. By presenting this past to his audience in this way, Caetano constructs the foundation spoken of by Eduardo de la Cruz from which to "say the unsayable" (de la Cruz 710). According to Caetano many of the films that have been produced about the horrors of the Dirty War in Argentina, especially throughout the 1980's, explicitly show torture and more torture, which resulted in films where the torturers became more important than their victims (Kaiser 2010, 118). By not portraying such scenes, the film is able to penetrate further into the psychological effects of fear. This is an essential contribution as fear was a major contributor to the years of purposeful cultural forgetting. No one spoke for fear that he or she too might disappear. By instead putting the audience in the same condition as a prisoner awaiting his or her fate and only knowing that the tortures occur by their lasting results, both physical and psychological, Caetano is able to penetrate further into the national psyche than he could through simply presenting torture.

The only time that torture is explicitly shown is in a scene that will be discussed in more detail later when Claudio and his accuser are both taken to a bathroom and tortured with a practice called the "submarino" or submarine. Instead of showing people being electrocuted, the audience only sees what other prisoners saw after another captive was returned to the common room, marks where electricity had been applied. Caetano does present the daily abuse suffered by the prisoners, but instead of showing it from above, as if a spectator or the abuser, the audience experiences the kicks to the face and body as if it were the prisoner himself. Through all of these experiences, the audience has no idea of what might come, just like the prisoners in the Seré Mansion (118). By putting his audience in the very same ignorance as the captives, Caetano adds to the suspense, horror, and feeling of complete hopelessness of the situation. The uncertainty shared by both prisoners and audience creates a shared fear. The audience feels the very same terror as the "chupados." The audience has to call upon its own knowledge of that horrible past of tortures by electrocution just as the "chupados" at the time had to rely on rumors until they themselves were taken to the rooms to be "interrogated." The burn marks on the captives when they return confirm to both the audience and to those that have not yet been taken in for questioning that the rumors are correct. Only then do the prisoners and the audience understand the fate that awaits them if ever they are taken in for "interrogation." The same is true of the terrible deaths of the prisoners that could no longer supply their captors with sufficient information to justify keeping them around. All the audience knows are the rumors among the prisoners left behind when their fellow captives are taken away with the promise that they will be allowed to go home. This information, however, combined with the knowledge of the past from the testimonies of former prisoners, is sufficient to give the audience a picture of that terrible past and thus increase the suspense of the film.

Caetano's avoidance of explicit torture and only allowing his audience to hear the screams and see the results of burn marks and exhaustive weeping when the prisoners are returned to their room-cells, places the audience in the same place as the other prisoners that know their time could come at any moment thus continuing to fill that societal void spoken of by Bazin (Bazin 2008, 40). The audience only knows what previous rumors have told them occurred in the detention centers and the testimonies and stories of survivors. Thus when his captors put Claudio in a room with only one other prisoner, this room is also all that the audience knows. Claudio's hands are bound behind his back and he is blindfolded. On his second day, he works to remove the blindfold just enough to see the room where he is held for the first time, only to have to pull it back down over his eyes when he hears someone coming to enter the room to check on him. This replacement of his own blindfold presents the audience with its own tendency to blindfold itself about the horrors of the *Proceso* because it did not want to see (Kaiser 2010, 109). His cellmate is calm and seems to have accepted his fate, while Claudio is still desperately hopeful that he may be granted his freedom if he can only convince his captors that he knows nothing about subversive activities.

On his third day in the mansion, the captors take Claudio into the bathroom where they again question him about his subversive activities and the mimeograph machine that he supposedly has in his possession. This is where the submarino torture is used and is the first time that Claudio has seen his accuser, nicknamed Gitano or Tano by their captors. Though Claudio insists that he has only seen the other prisoner twice in his life, their sisters are friends, and that he does not even have a telephone when Tano swears to their captors that he called Claudio with the information to be mimeographed, no one believes him since he cannot provide any names to help them capture other subversives. This is the only time that Caetano actually shows the torture of the prisoners. The men’s heads are held under water in the bathtub until they almost drown. They are then pulled up and questioned. Even here, however, Caetano does not show it from a normal perspective of spectator or torturer, but from that of the tortured. The camera is under the water when Claudio’s head is first submerged and voices are heard in muffled tones from above. The audience members experience the scene as if they were the prisoners. As the prisoners are blindfolded whenever guards enter a room, the audience is able to see what the captives would have seen but cannot. This viewpoint shifts the audience’s perspective. It allows the audience to experience what the prisoners experienced, by seeing what they would have seen. Other than this scene the torture is shown by its results. Even on Claudio’s first day, Caetano refrains from showing Claudio’s electrocution and only allowed the audience to hear his screams of pain, as though they too are prisoners in the mansion and thus in as much danger as the other prisoners that are told that they might be next as the guards open all the doors down the hallway. The audience, like the prisoners themselves can only speculate about the tortures endured by their fellows. Caetano’s presentation helps his audience to better understand the long cultural silence about the Dirty War, and its resultant cultural void.

Later that same day, Claudio, along with the other prisoners is made to stand in the hallway outside of his room-cell. The prisoners are told to recite their prayers while the guards pace up and down the hallway listening and watching to ensure that each one of them is remaining diligent in his prayers. This scene reminds the audience of the professed religious nature of the dictatorship. Subversives were believed to be as much against the church as the state during the dictatorship. Though there were priests and nuns that objected and even protested against the cruelty of the dictatorship, there were many more that either kept silent or were willing participants, especially after the initial purge of the Catholic church of anyone believed guilty. The scene also serves to remind the audience of those many instances where priests worked under the direction of the military in the detainment camps and that in many cases the leaders of the Catholic Church in Argentina approved of the killing of subversives because they were guilty of ungodly acts. Here the recitation of prayers by those that had been tortured evokes feelings of compassion. One prisoner is beaten for not praying loud enough, after which the main guard tells them to pray "para que Dios los escuche" (so that God hears them). These men that have been forced to pray seem far from being ungodly, rather they appear to be genuinely pleading to their God for their lives. The cruel torturers, in contrast, look on with what seems to be more self-congratulatory delight due more to the power they possess over their captives than a true godly compassion that they are in any way helping these men by forcing them to pray. While the prisoners pray, the camera shows the vastness of the mansion-prison as it spins around at the bottom of the stairs showing three other stories above. The audience sees only shadows as it hears the mutter prayers and shouts of the guards on the floors above. The camera retracts further into the hallway below to show refrigerators that were confiscated from the homes that they ransacked when taking their captives. This scene reminds of the earlier capture of Claudio, when the men that took him loaded his family's television into their trunk while emotionally torturing his mother for information.

By presenting the audience events that were rumored during the actual *Proceso*, Caetano is able to return those rumors to the active memory of the audience. He, in a sense, causes his audience to rediscover, almost by accident, those memories that were lost (Erll 2008, 98). In a later scene, when Claudio hears fireworks outside the window of his room-cell, guards enter and question Claudio's cellmate indicating that while time tends to stand still for the prisoners, it has continued on the outside. With this small moment of the outside world penetrating the prison, Caetano reminds his audience that life did continue outside, but also further cements the audience's feelings of being captive alongside Claudio. When the guards enter the room and question Claudio's cell mate, Claudio answers the questions posed because of the promise that the cellmate is being released and allowed to return home. Claudio even parrots that the guards are "gente buena" (good people) when those guards tell the cellmate to repeat this statement about his captors. At this point, it appears that Claudio still retains hope of release if he simply says the right words or his captors somehow realize that they have made a mistake by taking him in the first place. By maintaining a state of ignorance in the film and never providing any extra information to his audience, Caetano presents his audience with the very conditions of the detention centers. Neither Claudio nor the audience knows the fate of this former cellmate after his release. While it is unlikely that the cellmate was released to his home, the possibility remains because he has remained isolated and blindfolded during his imprisonment. For Caetano's audience that repressed the memory of those horrors, this scene recalls the hopes that the innocent went free as well as recalling the idea at the time that the captors were indeed good people doing what had to be done to save the country.

As the scene continues, the audience must confront the belief that the innocent always returned home safely, and further restores the fears of the time to the forefront. Claudio, believing that he too is being released when a guard tells him to turn around so that he can unbind Claudio's hands, turns around and tells them about his shoes. When instead a guard cuffs Claudio's hands in front, Claudio asks "adónde me llevan" (where are you taking me). The guard responds, "A vos, a ningún lado" (You, nowhere) and informs Claudio that he will not be going home because "las cosas hay que hacerlas bien" (things must be done right). A guard then moves Claudio into an adjacent room. The guard directs Claudio to remove his blindfold and open his eyes. Claudio is reluctant because he knows that once he has seen too much, his chances of release decrease dramatically. When he opens his eyes Claudio sees a lighted room with several other men, including Gitano o Tano, the acquaintance that had denounced him as a fellow subversive. Claudio had not seen his accuser since his third day when he had been tortured beside him in a bathroom in the mansion. The men are allowed a small reward of pan dulce[9] and wine to celebrate Christmas, the celebration for which Claudio heard the fireworks outside his window. When the guards leave and the doors close, Claudio runs to attack his accuser and now fellow prisoner. Claudio is detained by another man in the room and told to calm down so that the guards don't come back and punish them all. Once Claudio calms, Tano turns to him and tells him that he had to give his name because he was tortured and had to tell them something. He had to give time to the actual members of his "subversive" group to finish their plans. Tano assures Claudio that he will of course be released once they understand that he has nothing to do with any terrorist activities and that Claudio only has to endure until then. Claudio, finally understanding his fate after having seen his former cellmate leave and being moved into this larger room with those that he understands are condemned to die, looks at Tano and tells him "A mí, no me largan más. Me mataste, Tano" (They'll never let me go. You've killed me, Tano). This version of the detention center attempts to recreate the actual events according to Tamburrini's autobiographical account, but it also fulfills the role of filling the memory void of the audience that has existed due to the past forgetting.

When new guards arrive, they inform the prisoners of new rules within the mansion-prison. The prisoners will be required to do chores around the house. From this point on, though there continues to be a very real separation between the guards and prisoner, there seems to be more freedom in the house for the prisoners, at least to the extent that they see more of the house than ever before and are even allowed to go about to do their assigned chores with only one guard supervising them. In one sense, there seems to be a break in the nightmare that was the previous days of imprisonment, thus also giving the audience a sense of relief from their shared memory and participation in that torture. As Cardullo said that every film can be viewed as a social documentary in that it documents the desires of the collective unconsciousness that created it (Cardullo 36), here the audience becomes part of the mundane nature of the prisoners' life. Though allowing them to occasionally leave the room to perform tasks around the house could be seen as a kind gesture, it also furthers the idea that they do not have control over their own doings and reinforces the very real fact that no one is allowed to leave the mansion or has even seen outside as of yet. The apparent freedom and openness of the guards to their prisoners' humanity is further presented when the prisoners are given food in their room after several days. Claudio, in an act that the others believe will surely get them all killed, asks for a spoon with which to eat. When the guards leave, the other prisoners chide Claudio's boldness, but all fall quiet when the door reopens and a pile of spoons are tossed onto the floor, enough for each man. Though this act shows some compassion, it also shows that the guards still regard their prisoners as less than human as both spoons and food are left on the floor for them. One of the men, in an act of true humanity, takes food to another that has stopped eating, known as Vasco. The man later tells Claudio that it was this same "quebrado" that had denounced him, when Vasco has a breakdown about his fate because he was a former "guerrillero."

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[9] Pan dulce is a sweet bread filled with candied fruit eaten during the holiday season in Argentina. It is also known as the Italian Panettone.

That same day, a new prisoner, Jorge, joins the men and when he requests to go to the bathroom, Claudio is told to accompany him. While in the bathroom, Claudio learns that he is the one with the mimeograph machine attributed previously to Claudio by Tano, and that he has hopes of being released because he had no idea what information Tano had given him to copy. Claudio's hope of release briefly returns with this revelation. When Jorge informs Claudio that he must give names in order to be released, however, his despair that his fate is sealed returns. When Claudio insists that he doesn't know anything or anyone, Jorge informs him that their captors simply do not believe him. This scene not only serves to remind Claudio of his impending fate, but to remind the audience of their very real condition throughout the dictatorship. Here, the collective unconscious is reminded that during the *Proceso*, they mistrusted their neighbors out of fear of being denounced for every words they said. They are reminded of their complicit silence throughout the horrors and how much it still affects the societal culture in which they live thus presenting "in images that which society, sometimes, cannot see or hear," or in this case, that which they had chosen not to see or hear (de la Cruz 710).

Days later, the guards enter the room and tell Tano to put on shoes because he is leaving. The guards remind the rest of the men that they need to collaborate in order to leave. The first time a scene like this occurred Claudio was alone in a room with his roommate. The difference this second time is that the audience is permitted to observe what happens in the hallway with those that have been told that they will be going home. Tano, along with several others, is injected with something that they are told are "remedios" (medications) necessary to return home. The prisoners are then blindfolded and told to walk outside in a line with their hands on the shoulders of the man in front of them. They are loaded into trucks and driven away. Caetano continues the lack of showing any actual torture with these prisoners. This scene serves as a very real reminder of the horrors of the *Proceso* that the audience now seeks to remember along with Caetano. The unconscious nature of this desire reveals itself in Caetano's ability to present the audience with the worst parts of the past without explicitly showing them. The audience, because of Caetano's presentation, can remain in either blissful ignorance that the horrors actually occurred and continue to say that "algo habrán hecho" (they must have done something) or "por algo será" (it must be for some reason) or "no es por nada" (it is not for nothing), or that same audience can rely on the information revealed in the "Nunca más" trials to determine the fate of the band of prisoners. If the audience is willing to see the scene with more discerning eyes, it must rely on its own knowledge of the past and later conversations of the remaining prisoners to piece together the fate of these men that were led away and loaded into a truck. The scene reminds the discerning audience of the countless stories of prisoners that had outlived their usefulness and were drugged, loaded onto military planes and helicopters, taken over the La Plata River or the Atlantic Ocean, and thrown into the water while still alive. These were known later as "vuelos de la muerte."

When Jorge is later brought his shoes and told that he is going home, the scene is more reminiscent of the night that Claudio's first cellmate was told of his release than when Tano left the mansion. The guards also take Guillermo to "ask him some questions." When Guillermo and Jorge are alone in the hallway, Guillermo asks Jorge to let his family know he is alive. Jorge responds that he does not associate with "terrorists." The biggest difference between this scene and the previous ones of prisoners being told that they will be going home is that Jorge stands alone in the hallway with the daylight shining in through the open door thus presenting a much brighter future for Jorge. After the short encounter with Jorge in the hallway, the two men enter different cars. Jorge is in a small car that drives away in haste. Guillermo is in a larger vehicle with several guards. The guards take Guillermo to a house in order to get his “friends,” thus repeating the earlier scene in which Claudio was denounced by Tano. Because Guillermo’s information has not revealed any real information, the guards take him to an office building where he meets the man in charge of his case. This man informs Guillermo that they know he has been giving misinformation in order to mislead them. Guillermo attempts to assure them that the misinformation was merely on account of his being confused. The scene fades and returns when Guillermo is returned to the room with all the other prisoners with signs that he has again been beaten and tortured reminding the audience that these prisoners have no real hope of freedom and again recalling to mind the rumors of the past. Caetano’s presentation of hopelessness to his audience presents a vision of the expected. As very few were ever let go after their capture, and even fewer ever even attempted escape, Caetano again shows what the audience had not wanted to see or hear during the actual events (de la Cruz 710).

Later, apparently that same day though perhaps the day count could be cut out at this point because of the lack of awareness of the prisoners themselves, the four prisoners that remain in the room-cell are shaved bald while being told that they must cooperate and give information in order to leave. After they are shorn, the men are taken to the highest floor of the mansion and told to remove their clothes. In this uppermost room, guards handcuff the men to four beds and tell them to look at themselves in a mirror shard. They then ask the men if they recognize themselves and if they actually believe that anyone on the outside would still recognize them. One of the guards returns with a mop and bucket and tells the men that they are dirty but he will clean them. Though these men have rarely even heard their own names since arriving at the mansion, up to this point they had seemed to retain some humanity. From this point on while they remain in the mansion, the men are ever more like animals to their captors than human beings. This change in the film pushes the audience to confront its own ideas about those that were imprisoned by the military regime. The audience must think about the ideas of "it must have been for something," "it was not for nothing," and "he must have done something" when presented with these now poor creatures that have been stripped of all humanity. As Kaiser notes that there is neither heroism nor villainy, it is also important to note, that even in this moment of the complete removal of humanity by their captors, these men show true humanity and compassion (Kaiser 2010, 119). When the guards leave, Guillermo state that he must escape or they will kill him, and Claudio responds that he will go with him no matter what the plan may be. This moment of absolute solidarity amidst complete degradation returns a feeling of hope to the film. Though Tamburrini described a sort of acceptance of or "acostumbramiento" to the circumstances within the detention center, much like there was in society as a whole at the time, this moment of solidarity and the events that follow, show that perhaps there wasn't as much acceptance as believed (Kaiser 2010, 119-120).

Later the four men speak of their chances of being released. As names of former prisoners are listed, their supposed fates are discussed. When one of the prisoners mentions Tano and says of how he went home, another, Guillermo, says that they killed Tano. When another of the four mentions Jorge, and that he was allowed to leave, Guillermo states that Jorge was never truly in the prison. This seems to suggest that because Jorge so quickly collaborated with the guards, he was more like a mole placed with the others to get information rather than truly being one of them. With the talk of Tano's fate, Caetano again reminds the audience of the terrible "vuelos de la muerte," which was likely the fate of Tano and those that left in the truck with him.

The audience is also reminded of Claudio's terrible state. Claudio, who was falsely denounced and later proven to be completely innocent, knows that he has no hope of freedom. His accuser, who was a "quebrado," would have said any name that came to mind in order to stop the torture and prolong his own life. Claudio was simply a name the young man could recall during his torture. Perhaps he believed that he would be allowed to go free if he gave a name, or perhaps he just hoped to stop the torture for a time. In either circumstance, it is impossible to judge him without being in the same situation. Kaiser states that the film is not about betrayals but about negotiations for survival (Kaiser 2010, 119). The audience may at first hate the man that accused the story's protagonist falsely, but after the guards move Claudio to the same room as his accuser, the audience sees true humanity in these very inhumane conditions as though it were another prisoner moved with Claudio. Men that could hate one another are forced to rely on one another simply to survive. The longer they remain in the "chupadero" the less hope remains that they will ever be allowed to go free or that anyone on the outside even remembers who they once were. When the guards are present, the prisoners seem less human even to the audience as they cower and hide from their captors, thus reinforcing the contradiction within Argentine society about the *Proceso*. By showing the captives as somewhat less human, Caetano is able to create sympathy for them and cause the audience to think that perhaps there is a reason for their detainment. This “polyphonic social memory” that continues to exist in Argentina has grown over time so that the truth about those traumatic experiences can be neither “completely recalled [n]or completely forgotten (Robben 122).

The next day, Guillermo shows the others a large screw that he has hidden and tells them that he can use it to open the shutters on the window of their room to escape. He has gotten so thin while imprisoned that he is able to slip his hands from the handcuffs. When they hear guards coming, Guillermo returns to his bed and slips his hands back into the handcuffs and returns his blindfold. The guards, as well as one of the military officials that was part of the “chupado” that captured Claudio, enter the room and ask the prisoners what they want. One of the prisoners says that as he is to die anyway, he would like to see the face of his captors. Instead of allowing the request, the official takes an automatic weapon from one of the guards and fires it into the ceiling. As the prisoners cower in fear, the official tells the guards that they have gone too easy on the prisoners and made them too comfortable. When the guards and officials leave, the four men as well as the audience know that they will surely die the next day unless they attempt escape. The suspense and fear build from this point on as the audience, together with the prisoners awaits either an attempted escape or a certain death.

Early the next morning, the second anniversary of the military takeover of the government, there is a thunderstorm raging outside, a lucky break for the prisoners as it will obscure other sounds. Guillermo frees himself and Claudio. While Claudio frees the other two, Guillermo uses his hidden screw to unlatch the window. Once the window is opened, the men gather their sheets to tie them together into a rope that they will climb down from the window. Claudio and Guillermo, as the two keenest on escape, ensure that the other two are out first. Claudio descends and the three men wait for Guillermo. Guillermo uses his screw to leave a note on the wall to his captors before climbing out the window. The note only says “Gracias Lucas” (Thanks Lucas). Though the message is unclear to the audience, it seems to be meant as a revenge against his captors.

The four men that are now standing naked in the rain show one another true compassion. The men assist one another to climb down from the porch and hide in the bushes when they see a car enter with a new “chupado.” Once the coast is clear, the four run to the fence and escape to the street. They run naked to a nearby street where they can hide behind a gate in what appears to be a workshop. Claudio and Vasco are separated from the other two while Claudio tries to calm Vasco and convince him that the guards are not yet after them. Guillermo goes out to ask for help and is told by Gallego to phone his father to let him know where he is. Guillermo tells a woman that he was accosted and needs help. The woman gives him a few dollars for a taxi and a set of clothes even though she likely suspects the truth as it is odd to see anyone out after the imposed curfews. Guillermo disappears into the night and Claudio and Vasco rejoin Gallego. This scene, though short, presents a glimmer of hope, both for the escapees and the audience. It serves to show that even in the darkest of times, there were those willing to help someone in need, as well as give hope that perhaps the escape will be successful, both of which remind the audience of their own humanity and that of the escapees. This aspect makes the reality of the trauma endured and now recalled by the audience more forceful. It serves to rediscover the suppressed memory of trauma and return it to an active postmemory that has been altered by that suppression and by the memories and fictional stories told by others.

The men wait in the hidden workshop overnight until the next morning when Gallego's father arrives. Gallego tells his father that the other two men are his friends and he agrees to take them away in the trunk of his car. After driving a short distance, Gallego's father learns the truth about where his son has been and has the other two men get out of the trunk to leave them. The prisoners go their separate ways. The reaction of Gallego's father is not uncommon. Emilio Crenzel notes that those with friends that were disappeared tended to recall more oppression by the government while others preferred to ignore the terror at the time and forget it in the years since (Crenzel 86-89). The unusual case is that of the woman that gave Guillermo clothes and money for a taxi without notifying anyone or questioning him further. This stranger showed true compassion that the men had not seen from anyone except their fellow prisoners since their capture. Only in film do we see this aspect of history that is outside of the official accounts. Officially, the only dissenters were subversives, and anyone that helped them was also a subversive.

This small reminder to the audience that not everyone looked out only for him or herself during the *Proceso*, also provides a return to the present condition in Argentina where it is again acceptable to remember that past and accept that horrible things happened without fearing their return if they are spoken of too loudly.

Memory and postmemory both play a role in the film's final scenes. These scenes give brief accounts of the escapees' lives in subsequent years. One of them was recaptured, Vasco, and liberated in 1983 at the end of the dictatorship, three fled the country, Guillermo, Claudio, and Gallego, three testified against the military in 1985, Guillermo, Claudio, and Vasco. Gallego is the only one that never returned to Argentina after having left. Guillermo and Claudio saw one another for the first time since their escape when they met with director Adrian Caetano as consultants for the film adaptation of Claudio's novel. This serves to remind the audience that although to most of them the trauma of the *Proceso* ended many years ago, it continues to affect many in the present. Some were never able to return to Argentina because of the feelings of betrayal by their nation. Others only returned briefly, but continue to live outside of Argentina. For these that personally endured the horrors of the *Proceso*, it has remained an active part of their memories. Their accounts help to frame the postmemories of the generation that has begun to remember and the prosthetic memory of those that had never known the horrors.

One of the films greatest contributions to the long forgotten memory of the horrors of the past is the presentation of compassion and solidarity in even the hell of a detention center. These men from whom has been taken every ounce of humanity, including their names as they are called by nicknames most of the time, help one another.

They encourage one another, feed one another, look after and help calm those that begin to lose it with fear, and help keep one another composed to avoid further punishment (Kaiser 2010, 119-120). The escape of the last four men is the ultimate example of this solidarity as only two of them plan and carry out the escape but ensure that the other two accompany them though they are so terrified at that point that they could never have attempted such a feat on their own (120). According to Caetano, Tamburrini said that there was a kind of habituation in the prisoners that is perhaps a metaphor for what occurred in the society of that period. Caetano further notes that this is truly about a "sad escape" ("fuga triste") as the men are not escaping in order to live freely (120). They were not returning to true liberty. There was neither applause nor glory for these poor souls. Their flight had to continue out of the country that they had loved and believed in or, as in the case of Vasco, they would be captured again and held until the country returned to democracy.

Film has an ability to connect to an audience like no other media can, and as such there is a type of obligation to reach further into the memory in films of historical accounts. According to Claudio Tamburrini himself:

> If today we continue making movies that only relate the primary conflict – here are the bad guys, the torturers; and here are the good guys, the victims –, it would be a useless exercise, utilization with little benefit from so strong a medium as film. It would be an inert memory, inactive; unable to recuperate, or generate debate[10] (120).

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[10] Original quote is in Spanish. Translation is mine.

According to Kaiser, *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) is an exemplary sample of a film that contributes new elements in order to generate true reflection and debate about how we remember that period of time and how we will use those memories (2010, 120). As part of the new Argentine cinema, Caetano seeks to do more with his films than simply tell a story or entertain. With *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*), he is able to give an accurate account of the horrors of that terrible past, and do it in such a way that his audience is both enlightened and entertained. This idea of education and entertainment contribute to which memories pass on to the postmemory of future generations and the prosthetic memories of those previously untouched by the trauma. The audience can cheer when the men escape and give them the applause that they did not receive at the time, but it is also forced to reflect on its own memory of that past in which a society chose to ignore the disappearances or even justify them with statements like "he or she must have done something," "it was not for nothing" (without reason), or "it must be for something" (some reason). Caetano does as Cardullo states by revealing the 'unconscious truth' by providing his audience with a new perspective, both as part of a society that has struggled to recover from its horrific past and in the film itself by giving the audience the same visual perspective as the prisoners, Caetano provides a chance at dealing with that 'unconscious truth' that his audience wants to recall but fears at the same time.

It is not by forgetting or whitewashing the past that we can deal with the past, but by confronting it. By providing his audience with this new insight Caetano releases the past from that inert memory spoken of by Claudio Tamburrini or that place of unconscious thought spoken of by Bazin and Cardullo. *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) allows and even pushes that memory to move again. It is a film that renews old debates and generates new ones. It reopens that unconscious area of the national cultural memory while injecting new “remedios” that restore them to conscious memory instead of just sedatives disguised as medications to lull the prisoners into a false calm before throwing them to their deaths only to later be forgotten to time. The film leaves little room for the theories and excuses of the past. It is up to the audience to apply the “remedios” by continuing the debate and thereby fully restore that past.

Alejandro Agresti's Hopeful Recuperation of Argentine Cultural Memory in *A Less Bad World*

Agresti subtly references the Argentine present as it remembers the past in order to understand events and situations in the present. In attempting to again remember the forgotten past, Agresti's characters, like the Argentine public they represent, must link together the various bits and pieces of that past that they begin to recover as a result of the events in their present into the illusion of one continual series of events (Castañeda Hernandez 118). The film also serves to fill the societal cultural void of the past by showing its audience those things that it is somewhat afraid to approach (Bazin 2008, 40). Agresti's film is a social documentary of the attempt to cope with a past that can be neither "completely recalled [n]or completely forgotten (Robben 122).

Agresti is a prolific filmmaker known for his many feature films, shorts, documentaries, and TV movies. Some of his best known features other than *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) include: *Love is a fat woman* (*El amor es una mujer gorda*) (1987), *Secret Wedding* (*Boda Secreta*) (1989), *Buenos Aires Vice Versa* (1996), *Wind with the Gone* (*El viento se llevó lo que*) (1998), *A Night with Sabrina Love* (*Una noche con Sabrina Love*) (2000), *Valentín* (2002), *The Lake House* (2006), his first and so far only film produced by Hollywood, and more recently *No somos animales* (2013). Like many other writers and directors of the New Argentine Cinema movement, several of Agresti's films explore the horrors of the *Proceso* and its effects on Argentine culture and society. Agresti has explored the questions of the horrors of the *Proceso* in the past in *Love is a Fat Woman*, *Secret Wedding*, *Buenos Aires Vice Versa*, and *Valentín*. A *Less*

Bad World (*Un mundo menos peor*) is the culmination of Agresti's filmic exploration of the *Proceso* and effects. It presents some of the ways that Argentines have dealt with that horrific past since the return to democracy in 1983. Agresti, through his characters, presents various views of the horrific past of the *Proceso* and how Argentines from different facets of society have attempted to move beyond their personal pasts within those horrors. The hopeful tone of the film portrays the hope within modern Argentina. Agresti presents the idea that by remembering the past and acknowledging its horrors Argentina can finally overcome that past within the collective cultural memory and thereby make it so that those horrors will never happen again.

As *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) is set in the same year that it debuted, 2004, during the period after Nestor Kirchner and the Argentine congress again began to prosecute the military generals responsible for the disappearance of 30,000 Argentines, it follows the pattern of recovery that was propelled by the economic crisis of 2001-2002. Kirchner had run his campaign on the promise that he would push for the prosecution of these military personnel and annul all of the laws that had previously granted amnesty to everyone involved in the Dirty War. Kirchner's platform and the subsequent prosecution of the former military dictators by the Argentine congress reawakened the Argentine people to the importance of this dark period in their shared past.

Agresti presents the link between the period of recovery within Argentina at large and the film through his characters. These character symbolize the different desires and feelings of the audience and the Argentine populace that both the character and the audience represent. The tie between events that occurred during the *Proceso* and the years after and the film version of coping with the past, presents the "dream desires of the masses" (Bazin 2008, 40). These dream desires are the subconscious feelings of the audience. Through the characters, Agresti explores the differing ways in which his characters deal and have dealt with their own memories of that now distant past as well as their personal struggles to understand and deal with their memories of that past. At the same time, the audience experiences the possibility of recovering from its own traumatic memories of that past like the characters of the film. The alternate versions of the past created by the various characters in order to move on from the horrors they experienced begin to break down and they each have to learn how to approach it so that they can recover their identities without losing what they have accomplished since those horrors ended. In the same way, the film pushes its audience to confront its past and see one another as fellow victims of the same trauma.

Agresti presents these different social groups within Argentine society that experienced that past from different perspectives through his characters. The reactions of those characters characterize how these different groups have reacted to the memories of the past, both in the period of forgetting during the 1980's and '90's and since the increased push to remember from the early 2000's. The film is set 28 years after the start of the Argentine Military's Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso*), and 24 years after the characters at the center of the action personally experienced the horrors of that Proceso. The film follows a mother, Isabel, and her two daughters, Sonia and Beba, to a small seaside village in southern Argentina as they search for the father of Sonia, her older daughter. Sonia's father, Cholo, disappeared during the *Proceso* while Isabel was pregnant with her. Isabel believed Cholo dead until her brother informed her that he saw Cholo while vacationing in the seaside village where Cholo now works as the local baker. Agresti gives subtle references to his audience in order to identify what social groups some his characters represent, such as the newspaper articles about the Falkland Islands War (*Guerra de las Islas Malvinas*[11]) in Lalo's house, or the reference to the economic crisis of the early 2000's in the final scene with Isabel and her daughters. These subtle references to Argentine history present ties between Agresti's characters and the social groups and events in Argentina that they represent. The film is not reality, but it is a representation of the social desire to finally recover from the trauma of the past.

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[11] The Falkland Islands War or *Guerra de las Islas Malvinas* was waged by the military dictatorship against the United Kingdom over a small group of islands off Argentina's Atlantic coast. Both countries claim the islands as their sovereign territory. Because the military dictatorship waged the war when it was beginning to lose favorability among even its most ardent supporters, some believe that it was an attempt to distract the Argentine people from the Dirty War being waged within the country and create an external enemy to retain the dictatorship's power. When Argentina lost the war, the military dictatorship quickly lost its hold and left power soon thereafter. As this dissertation is written in English, the war is called the Falkland Islands War, however, the author recognizes Argentina's claim to the islands and its continued reference to them as Islas Malvinas.

De la Cruz also stated that film allows us to discover the stories and tales that shape the historic memory of the various groups or communities that make up a society. He further says that those tales, or filmic discourses, permit the rediscovery of the diverse points of view about the events within that history in addition to being a part of the collective imaginary of the various social groups (709). Agresti's *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) presents some of those various points of view that have persisted within Argentina since the end of the *Proceso*. By presenting those points of view from different perspectives within the film, Agresti further shows that though they persist, many of them are mostly, as de la Cruz states, part of the collective imaginary. That is to say, the points of view and beliefs of the various social groups are based more on the continued collective imagination of those various groups than on any persistent point of view of any of the other social groups that make up the whole of Argentine society. *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) also portrays that collective imaginary in that it does not present the reality of coping with the past. Instead, Agresti presents an idealized version of the recovery of those memories without truly exploring the psychological and emotional ramifications that it can cause. The film focuses on the hope that the cultural and societal recovery can be simple and quick; that the broken families and other victims of the *Proceso*, those that were victims of the horrors of the *Proceso* itself and those that have felt victimized since because of the stigma of all members of the military as murderers that occurred as a result, can work together. The film's final moments, where Cholo reads a letter left for him by Sonia, seems to suggest that it is not necessary to fully discuss the horrors experienced by the victims of the *Proceso*, but only admit that they did happen and there are still real victims, in order to recover in the present. Cholo's attempt to ignore and replace the true version of his past in order to create a less painful version becomes impossible for him to maintain when he allows Sonia's letter to affect him. He has to either choose to pretend that the previous week never happened or accept that his version of his past has broken down, but that a better version has presented itself where he has not lost everything he once loved. Cholo's reactions to the breakdown of his own invented history presents the idea that discomfort is part of the recovery of the past and that that discomfort must be experienced in order to truly recover from the past and obtain a better present and future. The film's hopeful tone is contrasted with the personal struggles of the characters to find their place within a society that is pushing them to remember the past. By presenting this idealistic hopeful ending and the personal struggles of his characters, Agresti allows his audience to observe its own struggle to recover and gives the hope that there can be a peaceful recovery once it accepts the past, at least in part, and comes together in the present to deal with both the current issues facing their society and the results of that past that continues to affect that present in order to build a less bad future.

While *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) attempts to recreate real events as they occurred, *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*), instead, offers its viewers an idealized perspective on Argentina's recovery of and from the past through characters that represent the viewpoints of different social groups within Argentine society, each affected by those past horrors in a different way. Though Agresti focuses more on this idealized version of recovery, he creates a believable illusion within *A Less*

Bad World (*Un mundo menos peor*) through his representative characters that have had to learn how to deal with the horrors of their collective past. In this way he makes his audience believe “that what [it] see[s] on-screen is true” and even possible for them (36). These characters’ emotions and reactions represent the reactions within Argentine society as Argentines have remembered the past and attempted to recuperate the collective memory of that painful and divisive period from their shared past. These characters had had very different experiences within that horrific past and had reacted differently since.

Agresti’s character portrayals allow those groups to see their own ideas and points of view voiced and, thus, better understand the points of view of other social groups through the reactions of the characters that represent them. By so doing, Agresti is able to give voice and understanding to groups within his audience that historically have been at odds because of the different ways that they experienced the horrors of the past and show what Robben calls the “polyphnonic social memory” that has “changed and expanded over time” (Robben 122). The character types vary from a former Air Force pilot that fought in the Falkland Islands War, to a woman who participated in communist rallies and presented films in the *villas de miseria* against the government’s actions during the dictatorship later losing her unborn child’s father as a result of their actions, to her boyfriend who was a fellow communist sympathizer, father of her oldest daughter, and one of the disappeared, to the daughter who never knew her father because of his disappearance when her mother was pregnant with her, to an eight year old girl that is so far removed from the horrors of the past that she does not understand why her mother loves her sister’s father more than her own, to a bus driver that has driven the route from

Buenos Aires to the small village since the days of the dictatorship and remembers the broken man that rode that bus years before. There are other supporting characters as well that serve as listeners so that the audience can hear all sides of the story and better understand the characters that symbolize the various principal groups within Argentina as they learn to deal with their past. The multigenerational and varied points of view of the principal characters invite those from several of those social groups mentioned by de la Cruz to both enjoy and relate to the film in a way that presenting a singular point of view could not achieve.

Agresti also continues the trend of New Argentine Cinema addressed by Amado in *Cine Argentino y política*. *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) presents the local issues within a small coastal village and the individual issues of Isabel, Cholo, and their daughter and relates them to the global Argentine society that is trying as well to understand and overcome its own past. As well as limiting his cast of characters to a few people within a small village, Agresti also limits the time of his story. The entire story occurs within only a few days. The actual recovery of memory in Argentina has spanned decades and has gone through several stages. Agresti presents these stages in his characters in less than a week, thus presenting a hopeful and idealized outlook for Argentine society. Agresti shows that Argentine society too can remember the past, or obtain, collect, preserve, and recover the bits and pieces of information that remain in individual memories into a single version of the events in the collective memory in order to construct a better, or “less bad,” present (Castañeda Hernández 118).

Agresti's representation of the various ways of remembering the past and the reactions to that past in the present begins when the film opens with Isabel and her two daughters on a bus from Buenos Aires to the village where Isabel's brother reported that he had seen Cholo. The first reaction to the past comes during a brief stop along the route where Isabel gets lunch with her two daughters. Isabel, reflects back on her first pregnancy that she endured alone after the disappearance of her then boyfriend, Cholo, a period that is now in the forefront of her thoughts. Isabel's silent reflection shows that she is hopeful though the memory remains somewhat painful to her. Once the three women are back on the bus, Beba talks with the bus driver about the reason for their trip from Buenos Aires to their destination. The bus driver listens intently as Beba tells him that she has gotten off school early because her mother explained to her teacher that the family had to travel together as a family. Beba explains that they are traveling so that her older sister, Sonia, can meet her father who is a baker. The conversation continues until Beba asks the bus driver if he knows where Cholo lives. The name seems to startle the bus driver and he tells Beba to go sit with her mother. This fearful reaction, somewhat the opposite of Isabel's contemplative reflection, presents the view of many that were not directly affected by the events of the *Proceso*. The bus driver attempts to remove himself from any memory of the past much like many within Argentina attempted to ignore the past for many years.

This scene is the first indication that Isabel and her daughters are Agresti's catalyst to remembering and representative of the conditions in Argentina at the turn of the century. The trend of forgetting and ignoring the past continued among the greater majority of Argentines until the economic and political crises of 2001-’02 reminded many of the same situations in 1975-’76 that resulted in a military take-over and the *Proceso* that led to the horrors they have tried to forget. In the same way, Isabel and her daughters force the small town to remember why each of them has fled there in the first place.

In a scene later that night the bus driver is making the return trip to Buenos Aires. He speaks with a passenger about a man that had been a passenger on that same bus route in 1980 or ’81. He tells of how that passenger had wept on the trip, did not even look at him when he got off at the final destination, and had later become a baker in the village. Though the mention of his name caused the bus driver to abruptly end the conversation with Beba, he was unable to forget the memories of that past “hace un montón de años” (many years ago) that it awakened in him. His reaction echoes that of many Argentines at the turn of the century when the economic, social, and political climate of the country awakened memories of the turbulent past that they had ignored and willfully forgotten for years. While this conversation is happening on the bus back to Buenos Aires, Sonia walks through the small village to find Cholo’s bakery. When she finally finds it, she is only able to watch from a distance as Cholo’s assistant leaves. Sonia seems unable to approach any closer to meet the father she has heard about but never known. In presenting these perspectives so early in the film, Agresti shows his viewers themselves within his characters. In the first fifteen minutes he documents the collective emotions, thoughts, and desires of some of the varying social groups that have constituted two versions of the same side of the debate that had continued since the end of the *Proceso*. These two groups consist of those that lost someone and their children that never knew their disappeared parents, and those that knew something was happening but had not participated actively on either side. Agresti presents these two examples in order to show the majority of his Argentine audience itself. Agresti thus constructs a foundational space from which to say the unsayable and show his audience what they have not been able to see in themselves (de la Cruz 710). In this way, Agresti puts that collective unconsciousness of society referred to by Cardullo on alert (36). He shows that before achieving any resolution to the past, there must be some uncomfortable reflection; that is to say, there must first be a remembering of the past before there can be a resolution within the cultural memory. A conversation between Isabel and the woman from whom she is renting the apartment where they are staying also presents the willingness within the village to allow things to stay the way they are.

Scenes in the film work as a microcosm for collective Argenitine memory. In 1976, though some groups in Argentina used public demonstrations to keep the memory of past atrocities alive, the majority remained silent. In the film, when Isabel asks her landlady, Floria, about Cholo, the woman responds that Cholo is a nice man, though a little messed up in the head. This is the first evidence within the film that those in the village do not know the truth and would prefer it stay that way – just like the majority of Argentinians in 1976 – so as not to have any disruption to their peace. The scene in the film reflects the suppression of the memory of the past – a past that would be abruptly awakened with the economic collapse of 2001.

The next morning, Isabel walks to Cholo’s bakery to see the man she has loved since her youth. This scene presents the difficulty of dealing with traumatic memories, whether one wishes to remember it or not. When she enters the crowded bakery, Cholo pauses seeming to faintly recognize her for a moment, but he quickly brushes off the idea and returns to his waiting customers. Isabel promptly leaves and is overcome with emotion. Miguel, a young man that recently moved to the village following a personal crisis of his own, asks Isabel if he can help and accompanies her home to ensure that she is feeling better.

In the same scene, while Miguel consoles Isabel outside of Cholo’s bakery, two local women walk away gossiping about how they believe Isabel has come with her daughters to deceive Cholo. These two women are the representation of the unwillingness of the village to allow any disruption to their peaceful ignorance. Miguel acts as a sort of liaison between Isabel and her two daughters, and the townspeople. Miguel somewhat represents the generation that wishes to remember. When Sonia later passes by the school where Miguel teaches music, Miguel offers to take her around town. As the two sit together on the beach outside Miguel’s home, Miguel, much like the bus driver with Beba, listens to Sonia tell about visiting the village to find her father. Miguel’s reaction is more matter of fact than the bus driver’s had been. He informs Sonia that the story about Cholo in the village is that he was in a car accident where his wife died. Following the tragic accident, Cholo moved to the village to escape the memory of his loss. Miguel’s version of Cholo’s story and his own personal story that he moved to the village after his wife left him, reveal an important detail about this remote village.

Many people have moved to this seaside place to escape their past. Thus, the village itself comes to represent the many years of cultural forgetfulness and willful ignorance among Argentines. Miguel is the bridge between the past that is now being recovered and the present that is not yet sure if it wants to remember. He knows the stories that have been told about the past and the truth about that past that reveals itself through Isabel and her daughters that have disrupted the peaceful ignorance in the village simply by arriving with an alternate version of the past. In this small town no one questions the past. Each new face that seeks to join them in their peaceful ignorance is able to create his or her own story and everyone else simply accepts the truth that he or she is capable of believing at the time. Everyone believes that Cholo has mental issues because of the accident where his wife died.

This willingness to ignore any truth that could disrupt the peace is further shown when Sonia goes to speak with Cholo's assistant in her home. The young woman lives with her partner next to a local hotel. The two women tell Sonia that the townspeople believe that they are sisters because it is what they want to believe. No one in the town questions the past or even the present situation, because to do so might disrupt their peace. The external conditions imposed by the societal and cultural contexts in the village are meant to maintain the peace and tranquility of all who live in the village, even at the expense of the truth, thus making the village a symbol of Assmann's cultural memory as a matter of "external conditions imposed by society and cultural contexts" (5-7). Within the film the cultural memory relies almost completely on the individual memory, even when that individual memory is completely invented either by the individual, as in

Cholo’s case, or by the community that is not ready to accept the truth, as in the lesbian couple’s case. In order to avoid the uncomfortable realities that may exist, the townspeople believe the easier versions of the past and present that will not disturb their individual and collective peace of mind, but those individual memories and beliefs must also fit into the goal of maintaining the village equilibrium as shown when Isabel and her daughters arrive and disrupt their peaceful ignorance of the truth (5-7). The two women outside Cholo’s bakery would prefer to believe that this woman has come to take advantage of Cholo rather than find out the truth about her because they know she is not planning to stay and is therefore more easily considered a disruption and nuisance. Because Isabel and her daughters are strangers and have not come to seek refuge from the past as so many others have, they remain outsiders and, therefore, must have come to cause problems.

The difficult nature of memory comes to the forefront in the lives of Isabel and her daughters that same day when they visit the local super market. While shopping, Isabel asks Sonia how she felt when she was waiting outside Cholo’s bakery. When Sonia responds that she only saw him from a distance, her mother says that she should have approached him. The two women argue about how neither of them actually knows what to do about Cholo and the current situation. Sonia storms out of the market, but returns to help her mother with the groceries. This lack of understanding between the generations, one that was a direct victim of the horrors at the time of the dictatorship and the other that is a victim because they lost people that they have never known, continues in Argentina as everyone affected by that horrific past must learn to understand what that past means to them and exactly how much it has affected them in the present. Sonia's return to help her mother further shows that no matter how much the younger generation has wished to distance itself from that past that it barely remembers, it will always be affected by it. In this way, Agresti again dialogues with Argentine society about memory and the attempt to recover that part of it that was lost and intentionally ignored through his characters (Amado 18-19). Their trial to know what they should do in order to approach Cholo and be a family, is the societal trial within Argentina to allow themselves to remember the past in a present that is still dealing with its affects.

The first true sign of a recovery from the past trauma occurs later that night. When Isabel sits outside Cholo's apartment hoping to talk with him, Lalo invites her out to the local game room and café. This invitation presents the audience with a new idea of welcoming the seeming chaos that comes with remembering, represented by Isabel and her daughters, in order to recover from the effects of that past. When she gets to the café, Isabel again sees Cholo. This time when Cholo sees her, he promptly leaves, unable to understand this disruption to the life of ignorance he has established. When Isabel follows him and confronts him on the beach, Cholo tells her that he does not know her. In the moment he, like the majority of the village's other residents, seems to believe that denying the past can make it go away.

While their mother is away, Floria visits to invite her to play cards. Floria, who represents the desire to keep things as they are and the rumors that spread about anything and anyone unknown, finally gets to Sonia. Tired of the gossip about her and her mother, Sonia tells Floria the reason for their visit. Sonia informs Floria that Cholo is her father that she never knew because he was taken by the military from their home when her mother was still pregnant with her. She tells Floria about her mother's breast cancer and that after everything that they have gone through, her mother only wants to finally be a family with the man that she has always loved. For many years they did not even know if he was alive, but now the only thing they need is to be left alone and not be gossiped about. Floria reacts by returning home and yelling at her two friends about their gossiping around town. Floria's anger at the revelations from Sonia further shows the desire to maintain a peaceful ignorance. When she first asked Sonia about why they had come to see Cholo, she was jovial, but once she knows the truth, she acts as if she too has been personally hurt by the gossip in town. The truth, brought back to the village by Isabel and her daughters, reveals that the willful ignorance in the village is a shallow façade that quickly breaks down once the truth about the past can no longer be ignored. In the same way, when Argentines again saw their country in a state of similar upheaval that it had experienced decades before, they could no longer ignore the truth that that past, believed better left in the past for many years, continued to affect them in the present. Cholo's and Floria's reactions contrast one another. Cholo continues to try to ignore the past, while Floria, no longer able to ignore it, reacts violently. Cholo and Floria represent those in Argentina that continued to try to ignore the past until it became too prevalent to reject. Floria's revelation comes sooner and more abruptly than Cholo's and she reacts more aggressively to the revelation than he does. Both characters' selective forgetting of that past is abruptly challenged, and their reactions to that abrupt confrontation show some of the ways that Argentines reacted to their own recalling of the traumatic past.

Children that were born and raised during the period of willful ignorance and forced forgetfulness of the 1980's and '90's never learned about the horrors of the *Proceso*, as very few were willing to discuss them during this period. This generation has instead begun to form a postmemory and even prosthetic memory in the absence of any actual knowledge about that past. Beba represents this generation born after the end of the *Proceso* too young to have been directly affected by it in any way. She is Isabel's daughter by a different man. Beba defends her father while her mother washes her hair. She asks her mother if she loves Cholo more than her own father. She cannot understand why her own father does not merit the same consideration as Cholo. Her distance from Cholo's disappearance, both in time and understanding because she was born years after the end of the dictatorship, keeps her from being able to comprehend that Cholo is not crazy, as the townspeople say, but that he has been so deeply affected by his experience as one of the disappeared, that he has yet to be able to cope with that past. Through Beba, Agresti presents the feelings, opinions, and experiences of Argentina's children in the present. Beba cannot understand her mother's and sister's desire to reconnect with Cholo, because she is so far separated from the horror's that they experienced, either directly by losing a loved one or indirectly by never being able to know that loved one. While Agresti does not further explore Beba's feelings and point of view within the film, the viewpoint of the group that she represents, the children born during the years after the *Proceso* and before the push to again remember its horrors, remains an important aspect to truly recovering the past. Because it was ignored for so long, Beba has no comprehension of the remaining emotions that those affected continue to experience. In order to restore that portion of the cultural memory that had been neglected, the youngest generation in Argentina needs to be informed about that past and its impact on the present through important postmemory works like this film. The postmemory that has "emerge[d] in the face of silence" and the memory of those that actually experienced the trauma first-hand need to reconcile in order to truly recover from it (Kaminsky 2014, 107).

Agresti contrasts this need for the younger generation to reconcile with past trauma, represented by the difficulty for Beba to understand it, with Cholo's own attempt to understand the truth about the past which has again confronted him. While Isabel has the uncomfortable conversation with Beba, Sonia and Miguel go by Cholo's bakery and see customers outside waiting for him to open so they can buy their bread for the day, Miguel decides to check Cholo's home to see why he has not opened that day. When Miguel finds him at home unable to reconcile the story that he has believed with what he is now experiencing, however, it shows that the forced ignorance and forgetfulness easily unravels when even the smallest element appears to remind of the truth. Cholo, probably for the first time in many years, tells Miguel that he believed once that he could be a part of something greater than himself and make a better world. Miguel suggests that instead of attempting to make a better world, perhaps they should attempt to create a less bad world. Cholo and the townspeople represent the majority of Argentine society that sought to forget that the horrors of the past ever happened in order to move past them. Isabel represents the reminders in the present that reawakened those memories within those that purposefully forgot, such as the economic crisis in Argentina in the early 2000's. Miguel is the link between the two. The voice that suggests that though they cannot undo the past or its horrors, the less bad way to overcome them, is to remember them so that they do not happen again. When Miguel attempts to explain Cholo's reactions to Isabel, he asks about the story of the car accident. Isabel reveals that he never knew how to drive, thus beginning to break down the façade that has existed within the village for many years because of a desire to remain in ignorance.

The theme of the difficult relationship with the past continues when Miguel invites Isabel and her daughters to lunch at his house. While there Sonia reads old love letters between the woman from whom Miguel rents the house and her lover. This scene provides a further link to the past, and its continued impact on the present, when one of the letters reveals that the two are Jews that escaped Hitler's Germany. She reveals in the letter that her sole desire is to not be a Jew, because she hates how much her people have lost their joy because of the horrors that they have experienced. She hates the ignorance of those horrors by everyone around her that just wants to forget that that horrific past ever happened. In reading this letter, Sonia seems to gain an even better comprehension of her own mother's experiences and all of them seem to better comprehend Cholo and why he too wishes he could stop being who he is in order to just forget the past.

Sonia is also able to better understand the town when she talks with Cholo's assistant and her partner and their revelation that the townspeople believe that they are sisters. Cholo's assistant tells Sonia that everyone that has come to the village, came for some reason. This thought reflects somewhat the idea of "it must be for something," prominent in Argentina during and after the *Proceso*. She also tells Sonia that though no one ever told Cholo that he has a daughter, the way he looks at her means that he somehow knows about her and wants to know her. She then tells Sonia that Cholo needs to know the truth, because the truth is better than having to hide in a lie like the one she and her partner live. They had to invent the story that they are sisters because others are not prepared to accept the truth.

The last group that Agresti represents in the film is that of the soldiers themselves. When Isabel and her daughters again attempt to confront Cholo, Marcelo, the neighbor Lalo's son, invites them to wait in his home. The house walls are filled with news clippings about the Falkland Islands war. Lalo served as a navy pilot during the war. When he later returns home, Lalo reveals his own feelings about that past. When Isabel tries to help him to better understand his son, he tells Isabel that he cannot even look his son in the eyes because people believe that he is a murderer because he served in the military. He reveals that he served for his country, but was never one of the ones that removed people from the streets. His opinion, representative of the feelings of others that served in the military at the time, reveals that he too continues to feel the effects of that horrific past and that while he remembers and is proud of what he accomplished by serving, he continues to feel ashamed because of his association with those that did participate directly in the *Proceso*.

In the discussion of the impact of the past on the present, the feelings and opinions of those that served in the military during the *Proceso* is often neglected. The laws of Due Obedience and Final Point seemed to portray that no one in the military, from the lowest ranks to the commanders-in-chief, was responsible for the atrocities committed. The alternate opinion, that anyone that served in the military is guilty, has also existed among some. This alternate opinion has impacted Lalo's opinion of himself. Because he believes that others believe him guilty, Lalo has remained distant from his own son in order to save him from the same sense of guilt and shame that he has felt. Isabel, a direct victim of the *Proceso*, does not fault him however, and her reaction is instead to try to help him to better relate to his son. Agresti's repeated portrayal of the relationship between the children that were born since the *Proceso* and their parents that were a part of it on one side or the other in this scene, shows that the recovery of the past must at least in part be an intergenerational dialogue about that past instead of continuing the "half-understood language" that produced the postmemory of the younger generation and the fictionalized accounts that have created a prosthetic memory of the events (Kaminsky 2014, 107).

When Cholo returns home, he finds a letter in his door that is simply addressed Papá. As he reads the letter, written and left for him by Sonia, Cholo finally begins to accept the past that has invaded his present. Sonia explains in her letter that though she never met him, he was always a part of her life because she has always loved him. Sonia says further that she promises to never bring up the horrific things that Cholo experienced in the past, but that she only wants him to be a part of their lives because she and her mother have always loved him. Cholo finally seems able to deal with his own past as he reads, and for the first time, the present offers a more favorable version of the past than the one he had invented for himself.

The film's final scene again references the economic crisis of the early 2000's. Isabel and her daughters sit in a restaurant eating dinner on their final night before they plan to return to Buenos Aires, Cholo's rejection of Isabel has been too painful for her and she has decided to let Cholo return to his version of the past. The window by which the three women sit reads "se aceptan Patacones y Lecop[12]" (Patacones and Lecop accepted here). Cholo approaches the window and taps on the window to get their attention. As Cholo and Isabel gaze at each other through the window, the film suggests at a reconciliation between them and their past. The subtle reminder of the economic crisis in this final scene with Isabel and her daughters who disrupted Cholo's and the townspeople's peaceful ignorance, cements the idea to the audience that Agresti intended the women to represent Argentina's own reminders of its past that it too had tried to forget and ignore. Cholo's approach and willingness to look through that window, presents an idea of a hopeful future where the past can be a part of the memory in the present. Recognizing that it is a shared past and not limited to the experiences of unrelated individuals, can help to construct a less bad world in the present.

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[12] Patacones and Lecop were two types of temporary currency that the federal government allowed the provinces to print during the economic crisis. Currency had been removed from circulation by the Federal Reserve for several years in order to maintain the Argentine peso's equivalency to the American dollar. When there was no longer sufficient cash in circulation to pay workers, the federal government authorized provincial temporary printing of currency that was intended to last only a few months when it could be turned in for 1.25 its printed value. The plan backfired when this currency flooded the market and led to inflation and the devaluation of the Argentine peso after the removal of President de la Rúa in December 2001.

Agresti's presentation of the collective imaginary in *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) gives his Argentine public an image of its own struggle to deal with the versions of its collective past. He addresses the version of the two devils that predominated when Isabel, one of the many victims of the *Proceso* seeks to help Lalo, a former member of the military, without any judgment of either of their pasts. He presents the ideas of "they must have done something," it was not for nothing, and it must have been for something when Sonia, Isabel, and Miguel read the letters between the two Jewish lovers that wish they could be anything other than Jewish in order to escape the meaninglessness in the horrors of the holocaust. He tackles the difficulty for Argentina's youngest generations born after the return to democracy to understand the past that has been ignored throughout the lifetime when Beba scolds her mother for not loving her father as much as she continues to love Cholo whom Beba thinks is pretending to be crazy because he does not love or want to remember Isabel. In Beba's view, Cholo is not worth any more of her mother's love than Beba's own father. He confronts the feelings of the generation deprived of parents because of the military dictatorship and its *Proceso* through Sonia's letter to her father, Cholo. Sonia tells Cholo that she loves him and he has always been a part of her life though he was never actually present. Though she does not know everything that her father experienced during his captivity, why he has never sought his family, or what he might be feeling now at their reappearance, she only wants him to be a part of their lives so that they can be a family after so much time and so many trials. Sonia's letter points out that the past cannot be truly recovered, but it presents the hope that in remembering at least portions of that past, though it may be difficult and painful, she, her mother, sister, and father can finally be a family.

Through the varied perspectives of his characters, Agresti brings together the various points of view of the Argentine social groups that they represent in a condensed time and place in order to present a more hopeful version of what was happening in Argentine society at the time of the film's release. As Argentines remember their collective past and replace the collective desire to willfully forget, they return to a collective memory that includes current events. This film (as well as the other one and the two novels) form part of a collective memory that obtains, collects, preserves, and recovers individual memories making possible an Argentina that overcomes past trauma. Agresti's hopeful filmic version of the recovery of the past does not ignore the personal struggles that the victims of that past have to endure. Instead of focusing exclusively on those struggles, however, Agresti gives his audience hope for a better, or "less bad," present and future if they will come together to face those struggles.

Agresti's fictional depiction of a single mother and her daughters in a small Argentine village in *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*) and its tie to the struggles that Argentine society faces in the present differs from Caetano's presentation of actual events, or as close as he could come to actual events, within one of Argentina's detention camps during the *Proceso* in *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) not only in time, place, and attempt at presenting realism, but in that Agresti's film is more hopeful in tone throughout and conclusion. Caetano's characters, based on real people, escape without any hope for a better future. These two filmmakers that are part of a movement that has sought to remind Argentines of their shared past and that they continue to share their present struggles, approach the questions of how to recover the past in different ways. These filmmakers, like the characters in their films and the Argentines in their audience, come to a different conclusion as they work to understand their shared past, both in its original context and by the continued affect it has had on the collective cultural memory. They, like the majority of their generation of filmmakers, contribute to the recovery of that collective cultural memory in Argentina. They, their films, and the New Argentine Cinema movement of which they are a part are results of their shared history, culture, and society. The films that they have made as a result of that shared past have also become representations and symbols for that culture, society, and history for their Argentine audience as it attempts to understand the collective process of remembering the past.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

The conversation and study of trauma in Argentina continues, including what exactly led to the military's Process of National Reorganization (*Proceso*) and how justifiable a response the *Proceso* was at the time. This dissertation looks to how four cultural artefacts restore memory rather than focusing on the historical recounting of the trauma itself. This restoration began in the mid 1990's and accelerated at the turn of the century. The intentional forgetfulness and purposeful ignorance during the 1980's and 1990's that was further spread with passing of laws that granted amnesty to military personnel and officials that had participated in the disappearance, torture, and murder of Argentine citizens during the *Proceso* had a lasting effect on that memory. The cultural trend of forgetful ignorance that it generated fragmented the collective memory more than the passing of time alone would have. In addition to affecting the collective memory in this way, this ignorance also led to the ignoring of the personal memories of those that had endured those past events to such an extent that it led to a cultural taboo that further inhibited the public discussion of the *Proceso*.

A cultural forgetting about the past continued among the majority of Argentines until the economic and political crises at the turn of the twenty-first century triggered the memories of older generations. The desire to move on from the fear of the *Proceso* led to the period of purposeful forgetfulness and intentional ignorance during the final decades of the previous century. The structure of ignorance quickly fell apart when economic and political conditions at the turn of the twenty-first century returned many to their memories of the past. The return of economic woes, political insecurity, and a growing mistrust of elected officials caused the Argentine collective memory to return to a time when a similar political and economic climate resulted in the final military takeover of the twentieth century in Argentina.

The revival in cultural memory that the subsequent presidency of Néstor Kirchner promoted helped to propel a new generation of novelists, filmmakers, and other artists that has focused on the memory of those horrors of the twentieth century and their continued effect on modern Argentine culture. This has in turn contributed to the continued discussion of memory in Argentina, both the memory of the past itself and how that memory affects the present. This resurgence of interest in the horrors of the past has generated a boom in the arts. This new artistic boom is led by that generation of novelists, filmmakers, and other artists that have been influenced by the larger societal cultural movement to again remember the past and the way it affects Argentine culture and society in the present. The evolution of this resurgence of memory that began in the mid 1990's with the coming of age of the generation of children of the disappeared and their formation of H.I.J.O.S. has, since the turn of the century, spread to the public sphere and influenced political movements and led to the creation of public space like the *Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos* (Memory and Human Rights Space) in the ex ESMA, one of the most famous of the military's detention camps during the *Proceso*.

Castañeda Hernández refers to the phenomenon of the influence of literature and the arts on memory, both individual and collective. She states that individual memory is something abstract, but that it can materialize in literature, as well as other art forms. Once the individual memory is thus materialized, it begins to affect the collective and cultural memory and become part of communication (118). The novels, *The Promised Hell: A Prostitute of the Zwi Migdal* (*El infierno prometido: una prostitute de la Zwi Migdal*) and *On a Same Night* (*Una misma noche*), and films, *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*) and *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*), discussed in this dissertation are a part of this process. The novels, films, and other forms of art and media that preceded them affected the collective memory and thus the individual memories of the novelists and filmmakers. The films and novels discussed herein have now also become a part of that collective memory and the individual memories of those that make up the collective and will thus affect future works.

This dissertation focuses on novels and films to show the ways that novelists and filmmakers have contributed to the restoration of memory in Argentina. The two principal methods employed to discuss memory have been to explore it in the past by presenting a story, either based on real events and the people that experienced them or completely fictional but set in the events of the past or set in the present with characters that seek to understand the events of the past. Within these two methods, novelists and filmmakers use various devices to help their audiences understand that the stories of the past should not be relegated to any single group, but they are shared by all.

Elsa Drucaroff uses the shared religious traditions of Jews and Christians, the two most prominent religious groups in Argentina, to show that even events of the past that occurred within a certain social group, in this case the white slave trade which involved members of the Jewish community in Argentina in the early twentieth century, are a part of the shared history of all Argentines. In addition to these religious parallels, Drucaroff intends the story of an imprisoned young Jewish woman that must leave her native country in disgrace, and then escape her brothel prison in Argentina to remind her readers of the horrors of the more recent past. Drucaroff presented this idea in an interview with *Página12*. She talked about the idea of "innocent victims" and the prevalent phrases in Argentina of "it was not for nothing" and "it must be for something." Drucaroff's tale is set many years before Argentina's last military dictatorship, but the story of imprisonment, abuse of power, and the hope of escape to a better life relates to all of the horrific events in Argentine history. Brizuela sets his story thirty years after the dictatorship when an event in the main character's present sets his thoughts back to similar events in the past. To Brizuela's readers, the story echoes recent circumstances in Argentina when political and economic troubles recalled to the collective memory similar situations years before that led to the military take-over that brought about the *Proceso*. By sending his audience into his character's process of obsessive remembering, Brizuela presents his Argentine readers their own collective processes that have resulted in the establishment of memory spaces, like the ESMA in Buenos Aires, and has led to a collective cultural mindset that seeks to more fully remember the past to never repeat its horrors.

The films discussed are also examples of the two methods of presenting the past. Caetano sets his film in the events of the past. His use of suspense and camera angles place his audience in the position of the captives themselves. In this way he not only gives the audience the physical perspective experienced by those captives in the military concentration camp, but also gives the audience the same sense of uncertainty experienced by the captives. This uncertainty and fear presents that audience with a vision of the very emotions that caused silence, forgetfulness, and ignorance in the decades following the return to democracy. Caetano's film, *Chronicle of an Escape* (*Crónica de una fuga*), delves into the depths of the fear and despair that kept Argentines from openly discussing the past that it portrays for decades. Agresti, instead of setting his film in the horrors of the past, presents the effects of the memory of the past in the present. In this way, Agresti presents a micro version of the national struggle to remember the past when current conditions reawakened those suppressed memories. The condition in Agresti's film, *A Less Bad World* (*Un mundo menos peor*), is the visit of a single mother and her two daughters to the small coastal village to find the lover and father they had believed long dead. Their visit revives past memories and the former identity of that lover and father that he has kept hidden. These women interrupt the peaceful ignorance that the villagers maintain and symbolize the economic and political troubles at the turn of the century in Argentina that recalled the conditions that led to the military take-over in 1976. Agresti presents his audience with a visual representation of its own struggles in remembering the past.

By way of conclusion, future studies may take the same theoretical approach to collective memory and examine how music and poetry function in a similar way to novels and cinema. Among Argentina's middle class, the most popular form of music is Rock. The Rock movement in Argentina, known as *Rock Nacional*, began in the 1960's and spans many genres of rock today. *Rock Nacional* has always addressed local issues and culture, a tendency that distinguishes it from the popular music of many other countries that tends to have more universally relatable lyrics. This focus on local society and culture brings *Rock Nacional* into the discussion of cultural memory.

The two ways of viewing cultural memory discussed in this dissertation, also appear in popular music. The song *Vuelos* by the alternative rock group Bersuit Vergarabat, debuted in 1999 on the band's *Libertinaje* album. The song is from the point of view of one of the victims of the "vuelos de la muerte" (death flights) and explores the feelings of that victim as he is falls to his death. In this way, the song explores the past in the past. In contrast, *Canción inútil* by the Argentine punk band Attaque 77, released on the *Radio Insomnio* album in 2002, explores the personal feelings of the band's generation that were children during the *Proceso* and now seeks to understand the past. The lyrics have a sense of self awareness in that they express the uselessness of the song itself. *Canción inútil* is an example of the cultural effects of the past in the present, as it presents the feelings of that young generation that knew about the disappearances during the *Proceso*. Though they were children at the time, by knowing and doing nothing, they feel some of the same feelings of guilt of the older generations. The song is self-aware in that it expresses the idea that though it may not be much, it is all that the group has to offer. Further investigation into the contribution of music to the recovery of Argentine cultural memory will further illuminate the shape of the recovery of cultural memory in Argentina.

A new generation of artists are exploring those parts of the past that have been hidden. This generation has taken the disjointed memories, their own and those of the collective, and linked them together into coherent and understandable versions of history.

The two principal ways of presenting these versions of history are to present a version of them in their original time and to show the ways Argentines deal with the recovery of the forgotten and ignored parts of the collective memory in the present. As their contributions become a part of the very culture that influenced them, they influence the collective cultural memory by filling in the spaces left by the intentional forgetfulness and purposeful ignorance. Their versions of memory become a part of the collective remembering of its own history as they create a public version of Castañeda Hernández's illusion of one continual series of events.

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