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PRESENCIAR EL PASADO

WITNESSING THE SPANISH AND ARGENTINE DICTATORSHIPS THROUGH FILM AND TELEVISION

by

Kristina L. Jacobs

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Latin American, Latino and Iberian Cultures in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2019

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Presenciar el pasado: Witnessing the Spanish and Argentine Dictatorships through Film and Television

By

Kristina L. Jacobs

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Latin American, Latino and Iberian Cultures in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Presenciar el pasado: Witnessing the Spanish and Argentine Dictatorships through Film and Television

by Kristina L. Jacobs

Advisor: Paul Julian Smith

This dissertation explores the ways in which recent (1999–2017) films and television series ask today's spectators to witness the 20th-century Spanish and Argentine dictatorships by analyzing these texts on both a narrative and technical level. I examine torture in the Argentine films *Garage Olimpo* (Marco Bechis, 1999), *Crónica de una fuga* (Andrés Caetano, 2006), and, from Spain, *La voz dormida* (Benito Zambrano, 2011). I also investigate the theme of disappearance as seen in two Spain-Argentina joint ventures, *Pasaje de vida* (Diego Corsini, 2015) and *Los pasos perdidos* (Manane Rodríguez, 2001), both of which portray how parental absence affects the children of the Argentine "disappeared" living in exile in Spain. I then assess how the relationship between sound and image appears as an unresolved tension in *El secreto de sus ojos* (Juan José Campanella, 2009) from Argentina and *La isla mínima* (Alberto Rodríguez, 2014) from Spain, as well as how these films appeal to spectators' senses beyond vision and hearing. Finally, I determine how today's viewers experience the past via current television dramas in the long-running Spanish series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Miguel Ángel Bernardeau, 2001–present) as well as in its Argentine adaptation (Patricia Moser and Gustavo Villamagna, 2017). I demonstrate how torture, disappearance, sensorial perception, and television correspond with four elements of spectatorship theory (masochism, suture, embodied spectatorship, and meta-witnessing) to provide a holistic viewing experience that appeals to mind and body, thereby overcoming the distancing effects of time and representation.

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INTRODUCTION

Presenciar el pasado: Witnessing the Spanish and Argentine Dictatorships through Film and Television

1. How to Witness Dictatorship?

The Spanish verb *presenciar* means "to witness" and, while its English translation emphasizes its visual nature (as in the term "eyewitness" or the phrase "seeing is believing" [Ellis 10]), the Spanish verb evokes the idea of presence, both physical and temporal. In this dissertation I explore the possibility that recent films and television series about dictatorship might connect past and present for their audiences. Both cinema and witnessing are related to seeing, making film an apt medium for experiencing the past. Yet, what happens when films ask spectators to *presenciar* historical events? More specifically, how do recent films and television shows (1999–2017) from Spain and Argentina invite viewers to witness dictatorship? This project examines the connection between four devices within spectatorship theory—the subbranch of film theory that refers to the relationship between the person watching a film and the film text itself—and films and television dramas that represent the dictatorships. I will assess how the cinematic audience in a democratic country deals with this past: how do spectatorship studies (applying film and television theory to a reading of audiovisual texts), inform a reading of the representations of state violence in these two regimes? In other words, how do feature films and television series ask today's spectators to witness the horrors of the past?

To answer these questions, I will consider recent films and series from Spain and Argentina on both the narrative and technical levels, examining how the devices they employ

affect the spectator's experience. This includes analyses of torture in Argentine films such as *Garage Olimpo* (Marco Bechis, 1999) and *Crónica de una fuga* (Andrés Caetano, 2006), as well as the disturbingly sexualized scene in Benito Zambrano's 2011 film of *La voz dormida*, an adaptation of Dulce Chacón's 2002 novel of the same name. I will also examine forced disappearance as seen in two Spain-Argentina joint ventures, *Pasaje de vida* (Diego Corsini, 2015) and *Los pasos perdidos* (Manane Rodríguez, 2001). Both of these films portray how disappearance influences the children of the disappeared living in exile in Spain. I will go on to evaluate how the relationship between sound and image, often as proof of violence, appears as an unresolved tension in Argentina's *El secreto de sus ojos* (Juan José Campanella, 2009) and Spain's *La isla mínima* (Alberto Rodríguez, 2014), as well as how those films appeal to other senses. Finally, I will investigate what I deem "meta-witnessing"—that is, how TV characters experience dictatorship on television—in long-running Spanish series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Miguel Ángel Bernardeau, 2008) and its Argentine version of the same title (Patricia Moser and Gustavo Villamagna, 2017).

I will attempt to show how the torture, disappearance, sensorial appeal, and meta-witnessing portrayed in these texts contribute to the viewer's experience of witness and how their accompanying theoretical components shed light on spectatorship today. Michele Aaron in *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking on* identifies the close relationship between the artistic and the political, revealing the importance of analyzing what it means to witness a film or TV show, particularly if that text portrays atrocity. Spectatorship theory evaluates how a viewer is involved in the viewing experience—however, witnessing violence via film or television adds another layer of interest because observing brutality in real life remains distinct from witnessing the

horror of history through media. Recent depictions of historical violence are a continuation of the fraught processes of collective remembering in Argentina as well as Spain.

2. History, Historical Memory, and Representation

Marked by widespread and often unchecked violence, the twentieth century's most oppressive political regimes shared the notion that a powerful, vigilant governmental force could unify a fractured nation. After years of turbulent political environments in Spain and Argentina, leaders promised a return to stability but established dictatorships where democracies might have taken hold. In these two countries, the resulting violence produced the kind of horrific material that would come to be represented in film and television during and after the dictatorships, coinciding with both memory booms and periods of stagnation in coming to terms with the past. In Spain, the trauma of Franco's dictatorship was also compounded by the brutal civil war that preceded it.

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) tore the country apart as Franco's troops gained steadily more territory within the recently-established Spanish Republic until, in March 1939, the Franquists captured Madrid, putting an end to the grisly conflict. As is well known, the war between Franco-supporting Nationalists and leftist Republicans often pitted friends, neighbors, and family members against each other. Throughout the war and in the early years of Franco's regime (particularly the first half of the 1940s, although the dictatorship ended only with Franco's death in 1975), the fascist government imprisoned and regularly executed the innocent in an attempt to purge leftist thinking. In contrast to Argentina (where justice was sought within the first months and years after the dictatorship), in Spain, one of the first political actions after

Franco's death was the implementation of what was later denounced by its opponents as the *pacto del olvido*, which promoted bilateral forgetting of past cruelties in order to move forward with the transition (Labanyi 93).

However, as Spanish cinema scholar Jo Labanyi argues, some films addressing the dictatorship were made even during Franco's regime, and several appeared in the 1980s that dealt with the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath (95). In 2000, the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica began excavating the mass graves of the victims of Francoism (Labanyi 95). A few years later, in 2004, Socialists were voted into power once more (they had already formed the government from 1982 to 1996), seeking to enhance the already-stoked interest in the past by passing the Ley de la Memoria Histórica in 2007 ("Ley de la Memoria Histórica"). This law promoted the rights of victims of the war and Francoist repression (Labanyi 96). The political shift of the mid-2000s was anticipated in the creation of films and series like *Cuéntame*, which began earlier in 2001 under the Partido Popular. This Socialist government lasted from 2004 until 2011 (Field and Botti 1), and in 2018 Pedro Sánchez of the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) returned control to the Socialists as a minority government in Parliament after the ousting of conservative Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy ("Mariano Rajoy"). The reemergence of the past continues with the fragile new government's plan to exhume Franco's tomb, a project initiated by the Socialist Zapatero administration but paused during the Rajoy period (Strange). Still, the proposal's divisiveness points to continued conflict around the proper response to the legacy of Franco and Francoism in Spain (Strange).

It was in 1976—the year after Franco's death—that the heads of the Argentine military ousted Juan Perón's widow, Isabel, in a coup d'état. This *junta* falsely promised stability after years of conflict between the government and leftist guerrilla groups and a chaotic split between

right-wing and left-wing Peronism. However, until democracy was reinstated in 1983, the military government fostered an atmosphere of fear and doubt, as thousands of violent guerrillas who opposed the *junta*—as well as innocent citizens who simply had leftist or intellectual leanings—were "disappeared": kidnapped, imprisoned, and often tortured and killed through methods such as death flights during which victims were drugged and tossed from airplanes into the Río de la Plata.

While the end of the Spanish dictatorship was marked by the *pacto del olvido*, after the Argentine dictatorship fell, those eager for justice set up trials and commissions such as CONADEP (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas) and the *Nunca Más* report, which detailed military crimes and the experiences of the disappeared (Lessa 9111). Despite president Raúl Alfonsín's early enthusiasm for justice, later in his term he abruptly terminated the trials of former regime officials and granted amnesty to low-ranking officers (Jiménez Frei). Then, in 1990, Alfonsín's successor Carlos Menem incited public backlash by pardoning previously-convicted officers (Jiménez Frei). Although public historical memory stagnated from 1990–2002, it was reinvigorated with the repeal of two laws, the Ley de Punto Final and Ley de Obediencia Debida, which had suspended prosecution against those accused of crimes during the post-dictatorship transition. In the 2000s, the left-wing populist Kirchner governments reemphasized the role of human rights and justice in the collective process of coping with Argentina's past (Lessa 9–11).

Running almost parallel to the Zapatero government in Spain, the two Kirchner administrations (Néstor [2003–07] and his wife Cristina [2007–15]) marked a shift from an official stance of forgiveness to one of memory and justice (Jiménez Frei). Néstor Kirchner, for example, removed the portraits of the dictatorship's generals from the country's military

academy, issued a formal apology for the state violence carried out by the *junta*, and designated the ex-ESMA (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada), site of a former clandestine prison, as an official historical monument and "Espacio Memoria y Derechos Humanos" (Jiménez Frei). Still, the memory boom is currently stalled as current president Mauricio Macri, a political conservative, recently cast doubt on the number of victims of the regime's violence. The disappearance of an indigenous activist following a police raid has also brought up memories of state terror (Jiménez Frei). Still, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (which originated long ago in 1977 [Taylor 186]) and their offshoot Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo keep the memory of victims alive as they continue their activism in the public sphere.

Both countries, then, have endured cycles of memory booms and, at other times, the rejection of that memory. The cinematic representations of the dictatorships analyzed in this dissertation roughly correspond with the leftist Zapatero and Kirchner governments, both of which affirmed the importance of remembering. Before this period, Spanish cinema around the time of Franco's death employed an allegorical, oblique style known as "the Francoist aesthetic," owing in part to censorship in such consecrated art films as *El espíritu de la colmena* (Víctor Erice, 1973) and *Cría cuervos* (Carlos Saura, 1976) (both of these starred child actress Ana Torrent as melancholy young girls). The many films on the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship made in the 1980s and 1990s were often audience-friendly literary adaptations such as *¡Ay, Carmela!* (Carlos Saura, 1990); meanwhile, Fernando Trueba's *Belle Epoque* (1992), a love story between one man and four sisters, foreshadows in a disturbingly comic tone the Spanish Civil War.

In Argentina, the end of the dictatorship in 1983 led to the production of films such as the well-known melodrama and original *desaparecidos* narrative, *La historia oficial* (Luis Puenzo,

1985), as well as *La noche de los lápices* (Héctor Oliveira, 1986). This second film follows parallel stories of students' political activities in the first narrative and their internment in a clandestine detention center in the second (Peris Blanes 5). These titles preceded a relative drought in cinematic representations of the dictatorship in the 1990s, as well as those portrayals treated in this dissertation, which correspond to the more memory-focused Kirchner era. Some of the older Spanish and Argentine works mentioned here, although outside the scope of this dissertation, resemble those of the modern period (since the year 2000) in genre or tone—seemingly providing an example from which the newer films may draw. And, while political environments in the early 2000s facilitated visibility regarding the dictatorships, these more recent depictions also reflect the fact that both Spanish and Argentine citizens continue to grapple with their collective past even decades after those regimes ended.

3. Justification and Framing of Thesis

Beginning just a year after Franco's death, Argentina's dictatorship continued the arc of destruction that characterized much of the twentieth century around the world. The South American nation was not isolated in its political instability, as several of its geographical neighbors also faced military dictatorships in the same period. Yet only Argentina began, chronologically, where Spain left off. And, as evidenced by the Spanish-Argentine coproductions treated in this dissertation, the traumatic histories of the two countries are inextricably linked due to waves of migration that flowed between them. Aside from their shared historical experience, the fact that both nations experienced heightened public awareness of the past in the 2000s distinguishes them from other Spanish-speaking countries: both Spain and Argentina suffered

under oppressive leadership but experienced a vast cultural production immediately following the dictatorships. This increased historical consciousness was manifested in literary, cinematic, and other artistic representations of authoritarianism. Yet relatively little has been written that compares Spanish and Argentine cultural production post-dictatorship, and despite the global presence of violent regimes in the twentieth century, films and series about the Franco and the *junta* are rarely compared.

While a comparison could potentially arise from the two countries' comparably prolific post-dictatorship film production processes or, alternatively, their similar developments in historical memory, this thesis will instead focus on the form and content of the audiovisual texts themselves. Their style, I will show, overcomes the potential perception gap caused by representation style (fiction film, which is arguably further from historical verisimilitude than documentary, for example) and the gradual forgetting that occurs over time. My emphasis on more recent works results from not only a need to look at these newer films and series, many of which have as yet received relatively little critical attention, but also the fact that they appear in a very different historical (and political, economic, cultural) moment than that of the event itself. The convergence of history, politics, and psychoanalysis, moreover, are condensed in the theme of trauma, and the traumatic event is experienced belatedly: as theorist Cathy Caruth argues in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*,

> the pathology of trauma cannot be defined in the event itself nor can it be defined in terms of a *distortion* of the event; rather, the pathology consists solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. . . . It is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points toward its

> enigmatic core: the delay or incompletion in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent form, absolutely *true* to the event. (4–5)

Because the time between the dictatorships and current representations has been filled with films, novels, and television series about Franco and the *junta*, it is this "repeated possession" of the traumatic event that allows the most recent representations to fully realize past trauma. Further, as Marianne Hirsch explains in "Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission," the belated perception of trauma also carries into the next generation since, for survivors, the time between generations is the "breach between a traumatic memory located in the body and the mediated knowledge of those who were born after" ("Marked" 72). Her concept of "postmemory," then, occurs when the source of a memory "is mediated not through *repetition* or *reenactment* but rather through previous *representations* that themselves become the objects of projection and recreation" ("Marked" 76). Although this theory relates to Caruth's argument that repeated possession creates true knowledge of the event, my project will focus more on film theory than trauma or memory studies.

My concentration on commercial, fiction films results from their tendency to appeal to the public while also possessing some artistic merit; therefore, they provide modern spectators who did not experience the original event with a comprehensive aesthetic and social experience. I have chosen here to analyze fiction films and television dramas that (with some slight exceptions, such as *Garage Olimpo*) bridge the gap between niche or art house productions and commercial cinema: several of these texts—in particular *La voz dormida, El secreto de sus ojos*, *La isla mínima*, and the two *Cuéntame* series—are intended for a wide audience but often contain interesting film techniques. I contend that the availability and familiarity of commercial

period and genre film brings the spectator a sense of reassurance that may be upended by the disturbing techniques of embodied spectatorship such as appeals to the senses. The aim, then, is to determine what happens when spectators are distanced from the event not only chronologically but also stylistically.

In addition to the specific focus on recent fiction films, this project departs from the traditionally historical and cultural approaches to cinema and TV by operating from the psychoanalytic framework of film theory: currently, no psychoanalysis-based comparison between films from the two countries exists. The need for this dissertation, then, arises from the lack of comparative research into Spain and Argentina's cultural production and the dearth of scholarly investigation with a film theory-based approach and a focus on close analysis. As I will show, the cinematic mechanisms described in this thesis manifest certain aspects of spectatorship theory. According to theorist Michele Aaron, spectatorship studies "bridg[e] the gap between spectator and viewer" (2). They evaluate how the audience is involved in the viewing experience, posing the possibility that the spectator might become "entangled, encompassed or even lost within the 'self' of the text" (Aaron 2). This dissertation concerns a conceptual spectator rather than a historical spectator, as a quantitative analysis of audience reactions remains outside the scope of this investigation. "Spectator" in this thesis also refers to anyone who watches a film or television series, whether in Spain, Argentina, or elsewhere. The problem of collective spectatorship will be addressed in the Conclusion to this dissertation, but in general I aim to expose the techniques of the films themselves and their connection with audience address rather than examining the historical effects they may have on empirical citizens. The subject of spectatorship will be explored in greater detail in later sections of this Introduction.

4. State of the Question

Cinema and television possess unique power in their close relationship with the public as well as their centrality to a nation's cultural discourse. As previously mentioned, substantial scholarly research has been dedicated to the cinema of Spain and to a slightly lesser extent that of Argentina; however, until now, most approaches to Spanish and Argentine film have been historical and cultural. With the exception of Marsha Kinder's *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, which appeals to a broadly psychoanalytic framework, studies from outside the Peninsula tend to be empiricist and textualist in approach and rarely incorporate film theory. Within Spain, the scholarly tradition has typically been historicist, while Anglo-American scholars generally focus on cultural studies. Some of these major titles in Spanish cinema studies include Sally Faulkner's *A History of Spanish Film: Cinema and Society 1910–2010*, the Ann Davies-edited *Spain on Screen: Developments in Contemporary Spanish Cinema*, and Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas' *Contemporary Spanish Cinema*. Nuria Triana-Toribio's *Spanish National Cinema* posits that late-1990s cinema steered away from nostalgia and more toward social realism—although this trend does not mean that historical films were completely forgotten. Paul Julian Smith, too, has studied recent Spanish film in *Spanish Visual Culture: Cinema, Television, Internet* and *Spanish Screen Fiction*, which also analyzes television.

Some of the Spanish films to be discussed here (*La isla mínima* and *La voz dormida*, as well as two Spain-Argentina coproductions, *Pasaje de vida* and *Los pasos perdidos*) have received fairly little scholarly attention, mostly owing to their recent release. I thus refer to accounts in the trade and general press in Spain, Argentina, and the United States. The recent *La*

isla minima, released in Spain in 2014, will be analyzed using a review by María Delgado in the international film magazine *Sight & Sound*, as well as the article "Crime, Knowledge and the Photographic Object in *La isla mínima*" by Tom Whittaker, which dissects the roles of photography and photographs in the film. *La voz dormida* has received slightly more attention in academia, including in an article by Belén Puebla Martínez, Zoila Díaz-Maroto Fernández-Checa, and Elena Carrillo Pascual titled "Los personajes femeninos bajo la mirada del cineasta Benito Zambrano: retrato de la mujer en *Solas*, *Habana Blues* y *La voz dormida*," which was published in the academic journal *Fotocinema.* Its authors posit that Zambrano's female characters distance themselves "en cierto modo, del clasicismo de la imagen femenina que pudiera estar integrado dentro del imaginario colectivo" (137); however, I will show the limits of this female agency. Jorge Nieto Ferrando's "Introducción al cine de ficción sobre la Guerra Civil como género cinematográfico. Terror, historia y melodrama" categorizes Spanish films about the war and dictatorship as their own genre and summarizes the influences of melodrama and horror in *La voz dormida.*

With regard to the two Spain-Argentina coproductions compared in the third chapter, an interview with the filmmaker and his father from the Argentine newspaper *Clarín* offers a glimpse into the production of *Pasaje de vida* and explores the real-life story behind the narrative, shedding light on the added layer of mediation (fiction) in the film. Another interview with Corsini, in the Argentine daily *Página 12*, further exposes the creative process behind the production of *Pasaje de vida*. Also, interviews from Argentina's *La Nación* and *Página 12* newspapers as well as from Spain's *El País* discuss Rodríguez's directorial intent in *Los pasos perdidos*. Hence, while these secondary sources are non-academic in nature, they do illuminate

the inspiration behind the fiction and demonstrate the directors' desire to create artistic representations while remaining somewhat faithful to real-life events.

Among general surveys of Argentine cinema, Joanna Page's *Crisis and Capitalism in Contemporary Argentine Cinema* (which places early twenty-first century films within a political and economic context and explores the relationship between public and private spheres) and Tamara Leah Falicov's *The Cinematic Tango: Contemporary Argentine Film* (a historical survey of Argentine cinema, with focused analyses of recent films) figure prominently. Two monographs, Gonzalo Aguilar's *New Argentine Film: Other Worlds* and Jens Andermann's *New Argentine Cinema* discuss in-depth the trend of the "nuevo cine argentino" of the 1990s, during which independent filmmakers such as Lucrecia Martel and Adrián Caetano (whose *Crónica de una fuga* will be discussed here) emerged. Although these works contribute important research to the area of Argentine film, the texts treated in them slightly precede mine.

In contrasts to my other titles, *El secreto de sus ojos*, has been more widely studied by scholars in such articles as "Perverse Fascinations and Atrocious Acts: An Approach to *El secreto de sus ojos* by Juan José Campanella" by Hugo Hortiguera. Hortiguera emphasizes Campanella's interest in "analyzing the way in which a democratic government starts to transgress the legal limits" (114), with a heavy focus on government impunity as well as the close-up rape scene that prevents a viewer from being able to forget the horror they have just witnessed (118). Ana Moraña's "Memoria e impunidad a través del imaginario cinematográfico: *La mujer sin cabeza* (Lucrecia Martel, 2008) y *El secreto de sus ojos* (Juan José Campanella, 2009)" points out the skeptical attitude toward justice and highlights genre elements in *El secreto de sus ojos*. Meanwhile, Adriana Bergero in "Estructuras emocionales y archivistas de la memoria en *El secreto de sus ojos*: Benjamín y la espera en solitario de Ricardo Morales" and

John Elster in "Emotions and Transitional Justice," both treat the theme of emotion in transitional justice, with Bergero focusing specifically on Campanella's film.

Crónica de una fuga and *Garage Olimpo* have often been studied in relation to the traumatic event (torture) that they depict, among other aspects. Federico Pous' "Política de una fuga. Memoria y subjetivación política en la representación cinematográfica del poder desaparecedor en Argentina" examines how recent films depart from traditional narratives of historical memory about the dictatorship. Maribel Cedeño Rojas in "Estética y estrategias narrativas del cine de terror y el thriller en *Crónica de un fuga* de Adrián Caetano" argues that the film emphasizes the staging of disappearance and torture through generic devices. Meanwhile, Parizad Dejbord Sawan's "Mirar o no mirar: La mujer como espectáculo en *Garaje Olimpo*" highlights the visual element of torture and the significance of the (male) look toward the tortured woman in Bechis' film. Other authors that tackle the text's gender theme include Rebeca Ulland in "Enforced Heteronormative Socio-Cultural Structures in *Garage Olimpo* and *Cambio de armas*" and Patricia Vieira, whose "Torture and the Sublime. The Ethics of Physical Pain in *Garage Olimpo*" also dissects its ethical dimension. Eduardo Jakubowicz and Laura Radetich in "Represión y desaparecidos: Las representaciones a través del cine argentino (1983–2005)" and Jaume Peris Blanes in "Desplazamientos, suturas y elusiones: el cuerpo torturado en *Tiempo de revancha*, *La noche de los lápices* y *Garage Olimpo*" also provide crucial context on the history of disappearance and torture in Argentine film. Finally, Amy Kaminsky analyzes the film's tension between the visible and invisible in "Marco Bechis' *Garaje Olimpo*: Cinema of Witness." In general, however, these articles identify the significance of clandestine imprisonment and torture on the levels of both form and content.

Although Spanish and Argentine film have been thoroughly studied, television has remained relatively undiscovered. Paul Julian Smith argues in "The Emotional Imperative: Almodóvar's *Hable con ella* (*Talk to Her*) and Televisión Española's *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (*Tell Me How It Happened*)" that the TV series is "directed to the home" and that television in Spain is meant to entertain and educate, although *Cuéntame*'s reliance on emotion is a form of cognition; that is, of learning about the world [371, 364]). In *Television in Spain* he also analyzes the long-running drama series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, which depicts Spanish society through the microcosm of the Alcántara family, who witness the transition from Francoism to democracy. While Manuel Palacio has written generally on Spanish television in *Historia de la televisión en España* and *Televisión durante la Transición española*, in which he refutes the *pacto del olvido* hypothesis by showing how television both documented the past and educated Spaniards on the new rights and responsibilities of democracy, in *Spanish Screen Fiction: Between Cinema and Television*, Smith argues more specifically for the reciprocal relationship between the two media. This project will assess several articles and book chapters about *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, which include Enrique Bordería Ortiz's "Los medios audiovisuales y la historia: memoria del franquismo y la transición en la serie *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," which provides necessary context on the series and its representation of Francoism. And while some scholars such as Smith (mentioned above) approve of the series' critical portrayal of the dictatorship, including Abigail Loxham in "*Cuéntame cómo pasó/Tell Me How It Was*: Narratives of Memory and Television Drama in Contemporary Spain," Diana Rey in "We the People Shall Inherit the Past: The Re-imagining of the Self Within Post-Francoist Collective Memory in the Spanish Television Series *Cuéntame cómo Pasó*," and Ana Corbalán in "Reconstrucción del pasado histórico: nostalgia reflexiva en *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," others such as Isabel Estrada in "*Cuéntame cómo pasó* o la

revisión televisiva de la historia española reciente" and José Carlos Rueda Laffond (in two co-authored texts, "Televisión y nostalgia. *The Wonder Years* y *Cuéntame cómo pasó*" with Amparo Guerra Gómez and *La mirada televisiva: ficción y representación histórica en España* with Carlota Coronado Ruiz), oppose what they view as *Cuéntame*'s nostalgic focus and lack of criticism of the regime.

In the realm of Argentine television, relatively little has been written. The work of Mirta Varela and Nora Mazzioti on Argentine television predate the 2000s era and cover themes distinct from my own. However, Laura Pousa and Eleonora Fornasari discuss *Cuéntame* as successful export to Portugal and Italy in "Tell the (Hi)story to the Nation. Two Transcultural Adaptations of the Spanish TV Series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*: *Raccontami* and *Conta-me como foi*." Looking more specifically at the Argentine *Cuéntame* that aired in 2017, Marcelo Stiletano's *La Nación* review, "*Cuéntame cómo pasó*: la historia argentina, según una típica familia de clase media," provides background on the series, although little else (including academic articles) has yet to be written about the show. In this analysis, while press sources provide evidence for reception, academic ones mostly fail to employ the psychoanalytic framework that I suggest in this dissertation, although they do provide some contextual background.

5. Theory: Overcoming "Percepticide"

This dissertation's assessment of how film theory informs a reading of current representations of dictatorship in Spain and Argentina will be based around four main themes associated with spectatorship: masochism (relating thematically to torture), suture (associated

with disappearance), sensorial perception—especially sound and image and their portrayal of the truth—and television's meta-representation. I argue that these techniques offer new ways of witnessing dictatorship. In this investigation, films and television series become their own "spectacle" (in Diana Taylor's sense of the term as a way for spectators to question their own innocence in violent events [xi]). This is accomplished through the texts' reproduction of horror, which is retroactively witnessed by spectators in a theater or at home. The public was perceptually blinded, as I will describe using Diana Taylor's theories below, in mid-century Spain and 1970s–80s Argentina; I question whether and how this blindness is converted into vision, hearing, and understanding when today's spectators watch films representing historical horror.

As previously mentioned, the potential perception gap that accompanies the passage of time and differing portrayals of atrocity parallels with Taylor's conceptualization of citizens' metaphorical blinding. In her investigation of the Argentine Dirty War, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Nationalism in Argentina's Dirty War*, Taylor highlights the visibility and invisibility of horror during the Argentine dictatorship: the *junta* used theatricality to terrorize its public through kidnapping and illegal, clandestine detentions (x). Taylor argues that the visibility-invisibility of the kidnapping methods employed by the *junta*, wherein the spectacle of kidnapping in public—one later echoed in the torture chamber—served to discipline citizens yet contrasted with the extreme invisibility of disappearance. The simultaneous transparency and concealment of injustice could also apply to Spain, however, as the imprisonment and execution of government enemies had both public (trial) and private (imprisonment) aspects.

This disciplinary process resulted in "percepticide," which Taylor defines as the perceptual blinding experienced when citizens are forced to ignore the horror happening around

them: in the percepticidic context, "dangerous" seeing needed to be avoided while cultivating a careful blindness (122). This practice left citizens silent, deaf, and blind; and the visibility of military violence illustrates that "the population was the intended target, positioned by means of spectacle" that disempowers people and makes all citizens complicit (Taylor 122–23). If the Spanish and Argentine regimes blunted public perception of their state terror, I contend that percepticide may be undone through cinema and, specifically, the techniques utilized by the texts analyzed in this dissertation, all to a greater or lesser degree.

As also previously mentioned, spectatorship deals with the relationship between a film and its viewer. Aaron's *Spectatorship* challenges the traditional notion of audience passivity, revealing the act of viewing as "an intrinsically politicized subject" (4) and proposing a "counter-model of spectatorship that locates the spectator's submission within an interaction of textual, social and psychic processes" (3). For Aaron, the masochism of film spectatorship manifests itself "between activity and passivity, between pain and pleasure, between submission and control"; the masochistic spectator's status as witness is thus similarly "strangely positioned but always . . . complicit" (61–62). A second concept, suture, is based on Kaja Silverman's conceptualization of Freud's *fort/da* game, which stages the disappearance and reappearance of objects within a child's reach (219).[1] Here the masochistic waiting of the *fort/da* game is replicated through the parental loss of disappearance; although the lost object is not recuperated, the truth (knowledge—received memories from others) becomes a substitute for the parent. My exploration of the relationship between sound and image considers which senses spectators may rely on to determine what the film represents as truth. Thomas Elsaesser contends in *Film*

[1] In Freud's anecdote a child tosses a cotton reel until it is out of sight (*fort* or "lost"), representing the absent mother; he then pulls it back in (*da* or "found") (Silverman 219).

Theory: An Introduction through the Senses that neither sense (sight nor hearing) is trustworthy, although both are needed (147), while in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* Michel Chion argues that certain aspects of film can be "transsensorial," a combination of two or more senses (136). Further, Laura Marks in "Thinking Multisensory Culture" and Jennifer Barker in *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* affirm cinema's ability to stimulate senses other than hearing and seeing. I will examine how the truth is represented and conveyed to be such, both within the film and for the spectator. The final theoretical topic treated in this dissertation, television, is based on John Ellis' argument in *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* that we are in an age of witnessing (that is, of seeing without the possibility of participation), and that witnessing has become a commonplace act endowed with "a new characteristic: liveness" (36), bringing those who experience the past via television closer to the original event. I also employ the work of Albert Moran, whose *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity* examines the influence of globalization on the television industry.

Each chapter of this dissertation will expand on one these four techniques, which allow for a closer relationship between spectator and cinematic or televisual text, drawing the viewer in and supplying the public with a perhaps previously-unknown knowledge of the past. Of course, memories are passed down from one generation to the next, a process that has inspired many theorists to coin neologisms to pathologize these remembering processes. The most significant to this project is Alison Landsberg's notion of "prosthetic memory": she asserts in *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* that cinema might be "imagined as a site in which people experience a bodily, mimetic encounter with a past

that was not actually theirs" (14). Landsberg then further outlines her definition of suture, stipulating its several criteria:

> First, they [prosthetic memories] are not natural, not the product of lived experience—or "organic" in the hereditary nineteenth-century sense—but are derived from engagement with a mediated representation (seeing a film, visiting a museum, watching a television miniseries). Second, . . . these memories, like an artificial limb, are actually worn on the body; these are sensuous memories produced by an *experience* of mass-mediated representations. . . . Also, prosthetic memories, like an artificial limb, often mark a trauma. Third, calling them 'prosthetic' signals their interchangeability and exchangeability and underscores their commodified form. (20)

Prosthetic memory thus allows spectators to approximate on a bodily level a previously-unknown experience; however, I also argue that characters within a film can use media as well as objects as prostheses to aid in the (re)construction of their identities.

6. Structure: Bringing Closer and Bringing Closure

My first three chapters deal exclusively with film, while the final section focuses on television. Chapters One and Two relate to the similar theoretical notions of masochistic spectatorship (in *Crónica de una fuga*, *Garage Olimpo*, and *La voz dormida*) and suture (in *Los pasos perdidos* and *Pasaje de vida*) which, although image-based, also demand the attention of spectators. These films encourage viewers to witness up close while occasionally employing the same techniques to accuse them of complicity. The more cerebral visuality of the first two chapters descends to the body in the third chapter, in which I describe how *El secreto de sus ojos*

and *La isla mínima* appeal to the audience's sensorial perception. Finally, the Spanish and Argentine versions of *Cuéntame cómo pasó* bring the dictatorship directly into the home, thus completing the approximating journey of these representations. I propose that the anti-percepticidic visual and aural understanding of embodied spectatorship (vis-à-vis film technique) heightens the collective conscience, repairing the loss of civil society suffered under dictatorship.

The first chapter will investigate how the masochism of spectatorship, as identified by Aaron, informs a reading of these films about torture. The scene of a woman's torture in Argentina's *Garage Olimpo* and Pepita's interrogation sequence from *La voz dormida* will be compared with the torture of men in *Crónica de una fuga*. I will discuss how films might implicate the spectator through the complicity of masochistic spectatorship and how the activity-passivity binary that is essential to masochism breaks down on both the narrative and technical levels. This chapter will also address gender, using close film analysis to establish how a female spectator, through the masochistic process of spectatorship, witnesses the process of torture onscreen.

I assert in Chapter Two that while torture may resemble the masochistic spectatorial experience, the concept of suture, whereby traditional representations of women as passive neutralize the psychic disturbance caused by film cuts, addresses another masochistic aspect of film spectatorship: namely, that masochism is "waiting in its pure form" (Aaron 60). Metz and Silverman have taken up Freud's *fort/da* game, which stages the disappearance and reappearance of objects within a child's reach. The potentially traumatic experience of this game approximates the practice of disappearance as seen in two Spain-Argentina coproductions, *Pasaje de vida* and *Los pasos perdidos*. Both films examine the ways parental absence affects the children of the disappeared living in Spain; they also explore the connections and shared history of the two

countries, between which transatlantic migrations took place before, during, and after both dictatorships. This second chapter assesses how, in these films, fresh evidence of the past lives of disappeared parents empowers the protagonists to reconstruct their identities and potentially transcend the time and space that separates them from their missing kin. This chapter also questions the relationship between film cuts and gender (if suture is conceptualized as inviting spectators to identify with male characters, who take on castration anxiety when they discover the lack of control exposed by film cuts) when the *fort/da* game is played out on a thematic level as well as a technical one.

The third chapter shifts from the masochistic experience of spectatorship to sense theory, examining the unresolved tension between sound and image in *El secreto de sus ojos* and *La isla mínima.* Both films deal with the rape and murder of young women, as well as the subsequent investigations that take place after the crimes are committed. Chapter Three explores what passes as legitimate proof of violence against women in these films, on two levels: what the characters, as well as the spectators, see and hear. I interrogate how truth is presented to the audience and portrayed as such within the fiction. This chapter also discusses how women's bodies are treated during and after male-perpetrated violence both within the diegesis and by the film form, addressing questions of perspective and point of view.

In many texts portraying the dictatorships, characters witness history through some kind of mediation—usually television. Chapter Four evaluates how today's spectators might witness characters' similarly-mediated experience of dictatorship, as spectatorship theory complicates contemporary spectatorship of episodes of the Spanish and Argentine versions of *Cuéntame cómo pasó*. This chapter analyzes the pilots of each series and later nonfiction episodes to determine how the two modes of representation that these series utilize, pedagogy and nostalgia,

differ in the way they present the past to modern-day viewers. In Chapter Four I will also consider how women—female characters as well as female spectators—are asked to witness historical events through television.

Finally, and as mentioned earlier, the main aim of this analysis is to uncover how four ideas—torture, disappearance, sensorial perception, and meta-witnessing shed light on the process of spectatorship today. Using the theories of Aaron (among others, including more traditional film theorists writing on masochistic spectatorship, suture, sensorial perception, and television), I will make close textual analyses of my corpus of audiovisual works to determine what it means for spectators today to witness historical atrocity through the artistic media of film and television. I will attempt to show that an often sense-based, embodied spectatorship reaches the collective level of morality. This dissertation will thus characterize the relationship between historical violence, artistic rendering of that horror, and spectatorship as a kind of anti-percepticidic process that amplifies, rather than magnifies, the horror of the past.

CHAPTER ONE

Masochistic Spectatorship and Representations of Torture in *Crónica de una fuga* (Adrián Caetano, 2006), *Garage Olimpo* (Marco Bechis, 1999), and *La voz dormida* (Benito Zambrano, 2011)

1.1 Introduction: Seeing is Believing?

The well-known poster for Marco Bechis' *Garage Olimpo* features a close-up of a young, blindfolded woman, with the film's title arranged over her covered eyes. The image points to a main theme in the film, and in this chapter—the contrast between blindness and seeing, and knowledge and ignorance. It highlights the literal blindness of the blindfolded prisoner, but also hints at the question of Argentines' blindness to the horrific acts of the dictatorship, which is potentially "percepticidic"—Diana Taylor's term for the perceptual blinding that occurs when a government uses fear to obligate its citizens to ignore the violence occurring around them (Taylor 122). In "Marco Bechis' *Garaje Olimpo*: Cinema of Witness," Amy Kaminsky likewise argues that this "iconic" image highlights the contrast between vision and blindness. Yet perhaps more significantly and paradoxically it also raises the question of gaining knowledge through sight, thus getting to the heart of the portrayal of torture in film: its relationship to spectators. The poster image further evokes the issue of activity versus passivity, as apparent passivity (kidnapping, torture, and murder) can potentially be redeemed through active spectatorship. This chapter explores the extent to which three films engage in masochistic spectatorship in two titles from Argentina (*Garage Olimpo* and *Crónica de una fuga*) and one from Spain (*La voz*

dormida). It analyzes the films' narratives but also includes shot-by-shot analyses of their techniques in order to comprehend the relationship between spectator and cinematic text.

Bechis' *Garage Olimpo* deals with the disappearance and torture of a young woman, María (Antonella Costa), who is kidnapped and brought to one of Buenos Aires' clandestine detention centers where she is imprisoned and tortured until finally boarding a "death flight" at the end of the film. Parallel to her story, the film also follows the narrative of her mother's attempts to free her daughter. An Argentina-Italy-France coproduction, it won several awards in Argentina, Italy, and at the Havana Film Festival ("*Garage Olimpo*," "*Garage Olimpo*: Awards"). In Caetano's 2006 *Crónica de una fuga*, soccer player Claudio Tamburrini (Rodrigo de la Serna) is also kidnapped, then imprisoned in a cavernous mansion on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Like María, he and the other prisoners are regularly tortured until they decide to make their escape. The film was well received, winning several Argentinean Film Critics Association Awards ("*Chronicle of an Escape*: Awards"). Zambrano's film version of the Dulce Chacón novel *La voz dormida* (2011) also received multiple awards in Spain—including three Goyas—and abroad ("*The Sleeping Voice*: Awards"). It follows the struggles of Pepita (María León) as she deals with the imprisonment of her activist sister Hortensia (Inma Cuesta), and the economic hardships of the post-Spanish Civil War era. Although torture appears in all three works to some extent, the depiction of it varies from film to film.

How much horror do spectators see, and how does the film present it? How do the mechanisms of film (namely the masochistic play between dominance and submission—both within the film and in the spectators' experience while watching it) urge people to view torture in one way or another? How might film technique implicate the spectator through the complicity of masochistic spectatorship? That is, how do the films I treat in this chapter—*Crónica de una fuga*

and *Garage Olimpo* from Argentina, as well as *La voz dormida* from Spain—ask spectators to witness? This chapter will apply film theory on masochism to analyses of torture scenes in order to assess the potential relationship between torture (on the level of narrative) and masochism (on the level of spectatorship, as influenced by the films' technique). In her overview of spectatorship studies, Michele Aaron defines masochism as the "pleasure of unpleasure," an "active desire played out through passivity" (52). Aaron's definition will be explained in more detail and applied to the films in later sections. Thus, the tension between vision and blindness is enhanced by the similarly-fraught relationship between activity and passivity for both characters and spectators. Adjacent to the activity-passivity binary lies the notion of agency, or the capacity of individuals to act; the enforced passivity of prisoners denotes their lack of agency.

More technically, while in the Argentine films to be discussed here (*Garage Olimpo* and *Crónica de una fuga*) the torture occurs offscreen, the brutal interrogation of the main character, Pepita (María León) in the Spanish *La voz dormida* enables spectators to (almost) fully witness this violence. While torture could be considered a somewhat broad category—where does cruel treatment end and torture begin?—for these purposes, it will refer to pain inflicted with the ostensible intent of extracting information but the implicit desire to bring pain and humiliation, carried out in a regime's private space where a victim has been taken against his or her will. This chapter will take into consideration the films as a whole but will also provide a more in-depth analysis of the torture scenes that appear in each film. It will, moreover, address the torture of women in *Garage Olimpo* and *La voz dormida* and of men in *Crónica de una fuga*. As we shall now see, portrayals of the horrors of the dictatorships have evolved over the years, especially in Argentina.

1.2 Context: Cinematic Representations of Dictatorship and Torture through the Years

In Argentina, there have been three phases of post-dictatorship cinematic production, as suggested by Eduardo Jakubowicz and Laura Radetich in "Represión y desaparecidos: Las representaciones a través del cine argentino (1983–2005)" and Jaume Peris Blanes in "Desplazamientos, suturas y elusiones: el cuerpo torturado en *Tiempo de revancha*, *La noche de los lápices* y *Garage Olimpo.*" Jakubowicz and Radetich argue that a period of collective memory and collective catharsis at the end of the military dictatorship as exemplified by *La historia oficial* followed the end of the dictatorship. Films such as La *noche de los lápices* ushered in the era of "memoria ejemplar," in which "mostrar las torturas pero no la muerte es una estrategia fundamental para la elaboración de esta forma de memoria crítica que pone el acento en el futuro" (Jakubowicz and Radetich). This phase was, according to the authors, facilitated by the judicial processes of the late 1980s (Jakubowicz and Radetich).

The second stage initiated by the pardons of the late 1980s and early 1990s was one of "exceso de pasado," "olvido selectivo," and "tiempo de duelo"—an era of saturation (Jakubowicz and Radetich). In the mid-1990s, the creation of HIJOs (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio), the nulling of illegal adoptions, and the twentieth anniversary of the *golpe de estado* brought about a "quiebre" that initiated a new phase, marked by a new perspective and a new way of constructing meaning (Jakubowicz and Radetich). Scholarly criticism of Bechis' film focuses mostly on its (lack of) torture and on gender issues. As Jakubowicz and Radetich state in their previously-mentioned article, *Garage* belongs to the post-1996 era of Argentine filmmaking about the dictatorship, which departed from the collective catharsis and "exceso de pasado" of earlier eras. *Garage*'s lack of visible violence thus

highlights its figurative "agujeros" rather than suturing them: the film refuses to close the gaps (Peris Blanes 8). Further, Kaminsky highlights the depiction of torture through sound and the paradox that the light of the sunny outdoors does not illuminate: the people outside are ignorant of what happens in the darkness of the clandestine prison.

Peris Blanes further argues that this period (of which *Garage* is an example) embodies the "agujeros de la representación" (7): films of this era were full of ellipses and offscreen allusions (Peris Blanes 8–9). These three phases were initiated by historical events—the end of the dictatorship, testimonies, and the pardoning of those who committed acts of state terrorism, respectively. In "Política de una fuga. Memoria y subjetivación política en la representación cinematográfica del poder desaparecedor en Argentina," Federico Pous similarly defines the three stages of post-dictatorship cinema: the founding narratives of the 1980s, memory boom in the late 1990s and "monumentalization" (the period in which the government acknowledged the memory of the dictatorship with public monuments) in the 2000s and 2010s (676).

Meanwhile, in Spain the Ley de la Memoria Histórica in the 2000s injected new life into representations of Francoism through cinema and other artistic work. The political shift represented by the 2007 memory law was perhaps foreseen in the creation of films and series like *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, which as previously mentioned began in 2001 and continues to the present. While Argentina experienced several periods of filmmaking production post-dictatorship, Spain's Francoist aesthetic has been followed by a mostly homogeneous filmmaking style in which new films about the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship often draw on older ones, thus generating their own historical genre (Ferrando Nieto 806). Both countries, then, experienced heightened public awareness of the past in the 2000s.

1.3 Theory: Spectatorship and Torture

Parizad Dejbord Sawan declares in "Mirar o no mirar. La mujer como espectáculo en *Garaje Olimpo*" that the Bechis' film emerged from the depoliticized Nuevo Cine Argentino: while films tended to be more political in the 1980s, filmmakers in the 1990s eschewed the political impulse in favor of less controversial themes (251–52). However, she builds on Gonzalo Aguilar's argument that in reality new filmmakers had simply redefined "lo político" (Dejbord Sawan 252). Dejbord Sawan contends that more recent films shy away from the didacticism of earlier films. For this reason, for example, *Garage* avoids the overtly political message of *La historia oficial* (Luis Puenzo, 1985) as well as the subjective camera angles of *La noche de los lápices* (Héctor Olivera, 1986) (Dejbord Sawan 252–53). Spanish cinema of the early 2000s was slightly behind Argentina in this trend, as it moved away from nostalgic looks at the past and toward a kind of social realism (Triana-Toribio 153–55). Filmmakers in both countries, then, were redefining how political themes could be conveyed cinematically.

How do these films redefine "lo politico" on a technical level? How do they present torture to spectators? As previously mentioned, one of the most important aspects of film technique is the relationship between film text and spectator. In *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking on* Michele Aaron positions Freud's "conservative" view of masochism as passivity (related to female weakness) against more active models proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Theodor Reik. Still, even Freud suggested that the child in the *fort/da* game actively "pre-empts displeasure, staging sadness and joy before they are imposed on him" (Aaron 59). Film, according to Aaron, can even heighten a spectator's sense of survival when we witness near-death experiences onscreen (56).

Aaron further argues that witnessing violence onscreen is potentially a masochistic act: for her, spectatorship is the “pleasure of unpleasure” (58) that manifests itself not as a perverse investment in feeling pain, but rather a “perverse” pleasure in indulging in a fantasy of pain (60). This chapter does not suggest that torture is masochistic, but that the fantasy of pain, anticipation, and pleasure of unpleasure that spectators may experience while witnessing torture onscreen mimics the struggle between activity and passivity in masochistic spectatorship. In other words, the experience of narrative comes to resemble the experience of spectatorship. Citing Deleuze, Aaron notes that masochism is “waiting in its pure form”: here, the anticipation of pain—not just the wait being over—heightens pleasure (60). Thus, films can reenact the masochistic process by creating suspense (60). At the same time, however, educated spectators who have spent a lifetime watching movies know what to expect. For this reason,

> often overlooked is the grounding of suspense in predictability, in the heightening of tension through the waiting for something expected and not unknown. In other words, what is often overlooked is its emphatic correspondence to masochism. Suspense, then, further normalizes or popularizes masochism; it gives masochism a (narrative) method. It also reveals much about the machinations of spectatorship, for where masochism can be attributed to the experience of both characters and spectators, suspense is spectatorial. (Aaron 71)

The spectator’s knowledge arises from elements of the narrative (for example, characterization), the spectatorial (shot selection, perspective) and the industrial (genre, commercialism) (Aaron 72). Therefore, the masochistic spectatorship experience depends in great part on the spectators’ pre-knowledge of cinematic conventions.

Much like Deleuze, Reik similarly figures masochism as the desire for the idea of pain rather than its actuality (Aaron 60). So, while for Freudians the other actor in a masochistic relationship is a sadist, for Reik and Deleuze he or she is just another performer (61). This other person holds a "fictitious" power because the sadist's desire—lack of consent—conflicts with that of the masochist, who necessarily grants permission to receive pain (Aaron 61). According to Reik, the masochist requires "witnesses to his pain and degradation" who, in the cinematic context, Aaron defines as spectators (62). Aaron elaborates on the cinematic witness, asking, "Who, after all, is this dramatization of masochistic pleasure for? Who 'pays for' the suspense, the fantasy of pain, the disavowal of activity? Who looks on in rapt attention, seated, silenced, watching the overtly dramatic strategies play out?" (63). This spectatorial witnessing takes on another significance when spectators witness torture (albeit secondarily, through representation rather than direct contact with the event) in films about dictatorship.

Along these lines of witness and seeing, Aaron also addresses Gaylyn Studlar's theories on masochistic spectatorship in cinema. The *Spectatorship* author casts Studlar's ideas as insufficient for today's media landscape, stating that they generally follow what Aaron views as Freud's conservative model, even though Studlar focuses on male masochism. However, Aaron does emphasize Studlar's point that masochism "obsessively recreates the movement between concealment and revelation, disappearance and appearance, seduction and rejection, in emulation of the ambivalent response to the mother who may either abandon or overwhelm the child" (Aaron 70). This vacillation between the visible and invisible will connect with the tortured subjects depicted in the three films to be discussed here as blurred, darkened, and truncated bodies alternate with shots of exposed body parts in all three films.

Some theorists who write more directly on torture itself without treating film highlight a similar tension between the visible and invisible. Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* deals with the concept of torture rather than spectatorship. In this text, Scarry connects the concepts of torture and blindness or, alternatively, vision. She marks the stark separation between torturer and victim: "for the prisoner, the body and its pain are overwhelmingly present and voice, world, and self are absent; for the torturer, voice, world, and self are overwhelmingly present and the body and pain are absent" (46). This chapter argues that the films discussed make the body and pain of spectators "overwhelmingly present," marking them as not just witnesses but rather victims themselves. Scarry touches on the importance of visually witnessing torture in arguing that "to have pain is to have *certainty*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*" (13). But here, the connection between victim's body and spectator's body becomes more immediate. If "in order to express pain one must both objectify its felt characteristics and hold steadily visible the referent for those characteristics" (Scarry 17), what happens when torture occurs offscreen or is shown only partially? What does it mean to only witness the results of torture (scabs, marks, sunken eyes, and sudden thinness): is this also witnessing?

As mentioned earlier, this chapter will analyze what it means for today's spectators to experience torture onscreen, examining the relationship between activity and passivity for both the characters in the film and its audience as well. It will take into account the theories of masochistic spectatorship described by Aaron and Scarry and consider how the passivity and activity in relationships between characters, and in representations of torture, resembles the power dynamics in masochistic spectatorship. The anticipation of pain in masochistic spectatorship—based on a pre-knowledge of genre structures—also enters the analysis, as these films contain generic tropes that warn educated spectators of what to expect, thereby heightening

their anticipation. Other aspects of masochism seen here include the decision to be passive, in which the activity is inherent; the pleasure of unpleasure (often accomplished through the incorporation of genre elements), and the play between visible and invisible.

1.4 *Crónica de una fuga*: Activity and Passivity, Unbalanced

In *Crónica de una fuga*, minor league soccer player Claudio Tamburrini is kidnapped and taken to the Mansión Seré on the outskirts of Buenos Aires for suspected terrorist activity. There, he and his fellow captives are held together in one of the mansion's bedrooms, often naked, always blindfolded, and usually chained to their cots. They are routinely tortured, as evidenced by the many sores and bruises that mark their bodies. After one of the facility's guards humiliatingly "mops" clean Claudio's friend Guillermo, played by Nazareno Casero (the guard runs a dirty mop over the man's body, promising that the act will literally and figuratively clean him up), they decide to escape. One stormy night the men jump out the window, crawl off the mansion's grounds, and hide in a shed until it is safe to emerge. The film is based on real events, as established by an epilogue explaining the current lives of the four escapees. Despite *Crónica*'s emphasis on the escape referenced in its title, the film's main focus, and the basis of this analysis, will be its depiction of imprisonment and torture.

This section is structured around the tension between activity and passivity on both the narrative and technical levels. Within this analysis, it will address the relationship between blindness and vision, as well as other elements of the film such as its focus on the body and scars, sound, and techniques that may foster identification with the characters. The prisoners' escape evidently and finally gives them agency, although there are passive elements of the

narrative that undercut this activity. The tension between activity and passivity is replicated on the level of technique, meaning that spectators' occasional activity is tempered by passivity at other moments in the film.

While the text mostly portrays evidence of torture through the men's marked bodies, there is only one scene of explicit torture: a long *submarino* sequence (the *submarino* was a method of torture during which the prisoner's head was repeatedly held underwater, causing him to nearly drown) and Guillermo's previously-mentioned mopping scene. Despite the infrequent portrayals of explicit torture in the film, traces of the men's near-constant beatings are apparent on their bodies in the forms of welts, dried blood, and other marks. And while the film shows little of the actual torture, its techniques sometimes require both activity and passivity on the part of the spectator. The play between the visible and invisible in these scenes demonstrates Studlar's view that masochism is a game between the seen and unseen. Showing small elements of the torture also teases the spectator, heightening anticipation. This element of the film has to do with its utilization of horror and thriller tropes to ratchet up the tension, although the use of genre—and the (problematic) pleasure that goes along with it—will also be debated here. The film engages masochistic spectatorship most of all by employing techniques that emphasize anticipation and the fantasy of pain.

On the level of narrative, the prisoners in *Crónica de una fuga* decisively resist the challenging authority of the regime by escaping their imprisonment. Indeed, as Pous points out the male characters finally transform weakness into the agency of escape (686). The only other example of narrative activity is during a scene in which the men think they are about to be killed: the guards ask them for one last wish and Guillermo, the bravest of the group, asks to see the faces of the men who will execute him. Rather than allow this apparent impropriety, Huguito

(Pablo Echarri) shoots up the ceiling, forcing the still-blindfolded prisoners to dive onto the floor. Any kind of activity on the part of the prisoners is either punished (as in this scene) or limited (for example, their habitual removal of their blindfolds, which occurs each time a guard leaves their room).

The majority of the film deals with the men's kidnapping, imprisonment, torture, and forced nudity and blindfolding. Their activity is sometimes even challenged in gendered terms—as when one of their captors, Lucas (Diego Alonso Gómez) refers to the men with feminine pronouns and tells the prisoners to treat the "new girl" (a new captive) well. The "happy" ending brought about by the escape and the group's subsequent freedom is tempered by the film's epilogue, which reveals that all of the men escaped to other countries or, in the case of Vasco (played by Matías Marmorato), were recaptured. Gallego (Lautaro Delgado) moved to Spain and never returned to Argentina, and the military burned the mansion to remove all evidence of its use as a clandestine detention center. Still, several of the men testified against the military *junta* in 1985. Although not part of the epilogue, in 2000, the Casa de la Memoria was opened as an "espacio de la memoria" where the Mansión Seré once stood (Cedeño Rojas 59–60). And while the film ends on a positive note, the final image—of a gaunt, bloody Claudio waiting for the bus after his escape—reaffirms the damage that has been done. This includes the negative effects on the Argentine public as well: the film is bookended with images of Claudio giving up his seat on the bus to a pregnant woman at the beginning and the same woman, holding a baby and staring disapprovingly at the disheveled Claudio, at the end.

This final image reinforces the percepticidic effects of the dictatorship's tactics; it also demonstrates the perceptual blindness the public suffered. The figurative blinding parallels with the prisoners' more literal blindfolding. However, there is a constant "juego de las miradas"

(Pous 685) at play in the film, which is accentuated by the way the detainees continually remove and replace their blindfolds. The men are able, for brief durations, to suspend their blindness. This act simultaneously connotes agency (the action of taking the blindfolds off) and domination (the obligation to put the blindfolds back on so as not to be caught without them). At one point, Lucas even tells Gallego to remove his blindfold but he at first refuses to open his eyes, seemingly out of fear. The play of removing and replacing the blindfolds hints at the tension between activity and passivity. This tension, however, mostly plays out on the level of technique and how the spectator witnesses the film. It centers on the relationship between vision and blindness and, peripheral to that, sound, as well as a focus on the body and its scars.

The activity-passivity binary collapses in masochistic spectatorship, a process aided by increased tension and the associated incorporation of genre elements. In a scene where Claudio helps the guards cook breakfast, he appears to consider escaping by grabbing the keys to the guards' car, which is parked outside. Here, the music's discordant and repetitive tones, medium close-ups of Claudio's grinding jaw muscles, and alternating shots between Claudio, Gallego, Lucas (who is watching soccer on television), and the keys to the potential escape vehicle, all create a tense atmosphere. They also relate to Aaron's notion of masochism as "waiting in its pure form" (60). Much of the film's sense of anticipation is accomplished through the incorporation of tropes from horror and thriller films. Maribel Cedeño Rojas in "Estética y estrategias narrativas del cine del terror y el *thriller* en *Crónica de una fuga* de Adrián Caetano" identifies this scene as reliant on thriller characteristics.

Cedeño Rojas contends that Caetano's film eschews violence in favor of emphasizing staging and the use of genre cinema (horror, suspense, thriller) to tell a history (48). According to this author, evidence of horror tropes in the film includes the setting (an atmosphere of darkness,

rainstorms, and a “haunted” Gothic and labyrinthine house), narrative (the main character’s removal from his normal life and belated discovery of the reason why), tone (paranoia), and technique. The mansion itself is even presented as a kind of horror house (Cedeño Rojas 53). Establishing this dwelling as the setting for the film’s gruesome action and employing familiar music cues notify spectators that they can expect to see horror movie tropes in the film. Most importantly, the Dutch angles (off-kilter shots) employed here and chaotic, handheld-style camerawork, reinforce the sinisterness of the events taking place (Cedeño Rojas 51–56). The author further posits that this angle, used both for victims and victimizers as well as the house itself, suggests abnormality, disorientation, and “locura” (54). The use of this “plano característico del género de terror” (Cedeño Rojas 52) inserts the viewer into the position of the camera, as an off-kilter shot in a turbulent scene is more authentically spectatorial than a level shot. This technique demonstrates Aaron’s notion (citing Deleuze and Reik) that anticipation is a key element in masochism. Knowing what to expect because of such stylistic cues heightens the pleasure of waiting.

The motif of the escape itself is, as Cedeño Rojas points out, also reminiscent of the thriller genre. Claudio’s removal from his normal life, the film’s pervasive feeling of suspense (in the kitchen scene, for example, which is also part of horror films) and paranoia where even the prisoners cannot trust each other point to the thriller genre as well (Cedeño Rojas 61–65). The parallel editing at the beginning of the film, in which scenes of Claudio’s kidnapping are interspersed with images of his mother’s brutal interrogation, is further evidence of Caetano’s drawing on thriller tropes (Cedeño Rojas 62). *Crónica de una fuga*’s heavy reliance on genre relates to Aaron’s theory that the spectator’s knowledge is derived from a combination of aesthetic, spectatorial, and industrial aspects (72). It further demonstrates that this foreknowledge

amplifies the tense atmosphere of the film, which intends to provoke the same feeling in the spectator. The use of the horror and thriller genres will be discussed later in conjunction with the use of melodrama in *La voz dormida*.

The masochistic effects of the tension created by horror and thriller tactics are also apparent in the film's use of sound and music, as I previously alluded to. In the kitchen scene, discordant and repetitive piano chords alternate with a fast-tempo piano lick and rhythmic chiming noises, creating an ambiance of fear and danger. When the men are forced to kneel and "pray" in the hallway and are vigorously beaten by the guards, we hear music reminiscent of horror film scores—with a constant chiming sound—as we see a twirling shot of a dark staircase that eventually fades to black, perhaps stimulating the spectator to ask what else could be happening in this house. Other instances of horror music include Tano's injection and procession out of the house (presumably to his death). Here, sustained minor chords are overlaid with discordant, chimey piano music. The tension-creating music in these scenes contrasts with the lack of music in the *submarino* scene and the plodding, melodic piano tune heard during Guillermo's mopping scene—at these two moments the horror is not in the future but already arrived.

While music can be used to create atmosphere, sound more generally can also represent unseen violence: when the captors beat Claudio and torture him with the *picana* during his initial interrogation, the camera is fixed on the captors—however, the sounds of the blows, electric shocks, and Claudio's screams are audible. A shaky, documentary-style shot shows Huguito and two other guards, while we hear the sound of the *picana* mechanism at work and Claudio's cries. Another guard chuckles to himself, as Huguito, unsatisfied with Claudio's responses, asks, "¿Vamos de nuevo?" When Claudio is unable to tell Huguito his contacts, a frustrated Alemán

(Daniel Valenzuela) searches for new victims in the mansion's other bedrooms, as Claudio's cries remain audible. The refusal to show Claudio's torture here differs slightly from another torture scene, the *submarino*, where the spectator has some access to the victim's suffering but is kept slightly at a distance through the film's lack of subjective shots.

In the *submarino* sequence, Claudio and Tano are taken to a bathroom, where their heads are repeatedly dunked into a bathtub. The torturers demand that Claudio confess his association with a known terrorist, but he denies knowing the man, desperately crying, "¡No sé quién es! ¡No sé quién es!" As his head is submerged, the voices of the torturers surrounding him become muffled, offering a kind of sonic subjectivity. Obligating the spectator to experience the victim's sense of hearing fosters a physical, sense-based appeal to the spectator's own body. There are also shots from the side of his head underwater. Aerial views of the scene establish power relations: the two prisoners appear small in the background while the torturers take up most of the foreground space. Contributing to this feeling of diminished size and stature, the bodies of Claudio and his fellow prisoner are truncated so only their torsos are visible while the full bodies of most of the torturers can be seen clearly. The semi-invisibility of their bodies demonstrates the relationship between the visible and invisible, which Studlar proposes as a key element of masochistic spectatorship. The scene lacks traditional point-of-view shots but does foster some kind of identification with the victim through close-ups and underwater shots.

Claudio's torture draws attention to the film's focus on the body, as well as other issues of visibility and invisibility and activity and passivity. On the level of technique, resistance remains elusive for these characters—at least early in the film and despite their escape later on. The physical diminishment of the prisoners' partially-visible bodies in the *submarino* scene highlights this passivity, while the fact that they are forced to kneel and have their heads

submerged repeatedly in water underscores their victimhood. Both agency and activity are restricted by the captors, who limit sensorial perception in the film as well. A head being dunked underwater, for example, limits aural perception, while blindfolding prevents vision.

While the film mostly avoids depicting torture, it also refuses to portray the unaccustomed spectacle of male nudity: although the prisoners are naked for most of the film, the lack of lingering shots on their bodies, use of shadows, and—during the escape—the men's covering of their groins with their hands all tend to obscure the view of their genitals. As with *Garage*, to be discussed in the next section, men's bodies are exposed in the sense that they are technically naked while remaining covered in that their genitals tend to be hidden by shadows or the men's hands as they cover themselves in modesty; sometimes the camera shot eliminates the lower halves of their bodies completely. The camera typically only shows the men's full naked bodies when necessary, as when they are lined up for an interrogation.

This lack of lingering shots on their bodies reaffirms the film's lack of interest in what we might call the "male spectacle." It does, however, foster a certain identification between the spectators and the characters. What it does focus on in terms of the prisoners' bodies are the many scars that accumulate on their bodies as a result of torture. These marks are visible on the men's bodies throughout the film, such as the large welts seen on Claudio's back in a lingering shot of him lying on the floor after the *submarino.* Other wounds are evident on all the captives' bodies at various other points in the film—including during their escape and in the cooking scene. At one point, there is a voice-over narration by Juez (Guillermo Fernández), who tells Guillermo that the guards decide whether to kill him or let him go. What we see at this point is a close-up of Guillermo's badly beaten face as the camera slowly pulls away from this horrific image. While spectators are deprived of knowing the source of the scars, they are forced to

actively imagine what happened, perhaps unconsciously asking themselves, “What am I not seeing?”

The almost casual manner in which the film depicts this physical trauma (the only time the camera focuses on the wounds directly is in the shot of Guillermo’s face) in some way paradoxically draws attention to them via incongruity—in the breakfast scene, for example, a tranquil, domestic mise-en-scène is interrupted by the grisly sight of Claudio’s many scars. These traces of violence also offer a port of entry to the world of torture: while most spectators have not experienced the brutal interrogations endured by the film’s characters, they may well have acquired scars, bruises, and other marks of pain in the course of their lives. Thus, while they may not identify with the characters if they only witnessed the extraordinary event of the torture itself, the focus on scars highlights the commonality of everyday life between spectators and characters.

The film’s technique brings the spectator close to the action while avoiding full-on identification with the victims. Close-ups of Claudio spitting out water after having his head dunked in the bathtub and of Guillermo’s bloody, battered face encourage the spectator to witness up close the horror of the dictatorship. The sonic subjectivity in the *submarino* scene, in which the spectator experiences one sense (hearing) as the victim does, is balanced with the more distancing technique of placing the camera underwater. The spectator thus experiences another sense (sight) through the eyes of a witness, not a victim. Here, also, the camera goes in and out of focus and roves around the scene almost arbitrarily as if searching for something. The camera’s inquisitiveness highlights the notion that torture is ineffective at soliciting the truth (in this scene Tano [Martín Urruty] lies to the guards, claiming that Claudio is a revolutionary; the camera’s constant movement emphasizes that the much sought-after truth is nowhere to be found

in this scene). But the camerawork also mimics the chaotic, disorienting feeling of the *submarino* while still distancing the spectator somewhat through the lack of subjective shots.

The film's only subjective shot from the point of view of a victim is a 90-degree Dutch angle shot of Lucas entering the prisoners' room, mimicking the view of the prisoners who are lying horizontally in bed. It appears to be from the viewpoint of Claudio, who is lying chained to his cot. However, at several other moments the camerawork points to the men's passivity through overhead shots of them handcuffed to their beds and a high-angle shot of the *submarino*. While the men talk while handcuffed to the beds, they are shot from an aerial perspective—the perspective of a victimizer who in later scenes stands over them in a display of dominance. This dominance is also on display in the mopping scene, which is shown in a low-angle, canted shot of Guillermo lying on his bed in the foreground and Lucas looming over him in the background. Although high-angle shots tend to connote power, this low-angle shot complicates that notion as it simultaneously places the spectator close to Guillermo's body, prompting identification (especially when the camera tracks up toward his head) while also capturing Lucas' power over him. When another guard, Huguito, enters the room, a high-angle shot shows the four men lying on their beds, crumpled up, with Huguito standing in the middle and his shadow extending all the way to the end of the room. This image, with its high angle and Huguito's silhouette occupying so much space in the shot, again highlights the men's passivity. In conjunction with the men's partially-shown bodies (torso, groin, shoulder—as in the *submarino* scene), these techniques again demonstrate their lack of agency. On the level of technique, then, the men are shown to be passive while the camerawork provokes the spectator to be active in his or her near-identification with the victims.

As we have seen, while *Crónica de una fuga* presents complicated relationships between vision and blindness and passivity and activity, it tends to undercut any positive aspects (vision, activity) with techniques that reaffirm the characters' passivity and (sometimes-voluntary) blindness. It also incorporates, somewhat problematically, elements of thriller and horror films, demonstrating Aaron's argument that a spectator's foreknowledge heightens anticipation and contributes to the masochistic aspect of spectatorship. Finally, the film's focus on wounds and the body, while avoiding explicit focus on the male body, facilitates a universal bond between the spectators and the characters. The lack of overt representations of torture does not mean spectators are blind to the horrors of the dictatorship, but rather that they experience the bodily memories of that era through the film's representation of scars, marks, and other evidence of torture. This mechanism also appears in Bechis' film, although the focus turns here from the male to the female body.

1.5 *Garage Olimpo*: The Demands of Spectatorship

As mentioned earlier, Bechis' *Garage Olimpo* depicts a woman's detention in one of Buenos Aires' clandestine torture centers. The film is somewhat based on Bechis' own experiences at the underground Olimpo prison, although the director chose a female protagonist to avoid over-identification (Tabanelli 142). In the film, María—a young woman who teaches literacy to slum residents—is abducted and regularly tortured. One of her captors, Félix (Carlos Echevarría), is a tenant of María's mother with whom María was acquainted before her kidnapping. She and Félix develop a close relationship, although, while Félix's romantic feelings for María are clear, hers remain ambiguous since any fondness shown toward him is perhaps just

a way to encourage Félix's small kindnesses. At the end of the film, María is taken to board a plane, presumably one of the dictatorship's infamous death flights. The ending is thus very different to that of *Crónica*, which ends with the characters' fortunate escape. Close analysis of *Garage* shows that active spectatorship contrasts with the (sometimes forced) passivity of the victims in the narrative. In the film horrific images appear frequently, although, as with *Crónica*, there are only two real torture scenes: one of María and another of an unidentified man. More generally, the tension between narrative activity and passivity resembles that of *Crónica* because any activity on the part of the victims is tempered by their imprisonment and torture and in María's case, forced sex and dating. In this case, however, there is no final act of agency—the escape—as María boards the death flight at the end of the film. Each time she attempts to assert her agency the male guards punish her, reinforcing her powerlessness.

Twice, María attempts to escape the Garage Olimpo, first when she notices an open portal in the garage door, and later, when Félix takes her on an obligatory "date." Both times her efforts are thwarted. After her first escape attempt, she is dragged back to the garage and Texas (Pablo Razuk) dramatically mock-executes her; then, Félix sweeps up the stunned María in his arms. On their date, after she tries to run away, he chases her through a crowd and curls his arm around her shoulders in a tight, threatening grip. When he grabs her and forces her to continue their date, her dazed look underscores her lack of agency. Another example of narrative activity is when an unnamed male victim swears at Félix, calling him an "hijo de puta." However, this act of agency diminishes as Félix immediately begins torturing him.

The victims' passivity or enforced powerlessness, especially María's, is manifested on a technical level as well. In the scene where she is to be "trasladada" (a euphemism for murder) she appears small in stature, captured in a long shot. Highlighting her lack of power, she stands

in a beam of light while surrounded by a group of men in the shadows. María appears in a physically passive position at other moments as well. For example, Félix looms over her while she lies on a table during their torture session, unlike when Félix tortures the male victim and perches on the bed next to him. She also takes the submissive position during the sex scene between her and Félix during their "date," lying down on the bed with him on top of her. And although at one point she rises, putting them on a physically equal level, María has no choice but to allow Félix to rape her.

This lack of agency plays out on the spectatorial level, yet the film's techniques also inspire activity in the spectator. *Garage*'s use of blindfolds, dark lighting and visual impediments (often objects block the main subject of a shot, as when a scene of María and Félix at a restaurant counter is almost entirely obscured by a beer bottle and cake stand on the counter), dark mises-en-scène (in the torture scenes, for example, where sometimes half the screen appears completely black—lighting reveals María's pale, almost porcelain-looking figure but nothing else), combine to create a mysterious atmosphere. Like *Crónica*, *Garage* portrays blindness on a narrative level through the portrayal of torture through sound as previously discussed, and also through the presence of blindfolds on its characters. However, the prisoners in *Garage* cannot easily remove and replace their blindfolds when their captors leave the room. María's mandatory blindness upon arrival at the prison is paired with a threat of violence: after forcing a blindfold on her, Texas leads her to the torture chamber saying, "Este es el mundo del sonido, mirá vos. A partir de ahora no vas a ver más, nunca más. Y si ves algo te voy a sacar los ojos con una cuchara." The explicit stress on sound in this dialogue is significant. However, this is a world in which the spectators simultaneously have the truth hidden from them (forced passivity) but are also forced to search for it (activity).

The film demands the spectator's attention and activity on a technical level but also on a narrative level. The first scene of the film, for example, initially appears to have nothing to do with the rest of the diegesis. Here, Ana (Chiara Caselli), a young Montonera, plants a bomb under the bed of her friend's father; only later do we learn this man is Tigre (Enrique Piñeyro), the head of the clandestine prison where María is being kept. Right before María is chosen to be "trasladada," a scene showing the bomb exploding in Tigre's home confirms the connection between María and Ana. Spectators must then discern for themselves María's "guilt"—how involved she was in the opposition movement before her kidnapping. Some victims of the dictatorship were left-wing terrorists (in some sense guilty, because they did commit crimes—although they should have been processed within the official judicial system), while others were simply left-leaning. The only information spectators have about María's job is an opening scene that shows her teaching illiterate people to read and write, a clearly sympathetic occupation. But when an accomplice of hers is later taken to the prison, she appears guiltier, as the two discuss a botched operation in which they were both involved. There is thus a certain moral ambivalence staged in the film at a narrative level.

Garage further requires spectators to piece together information in order to fully understand the film, which doles out knowledge bit by bit and out of chronological sequence. The aerial shots of the city at the end of the film, interspersed with shots of the airplane itself, confirm retrospectively that the aerial views of Buenos Aires intercut throughout the fiction are by no means innocent but rather were taken from the perspective of a death flight. There are also several representations of the events leading up to the death flights: first, the prisoners are told they are being "trasladados." Later in the film, this *traslado* scene appears again but is this time followed by their injection with a "vacuna" and the victims being loaded into a truck where they

begin to cough and complain of feeling sick. Finally, we see a shot of those supposedly vaccinated prisoners, drugged and unconscious on the plane. When the guards line up María with a group of other inmates and inject them with the supposed vaccine, the group boards a plane, and the audience finally understands that María is boarding a death flight. This suspension of narrative conclusion might perhaps be compared to the "pure waiting" of masochism.

María's true feelings about Félix also remain somewhat hidden or ambivalent, as she is forced to play the part of his girlfriend in order to survive. While María's actions and words portray her as genuinely attracted to Félix—the two nearly kiss at the beginning of the film, before her kidnapping and while Félix is living in her mother's pension—the close-ups of her angry, sullen, or emotionless face betray her true feelings of disgust. This is a manifestation of a fellow prisoner's recommendation that she fake everything with her body ("alegría, llanto, tristeza"). The problem, he tells her, is that one's eyes will betray the fact that one is lying. The many close-ups of her angry or dead-eyed face seem to demonstrate that she is indeed faking it. For this reason, her defiant offscreen looks betray her true feelings, to which we have access, but Félix does not.

Finally, the lack of knowledge that the spectator experiences is replicated on the technical level as well: while the film lacks any subjective shots from the viewpoint of the blindfolded victim (i.e. a blank screen), its first image replicates the sensation of being blindfolded and experiencing the world through sound: the film's first frames are simply a dark screen, with the sound of water in the background. Then, the image of the Río de la Plata appears in a medium shot. In other scenes, the source of music in the prison is unknown until a shot later in the film establishes that it is emanating from a radio. This technique provokes audiences to ask questions ("What is the source of that sound?") which are only subsequently answered. The delayed

question-answering increases the tension in the spectator's viewing experience while inviting him or her to participate in an active process of discovery on both the narrative and technical levels.

As previously mentioned, the film forces spectators to piece together information into a coherent narrative. A similarly-active process takes place through *Garage*'s portrayal of torture: the film generally avoids portraying the torture explicitly, just as in *Crónica*. And similar to Caetano's film, the spectator must use the scars on the victims' bodies to infer, or rather, imagine, what caused them. This technique works with the film's refusal (mostly) to visually portray torture. Thus, it emphasizes the tension between activity and passivity for the spectator, who is simultaneously denied information and invited to actively imagine what goes on behind the metal doors of the torture chamber. The real-time portrayal of María's torture, which is primarily depicted through sound and, later, scars (while mostly avoiding full shots of her naked body), highlights her forced passivity. Her torture occurs in two sections: first, Texas shocks her with the electric prod until she nearly dies, and he must seek Tigre's help; then, Félix arrives to complete the interrogation. In the earlier scene, the camera bounces gently from side to side in pseudo-documentary style and a fly buzzes around the room. The sound lends an air of realism—as does the cheerful diegetic pop song "Chau, cariño, chau" by Abracadabra, which is clearly ironic in this context. Also adding to this authenticity is the length of the take: as with many scenes in the film, the slow rhythm gives the camera ample time to absorb the action on the screen. For example, in an extremely long take, Tigre takes her pulse while her head lolls around on the bed as she returns to consciousness. The realistic time frame and ironic use of common sounds draw attention to the scene's horror.

In the next shot, an aerial, nighttime view of the street, the same diegetic music is audible—only much softer—as if passersby could perceive in some sense the horror of what was going on inside. Later in the film, a similar sequence demonstrates the contrast between the world inside and outside the detention center: while the prisoners are led—blindfolded, bruised, and bloody—through the prison, an exterior shot shows a man pushing a cart outside the garage door. Again, the ironic music—in this case "Ruby, Baby"—provides continuity and connects the two worlds. The use of sound to portray torture thus hints at the public's conscious ignorance, and therefore potential complicity, during the dictatorship.

The play between the visible and invisible continues with Félix's torture of María, during which he stands over her with the phallic prod by his groin. María lies in a Christlike position, vulnerable with her hands tied over her head and legs spread wide. The next, brief image is a high-angle shot of this scene from security footage (with the frame of the television set not visible). There is another aerial shot of a Buenos Aires street mixed with city noises—this time, the famous Avenida 9 de Julio and its obelisk—and finally, an image of Félix and María, heads close, breathing heavily. The inserted aerial shot resembles other moments when the events within the prison are juxtaposed with scenes from outside it, again highlighting the citizens' perhaps-voluntary lack of knowledge and the limited power of sight. Patricia Vieira in "Torture and the Sublime. The Ethics of Physical Pain in *Garage Olimpo*" brings the activity-passivity divide to the level of spectatorship, noting that while the aerial shots appear from a godlike position, they also fail to reveal the horrors occurring underground and thus force viewers into passivity (4). However, I view *Garage*'s technique as more accusatory and participatory: the way sound permeates the city suggests the public's knowing ignorance, while (as I later describe) the use of scars invites spectators to imagine torture and identify with victims.

Kaminsky further contends that the representation of the dictatorship through sound relates to the film's autobiographical quality, remarking that experiencing the prison through sound resembles Bechis' own experience as a prisoner. In an interview Bechis states, ". . . it's not that I listened to those exact songs, that radio, it's not that I heard those exact things, but what is exact is the thickness and the quality of the sound of that place, that is very much like what I remember" (Gallotta qtd. in Kaminsky). The music and buzzing fly—in addition to the frequent noises from a table tennis game the guards continuously play in an unseen room—create this "thick" sound design to more clearly evoke the oppressive atmosphere of the detention center. Thus, while the film asks spectators to experience torture the same way as the public (through sound emanating into the streets), it simultaneously places them in the auditory subjective position of the torture victim. In her article "The Violence of History in Marco Bechis' Argentina," Roberta Tabanelli concurs with Kaminsky, emphasizing the focus on "aural perception, in order to 'echo' the actual feelings and disorientation of the prisoners, whose eyes and head were kept covered, with a blindfold or a hood, for the entire time of their captivity" (129).

The sequences in which sounds stands in for torture highlight the visibility-invisibility of forced disappearance (visible because people were kidnapped on the street, invisible because they were subsequently disappeared), as they contrasts the peaceful exterior of the building and street with the horrors occurring inside. The film seems to criticize the public, moreover, in showing that evidence of the dictatorship's cruelty is all around via the music (representing torture), which is audible on the street. Tabanelli points out, further, that *Garage*'s underground sounds are mostly diegetic, while those above ground are "alien and unsettling," emphasizing that the prison is reality and the city fiction (139). Yet Kaminsky maintains that the "bright light

of the city blinds people in the streets to what is going on around them; giving them perhaps a false sense of vision. Along the same lines, but in a return to the literal, the aerial shots of the city that impart the feeling of surveillance in fact do not permit us to see the details of what is occurring there. Paradoxically, light does not illuminate.” Finally, Pous argues for percepticide even within the film’s narrative, noting that María plays into it by putting on the dress that surely belongs to a (now-dead) fellow female prisoner (683). These scholars, then, agree with my argument that percepticide permeates the levels of fiction, technique, and history.

Another sequence that complicates the activity-passivity relationship is Félix’s torture of the unnamed male prisoner. This scene more clearly exemplifies the film’s refusal to depict torture visually: the two men discuss hunger (Félix complains that he has gone hungry before, “por culpa de gente como vos,” and never wants to again) and the victim swears at him, but the camera cuts away. While *Garage* avoids portraying the consequent torture directly, the combination of diegetic salsa music, loud noises (the metal door opening and slamming shut), and the prisoner lifting his bloody head in the background as Félix leaves the “quirófano” (the dictatorship’s bitterly incongruous name for its torture chambers) to ask someone to fix his torture kit, all add to the horror of the scene. When the shot returns to the torture room, Félix lifts an electric wire and the camera pans from the wire to the victim’s bloodied face and torso. The brief close-up of the prisoner’s head and shoulders, which are covered in blood, also contributes to the feeling of dread—as do his screams and grunts, heard from the other side of the metal door after Félix returns to finish his work. Again, torture is portrayed through sound and ambiance: the upbeat music contrasts ironically with the events, while the door’s sudden noises contribute to the atmosphere of terror. We hear the victim’s cries and see the gruesome aftermath of the torture, but never the application of the torture device itself.

The only visible result of these violent interrogations are the male victim's bloody, lesioned face, and María's *picana* scars on her chest and—most notably—her forehead. This mark is visible throughout much of the rest of the film, including when she is taken on a sting operation and while she performs manual labor at the center. The visual marker constantly reminds the viewer that, although María may leave the clandestine prison, she remains a prisoner. The scar also appear as she walks blindfolded through the detention center in a line with the other prisoners while the Dion and the Belmonts' song "Ruby, Baby" plays, mimicking the atmosphere created by the diegetic music during both torture scenes. The joyful nature of the music also creates a clearly ironic contrast with the sinister images (blindfold, scar) visible onscreen.

Some scholars argue that witnessing the wounds caused by torture is not as intense or personal as seeing the torture itself—Marianne Hirsch suggests in "Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission" that a wound can be read as "a sign of trauma's incommunicability" (72). However, an unexplained wound could also initiate that creative process in which the spectator is forced to imagine what caused the mark. Not only, then, do spectators actively and imaginatively engage with the unrepresented torture but they may also identify with the victims in that they, too, have most likely been marked by some kind of trauma as the scars call attention to the film's focus on the body. Hence, while wounds provoke the spectator to engage in active imagining and bodily identification with the victim, sound also implies a connection between the spectator and those who lived through the dictatorship without being directly affected by it.

In suggesting this link, the film indicates that both groups (the spectator and the Argentine public of the 1970s and 1980s) are somewhat culpable. As with Caetano's film,

Garage fosters identification with the victims only to a certain point. Just as in the *submarino* scene in *Crónica* where the camera anticipates Claudio's head underwater, *Garage* invites spectators to see up close the reality of torture and confinement without placing them in the subjective position of the victims. Both films keep the spectators slightly at a distance, as if to suggest to the audience, "you need to see this—but it did not happen to you." Moreover, as Parizad Dejbord Sawan points out in in "Mirar o no mirar. La mujer como espectáculo en *Garaje Olimpo*," not showing torture in the film deprives the viewer of "toda possible identificación o proyección de una fantasía de dominación" (264–65).

The film does sometimes invite identification with the victims primarily through close-ups of María's defiant face; however, like in *Crónica* there is one moment where the film's technique demands identification with the torturer by placing us in his position: when María begs for water after her torture, there is an overhead shot of her face from the viewpoint of someone gazing down at her. However, this obligatory identification with the torturer's subjective position is tempered by María's many defiant offscreen looks. For example, in the sex scene with Félix, she first lays on the bed but then sits up, stops kissing Félix, and gazes off into the distance. A similar telling look appears when she gets into the van to be sent on the death flight. Here she appears not dazed but furious: the close-up of her face, which shows her trembling nostrils and a furious look in her eyes, reveals that her apparent passivity disguises an inexpressible rage.

Although *Garage*'s use of sound and scars in the sequences I have just analyzed highlights the tension between the spectator's activity and passivity, the anticipation created in two other scenes also create a tension related to masochistic spectatorship. This is apparent in the film's first scene, which, as mentioned earlier, appears to have nothing to do with the rest of the diegesis: the question of Ana's actions at the beginning of the fiction is not answered until almost

the last sequence. Moreover, when María attempts to escape and runs out the door of the garage, the camera lingers on a shot of the open door for several seconds. Soon, she is dragged back inside. But the sequence, uninterrupted by cuts, displays the striking image of the bright outside world framed by the small opening in the garage door, increasing the anticipation of what will happen next—and what reprisals María will face. Indeed, Texas' mock execution of María punishes her not with physical pain but mental anguish. His slow count to ten as he aims his gun at the back of her head heightens fear anticipation for both the character and the spectator. And later, when María escapes from Félix on their "date," fast, repetitive string music also increases the tension until Félix recaptures her. The use of music, then, contributes to the tense atmosphere as do more technical aspects of visual or narrative technique such as the long take of the garage door and the extended wait for her return.

As mentioned earlier, Aaron states that masochism is "waiting in its pure form" (60): in *Garage*, the long take of the victim being dragged into the torture chamber and Félix approaching the room through the darkened hallway heighten anticipation and therefore tension and dread as well: first, we hear the male victim's cries and see María in her cell; then, the man, naked and blindfolded, is followed by an unsteady, backwards-moving camera. Three men drag him through the dim, grimy hallway. The camera makes a sharp turn, and in the background of this shot, Félix appears clutching his torture kit. He walks calmly through the hallway and chats with Texas for a few moments before entering the room, shutting the door behind him. The preparation for torture builds with each moment: first, we hear the victim's cries, then we see him and finally, his torturer and the torture implements.

During Texas' mock execution, a close-up from the side pans from the gun to María's face; then, María looks directly up at the camera overhead in a close-up that reveals her panic.

Spectators become technically involved in the film's "looks" in this most unusual technique. Indeed, Dejbord Sawan affirms that this mechanism forces viewers to acknowledge their "participación escópica" (266). This accusatory look affirms the spectator's dominance and the character's passivity, as the camera (and spectator) is physically looking down on her. At the same time, however, the shot works along the same lines as the film's use of music to challenge the audience. As with other close-ups of María's face, this shot requires the actress Antonella Costa's performance style to work in concert with the film's technical aspects (in this case, an overhead close-up). The guard discharges the gun away from María in another shot seen from the side, and she collapses on the floor, screaming. Another overhead shot shows her bent over on the floor as if praying while her would-be executioner walks off, asking, "¿Te asustaste?" María's physically diminished size as captured by the camera here emphasizes her powerlessness while simultaneously accusing the spectator of complicity: although previous scenes alluded to violence through the sound of music emanating through the city during simultaneous aerial exterior shots, here this over-the-head angle directly observes the dictatorship's brutal punishment.

Garage, then, participates in masochistic spectatorship through the anticipation of pain and the play between the visible and the invisible. Tangential to the latter theme is the film's portrayal of male and female bodies and the problematic combination of torture and erotics in the relationship between María and Félix. The prominence of María's body in the middle of the shot during her torture scene emphasizes the film's focus on the body. Yet, unlike in Caetano's film, María's breasts are visible throughout the long sequence. In part, this technique demonstrates her status as an object as she is touched, prodded, and mechanically revived. Her value to the regime lies in her status as a passive object existing at the border of life and death. The viewer can also

see up close the physical effects of the torture: the defibrillator's violent effect on María's limp body is particularly jarring. However, while her breasts are exposed, the camera captures them from the end of the bed, looking up at her head. In this way, the film avoids an overhead shot that would more graphically depict her body.

Similarly, the TV surveillance image seen before Félix tortures María manages to show her exposure and vulnerability as she awaits her torture (Félix stands over her) while refusing to expose her body to the spectator as the image is blurred and pixelated. Her figure is completely white against the dark background of the metal bed, and her arms and legs are spread and chained to the corners of the table. While Dejbord Sawan is critical of this sequence in its distancing effect, arguing that "el efecto de esa doble pantalla, y de la resultante distancia en la ubicación de María en relación al campo de visión del espectador, hace que la cámara nos ahorre los detalles pormenorizados de su cuerpo" (266), this lack of detail is necessary to avoid fetishization of the victim's body. The film manages to emphasize the victims' nudity while for the most part protecting them from full exposure. A quick shot of María's naked body as Félix helps her up from the table exemplifies this technique: although the spectator can see that she is naked, the camera does not linger on her body long enough to see her breasts or genitals. This sequence, along with the surveillance footage of her lying on the torture table, expose the film's intention to show the victims' vulnerability while discouraging voyeurism. While *Garage* on one hand enforces spectatorial activity via techniques that require viewers to pay close attention to the images onscreen, it also deprives them of the spectacle of the female body. The figure of the male victim also appears in blurred surveillance footage in a similar way, with his genitals hidden by the brightness of his body.

More problematic is María's relationship with Félix, which engages the pleasure of unpleasure. After their torture session, a close-up of the torturer and victim shows Félix leaning his head on her naked back, snuggling her wet hair as if post-coital. Rebecca J. Ulland argues in "Enforced Heteronormative Socio-Cultural Structures in *Garage Olimpo* and *Cambio de armas*" that traditional gender roles are forced on female protagonists via sex and confinement (3), further articulating that in *Garage* Félix obligates María to depend on him, tries to normalize their relationship by "making house," and forces María to descend into infantilization and submissiveness while on the date she has no choice but to participate in (7). However, Kaminsky writes that the film renders both characters, María and Félix, figuratively impotent in the face of an authoritarian regime. Similarly, for Dejbord Sawan, the obsessive desire to control María's body threatens Félix's power and he must deal with María's resistance at every turn (262). The film also suggests his impotence in the scene where he looks in the mirror to observe himself and María: she is looking at him (Dejbord Sawan 265). There are other technical aspects that contribute to this feeling as well, like María's physically dominant position in the final scene, as well as the camera's positioning as María's subjective look at Félix—which drives the spectator to identify with this female character (Dejbord Sawan 263). These scholars, then, agree with my analysis that María's lack of agency is troubling. Yet, they also further this argument by insisting that the film's techniques render Félix equally impotent.

Garage engages in masochistic spectatorship on the narrative level with prisoners' activity suppressed by torture and imprisonment. And while María's various looks are a form of agency, her murder at the end of the film accentuates her forced passivity and distinguishes *Garage* from *Crónica.* Masochism also emerges for spectators through a passivity (a denial of knowledge and vision) which is overcome through participative spectatorship—assembling the

narrative pieces, creative imagining sparked by scar imagery, and perception via sound. It also appears in the heightened tension created by long takes and fixed shots such as the open door through which María briefly escapes. Finally, *Garage* eschews graphic displays of the female or male body and, although it portrays the relationship between María and Félix as the pleasure of unpleasure on a narrative level, its technique affirms that María has some power of her own even in the most terribly constricted of circumstances.

1.6 *La voz dormida*: Torture Fully Witnessed?

In Benito Zambrano's film adaptation of the best-selling novel by Dulce Chacón, *La voz dormida*, young Pepita moves to Madrid to be closer to her pregnant sister, Hortensia, who is locked up in a fascist prison for guerrilla activities just after the end of the Spanish Civil War. Pepita lives in a pensión owned by Doña Celia (Teresa Calo), working as a maid for former doctor Don Fernando (Jesús Noguero) who has since abandoned the profession. Hortensia is convicted in a show trial and sentenced to death, but her execution is delayed until after the birth of her child. Meanwhile, Pepita deals with the postwar economic struggles and falls in love with a guerrilla, Paulino (Marc Clotet) who goes by the name Black Jacket and associates with Hortensia's husband Felipe (Daniel Holguín), who is also a resistance fighter. When Hortensia is executed, Pepita assumes care of the baby and, years later, is reunited with Paulino after decades of imprisonment under franquist law. *La voz* thus differs from the South American films in its chronological narrative, its focus on family relations, and its setting: most of the film takes place outside the prison.

This Spanish title represents its characters as more active (on the level of narrative) than the Argentine films: while María's participation in leftist terrorism becomes clear at the end of *Garage* and Claudio's flight in *Crónica* demonstrates his agency, *La voz* shows us much more of its characters' political activity. Hortensia, Paulino, and Felipe all participate in the resistance, while Pepita (albeit initially unwillingly) joins in as well by doing favors for her sister. The authors of "Los personajes femeninos bajo la mirada del cineasta Benito Zambrano" (Belén Puebla Martínez, Zoila Díaz-Maroto Fernández-Checa, and Elena Carrillo Pascual) note that Pepita often transcends stereotypes and subverts traditional roles in her evolution, arguing that

> En el personaje de Pepita se produce, en cierto sentido, una subversión del rol de género tradicional según va avanzando la película. Si sus cualidades iniciales eran las que el sistema patriarcal atribuía al ideal de mujer: timidez, pasividad, desvinculación política, inocencia y lealtad; además de excelente costurera, buena cristiana, etc. Pero a medida que avanza la historia, veremos aparecer en ella atributos considerados tradicionalmente como masculinos, como su valentía y su determinación y coraje. (157)

Still, as with the other two films, most of the characters' activity is constrained by imprisonment, torture, and execution: any resistance is, thus, punished. However, while *La voz* engages in some of the same techniques as *Crónica* and *Garage*, it does not require the same activity of its spectators as it is more conventional in its cinematic technique and narrative structure. Still, I argue that the film does engage in masochistic spectatorship by turning unpleasure into pleasure. This is accomplished by incorporating elements of genre cinema, namely melodrama, and portraying torture overtly; both techniques convert tragedy into something more (problematically) enjoyable. As with the other sections, this analysis is based on the tension between activity and passivity in Zambrano's film.

Pepita has some agency in her movements throughout the city, although these movements are limited by her obligation to her employers. While meeting with Paulino, for example, she remarks that she must return home before her mistress misses her. Similarly, Hortensia's futile resistance against the government is manifested on levels both large—her participation in the resistance, punished by execution—and small: she refuses to have her baby baptized, although when the guards hand over the infant to Pepita they tell her they already baptized her. When the women in the prison are forced to kiss the feet of a baby Jesus doll as a sign of "amor y sumisión," Tomasa (Charo Zapardiel) refuses; however, when Sor Serafines (Susi Sánchez) attempts to force her, the nun drops the doll and, enraged, grabs the baton of one of the guards and mercilessly beats her, telling her she will rot in hell. Although Tomasa demonstrates agency in defiantly refusing to kiss the Jesus, the authority figure's violent disciplinary measures underline the prison's brutal restrictions on personal expression. The film reminds us of the women's forced passivity even in happy moments: another example of thwarted agency occurs when Hortensia gives birth and Reme (Lola Casamayor) and Elvira (Ángela Cremonte) must ask permission to fetch coffee and supplies for the doctor.

For spectators, *La voz* is more explicit in its explanation of historical context than the Argentine films, no doubt because the period it represents is much further away from the present time of spectatorship. An intertitle at the beginning explains the transition to Francoism at the end of the Spanish Civil War, noting that "con el fin de la guerra no llegó la paz, ni la reconciliación." It claims, also, to be an homage to the all the women who "lloraron en silencio en las puertas y en las tapias de los cementerios." Conversely, the film's final epilogue repeats a more hopeful quotation from Antonio Machado: "Para los estrategas, para los políticos, para los historiadores, todo está claro: hemos perdido la guerra. Pero humanamente, no estoy tan seguro

. . . Quizá la hemos ganado.” The film’s final two images are messages from the director—an intertitle thanking author Dulce Chacón and a dedication of the film to his four sisters. A voice-over, spoken in what is identified as the adult voice of Hortensia’s child, explains that Pepita waited nineteen years for Paulino to be let out of prison, that the couple raised the child together, and that the War never should have happened. With these bookends, the film not only explains directly the context of the war and dictatorship, but also clearly sides with the Republicans, as do all recent features on the subject. Of course, this is also evident in the selection of Republicans as the heroes of the film, although it recognizes the suffering on both sides. Unlike the Argentine texts, *La voz* does not require the spectator to determine whether the characters are guilty, as it is clear from the beginning that they are all active in the opposition to Franco. *La voz*’s more explicit stance on the side of the Leftists also differs from the more ambiguous techniques of the Argentine films which, although they portray the suffering of these militants in clandestine prisons, seem to point the finger more at the spectator while Zambrano’s film directs blame to the Nationalists who were culpable for the injustices of the postwar period. Of course, *La voz* takes place in an earlier period: almost no one living at the time could be watching the film on its release. This could mean that audiences are absolved of even contemplating the possibility that they might have sided with the Francoists.

On a more technical level, the film’s lighting and mise-en-scène, though it overlaps with some of the techniques used in *Crónica* and *Garage*, also requires less activity on the part of the spectator. While, as in Bechis’ film, there are some visual impediments in the composition of shots in the film, they occur only in the two scenes where Pepita visits Hortensia in the prison. Here, a dark figure on the side of the shot occupies about one-third of the frame, as if an anonymous person were standing in the way. While this technique enables the spectator to feel

more physically present in the scene (as perhaps it also does in *Garage*), it does not—unlike the Argentine film—impede our view of the main characters. Its limited use also decreases its effectiveness. The film's employment of lighting also differs from that in *Garage*; here, the darkness of the prison cells contrasts starkly with non-naturalistic lighting that illuminates the characters' faces and bodies in a way that is unjustified by the mise-en-scène. In the first scene, the female prisoners huddle together in their cell as they listen to the execution outside. In one shot, Elvira's face is illuminated (apparently by a watchtower outside), while the rest of her body and the cell remain invisible in the darkness. Similarly, in a later scene as Hortensia sits on the floor, her face and Elvira's appear in a shaft of light while the rest of the shot stays mostly black. The stark contrast of the lighting (light and dark) here contrasts with the pervasive grayish-darkness in *Garage*, where there is only enough light to see what is going on, but no spotlights on any characters. While the darkness and visual impediments of *Garage* invite the spectator to actively interpret the scene, everything is much clearer in *La voz*, in all senses of the word: we can see Hortensia's and Pepita's faces despite the shadows in the corner of the screen as well as Hortensia and Elvira despite the prison's oppressive darkness. This painterly use of lighting aestheticizes the mise-en-scène, prettifying political violence.

While the film's narrative and technique do not require active spectatorship in the same way that *Crónica* and *Garage* do, *La voz* does appeal directly to the viewer's emotions through its incorporation of melodramatic elements. Jorge Nieto Ferrando in "Introducción al cine de ficción sobre la Guerra Civil como género cinematográfico. Terror, historia y melodrama" describes elements of genre film in post-dictatorship cinema, arguing firstly that war and dictatorship films are their own genre (806). Further, often a non-political person ends up the most political; this transformation is frequently accompanied by violence or the deaths of family

members or friends and bad economic situations—compared to the relative wealth of the Nationalists—as with Pepita here (811). Nieto Ferrando writes that melodrama often makes an appearance in the form of family atmospheres, children, and the absence of fathers, as well as the common image of the woman in the window, a symbol of the "lucha impotente contra la sociedad injusta de posguerra" (817), seen in Zambrano's film as Pepita gazes out the window of the police car bringing her to the jail for her interrogation later in the diegesis. Pepita is unique in the corpus of Spanish Civil War films because she has many melodramatic characteristics (fragility, innocence) and waits patiently for the final romantic encounter at the end of the film (Nieto Ferrando 817). María León, who is known for top-rated contemporary comedies in film and television, presumably shocked Spanish audiences in portraying a historical character and submitting to a graphic torture scene quite at odds with her benevolent star image.

Like the use of the thriller and horror genres in the Argentine titles, Zambrano's somewhat problematic employment of melodramatic tropes heightens anticipation and therefore creates masochistic spectatorship. When the police encounter Amalia (Begoña Maestre), an associate of Hortensia's, in a stairwell, the officers' subtle gestures to each other combined with sorrowful music and Amalia's increasing panic hint in traditional style at her imminent capture. This scene relies on the transparent prompts of music and acting to increase the tension; more generally, the exaggerated performance style in the film also evokes melodramas. María León initially plays Pepita as a feisty ingenue. In the film's first scenes, she excitedly accepts a used pair of shoes from the owner of her pension, Doña Celia—proclaiming that she will just stuff them with cloth if they do not fit—and later passionately clutches her chest as she tells her new employer, Doña Amparo (Miryam Gallego), that she is a good Christian. This highly-affective performance style is consistent with melodrama. Some of the characters appear to be borderline

hysterical at times: Pepita's rapid-fire speech and high-pitched tone when she asks Doña Amparo's husband, Don Fernando, to help the ailing Felipe is one more example of this exaggerated performance. Amalia appears similarly passionate and facially expressive while convincing Pepita to bring Felipe a letter, and later Sor Serafines goes on an impassioned rant about how God will not forgive the Spanish until all Communists are in jail or dead. Her facial expressions (she is so furious that she bares her teeth) and bodily gestures (she swings a baton around for effect) contribute to a melodramatic acting style known for its appeal to gestural excess.

Music, an indispensable element of the genre, also adds to the melodramatic effect of the film—for example, the extradiegetic sound of Hortensia singing the lullaby "Nana de la hierbabuena," an original song written for *La voz*, plays over Pepita's hysterical crying when the prison guards hand her Hortensia's baby. The (again, extradiegetic) piano music while Hortensia reads a letter from Felipe and when Paulino asks Pepita to be his girlfriend—apparently, they have fallen in love after spending only a few minutes together—also contributes to the melodramatic ambiance of the film in traditional style by heightening emotion. The use of music is thus very different to that of *Garage* where incongruous pop songs within the diegesis comment ironically on the traumatic action.

The film's representation of torture, again unlike the South American films, mostly does not depend on sound and scars. In the film's one torture scene, Pepita is questioned in the police station by two officers about the rebellious activities of Hortensia and Hortensia's husband. When Pepita's answers are deemed insufficient, a bloodied Felipe is brought in and sat next to her. The officers punch Felipe, knocking him over in his chair as she begs them to stop and sobs uncontrollably. Pepita denies knowing Black Jacket (Paulino), and he too is brought in. The

officers demonstrate their dominance here: one leans on a desk, looming over her; he also strokes her jaw suggestively, and another grabs her hair, jerking her head back and calling her a "putita" when she refuses to give up Felipe and Paulino. While there are some similarities with the techniques of the Argentine films (a roving camera like in *Crónica*'s *submarino* scene, and Pepita's blurry face and a shot showing her seemingly-bodiless head), the representation of the torture itself differs in that, as we will now see, *La voz* shows explicitly the application of the torture tools.

Enraged, the officer demands the pincers. Pepita is tied to her chair, and her dress is ripped open, revealing her naked chest. A distraught Pepita is seen with her torturer in a shot from the side as he prepares the sparking pincers for use while, once more, Paulino appears in the background between the two. Then, a tighter shot of Paulino includes blurry portions of Pepita's and the torturer's faces seen on the sides of the shot. The officer applies the pincers to Pepita's nipples, and she howls in pain. A higher-angle shot then captures the whole scene: two battered men sit in a dark corner near the officer, also in the dark. Again, while this high angle resembles overhead shots in *Garage* and *Crónica*, its aim is simply to show the whole scene. This differs from the use of high angles to create a dramatic effect where, for example, in *Garage* María gazes straight into the camera during her mock execution to demonstrate her powerlessness (the camera is situated in a physically dominant position) as well as her agency (she challenges the audience with her look). Two officers stand behind Pepita while her torturer sits in front of her; finally, the torturer grabs her and applies the shock again, in the same style as before with both figures out of focus in the foreground and Paulino behind. Throughout the torture scene, Pepita repeatedly cries, "¡No sé nada!"

Next, in a jail scene, Pepita's image is captured in long shot through bars curled up and shivering, naked, on a cement bench. Don Fernando's father, Don Gonzalo (Lluís Marco), a general, arrives to retrieve her. She rises, forced by modesty to cower as she covers her body with her hands. He wipes some blood from her chin with a cloth, then demands assurance that she never mentioned Don Fernando's name. Much like the officer in the previous scene, he grabs her face and pulls his finger down around her mouth, smearing the blood, in a menacing but suggestive gesture as he forces her to agree to never have contact with his son again. Don Gonzalo's face appears better-lit than Pepita's: part of her face is obscured by darkness although she stands in a shaft of light in the otherwise dark cell. He throws her some clothes and tells her to dress, refusing to help her sister as he had promised. Her breasts are again exposed when she turns around to put on the borrowed outfit. The play of light and dark here echoes the shadows in *Garage* and the truncated bodies in *Crónica*; it also exemplifies Studlar's conception of masochism as the tension between the visible and invisible, but the stark contrast between light and dark make it easier than in the Argentine films for the spectator to see the action clearly.

In the next scene, a man splashes water on a shirtless Paulino, who is tied to a wall. One man punches him in the gut while another rubs two electrically charged rods together to produce a threatening spark. The torturer applies the pincers to his damp upper chest, causing him to scream and convulse with pain. Both torturer and victim appear in the shadows, while a second torturer is seen in the light in the background. The atmosphere is similar to that of Pepita's interrogation: dark, smoky, and with few sources of light. However, the most graphic images of violence here are of Felipe: hung from the ceiling by his wrists, he appears as a black figure in a shaft of light. Felipe and his torturer (also a dark figure) are seen on the mid-left of the screen. Paulino watches Felipe's torture through a doorway: the man punches Felipe repeatedly,

apparently in the kidney. Finally, we see Felipe's dark figure lying motionless on the floor in a low but eye-level shot, with a chain hanging from the ceiling in view. Paulino is seen, with his bloodied face, from his adjoining room whispering, "Cordobés," Felipe's *nom de guerre.* Again, while there is some overlap in the techniques of *La voz* and the two Argentine films—darkness, shadows, obscured bodies—the film's insistence on graphically showing Pepita's torture renders spectatorial participation impossible. Not only are spectators told where to look, they also fully witness Pepita's torture and therefore do not participate in the creative processes of identification that the Argentine films provoke through the constant presence of scars.

Moreover, the nondiegetic music here—low, soft strings that creep in at the end of Pepita's torture scene and continue up to the shot of her in the prison cell—are typical of melodrama. But much of the noise here is the diegetic sound of shouting during the interrogation and Pepita's whimpers and cries. The film's recurrent electric-piano music is also audible during the torture of Paulino and Felipe, perhaps seeking to encourage an emotional response once more. This extradiegetic music is more prominent than the diegetic sound—the victims' pained cries—which seems muffled. The overlapping of extradiegetic and diegetic sound and the privileging of extradiegetic music contrasts sharply with the use of sound in the Argentine films, where victims' cries are acoustically isolated from the tension-producing diegetic music.

More generally, the film's use of sound and presentation of scars, though sometimes resembling that in *Crónica* and *Garage*, also allow less activity on the part of the spectator. For example, the opening sequences of *Garage* and *La voz* both include sound bridges: the waves of the Río de la Plata in *Garage* and the sounds of marching boots in *La voz*. The source of these sounds remains unknown until the films cut from a black screen (*Garage*) or intertitles (*La voz*) to a shot that reveals it. But while the beginning of Caetano's film invites us to make an

imaginative leap to the sea in which the protagonist will finally perish before the narrative's first image appears, in Zambrano's film the technique functions more as a traditional sound bridge moving the spectator (or auditor) unproblematically from the initial context to the film's main action.

While *Crónica* depends on music inspired by horror films and *Garage* uses mostly diegetic songs, both serving to create a tense atmosphere, *La voz*'s score is comprised (surprisingly) of almost futuristic, electronic-sounding music, perhaps designed to make a connection with the modern audience. This score plays only at certain moments, such as Pepita's arrival in Madrid, apparently to heighten the emotional effect of the scene rather than to increase dramatic tension. The film's other main use of nondiegetic music is a military drum roll, which serves as an audible signal of fascist injustice: it is heard, for example, at Hortensia's sentencing as well as when Pepita encounters a group of officers violently forcing a group of men on the street to divulge the whereabouts of Black Jacket. Diegetic music appears mostly in the form of songs; in addition to Hortensia's song to her daughter, the prisoners sing their Republican hymn and, later, are forced to sing a song about Franquist victory. Such authentic songs attest to the historicity of this conventional period film.

Unusually, what sounds like diegetic Celtic-sounding radio music is heard when a bloodied woman with crudely chopped-off hair is dragged up the stairs at the prison and forced to identify Sole (Amparo Vega León), who is in possession of a contraband letter. Unlike *Garage*, the diegetic music here reinforces rather than contrasts with the dark tone of the scene. Later, when Sole has also been beaten and her hair shorn, a close-up shows her bloody face as she is brought up the stairs to her cell. This is the film's only example of present scars or blood standing in for a past torture that we have not seen: in previous sequences, such as Pepita's

interrogation, we actually witness the blows that cause her bloody nose as well as the pincers torture on her chest.

After Hortensia and the others are sentenced to death, Hortensia and Pepita leave the courtroom in a dreamlike sequence in which we hear the distorted noise (similar to the torture of Paulino) of an official's voice as he continues to read off other prisoners' punishments in a rare use of subjective sound. Here, both sound and image (the camera captures a shot-reverse-shot sequence of Pepita and Hortensia trying to catch glimpses of each other, while the figures of other people in the crowded room prevent a full view of the sisters) mimic the experience of the characters, increasing identification through point-of-view shots. The same military drums and low, mournful strings are also heard, intensifying the emotional effect of the scene. A brief close-up of Sole's face after she is beaten for possessing a letter also allows the spectator to see the brutal effects of Franco's (in)justice system. However, the fluid camera movement contrasts with the lingering shots of María or slow distancing of the camera from a close-up of Guillermo's bloodied face in the two Argentine films.

Close examination of these key sequences thus reveals that Zambrano's film employs some of the techniques also used in *Crónica* and *Garage*, but in a manner that reinforces the spectator's passivity. His film also holds back from accusing the spectator of complicity (in ways analogous to the representation of torture via sound in *Garage*) in its depiction of the protagonist's torture. More explicitly, and more problematically, *La voz* permits the spectator to (almost) fully witness Pepita's torture in a somewhat sexualized, voyeuristic way by showing the application of the torture device to her naked skin, as well as her pained reaction. While the period genre in Spain, as elsewhere, is primarily targeted to a female audience, male viewing pleasure often hinges on the ability to see women's bodies. Pepita's torture scene thus risks

inciting male and even female spectators to view her as an object to behold rather than a character with whom to identify.

1.7 Conclusion: Masochistic Spectatorship and The Nature of Witnessing Torture

As we have seen, Zambrano's film differs from Caetano's and Bechis' in its representation of torture and narrative coherence. It also maintains a more optimistic tone, which its title reflects: *La voz* refers to the only temporarily-silenced voices of the liberal Spanish Republic. This title is also more allegorical than those of the Argentine films, which refer to more concrete themes such as location (*Garage*) and narrative (*Crónica*). Although the torture, violence, and death in the films are somewhat offset by their visual or narrative pleasure, all three films also engage in masochistic spectatorship by creating a certain tension between activity and passivity—Zambrano's film, however, permits more passivity on the part of the spectator. As I have shown through narrative and technical analyses, the tension between activity and passivity is manifested on both the narrative and technical levels. In the Argentine films, María's and Claudio's agency—attempted escapes and resistant looks, are balanced with disappearance, torture, and even execution. *Crónica* and *Garage* do all they can to show resistance within a setting where characters are powerless; while this is less true of *La voz*, Pepita (unlike María) survives. And for spectators, much more effort is required to understand the historical context of the Argentine films, particularly that of Bechis, which is not overtly explained.

Audience members are encouraged to participate in *Crónica* and *Garage* through the many appearances of marks and scars, which I read as initiating creative processes of imagining

and connections to the spectator's own past experiences. The films are thus active for spectators, who are encouraged but not forced to identify with victims and also to imagine the victims' torture which is not graphically seen. This obligation to assemble the plot's disparate parts, as well as the creative imagining that takes place with both *Garage* and *Crónica*, contrasts with the more passive spectatorship required by the conventional narrative of *La voz.* Part of this dialectic between activity and passivity has to do with the spectator's responsibility to discern the victim's guilt or innocence, which Zambrano's film makes clear from the beginning. In *Crónica*, Tano gives up Claudio's name to the authorities and, although the two men were acquaintances, it becomes clear that Claudio is innocent. The spectator's lack of knowledge, perhaps a kind of passivity, is thus tempered by the activity required in putting together the proof of Claudio's innocence. In Bechis' film María's involvement in terrorist activities is not made totally clear until the end of the film, although there are hints throughout. The Argentine films thus sets in motion a certain moral ambivalence that the more explicit Spanish one does not.

The second aspect of masochism, the conversion of unpleasure (such as witnessing torture) into pleasure, takes place on some level in all the films. While *Crónica*, *Garage*, and *La voz* all portray torture—albeit in different ways—they also engage in masochistic spectatorship differently. Can watching these films be pleasurable? Aaron, we remember, suggests that spectators engage in a "'perverse' pleasure in indulging in a fantasy of pain" (60). How is this carried out in the films in question? It could be true in the South American films, as the spectators may—in fact, are forced to—imagine the pain without actually seeing it. That all three films straddle the line between what is visible and invisible to some extent challenges the spectator to fantasize about that pain. What remains unclear is whether or not there is a "perverse pleasure" in this act. Certainly, the reaction of empirical spectators cannot be gauged in this

textual analysis. But, through the psychic processes they engage, do the films permit the disturbing possibility of a kind of pleasurable viewing, perhaps through identification with the torturer or through the pleasures of narrative or voyeurism?

On the narrative level, Zambrano's film is masochistic in that it turns unpleasure into pleasure through its reassuringly coherent, chronological narrative and generic melodrama conventions. At the same time, *Crónica* also utilizes a chronological narrative and the generic tropes of horror and thriller films. Although one might argue that drawing on the horror or thriller genres is more ethical than relying on the conventions of melodrama, as the former more realistically reflects the terror of the period, the affect that *La voz* attempts to produce might be seen as equally legitimate in its ability to provoke spectators' emotions. This is also partially accomplished through easy identification with the protagonist. The authors of "Los personajes femeninos bajo la mirada del cineasta Benito Zambrano" similarly conclude that the film encourages an emotional identification with the film's female characters (159). *Garage*, while it also relies on some horror and thriller conventions such as the anticipation created during María's attempted escape, distances itself from coherent narrative by introducing characters and events at the beginning of the film that are not explained until the end. Still, there is some incongruity in using fictional generic tropes to portray real events (particularly in the case of Caetano's film, which is most explicitly based on real life). Genre also relates to another aspect of masochism—anticipation, which occurs when spectators foresee future plot points due to familiarity with the narrative triggers of certain genres (horror, thriller, melodrama). Anticipation and the fantasy of pain also occur during scenes that heighten tension, such as the breakfast scene in *Crónica*.

However, these techniques are also a way of connecting with the spectator, rendering accessible the horrors of dictatorship by using conventions familiar to him or her. That all the films cast attractive actors of both sexes encourages identification with them and desire for them, increasing the visual pleasure of watching the films. Still, the Argentine films do a much better job of portraying the grime and grease on the faces and bodies of their main characters than does *La voz*, where most of the actors' good looks are not marred by dirt and sweat. *La voz* is also slightly more problematic regarding the physical spectacle of male and female bodies through its explicit depiction of Pepita's torture. *Crónica* and *Garage* portray male and female bodies as almost androgynous in their lack of identifiable genitalia (for the most part), denying the spectator the pleasure of seeing their bodies.

This, in turn, discourages the spectator from identifying with the victims as either male or female during torture scenes. There are exceptions, of course, since clearly Claudio is a man and María is a woman—as evidenced by her explicitly exposed breasts during the *picana.* Yet Bechis refuses to show María being tortured with the cattle prod, which was normally applied to the genitals but here scars her head. Unlike in *Garage* the torture implements in *La voz* are employed directly on Pepita's exposed breasts, highlighting her femininity and sexualizing her in a moment of agony and terror. Where María's chest is an unavoidable visual detail (indeed, *Garage* emphasizes the similarities in the torture of male and female victims, and their bodies appear more or less equally exposed), Pepita's chest becomes the locus of her pain: she must suffer *as a woman.*[2]

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[2] Undeniably, María also suffers as a woman—both mentally (she is forced to carry on a relationship with Félix) and physically (this relationship entails sex). However, the films differ in their portrayal of the torture itself. The spectator of *Garage Olimpo* does not visually witness María's specifically-female physical anguish as does the spectator of *La voz dormida*.

The play between the visible and invisible, the final aspect of masochism being applied here to masochistic spectatorship, also plays a role in all three films. Characters in the Argentine films are often blindfolded and forcibly prevented from seeing. This process also occurs with spectators, who experience limited sights (truncated, blurred, darkened bodies and little evidence of the application of torture) and sounds (for example, the hidden source of the radio noise in *Garage*). There is in the Latin American titles in particular an unsettling play between the seen and the unseen; spectators witness a dark atmosphere, visual impediments, and truncated and partially-visible bodies. The blurry shot of María on surveillance footage, in which she appears simultaneously exposed and hidden, is one key example of this.

One element that all three films share to a certain extent is their relative refusal to portray torture itself. While *La voz* does explicitly show Pepita's torture, it also hides that of Paulino and Felipe in the shadows (although in a much less successful way than *Garage* or *Crónica*). *Crónica*, for example, contains only one true scene of torture: the *submarino*. The hallway beating and "mopping" clean, however, also fit within the definition of torture provided at the beginning of this chapter: they exhibit the regime's desire to inflict pain (the beating) or humiliation (the mopping). In *La voz*, although Pepita's visible torture does appear in the film, that of Felipe remains unseen in the sense that his body appears as a mere silhouette. The shadow play in *Garage* similarly disguises the worst physical pain inflicted on the regime's victims.

More typically, the spectator's experience of witness means seeing the wounds that the torture inflicts, as with the men's marked bodies and horrifying thinness in *Crónica*, Maria's head wound or the male victim's bloody face and torso in *Garage*, and Felipe's limp body lying motionless on the floor of the jail in *La voz*. This technique is once more a filmic manifestation of Aaron's assertion that masochism is "waiting in its pure form" (Aaron 60): the anticipation of

torture (as when Félix engages in a lengthy conversation with an assistant) can be, in some ways, more painful that witnessing the torture itself. If marks and scars prompt spectators to imagine torture, the portrayal of Pepita's trauma does the opposite: spectators witness not only the torture itself but also Pepita's cathartic scream. Unlike María, who is mostly unconscious during her *picana*, Pepita reacts to the pain, perhaps making it easier to bear.

When there is no mystery—as in *La voz*—there is nothing to fear because we have already seen the worst. Further, representing the torture in a conventional way (through standard shot-reverse-shot and medium shots) makes it seem more normal or prosaic. In contrast, strange camera angles—like the one at María's feet in *Garage* or underwater in *Crónica*—as well as the portrayal of torture through scars and sound, make the torture appear more mysterious and shocking. Here, wounds facilitate communication between character and spectator on two levels. On the bodily level, the spectator may identify with the character ("I also have scars, I know what that feels like") as well as the cognitive level ("I do not know what torture feels like, but I can imagine"). While Scarry emphasizes the need to visually witness torture and Aaron argues that, equally, pain must be seen, neither of those processes truly occurs here. The Argentine films provide just enough visual information to create a horrific experience for the spectator as he or she imagines the rest of the torture throughout the fiction. The fact that the torture is usually invisible thus leads to it being felt (perceived bodily) rather than seen (perceived visually). Indeed, Hirsch also affirms that survivors' bodily trauma reminds viewers of their own bodies (81).

Although the Argentine films promote identification with victims through close-ups, Zambrano's film mostly avoids fostering identification with characters through specific cinematic techniques, although it does facilitate narrative identification with Pepita. Thus, the

body-based identification between spectator and character in *Crónica* and *Garage* contrasts with the narrative-based identification in *La voz.* In *Prosthetic Memory* Landsberg argues that, in a somewhat similar case, *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002) avoids sadism and voyeurism because spectators are encouraged to witness the Holocaust while identifying, via close-ups, with its Jewish victims (128). However, the Argentine films I have treated here also keep the spectator at a distance, to place us there as witnesses without forcing identification: they seem to indicate that the audience must see what happened (indeed, the public may have indirectly witnessed the dictatorship at the time, as *Garage*'s use of sound suggests) while affirming that the modern-day spectator cannot fully experience the torture that the victims suffered and thus must contemplate it in a more distanced way.

Simplified, it appears the *Garage* portrays torture in the purest way, and *La voz* the least pure: while Bechis' work obliges spectators to witness, it also uses scars to encourage identification and sound to accuse them of complicity. *Crónica* represents torture similarly, but its dependence on genre conventions adds to the film's problematically pleasurable aspect. *La voz*, which also relies on genre (melodrama), becomes less haunting than the Argentine films because of its explicit portrayal of torture. Whereas the Argentine films, especially *Garage*, implicate the spectator through accusatory looks and emanating sounds, *La voz* absolves viewers from the possibility of implication. Its employment of traditional cinema technique in portraying torture also risks normalizing it, while the unusual methods in the South American titles represent torture as out of the ordinary. I attribute this discrepancy to the films' different time periods: Zambrano's eagerness to contain torture to one scene—while it permeates almost the entirety of Caetano's and Bechis' films—suggests that the specter of horror still hangs over Argentina.

This chapter identifies the largest gap in the representations of dictatorship between Spanish and Argentine audiovisual texts. The next chapter will deal with two Spain-Argentina coproductions, and specifically the relationship between the film technique of suture and the disappearance of parental figures in *Los pasos perdidos* and *Pasaje de vida.* Children can be seen as a kind of mark or scar—a remnant of previous actions—like those witnessed in the films discussed in this chapter, for example, the dark, round mark on María's forehead throughout most of *Garage*. In one scene of the same film a child (presumably the son or daughter of a *desaparecido*) has escaped from the room that holds the children all together—a kind of clandestine nursery. These children are another kind of physical evidence, along the same lines as the scars discussed in this chapter, because they bear witness to the damage done by the regime. As we will see, in *Los pasos perdidos* and *Pasaje de vida* these children of the *desaparecidos*, as physical, living manifestations of past wrongdoing, long to know their parents' histories.

CHAPTER TWO

Disappearance and Suture in *Los pasos perdidos* (Manane Rodríguez, 2001) and *Pasaje de vida* (Diego Corsini, 2015)

2.1 Introduction: Finding Families and Reassembling Identities

The recuperation of the children of Argentina's *desaparecidos*, which began at the start of the dictatorship, remains ongoing. In August 2018, the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo located Marcos Eduardo Ramos, who disappeared soon after his birth in 1976 and reappeared following an investigation and DNA test ("Nuestros Nietos"). Formed in 1977, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo split into two factions in 1986: the Madres, who continued their children's political fight and demanded their return "con vida," and what came to be known as the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, whose focus on returning the disappeared children to their families and bringing justice to the perpetrators reflects their less-radical ideology (Taylor 186–89 and "Las Abuelas: Historia"). The name "Abuelas" references not only their age but also their focus on recovering the identities of their grandchildren, and the organization's website expresses their mission to continue the search for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren:

> Las Abuelas siguen buscando a sus nietos, hoy adultos, pero también a sus bisnietos—que, como sus padres, ven violado su derecho a la identidad—y con esta finalidad trabajan los equipos técnicos de la institución, además de crear las condiciones para que nunca más se repita tan terrible violación de los derechos de los niños y exigir castigo a todos los responsables de estos gravísimos delitos. ("Las Abuelas: Historia")

The Abuelas figure prominently in news footage and protest scenes in Manane Rodríguez's 2001 film *Los pasos perdidos*, in which a well-known writer, Bruno Leardi (Federico Luppi), searches for his granddaughter Diana (Irene Visedo), who was abducted as a young child and brought to Spain by a new family that renamed her Mónica.

In Spain, too, children were taken from their birth parents and adopted by new families. As in Argentina, where the children of leftist *desaparecidos* were often gifted to members of the military to be raised in *junta*-supported households, in Spain "the practice of separating children of political opponents from their parents gathered pace after Franco won the Spanish Civil War in 1939 and sought to have the children of his Republican and far-left opponents adopted by families who espoused the Catholicism and conservative nationalist ideology of his regime" (Minder). Illegal and irregular adoptions in Spain occurred on a much smaller scale than in Argentina. However, the historical connection between the two nations extends even to physical motion between them, as with exile from Spain to Argentina during and after the Spanish Civil War (a character in the Argentine version of *Cuéntame cómo pasó* exemplifies this emigration, as we will see in the fourth chapter) and exile from Argentina to Spain during the 1970s dictatorship. In Diego Corsini's *Pasaje de vida*, Mario, whose Montonero father escaped with him to Spain during the regime after his mother's murder, searches for answers about his identity. Although the two films were released almost fifteen years apart, they share similar themes and techniques that portray parental absence as integral to the (re)formation of personal identity. While both films manifest absence through their narratives, they also do so on a technical level.

The titles of the two films hint at their protagonists' identity struggles: between two countries and two identities, they attempt to form concrete notions of themselves. The lost

"steps" referenced in *Los pasos* likely refer to Diana/Mónica's (hereafter referred to as Mónica) incomplete identity formation as well as her absent —"lost"—parents. And *Pasaje* suggests the passage of life, chronologically through the film's exploration of the relationships between father, son, and grandson; as well as geographically via its transatlantic shifts. The film's many flashbacks provide further evidence of *Pasaje*'s flexibility with regard to time and place, as characters transit between Spain in the present and Argentina in the past. Both films, then, reference lost generations as well as physical movement between the two nations.

This transatlanticism is demonstrated on the level of production as well, as both films are Spain-Argentina coproductions, with each title denoting both Spain and Argentina as their countries of origin ("*The Lost Steps*," "*Pasaje de vida*"). Although both directors are South American (Corsini is Argentine and Rodríguez Uruguayan), their casts feature performers from both regions: the Argentine actor Luis Brandoni and Spain's beloved Concha Velasco star as the parents of Mónica, who is played by Spanish actress Irene Visedo, an actress who now remains best known for her long-running role in the original Spanish version of television drama *Cuéntame cómo pasó*. And Javier Godino, from Spain, leads *Pasaje*'s cast along with Argentine actors Chino Darín and Miguel Ángel Solá, who play the younger and older versions of his father respectively. Both Corsini and Rodríguez filmed in on location in Spain as well as Argentina ("*The Lost Steps*," "*Pasaje de vida*").

In addition to their similarities in production, the two works share several narrative characteristics: they deal with similar themes, including memory, time, identity (and photographic proof of such), and the trauma of dictatorship and family separation. Both depict adolescence and adulthood, although *Los pasos* relies heavily on the infantilization of a female character while *Pasaje*'s protagonist, Mario, enjoys more of a maturation to adulthood. They also

mix genres, particularly melodrama and thriller. The two films resemble each other in their effect on the spectator as well, since their techniques attempt to remedy the discomfort that is felt by the protagonists and exhibited through cinematic mechanisms. As we will see, film theorists contend that the practice of "suture" attempts to assuage the displeasure of film cuts: for example, in a scene where two characters converse, a shot showing one character often cuts to another shot of the second character's reaction. The spectator's feeling that, "I thought my subjective position was here, but now it is there," parallels the protagonists of *Los pasos* and *Pasaje*'s feeling that discovering more about their identities—and therefore subjectivities—challenge previously-held notions of who they are. This chapter, then, examines the discomfort that accompanies the realization that one's identity is false or based on lies, and how the films represent that unease. I will, further, describe what methods the films use to comfort the spectator whose subjective position has been thrown off by the (perhaps unconscious) awareness of the camera's presence. Thus, while traditional narrative editing techniques invoke the theme of absence, the films sometimes employ other methods to allay the anxiety of both the characters and the spectators.

2.2 Theory: Suture, or the "Covering Over"

This chapter, then, relates the film theory concept of suture to disappearance in film narrative. Theorists such as Christian Metz, Daniel Dayan, and feminist film scholar Kaja Silverman have speculated on the idea of suture, a term for the techniques used in cinema to join film cuts together. Aaron's *Spectatorship* provides an overview of approaches to the subject: according to Aaron, for Metz, cinema makes up for its lack of reality through heightened

aesthetics or over-valuation of the image (Aaron 13). Silverman argues, rather, that traditional gender roles act as suturing agents on the level of narrative. Suture also addresses another masochistic aspect of film spectatorship, however, that masochism is "waiting in its pure form" (Aaron 60), an insight that was already addressed in the first chapter of this dissertation. Silverman bases her suture argument partially on Freud's *fort/da* game, in which objects within a child's reach are made to disappear and reappear by the child him- or herself (219).

Aaron cites Freud's statement in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" that a mother's departure "had to be enacted as a necessary preliminary to her joyful return, and that it was in the latter that lay the true purpose of the game" (Aaron 54). Yet the child controls the gaming, actively "staging sadness and joy before they are imposed on 'him'" (Aaron 55). There is therefore some inherent agency in the removal and replacement of the parental figure even at a very young age. I would argue, then that the masochistic waiting of the *fort/da* game is replicated in these two films through the parental loss of disappearance. Here, however, while the lost object (the parent) does not reappear, the acquisition of knowledge—the truth—has the effect of a returned parent. That is, in the process of learning what happened, the child receives the posttraumatic memory that would have been transmitted to him or her by the absent parent had (s)he not disappeared.

Suture is characterized by "lack" and "absence"—that is, it acts as a stand-in for the subject in the chain of its discourse, but only at the cost of taking the place of the subject (Silverman 219). Silverman explains further that the concept of suture was brought to film studies by Jean-Pierre Oudart, who speculated about the possibility of a purely cinematic language (that is, an equivalent to language in literature) (219–20). Since suture has become gradually more complex with each new theorist, Silverman takes care to outline the contributions

to this subject made in turn by Oudart, Daniel Dayan, Stephen Heath, and Laura Mulvey (220). For Daniel Dayan in "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," the child perceives his or her own body as united with the mother's body, imagining a singular self (109). He argues that the succession of shots in a film is a sequence of views, raising the twin questions "Who is watching this?" and "Who is ordering these images?" (113). The ghost that rules the frame and "robs" the spectator of his pleasure is the "absent-one" (Dayan 115). The absent-one's system depends on two elements: what images appear onscreen and the place from which the absent-one observes. In a shot/reverse shot, the reverse shot thus represents the fictional owner of the glance corresponding to shot one. It sutures the gap in "the spectator's imaginary relationship with the filmic field by its perception of the absent-one" (Dayan 115). The absent-one as missing parent on the technical level mimics the disappeared parent on the narrative level. In the films under discussion that parent can be a missing mother or father.

There is also a temporal aspect to suture, where the meaning of the shot is only understood retrospectively, in the spectator's memory. Thus a

> retroactive process organizes the *signified*. On the other hand, an anticipatory process organizes the *signifier*. Falling under the control of the cinematic system, the spectator loses access to the present. When the absent-one points toward it, the signification belongs to the future. When the suture realizes it, the signification belongs to the past. (Dayan 117)

In what Silverman deems "Shot 1" the spectator sees an image not bound by a gaze, creating a feeling of "jouissance" similar to the mirror stage discovery for a child; however, when the reverse shot ("Shot 2") makes the viewer aware of his or her visual limitations, Shot 1 becomes "a signifier of that absent field," and the joy of the first shot becomes displeasure

(Silverman 220). According to Dayan, moreover, in the reverse shot the viewer loses trust in the frame. The spectator realizes that he can only see what is in the "axis of the gaze" of the missing spectator called the "Absent One" (Silverman 221). This latter figure acts as the symbolic father ("potency, knowledge, transcendental vision, self-sufficiency, and discursive power" [Silverman 221]), is the speaking subject of cinema, and is located in the cinematic apparatus (Silverman 221). The shot/reverse shot structure demonstrates the fictionality of the Absent One's gaze (Silverman 221). For Oudart, a cinematic signifier is produced by the displeasure experienced when a viewer realizes that s/he lacks something ("the disruption of imaginary plenitude"): in other words, it constitutes a symbolic castration (Silverman 221). A narrative is thus created to suture the wound of castration in an attempt to complete that lack (Silverman 221).

Heath's rendering of cinema according to Silverman is similarly based on negation; he proposes that the spectator exposes himself to a "willing absence" (the decision to allow a fictional character to stand in, thus becoming absent to oneself), wherein suture occurs "at the moment that the viewing subject says, 'Yes, that's me'" (222). Cutting and excluding are also crucial to cinematic coherence; a cut, for example, turns the shot into a signifier of the next shot and the signified of the preceding shot (Silverman 222). Exclusion paradoxically creates cohesion as each image is defined by how it is different from the previous or next one ("'this but not that'") (Silverman 222). The "castrating coherence" that occurs when a "positive cinematic assertion" (the recognition of "'this but not that'") comes from the conversion of several negative assertions and is one of the aims of suture (Silverman 222).

Silverman's feminist approach to suture also argues that film draws on certain mechanisms to alleviate the unconscious distress caused by the realization that the viewer (subject) has no power over what he or she sees: a lack. Suture, defined once more as the

covering over of that gap caused by the stitching together of images to create narrative coherence, draws on sexual difference to establish its authority through enforced identification with male characters. This chapter goes beyond this gendering of spectatorship by interrogating the different experiences for the male and female protagonists, as well as how spectators are asked to witness the disappearance of a parental figure by examining how films use suture to suggest identification with male or female characters.

Silverman argues, like her fellow theorists, that classic narrative cinema attempts to cover film cuts, but points to *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) as an exception in its willingness to openly acknowledge the voyeuristic cinema experience and the speaking subject (222). She suggests that the act of realizing the lack causes a psychic "castration," and that the anxiety surrounding that castration is generally overcome through voyeurism and fetishism, drawing on Laura Mulvey. Silverman concludes that the subject-cinematic discourse match occurs at both the level of shot and of narrative and classic films such as *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946) call into question the existing symbolic order, rearrange subject positions, and challenge coherence only to finally reaffirm all these aspects (Silverman 228). At other times, a "false" coherence may give way to what is presented as a "true" coherence, but this new order is in actuality simply an interruption of the old (Silverman 228).

Although suture gives the viewer the illusion of stability by "reinterpellating" him or her into different positions, it also serves to "rearticulate the existing symbolic order in ideologically orthodox ways" (Silverman 228). Silverman suggests that the "cutting" implied by sexual difference can also insert the viewer into the cinematic discourse (228). According to Silverman, one of the principal ways that suture "conceals the apparatuses of enunciation" is through the glances between male characters and male viewers (228–29). The "relay" of glances in the

narrative and between fictional characters and real spectators takes as its object the female body in the fiction, rendering female characters passive to deflect male viewers' own passivity and reestablish the "potency" of the male spectator, often through an investigation of a female character's castrated condition (Silverman 229). This process functions like suture: an absence is revealed, then covered through displacement from the "level of enunciation onto that of the fiction" (Silverman 229).

This chapter explores how suturing techniques—those methods that films employ to make the audience forget the camera's presence and the fact that someone else is ordering the shots—work in *Los pasos* and *Pasaje* to reinforce the protagonists' identities while also attempting to mollify the spectator. In the context of my films, the role of the Absent One as the ghost that seizes the spectator's pleasure becomes problematic considering that, narratively, this figure could correspond to two entities: the dictatorship itself, which stole babies from their families, or the literal Absent One—the missing parent. This second individual will be the focus of this chapter because, like the theoretical ghost, an absent loved one also denies the child the pleasure of parental comfort and guidance. For the purposes of this argument, I also examine here the temporal aspect of suture and its gender implications; namely, that suture has traditionally been used to reaffirm the male spectator's supremacy.

The act of suture may also work on another level, however, namely that of history. Trauma theorist Marianne Hirsch has written extensively on her concept of postmemory. In "Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission," she defines postmemory, which occurs when the source of a memory is based on previous representations rather than one's own remembering (76). She distinguishes Toni Morrison's notion of "rememory," which is manifested bodily, from postmemory, which works via "indirection and

multiple mediation" ("Marked" 74). This is particularly significant in the case of Spain, since knowledge of Franco's dictatorship and the Spanish Civil War comes mostly through films: because of this historical distance new films are obliged to draw on older ones, rather than the direct experience of historical events. Postmemory is further defined through an identification with the victim or witness of trauma—"witnesses by adoption" ("Marked" 76).

Both films discussed in this chapter deal heavily with photos and photographic as problematic proof of past events and identity. Hirsch writes in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* that the viewer fills in what the picture leaves out: if he or she sees a happy family but knows that one or more members of that family were murdered, this knowledge increases the horror of seeing the picture (21). Photos thus actually lie at the edge between memory and postmemory, with postmemory being distinguished from memory by generational distance and personal connection (*Family Frames* 22). And as Landsberg asserts in *Prosthetic Memory*, theorists have also imagined cinema as a mechanism to insert or "suture" spectators into other time periods (14). Therefore, film has "authorized and enabled people to inhabit subject positions and pasts through which they might not themselves have lived and to which they have no 'natural' connection" (Landsberg 14). As outlined in the Introduction to this dissertation, prosthetic memory allows spectators to approximate on a bodily level a previously-unknown experience; however, I also argue that characters within a film can use media as well as objects as prostheses to aid in the (re)construction of their identities.

2.3 *Los pasos perdidos*: Identity Imposed

In Manane Rodríguez's *Los pasos perdidos*, 23-year-old Mónica Erigaray's simple life on the Spanish coast, where she lives with her Argentine father Ernesto and Spanish mother Inés, is interrupted when a man suddenly begins following her as she goes about her daily activities including at her job at a children's nursery and meeting up with her boyfriend, Luis (Jesús Blanco). She learns through television news reports and contact with associates of a man claiming to be her real grandfather that she may not be Ernesto's and Inés' daughter. When legal pressure on Mónica's father increases after an Argentine poet named Bruno Leardi (Federico Luppi) persuades the High Court in Madrid to accept his case, Mónica starts feeling the pressure. Bruno then travels to Spain and attempts to make contact with Mónica, her father, and Pablo (Juan Querol), Mónica's new love interest. In interviews with journalists Ana Bianco and Francesc Relea, director Manane Rodríguez insists that the film is not based on the case of Argentine poet Juan Gelman (whose son and daughter-in-law were disappeared). She does acknowledge, however, that Luppi was inspired by Gelman's story in his performance and reveals that three members of her own family were kidnapped during the Uruguayan dictatorship (Bianco).[3]

The family attends the trial in Madrid, where Bruno explains that Mónica's real mother was murdered, and that Ernesto, as the head of one of Argentina's clandestine prisons, is responsible for her death. Looking at a photo of Bruno's son and daughter-in-law, Sara Pereira (Mónica's mother), with their baby, Mónica understands that her parents lied to her all her life. At the end of the film, Ernesto and Inés are to be tried for Sara's kidnapping, torture, and death and the abduction of Diana Leardi: the DNA results prove that Mónica is indeed Sara and Diego

[3] Rodríguez chose Argentina over Uruguay because of its ongoing "lucha por la memoria" (*Los pasos perdidos*").

Leardi's daughter. A year later, Mónica travels to Buenos Aires, where she attends a demonstration and visits her grandfather Bruno, seemingly having accepted her new—old—identity: when she rings his doorbell and he asks who is calling, she replies, "Soy . . . Diana." Thus, Mónica's search for identity plays out as a tug-of-war between two families as well as two countries.

When Mónica begins to question her identity after Bruno publicly announces his search for his granddaughter, she remains outwardly loyal to Ernesto and Inés but wonders about her true origins. She resists throughout the majority of the film, assuring her parents that she does not need proof—but agreeing to the DNA test just to appease the others. Mónica's eroding sense of self, or perhaps subjectivity, mimics the spectator's unconscious doubts about his or her own subjectivity as the film engages in techniques that occasionally call attention to the camera. The "I am here . . . no, I am there" positionality inherent in film cuts here manifests on the narrative level as well as in Mónica's questioning of her own identity. Her search for the truth thus resembles the viewers' attempts to ground themselves in a fixed subject position.

Los pasos attempts to overcome these challenges to Mónica's identity through a tension between her real memories and the false ones that her parents attempt to implant in her consciousness like fake prostheses. Ernesto and Inés use fictional memories to corrupt the enlightening possibility of prosthetic memory and make it work in their favor. For example, as Mónica gathers for a family night with her parents, the three sit side-by-side on the sofa. Ernesto suggests they sing the song that they always sang with Mónica as a child and Mónica begins singing the "Canción de los dedos," an original song for the film that is also heard in the opening sequence. However, Ernesto and Inés quickly correct her—the "Canción," they say, is not the right song. Ernesto then leads the family in a singalong of *Aurora*, a patriotic Argentine hymn

popular with the military dictatorship (it is also the song that plays over María's death flight at the end of *Garage Olimpo*). Mónica halfheartedly joins in the singing.

Yet, clearly, she has another piece of music on her mind: in the opening shots of the film, a mother bathes her child in a bathtub. Following a blurry shot of the mother's naked shoulders and head, there are close-ups of the baby's eyes and blood dripping down its leg and onto a bath toy. This horrific domestic scene then cuts to the adult Mónica waking up from this apparent nightmare. The dream is the sole memory she has of her birth mother, and it only appears to her subconsciously. Later in the film, Ernesto appears to co-opt this memory, telling her that she always used to be scared as a child, especially when they bathed her. However, the film confirms the legitimacy of the bath memory when, at the end of the film, Mónica travels to Buenos Aires to visit Bruno and finds the house where her real parents lived. A close-up of the bath and its loudly-dripping faucet confirms this object's affective power and its significance in Mónica's memories of her life before her abduction.

Another attempt to embed memories occurs when Inés shows Mónica baby pictures, asking, "¿Recuerdas?" as if to encourage her daughter's agreement. Mónica responds affirmatively, if hesitantly. In this sequence Inés attempts to link photographic proof with a memory that is not there, and while the photographic object actually reinforces Mónica's uncertainty, other objects also hold the same power for her. Later in the film she examines several drawings she made as a child, as well as her old toys and dress-up dolls. She also listens to a cassette of Ernesto teaching her to say her name as well as those of her parents, just as she does with the children she cares for at the nursery. The family on the tape sings *Aurora*—thus affirming its presence in her life while hinting at a darker past. And although the objects themselves cannot give her answers, their presence causes her to question her identity; still, their

status as false prostheses (although the toys and dolls did belong to her, they were possessions that belonged to Mónica, not Diana) means that they cannot confirm who she is.

Other objects, however, do seem to confirm her origins. Some symbols of national identity, like her Argentine father's *mate* vessel, made of a calabash gourd, clash with Mónica's perception of herself. At the beginning of the film, she moves the *mate* container out of the way to cook a *tortilla española*, as if implicitly rejecting her half-Argentine nationality and embracing the Spanish one. By the end of the film, she rejects Ernesto and Inés and moves out of their house—but returns inside to retrieve the gourd from the kitchen. Mónica thus appears to attach new meaning and a new identity, associated with Bruno, to an already-known object—or prosthesis—in an attempt to mesh her two experiences and selves. Physical objects that serve as fake prostheses (photos and their adjacent memories, as well as toys gifted to her from the couple that stole her) fail to answer Mónica's identity questions, while more external objects that are not forced on her such as the *mate* gourd actually aid in the recreation of her sense of self.

Mónica and her parents attempt to make and remake her identity through physical prostheses, suturing together her past and present; however, the spectator experiences this remedy on a technical level as well. First, in the aforementioned scene in which Mónica inspects her old toys, the camera slowly approaches her face as Ernesto's voice on the cassette tape asks her name and the child responds, "Mónica." He follows up this question with, ¿Dónde está Papá?" to which she enthusiastically responds "¡Aquí!" However, during this audible interaction, the camera slowly advances toward Mónica then retreats, mostly avoiding abrupt cuts. The technique highlights the focus on positionality that also occurs in the narrative: the question-and-answer session between Mónica and Ernesto stresses not simply who her parents are but also where they are physically located. Just as Mónica announces that here father is "here," the

camera seems to make the same statement. And by extension, the confirmation of the camera's position reinforces the spectatorial position of the viewer as well. Interestingly, this scene's inspiration was apparently taken from real life: Rodriguez cites the story of a disappeared child whose parents played this game with her, which was a "juego siniestro que hacían los apropiadores. Una forma de control de esa familia sobre esa hija robada" (Bianco).

In a similar scene, Mónica plays the same game with the children at the preschool. As she asks them their names and those of their parents, a slow tracking shot captures the action; here, the camera begins over Mónica's right shoulder and slowly tracks in a semicircle around the children, eventually fixing on a space near where it started its movement but without completing the shape. The children's backs are visible in the bottom of the frame while Mónica is seated behind them, facing the camera. The incomplete circle of the camera's activity suggests Mónica's still-developing understanding of her identity. Her wistful look when one child responds that his father's name is "Papá"—she seems to lament that the boy's easy response contrasts so sharply to her own confused paternity—in turn underscores the sense of incompleteness that the camera's motions indicate.

In another key scene, the Erigaray family gathers with their lawyers to hear testimony from the victims of the dictatorship. An unnamed woman (Élida Mauro) testifies that "El Sapo"—Ernesto's nickname during the *junta*—tortured her during her imprisonment and that she once encountered Sara and Diego with their baby in the clandestine detention center. A similar elliptical motion captures her speech at the hearing, which then cuts to a tracking shot in the opposite direction of Mónica, her parents, and their lawyers. This technique mostly avoids suddenly jumping from one subject position to another (with the small exception of the reverse shot during the testimony), providing a smooth transition for the spectator. It also attempts to

close the gap, to physically suture together the two sequences by starting the second where the first left off. Camera movement is thus by no means incidental to the creation of meaning in the film.

How successful is *Los pasos* in reassembling Mónica's identity and alleviating the spectator's discomfort? On the one hand, Mónica does appear to acknowledge her new-old identity, as suggested by the film's final scenes in which she returns to Buenos Aires and attends HIJOS demonstrations and throws a bouquet into the Río de la Plata, all while a flamenco version of the "Canción de los dedos" plays extradiegetically. However, as already suggested, the film presents the young woman's two identities (Mónica and Diana) as imposed on her, usually by men. She therefore cannot creatively reconstruct who she is but rather passively accepts the identities that Ernesto, Luis, Bruno, and Pablo force onto her.

Despite Mónica's repeated insistence that she is an adult, almost all of the film's characters treat her like a child, and she sometimes acts like one. For example, she insists that "somos tres adultos" in the family and "no soy ninguna marioneta," but allows her parents to make decisions for her. Inés also apparently tucks Mónica into bed at night, reinforcing her daughter's infantile status. And while even Ernesto remarks that she is "casi una mujer," he also keeps her past a secret from her. When asked if Mónica knows about her true identity, Ernesto responds that she was always too young for him to say something—but that he still has not told her, despite her being in her early twenties. He is also overprotective of his daughter, picking her up from a café where she meets with her boyfriend, Luis. The four men in her life break up into two sets of allies: Ernesto and Luis, who appear aligned with the brutality of the dictatorship (in one scene Ernesto orders his lackey to violently restrain Pablo), while Bruno and Pablo represent the more benevolent force of the Argentine victims. As Mónica distances herself from Luis and

begins spending more time with Pablo, Bruno seeks out this new love interest, telling Pablo that soon Mónica will be Diana again and will need a boyfriend who is not a "cavernícola." Although the film suggests that Bruno and Pablo are more positive figures than Ernesto and Luis, they still conspire together to undo Mónica's Spanish identity without her knowledge.

The physical positioning of the characters often reinforces Mónica's inability to break free. In the aforementioned fight scene, Bruno and Pablo confront Luis and Ernesto, with Mónica placed in between them as if she were an object to manipulate. When she becomes upset, Luis even physically restrains her. The imposition of identity appears in Mónica's reenactment of Lacan's mirror stage moment as well, during which she gazes at herself in the mirror of a bar bathroom. This image is undercut by a similar bar scene in which Pablo appears beside her while she is again looking in a mirror, this time one behind the bar, physically positioning himself as an important accessory in her identity construction. Another scene that demonstrates Mónica's lack of independence is the three-shot of her, Inés, and Ernesto as they gather on the couch to watch television. Again, Mónica appears in between her two parental figures, reaffirming her childlike status. This process of objectifying Mónica, or putting her in her place, occurs for the spectator as well, particularly in the various scenes in which men (Ernesto, Bruno, and Pablo) watch her through a pair of binoculars. The circular shape of the binoculars, visible around the edges of the film frame, encourages spectators to participate in Mónica's objectification. This technique is problematic fact given that , elsewhere, viewers are invited to identify with her as a protagonist. The composition in the TV-watching scene is also disturbing to the spectator, as it breaks the rule of thirds in which actors' bodies typically off-center along the two vertical gridlines that separate the screen into thirds (Perry). Here, however, each actor fits into a distinct portion of the frame. This disruption of typical composition style might be unconsciously

troubling to the spectator, whose eye is accustomed to search the intersection of gridlines for visual information where here he or she finds none.

As mentioned earlier, Mónica is also repeatedly watched through binoculars without her knowledge: by Ernesto as she runs on the beach, and later by Bruno and Pablo. As well as the circular shape of the device, leaves and branches also occasionally hide Mónica from view. This subjective image apparently convinces Bruno of Mónica's true identity as he speaks directly to his deceased son and daughter-in-law, lamenting, "Diego, es tu hija. Es idéntica a ti, Sara." Later, Bruno is joined by Mónica's love interest, Pablo, in spying on her with the viewing device. For Silverman, suture draws on sexual difference to establish its systemic authority through enforced identification with male characters. In her classic film theory essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey identifies voyeurism as a potential cure for castration anxiety, "counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment, or saving of the guilty object" (21).

In the narrative of this film, similarly, men seek to restore their primacy through devaluation (Ernesto with his infantilization) and saving (Bruno and Pablo, who attempt to rescue Mónica's identity and love life). The combination of voyeurism, which has sexual connotations—as with peeping Toms—and infantilization creates potential confusion for the spectator, who simultaneously perceives Mónica as a powerless child and as a sexual object. This technique is further problematized in having the male characters look through the binoculars, forcing the spectator to behold the same images. The film thus forges identification with that male gaze, somewhat imposing an identity on the viewer in addition to confusing the spectator by encouraging both identification with and objectification of Mónica. Her powerlessness is further highlighted by Ernesto's hobby of hunting, which reinforces his predatory status. It is also reaffirmed by the times Bruno and Pablo look offscreen to mutter something to or about

Mónica (convinced of her false identity, Pablo at one point asserts, “No eres Mónica”), rather than bringing up the subject with the woman herself. The somewhat menacing, circular tracking camera movement around Mónica also suggests hunting and again imbues the act of spectatorship with a menacing kind of objectification.

Still, *Los pasos*’ incorporation of reality into its fiction works for both Mónica and the audience. In one sense it proves the protagonist’s real identity—photographs, newspaper clippings, and television news reports expose the truth of Mónica’s kidnapping. Ernesto’s spy Meléndez (played by Pedro Miguel Martínez) shows Ernesto some newspaper clippings of Diana Leardi which Ernesto in turn presents to Mónica. The family also watches a news report about Bruno and demonstrations in Argentina with protestors shouting “Nunca más,” while Mónica witnesses other demonstrators calling Erigaray a killer and a torturer. We also witness an interview with Bruno about his granddaughter Diana Leardi, and another with real-life Abuelas leader Estela de Carlotto in which the activist reveals how investigations often lead them to Spain. Identity and proof of that identity is thus derived from many sources. The film itself is even dedicated to the Madres’ continued fight for justice.

Likewise, the film itself provides the same experience for the spectator who was perhaps previously unaware of the *junta*’s practice of stealing children from its victims as it does for its protagonist. The interview with de Carlotto functions on a technical level to mimic the main character’s experience. The film’s production, like the film itself, draws on real-life activism: according to Rodríguez, the Abuelas helped her by providing documents and photos (Relea). Inés watches apparently authentic news coverage of the protests in Argentina and an interview with Bruno during which he accuses her husband of stealing his granddaughter. In this scene, Mónica hears the newscaster talking about Erigaray before she sees the television: there is a shot

of the living room from what appears to be her point of view, but through an indoor window looking into the living room. Mónica returns to the kitchen and in the next shot, Inés sits in the bottom right of the frame and Mónica in the top left, almost as if they were next to each other but on different planes. Framing, as well as camera movement and editing, thus serves to establish the characters' relationship to each other and to reinforce plot development.

As with the film's narrative, this technique suggests that her parents have imposed an identity on her: rather than allowing space for the disappeared parent they insert themselves into that space. The scene also suggest a secondhand transmission of trauma as Mónica learns not from Inés and Ernesto, but from television, that her parents were disappeared during the dictatorship. After Mónica returns to the kitchen, there is an extended medium shot of the news and an interview with de Carlotto, in which the activist explains that there are three places in Spain where they suspect children of the disappeared are living. This extended shot, which provides some context for Mónica's situation, seems almost pedagogical in its explanatory nature. It reflects the nature of knowing for many of the disappeared's children, in which perceptions are eventually confirmed with facts. It also helps viewers who may themselves suffer from the percepticide experienced by Mónica to understand the situation.

The film's success in providing the audience with prosthetic memories lies partially in the way it appeals to the spectator's knowledge of films about the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship by directly referencing prior Spanish films about the dictatorship and Civil War. In one early scene, Inés watches Víctor Erice's classic *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973), which ends with a lengthy sequence of a search for a missing child, as Mónica and Ernesto doze on the couch. Here, we see the sequence where the film's antagonistic monster comes out at night and Mónica wakes up, only to see the young protagonist (Ana Torrent) facing the creature

on the television. Mónica also takes care of a young girl at her nursery who physically resembles Torrent, reaffirming her connection to the Erice character and *Los pasos*' link to previous representations of historical events. These scenes show how trauma that is transmitted artificially through cinema on a collective level (i.e. the film is available and widely known to the Spanish public) can also be transferred individually.

To conclude, the film attempts to add to the spectator's previous familiarity with the dictatorship and its cruel effects through the prosthetic acquisition of knowledge; this process is replicated within the narrative via Mónica's valorization of certain objects. Yet *Los pasos* also manifests the discomfort of absence by slightly bending the rules of classic cinema, as with the three-shot of the family and the use of binoculars to objectify Mónica. It simultaneously attempts to allay this anxiety through sequences that mostly avoid cuts and instead allow the camera to move in a fluid geometric manner, as with the semicircular and elliptical movements previously mentioned. However, these methods may inflict more harm on the spectator's subjectivity than intended, paradoxically calling even more attention to the fact that it is the camera that is doing the looking: does the film's attempt to close the gap undermine itself? It is possible that watching a camera encircle Mónica during a moment of realization causes spectators to question their own identities rather than reaffirming them, especially considering the spectatorial confusion brought on by the use of binoculars that also encourages viewers to identify with male characters. As I previously argued, *Los pasos* aggressively foists an identity onto the protagonist, denying her the possibility of actively discovering it herself, as my analyses of the narrative and technique demonstrate. This is mostly problematic in terms of gender because the men in her life also continually foist an identity on her rather than aiding in her discovery process. Her lack of freedom to (re)construct her own identity reappears on the level of spectatorship, where one of

the common solutions to castration anxiety, voyeurism, not only puts Mónica in her place but also, unfortunately, forces the spectator to become a voyeur as well. The audience is thus encouraged to take on the more dominant, secure, masculine viewing position, protecting us from having to ask too many questions about who we are.

2.4 *Pasaje de vida*: Identity Assembled

Diego Corsini's *Pasaje de vida* follows the story of Mario, who is called home to Segovia when his semi-estranged elderly father Miguel suddenly falls ill; the latter has been suffering from memory loss and confusion and is resting in the hospital where Mario's ex-girlfriend Ariadna (Silvia Abascal) is now a doctor. Mistaking Mario for someone from his past, Miguel repeatedly insists that they must find a woman named Diana, who was apparently kidnapped ("se la llevaron"). In a flashback to 1970s Argentina, young Miguel meets Diana (Carla Quevedo) through their political activities as Montoneros, although both characters also work in the same factory. Mario learns that Diana is the *nombre de guerra* of Gloria (as this character will henceforth be known), Mario's mother, from a book he finds at his father's house. He and Ariadna attempt to find out more about Mario's mother when Mario realizes that a picture of her was taken at his father's home in Spain.

In another flashback, Miguel and Diana engage in guerrilla activities, and during a botched operation, Miguel's best friend Pacho (whose real name is Mario and is played by Marco Antonio Caponi), dies of a gunshot wound to the stomach. Mario the son reads about this event in the book; then he and Ariadna resume the romantic relationship they began years before, which parallels that of Miguel and Gloria. Mario visits Miguel's friend Sonia (Charo López),

who tells him that the woman in the picture is not in fact his mother, but her: in flashback we learn that Gloria wants to say goodbye to her mother before fleeing with Miguel to Spain; her mother, however, reports her to the authorities. Gloria is taken away but, we later learn, swallows a cyanide pill before the officials can torture or kill her. After Gloria's death, young Sonia (Carolina Barbosa) and Miguel burn all evidence of their guerrilla lives. Sonia pretends to be Gloria and moves to Spain with Miguel, although they lose contact soon after arriving. In the film's final scene, Mario and Miguel sit outside under the stars. Miguel finally remembers who Mario is, and Mario drinks from a cup of *mate*—which he had up to then refused throughout the film. While *Pasaje*'s themes overlap with those of Rodríguez's film, the focus on the father-son relationship and Mario's maturation, as opposed to María's infantilization, distinguishes the two texts.

Yet, as with *Los pasos*, the discomfort in *Pasaje* arises from Mario's discovery of his father's past, which in turn sheds light on his own origins. His potentially multiple identities also mimic the doubling of each of the flashback characters with their false names: Miguel takes the *nombre de guerra* Simón, Gloria is Diana, and Mario becomes Pacho. During a moment of dementia-induced confusion, Miguel insists that they must find "Diana," after which Mario initiates the exploration of his family history. From the beginning of the film, we understand the close relationship between trauma and memory in the narrative: Miguel's dementia means that at times he conflates present and past, and often cannot recognize his own son. When he and Sonia leave Argentina, they burn all their photos and letters, leaving them with just "nuestros recuerdos." Mario also remembers that his father was obsessed with security his whole life, which created a difficult relationship for them—Mario is visibly upset when he sees Miguel teaching Ariadna's son to ride a bike, since he never bonded with Miguel as a child. Moreover,

Pasaje's grayish-toned opening sequence contains occasional pops of red on certain objects such as a car and a woman's dress, hinting at the violence to come.[4] Here, a father's voice can be heard teaching his son how to memorize his surroundings. He has ten seconds to remember everything around him and if he fails, he dies. The scene is somewhat subjectively shot, as whenever the boy's eyes are closed the screen appears completely black—this opening therefore encourages spectators to participate in the memory game. The obsession with remembering is instilled in young Mario from an early age, but Miguel's failing health demonstrates the fragility of memory and the possibility of mentally living in two different decades simultaneously. This sequence also suggests that Mario's lack of memory, caused by his father's silence over the years, corresponds with Miguel's dementia. It also points to the role of postmemory in the potential transmission of those memories to younger generations.

As in the case of the previous film, the director remarks that *Pasaje* was based on the life of his father (Bilbao). In interviews, Corsini also acknowledges the transmission of memory inherent in the (re)discovery of one's parents, stating that "El gran problema es que no conocieron a sus padres, entonces a la hora de salir a redescubrirlos, lo hacen a partir de narraciones de otros, o de las cosas que les contaron. Y está esa pregunta, ¿por qué no estás, papá?" (Bilbao). Indeed, as the director also recognizes in an interview with Oscar Ranzani,

> Y hay un montón de cosas reflejadas que para mí eran juegos pero que tenían que ver con una cuestión de protección, como la cuenta hasta diez y tener claro el registro de dónde estaba. Algunas cosas me quedan, que tenían un sentido y ahora ya no. Todavía uso

[4] This use of color foreshadows Diana's death: in the film's first flashback, to the factory that is the scene of Diana and Miguel's first encounter, the scene is also shot in grayscale tones with the exception of Diana's red sweater, signaling her future demise. She wears a red sweater when she is kidnapped as well.

pañuelos de tela porque de chiquito iba a las manifestaciones con mis viejos y si había algún alboroto con gases lacrimógenos, lo mojaba donde fuera y podía respirar. O cuando voy a un bar trato de sentarme atrás mirando la puerta. Son cosas que para mí eran naturales, pero tienen que ver con una cuestión de ser hijo de militantes. (Ranzani)

Corsini thus acknowledges not just the transmission of memory not just from his parents to himself, but also the lasting effects of that trauma on him. Although this tension is manifested through his inherited trauma, he is able to find personal coherence and maturation through a creative process of discovery in which he reconstructs his father's life in parallel to his own.

His identity is confirmed over the course of the film predominantly through a process of maturation that differs significantly from Mónica's coming-of-age in *Los pasos*: here, Mario's identity is not passively imposed on him but rather actively assembled via his discovery of evidence and creation of a coherent narrative. Throughout *Pasaje* Mario finds proof of his father's former life in the form of photos and the book manuscript of *Los que viven.* At the beginning of the film, Mario encounters what appears to be evidence in his father's house, including highlighters, books, and magazines—but it is unclear what these objects prove. Then, by reading *Los que viven* (the author of which is unknown but turns out to be Sonia), Mario learns that the "Simón" and "Diana" that his father mentions are the *nombres de guerra* of his parents. As with Mónica, the photos lead Mario only to ask more questions about his identity. After stumbling upon a picture of what appears to be Miguel, Gloria, and a baby Mario—apparently demonstrating that his mother did not die in Argentina as he previously thought—Mario lines up the photo with the stone wall where it was taken decades earlier, thereby collapsing time and space. Later, Mario visits Sonia and looks at her pictures, and she tells him the truth about his mother's fate.

Another difference between the two films is the contrast between the infantilization of Mónica in *Los pasos* and the maturation of Mario in *Pasaje.* In *Pasaje*, Mario appears to go through a process of maturation despite the potential infantilization of returning to his childhood bedroom. Indeed, in one flashback sequence Gloria expresses dismay that her mother, whom she disdains for her bourgeois lifestyle, is so different from herself. Sonia assures her friend that, sometimes, historical events influence people's political and personal formation, affirming that despite being born in the same place, the moment in which a person is born is also significant. Sonia further argues that people enter a stage of maturity when they learn to forgive their parents' mistakes. Although this forgiveness has dire consequences for Gloria because it lead to her death, it turns out well for Mario, who comes to understand Miguel's parental shortcomings by the end of the film. Further, Mario's journey to adulthood is partially demonstrated through an equivalence between Mario and Miguel: Mario, in one scene, looks at Ariadna, saying "te miro"—just as his father did with his mother.

Technically, the film reproduces Mario's unease, often through the appeal to negative space in particular shots. Throughout *Pasaje*, a play of looks and visual gaps consistently alludes to missing people and times past. The absence of characters in certain shots references the unseen violence of the dictatorship. Early in the film, when Miguel and Gloria plan a workers' strike at their factory, a fellow employee who is unsympathetic to their cause gathers a group of thugs to attack Miguel. The men grab the protagonist, pulling him offscreen; however, we only hear the sounds of the beating while looking at the empty wall in front of which Miguel had previously been standing. Later, in the final scene, Miguel lies on a lounge chair while he gazes at the stars. The overhead crane shot includes the empty chair next to him, which Mario soon fills. After previously refusing a cup of *mate*, Mario finally accepts a drink from his father, who

laments, “Quisiera poder parar el tiempo.” As a crane shot pulls out from the scene, the camera exposes a suggestive empty spot to either side of the two men. This negative space suggests a potential place for memories to be inserted, or the physical absence of missing loved ones. At the same time, the inclusion of this negative space encourages characters and viewers to make them present: the missing are not simply cut out of the frame; their absence is actively rendered visible. Again, the symmetry of past and present appears here, as Miguel lies on the left and Mario on the right. This image mirrors aerial two-shots of the young Miguel and Gloria lying in Miguel’s car at night in previous flashback sequences.

One of the primary ways the film attempts to ameliorate the discomfort of absence is through transitions, particularly sound bridges or thematic matches that stitch together past and present. For example, a sequence in which the elderly Miguel works in his garden transitions to a flashback of him laboring in the factory. Here a sound bridge connects the two time periods, as we hear the chirping of birds in the garden blend into the whirring of industrial machines. The camera movement similarly softens the sharp effects of the cut, as it picks up where it left off: in the garden the camera pans down and left; after the cut, it begins in the bottom-left corner of the screen and moves right. As Mario converses with Sonia at her home in Segovia, he shows her the photo: “Esta mujer no es tu madre,” Sonia replies, and the camera pans from right to left. After a cut, we are now in a flashback and the camera moves back toward present-day Sonia, this time shifting from left to right. The same camera movement occurs when the action shifts back to the present day: 1970s Sonia appears on the left side of the screen, looking in the mirror as she tries to make herself appear more like Gloria. The film then cuts to contemporary Sonia on the right side of the screen. The spaces to the right and left thus suggest a kind of proportional movement between the present and the past. However, in some instances shots of the present and past show

characters occupying the same space at the center of the screen rather this lateral symmetry. For example, when Miguel's friend Pacho, in honor of whom we assume Miguel's son is named, dies in the back of his car after the botched *guerrilla* operation, his posture is mirrored by that of Mario, curled up on the couch, after a cut returns us to the present. The framing here is thus mobile and labile.

Thematically, the action in these transitions often lines up with those in the past. For example, the scene in which Miguel teaches Ariadna's son to ride a bike—a moment infused with the paternal affection that Mario craved for so long—cuts to a shot of Gloria in a bathroom as she realizes she is pregnant. The parental and generational connection is therefore emphasized on a technical level as well as a narrative one. These thematic transitions also sometimes serve to explain Mario's confusion in the present; for example, the scene between Sonia and Mario transitions to a flashback explaining how Sonia replaced Mario's mother on the journey after Gloria disappeared. Again, the camera's leftward movement in the present-day scene shifts over to the right after cutting to the past. In this flashback, when Miguel and Gloria travel through the Argentine countryside to initiate their escape to Spain, we see their car driving away while listening to Mario and Sonia discussing the same event during their conversation at Sonia's home in Segovia. This sequence thus proposes a question ("Who is the woman in the photo?") which is answered via an explanatory flashback: Mario's identity-related unease, replicated for the spectator through negative space, is somewhat assuaged through this question-and-answer technique. The film attempts to mend the spectatorial discomfort that is a prerequisite for suture, in which the viewer's subjective position is challenged by the cuts that are necessary to tell the story. The film's final transition is more visual but no less striking: Miguel stares out the window of his flight to Spain, and the camera closes in on a shot of the starry night. The camera then

retreats, revealing that we have returned to the present when we see the older Miguel sitting outside in anticipation of the film's concluding moments.

Pasaje's suture techniques are more successful than those of *Los pasos* in creating a cohesive identity for the protagonist. Corsini's work is likewise better at reassuring spectators of their own subjectivity through the use of flashback to explain Miguel's past life. For Landsberg, flashbacks can act as "a device for providing continuity between disparate spaces and realities" (12). And cinema itself "transports people into lives they have not lived in the traditional sense but that they are nevertheless invited to experience and even inhabit, albeit briefly" (12). Just as Mario appends his father's past onto his own present through an active process of narrativization, so the film's spectators stitch together the various flashbacks with sequences that take place in the present day. This process is aided by *Pasaje*'s techniques, which attempt to reconcile the two time periods by providing continuous camera movement and thematic transitions to alleviate the audience's confusion or discomfort of moving back and forth in time.

2.5 Conclusion: Closing the Gap?

Corsini's and Rodríguez's titles share several characteristics, including a thematic focus on absence, memory, and time and space. While, as I have shown, *Pasaje*'s methods of portraying and suturing the pain of parental disappearance are more successful, the two films share several themes and symbols, the most notable among these being the Argentine drink *mate*, which both characters accept at the end of each film after previously avoiding (Mónica) or rejecting (Mario) it. The two films also blend genres, most conspicuously thriller and melodrama. While Rodríguez's film blends the two genres throughout, Corsini divides them

between the present, which is represented primarily through melodramatic techniques such as dramatic music and a focus on family relations, and the past, which incorporates thriller tropes such as chaotic, menacing music as well as tense action scenes. At one point in the narrative, Miguel's car windows are smashed, and the scenes of the Montoneros' operation feature quick camerawork and violent, grating string music. Here, subjective sound (the ringing caused by gunshots) further demonstrates the influence of the thriller genre. This contrasts with the relationship-oriented sections of the film that are set in Spain, in which Mario pieces together his family history and cultivates a deeper emotional connection with his father, as well as falling in love with Ariadna.

In *Los pasos*, Pablo and another man (one of Ernesto's spies) surreptitiously observe her movements at the bar and the jerky camera movements here suggest thriller-like action. The predator-prey dynamic in the male use of binoculars further points to the thriller genre. At one point in the film, Mónica is so distracted that she nearly runs over a small child in the street while driving, adding a moment of heart-stopping action to the narrative—as does the scene where Pablo and Mónica outrun one of her father's spies. Mónica's actions are also monitored by Bruno's friend at a bar and outside her workplace. Fed up with the constant surveillance, she runs out to their car in the pouring rain to ask why they are following her. Here, dramatic music contributes to the overall feeling of melodrama. The two genres sometimes mix even in single sequences: when Pablo tells her that he does not care who she is (evidence of melodrama) there is a man clearly watching them from afar (thriller) at the same time. These sequences, while typical of thriller and melodrama, seem to draw on generic conventions purely by coincidence: Rodríguez insists that she wanted to avoid drawing on genre cinema, even going so far as to choose a grandfather (Luppi) rather than a grandmother to avoid "identificación sentimental"

("*Los pasos perdidos*"). She also argues in her interview with Bianco that, "Me preocupaba caer en el melodrama [pero] tampoco quería crear una historia de suspenso" (Bianco).

The two texts employ interesting camera movements (back-and-forth, elliptical, semicircular) that often act as a bridge between disparate times and spaces and attempt to soothe the spectator's discomfort. They differ somewhat, however, in their narrative and technique. Surrounding (mostly male) characters impose both real and false identities on Mónica and infantilize her throughout the film, as opposed to Mario's freedom to create his own identity narrative. In this way it could be said while both films appear to portray a coming-of-age for their protagonists, only *Pasaje* is successful in that regard. Both texts use mechanisms that suggest absence, as with the negative space in *Pasaje* and the incomplete circle in *Los pasos*. Yet the camera movement in *Pasaje* more so attempts to assuage the trauma through frequent back-and-forth movements that demonstrate how the past and present are not so easily divided in two. The camera's movement from past to present, picking up its position from one scene to the next, smooths the transitions from cut to cut, acting like the traditional mechanism of suture.

The missing generations in these films make it impossible for memory to be transmitted directly from one generation to another, and, as I have discussed, Miguel's trauma is passed on to Mario through postmemory. Yet possibly another type of memory at play here is Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory, which can be metaphorically appended by those who lived through the era but who ignored or were obligated to ignore (through forced exile, for example) the horrific events of that time. I argue that within these two films the main characters engage in a process of acquiring prostheses, such as the photos and objects that they continually refer to during the development of their identities. In this sense, the found appendages take on the role of the parent who, had (s)he not disappeared, would have transmitted the traumatic memory to the

child. Moreover, both suture (as signaled by Dayan) and postmemory are based ultimately on memory—film cuts require the spectator to remember what happened just a second ago in order to notice the cut. Similarly, the protagonists in these films must be aware of the recollections that they do not have (the known unknown) in order to pay attention to—and to understand—them.

While suture emerges on the technical level, it also appears in the narrative, sometimes serving both the protagonists and the spectators: as both characters cobble together new identities, *Los pasos* offers spectators elements of reality to supplement the historical information they already possessed: Mónica's trauma also becomes something to be taught to spectators via explicit didacticism. Yet these films manifest suture geographically as well as temporally and subjectively, literally closing the gap between Spain and Argentina with Mónica's journey to Buenos Aires and the many flashbacks between South America and Europe in *Pasaje*. Even the films' production, shared between the two countries, exemplifies the role of geographical suture at play here. Still, if suture is a "covering over," as Silverman indicates, does it risk hiding, or sweeping under the rug the horrors of the past? Indeed, the narrative closure at the end of both films suggests that the renegotiation of the past and the present leaves little room for alternative interpretations. The melodramatic music and camerawork near the end of *Los pasos* (after Mónica has learned of her past but before she visits Buenos Aires), for example, appear to tie up this complicated story in a too-simple way. *Pasaje*, too—despite its apparent comfort with absence—concludes its narrative with Mario's acceptance of his identity and his father's paternal shortcomings. The flashback sequences contrast with the dramatic music at the end of the film and the image of Mario and Miguel looking at the stars, which seems to tie everything up too easily, just as in the final sequence of *Los pasos*. Rodríguez herself doubts film's power to make people act: in an interview she laments, "'Ojalá [la película] sirviera para que algún chico que

tiene dudas de su identidad se presentara y accediera a hacerse la prueba, pero no soy tan optimista respecto a la fuerza del cine'" (Relea).

The available evidence attesting to Mónica's and Mario's original identities—via memories (their own and those of others) photographs, possessions, news reports, live demonstrations, and both formal and informal testimonies—varies in its success in helping the protagonists form, or rather re-form, those identities. How much can spectators, as well as fictional characters, depend on these diverse types of proof? Is one method more reliable than other? Is the evidence that films present to characters the same as the evidence they provide to spectators—or is one of these groups privier to insider information than the other? I will explore these questions in Chapter Three, which examines how both characters and viewers come to understand the truth of the past or what really happened. This chapter also investigates the tension between appeals to different senses (vision, hearing, touch, and smell) in *El secreto de sus ojos* and *La isla mínima.*

CHAPTER THREE

Sensorial Perception in *El secreto de sus ojos* (Juan José Campanella, 2009) and *La isla mínima* (Alberto Rodríguez, 2014)

3.1 Introduction: Cinematic Methods of Portraying Evidence

This chapter explores the tension between seeing, hearing, and, at times, other senses in two films about the Argentine and Spanish dictatorships, while also interrogating which sensorial perception-based techniques are used to expose evidence of crimes. It questions whether characters and spectators can trust what they see and hear: do spectators know more, or less, than the characters in the film? Is this evidence conveyed via sound or image, or via another sense altogether? As Tom Whittaker affirms in his article "Crime, Knowledge and the Photographic Object in *La isla mínima*," crime film address criminal investigations as a "problem of *knowledge*" (41); yet, who is privy to that knowledge? Characters, or spectators? Juan José Campanella's 2009 feature *El secreto de sus ojos* and Alberto Rodríguez's 2014 *La isla mínima* deal with violence around the time of the dictatorships in Argentina and Spain, respectively, through their depictions of murder investigations in which justice appears consistently out of reach. Each film enjoyed great success in its home country, and in the case of *El secreto*, internationally as well.

Set in 1974 and 1999, Campanella's film centers around the rape and murder of a young school teacher, Liliana Coloto (Carla Quevedo), and the work of two judicial employees, Benjamín Espósito (Ricardo Darín) and Irene Menéndez Hastings (Soledad Villamil) to bring her killer Gómez (Javier Godino) to justice. In the film, Liliana's husband (Pablo Rago), unsatisfied

with the state's decision to free Gómez, takes justice into his own hands by kidnapping and imprisoning him. In *La isla*, two police officers, Pedro (Raúl Arévalo) and Juan (Javier Gutiérrez, known for playing "good guys" on Spanish television) investigate the rape and murder of two sisters in Andalucía in 1980. Juan's dark past as a member of Franco's Brigada Político-Social, a kind of secret police (that, as Whittaker points out, continued to torture people into the early years of democracy [49]), is hinted at throughout the film. While both films explore themes of (in)justice and brutal crimes against women, they also both appeal to the spectator's sensorial perception. They deal thematically with ongoing issues of gender violence and the challenges of attaining justice, even during periods of democracy.

La isla refers to the case of the "niñas de Alcàsser," three young women who were savagely murdered in Valencia in 1992 while hitchhiking on their way to a party. The three men who had picked up the girls bound their limbs and stuffed them into their trunk, then repeatedly raped and tortured them. The men removed their teeth, fingernails, and arms, stabbing them in the chest before shooting them in the back of their heads (Álvarez). The manhunt went on for over two months as rumors circulated about the perpetrators' motives: "Entre las teorías llegó a planear aquella que aseguraba que los asesinos, movidos por dinero, perpetraron aquellas torturas mientras rodaban una snuff movie encargada por personalidades de las altas esferas españolas" (Álvarez). The film's plot, then, alludes to the method of the teenagers' rape and torture, as well as the snuff film dimension.

Yet the director insists on the plot's fictionality, remarking that "'no tiene que ver con ningún crimen real,' a pesar de que 'es cierto que recuerda a tantos casos horribles que han pasado en España'" ("Alberto Rodríguez"). However, Rodríguez also affirms that the rampant crime and corruption of the past are still very much present in the contemporary democratic

period (“Alberto Rodríguez”). This is evident particularly in the recent and much-publicized case of Diana Quer, who in 2016 disappeared after attending a party and whose body was discovered months after a man strangled her to death (“Cronología”). There was also a media frenzy at the time of the film’s production with:

> much media coverage surrounding one of the regime’s most prolific torturers, Antonio González Pacheco, otherwise known during these years as ‘Billy El Niño’ (Billy the Kid). . . . the suppression of evidence [in the film] points to Spain’s constitutional failure with officially reconciling itself with the wrongdoings of the regime—an unresolved question which, as attested by the controversy surrounding González Pacheco, continues to resonate in the present. (Whittaker 50)

Moreover, in an interview with Rodríguez, Spanish writer and director Daniel Monzón confirms that Rodríguez depicts “un pasado que es fácilmente nuestro presente” (Belinchón). Meanwhile in Argentina, although *El secreto* is entirely fictional in its premise, sexual violence and feminicide have become a flashpoint in the South American nation lately, particularly due to the acquittal of the men believed to have committed the rape and murder of sixteen-year-old Lucía Pérez (Villareal).

While justice is difficult to obtain in today’s democracies, it was of course equally elusive if not more so in the periods surrounding the authoritarian regimes of Franco and the Argentine *junta*. Both films take place just outside the time of the dictatorships—*La isla* in 1980 and *El secreto* in 1974–75 and 1990. Although Campanella’s film does not take place exactly within the dictatorship (1976–83), in his article “Beyond Law and Order” Demetrios Matheou cites the director himself, who argues that “‘the dictatorship merely organised and institutionalised the kind of repression that was already happening. . . . Many of the murders

were not only political, they were personal. And they could carry them out with impunity" (21). Hugo Hortiguera further notes in his article "Perverse Fascinations and Atrocious Acts: An Approach to *The Secret in Their Eyes* by Juan José Campanella" that the "radicalization of political thought, a strengthening of terrorist groups and the appearance of paramilitary squadrons" characterized Argentina's brief democratic period from 1973–76 (114). With his film, Campanella hoped to investigate how a "democratic government starts to transgress the legal limits" since *El secreto* depicts "those cases which gave way to the creation of a space of lawlessness, a region of incongruity of regulations in which legal values were violated and relinquished" (Hortiguera 114).

La isla stresses that, despite political changes, true justice remains difficult to achieve. While, for example, the police captain complains that Spain is not what it used to be—if you want to bring someone in for interrogation you must now ask him first—there are still clear traces of Francoism throughout, such as the menacing energy emanating from Juan's attitude and mysterious past. Further evidence of the lingering effects of Francoism include the barely-veiled threats invoked throughout the film, the police station's picture of Franco hanging next to a photo of the king, and graffiti on the walls of a crime scene that reads, "Viva Franco, vencimos y venceremos." Whittaker claims that until recently historical assessments of the transition overlooked the brutality that was part of democratic reform in Spain. The post-Franco period, in fact, was more violent than the transitions in some other European countries; for this reason, the film portrays some of the "residues of authoritarianism" (42–43). While, as mentioned earlier, neither film takes place during the dictatorships themselves, they do portray the way state (in)justice seeps into the transition and (in the case of *El secreto* in particular) haunts the post-transition as well.

3.2 Theory: Embodying Spectatorship

Both *El secreto de sus ojos* and *La isla mínima* depend on a tension among the senses—most notably sight, hearing, touch, and smell—to portray events and, more specifically, identify evidence of what happened. For example, Campanella's as well as Rodríguez's films depend on sense-based evidence of who is responsible for the murders of Liliana and the two girls in *La isla*. Often, full confirmation of this proof comes from the films' appeal to several different aspects of perception rather than just one. Although typically sight is associated most closely with the primarily visual medium of cinema, the potential of sound, touch, and smell to portray the truth will be explored here. This analysis will be based on film theory on the theme of embodied spectatorship, which incorporates sensorial perception into the study of cinema. Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener summarize that historically, the eye has been considered alternately as positive (associated with enlightenment, reason, and knowledge, and characterized by light and transparency) and negative (due to its potential "unrelenting demand for self-examination to the point of self-incrimination" and therefore associated with "power and subjugation") (84).

From the early days of cinema, the cinematic eye, which can in this case be identified with the camera, has been considered separate from the rest of a person's anatomy as well as a marker of cinema's voyeuristic nature: "The disembodied eye was celebrated as a strong illusion of power and omnipotence" (Elsaesser and Hagener 85). Vision's discreteness contrasts with sound's embodiment, because

> it [sound] creates an acoustic space, because we hear in all directions. This holds true not only for the space of cinema, where sound technologies like Dolby, THX and Surround systems have given blockbusters the kind of spatial presence that images alone cannot create, but applies to diegetic film space, where sound—especially if one thinks of characters being surprised or terrified by something they hear, eavesdropping on others or reacting to noise in a variety of ways—contributes significantly to the creation of cinema's imaginary topography. (Elsaesser and Hagener 129)

Thus, sound not only embodies the image onscreen but also appeals to the spectator's physical self through its three-dimensional character; for Rudolf Arnheim, sound transformed cinema from a two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional reality because "'the edge of the screen is no longer a frame, but the margin of a whole, of a theatrical space: sound transforms the screen into a spatial stage'" (ctd. by Elsaesser and Hagener 134). Sound also has tactile and haptic qualities, due to its manifestation in the form of waves and therefore movement, as an object must be touched (e.g. the strings of an instrument) in order to emit sound. In turn, it makes bodies vibrate, for which reason it "covers and uncovers, touches and enfolds even the spectator's body" (Elsaesser and Hagener 137). Therefore, through the "spatial extension brought about by the envelope of sound, omnipresent in the room, . . . it becomes indeed difficult to decide whether the cinematic experience takes place 'inside' or 'outside' the body" (Elsaesser and Hagener 140). Hence, images can appear disembodied while sounds can connect to a spectator's being. Yet the two senses share common characteristics as well; for example, both are sometimes associated with activity, as in the "phallic nature of the probing, inquisitive eye" in peephole films and the way sounds "probe deeply into the spectator's and listener's inner self" (Elsaesser and Hagener 86, 131).

Some theorists argue that seeing and hearing depend on each other. In *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen* Michel Chion suggests that images and sound in cinema are like two "ghosts," with a ghost being "the kind of perception made by only one sense" (125). In classical cinema, "sound asks 'Where?' and the image replies 'Here:' . . . . The image thus offers an orientation of what is 'in the picture' and how this is to be understood" (Elsaesser and Hagener 138). The relation between sound and image also creates tension as "sound and image dance around each other in a perpetual question-and-answer game" (Elsaesser and Hagener 138). Chion further asserts that sound becomes more "ghostly" than image because sounds become embedded in our memories (125). This is confirmed by Elsaesser and Hagener's conclusion that, in contemporary cinema (marked by the immateriality of the digital image), sound's physical link to material reality via surround-sound provides "a different kind of index and material trace, i.e. a set of 'truth-conditions' for the digital image"; hence, "we can trust neither sound nor image, but at the same time we need both, so that they may verify and confirm each other" (147). This will be the case on the narrative level in *El secreto* and *La isla*, where extradiegetic music often confirms the veracity of the events depicted onscreen.

Chion also posits the existence of images that appeal to the ear ("'visualists' of the ear") and sounds that can appeal to the eye ("'auditives' of the eye). For example, light that flutters and vibrates seems to us a "transposition of sonic velocity into the order of the visible" (134). Likewise, in image-to-sound conversions, "impressions of speed are produced most obviously by the flow of speech and fast overlapping of voices, but also—above all—by the visual rhythm" (Chion 135). Chion also asserts that sounds can turn into visual memories while images can leave the impression of something heard: in other words, spectators may remember sounds as images and vice versa (135). He clarifies that this perception occurs not in the moment, but later

(if only slightly later), through memory. Rhythm, texture, and language are all "transsensorial"—for example, rhythm reaches us via the eye or ear, where it "strikes us in some region of the brain connected to motor functions, and it is solely at this level that it is decoded as rhythm" (136).

As previously mentioned, Elsaesser and Hagener posit that sound has haptic qualities; however, films can also make overtures to spectators' other senses. The texts treated in this chapter do not rely solely on seeing and hearing but appeal to the baser senses of touch and smell as well. In *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Jennifer Barker argues that cinema simultaneously penetrates the skin, muscles, and "viscera" of the spectator, but at the same time, the tactile experience of cinema is shared by both the spectator and the film itself. Therefore, discovering

> cinema's tactility . . . opens up the possibility of cinema as an *intimate* experience and our relationship with cinema as a *close* connection, rather than as a distant experience of observation, which the notion of cinema as a purely visual medium presumes. To say that we are touched by cinema indicates that it has significance for us, that it comes close to us, and that it literally occupies our sphere. We *share* things with it: texture, spatial orientation, comportment, rhythm, and vitality. (2)

For Barker, film penetrates the body through "tension, balance, energy, inertia, languor, velocity (and) rhythm"—touch is not just contact but rather a "manner of being" through which either the human or cinematic body expresses itself to the world (2). Moreover, in "Thinking Multisensory Culture," Laura U. Marks distinguishes "proximal," or hedonic, bodily senses like touch, taste, and smell, from vision and hearing, which are often associated with "abstraction and transcendence because of their ability to seem independent of the body" (125, 128). The

embodied senses are more evident and thus more linked to the material world, “bringing it closer to our bodies” (128).

Considering Elsaesser and Hagener’s theories on the interdependency between sight and sound (the latter of which is embodied), Chion’s notion of the “transsensorial,” and Barker’s and Marks’ assertions that cinema can appeal to spectators’ bodies by utilizing the “hedonic” senses, this chapter interrogates the tension between seeing and hearing, as well as other senses such as touch and smell. It further explores the possibility that embodied spectatorship might allow viewers to connect not just their bodies to the action onscreen but to memories of their own traumas as well, primarily through the mechanism of embodied memory. In “Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self,” Roberta Culbertson suggests that wounding produces bodily responses that become memories of the traumatic event. These memories are sublimated to protect the self but are also manifested corporeally as they are “generally full of fleeting images, the percussion of blows, sounds, and movements of the body. . . . events and feelings are simply not registered, but this does not mean they are forgotten; they are located in other parts of the mind and the parts of the body affected as well . . . ” (174). More specifically, this chapter examines how films present sensorial evidence to characters, on the one hand, and to spectators, on the other. Does the audience know more than the characters, or is it the other way around—and through what senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, or a combination) does the film identify evidence of crimes? And are these texts capable of portraying trauma in a way that connects to the physical bodies of its spectators?

3.3 *El secreto de sus ojos*: Activating Cinema’s Traditional Sense(s)

In *El secreto de sus ojos*, Benjamín Espósito—recently retired from his job at the criminal court in Buenos Aires—attempts to write an autobiographical novel. After meeting with a former colleague with whom he was once in love, Irene Menéndez Hastings, he decides to start his narration at the beginning: the brutal rape and murder of young housewife Liliana Coloto in 1974. He promises Ricardo Morales, Liliana's widower, that he will bring his wife's murderer to justice and initiates an investigation into the crime with the help of his partner, Pablo Sandoval (Guillermo Francella). Benjamín looks at photos from Liliana's childhood in her hometown of Chivilcoy that show a man, Isidoro Gómez, whose eyes appear fixed on Liliana in every photograph. Although Benjamín believes Gómez to be the killer, he is released after a brief arrest and disappears soon after. Frustrated, Benjamín and Pablo travel to Chivilcoy and break into Gómez's mother's house to find his letters to Liliana, further proving his guilt. The investigation, however, is shut down by a corrupt political establishment.

A year later, Benjamín learns that Morales has been looking for Gómez and receives approval to reopen the case. Closer inspection of Gómez's letters reveals the criminal's love for a Buenos Aires football club, and Benjamín and Pablo finally arrest him at a match. After Irene and Benjamín interrogate him, he admits to the crime but a higher-up in the intelligence agency, Romano (Mariano Argento), releases Gómez and hires him as part of Isabel Perón's security detail, arguing that his violent temperament would be appreciated hunting leftist guerrillas. Irene suggests that Benjamín confess his obvious love for her one night, but before he can he discovers that Pablo has been brutally murdered in his apartment. Realizing that he too may be in danger, Benjamín escapes to the remote province of Jujuy with the help of Irene's well-connected family and the would-be lovers say goodbye at the train station.

Years later, Irene finishes reading Benjamín's novel and it becomes clear that the two have unfinished professional and personal business. They locate Ricardo Morales, who is living in a rural area outside of Buenos Aires: when Benjamín travels to visit him, Morales confesses that years prior he had located Gómez and killed him; however, while driving home Benjamín senses that Morales' story is false and returns to Morales' house. There, he discovers a side building where Morales has held Gómez prisoner for over twenty years. Stunned, Benjamín returns to the city, where he visits Irene and the two acknowledge their mutual romantic feelings. The ending of their love story puts to rest all the mysteries contained in the film: how Irene and Benjamín feel about each other, who killed Liliana, what happened to Gómez after he was freed, what happened to Pablo the night he died, and finally, who killed Liliana. These different threads represent the interconnectedness of love and justice, yet they also set the stage for the central issue of the film: Benjamín's obsession with solving Liliana's murder.

The twin stories of love and revenge are reflected in the ambiguity of the possessive pronoun "sus" in the Spanish title *El secreto de sus ojos*, highlighting the film's two main mysteries (who killed Liliana and how Benjamín and Irene truly feel about each other): the look in "'sus' ojos" could refer either to "his" (Gómez's) unreturned gaze at Liliana or "their" (Benjamín and Irene's) looks at each other. The tension between sound and image, as well as the different ways that evidence is presented to spectators, will be addressed in this section. Here, unsurprisingly, evidence of crimes committed and of their culprits—as with the murders of Liliana and Pablo, and the mystery of Gómez's disappearance—often appear through visual proof and the power of the look. Campanella's film highlights the power of the eyes and seeing from its first frames: one of the initial images seen is a close-up of Irene's eyes in a flashback to her goodbye scene with Benjamín at the train station. The camera first pans slowly over a blurry,

hectic scene and eventually settles into focus in a close-up of her eyes. Of course, Benjamín's proof of Gómez's guilt is also in the killer's eyes. The film further maintains a strong sense of what is allowed to be seen and heard, as Irene repeatedly asks her assistant to close the door or leave it open during particular conversations. When Benjamín firsts visits her in the 1990s, for example, she asks him the matter is urgent and then asks her assistant to leave the door open.[5]

Visual proof of crimes committed is also tied up in the film's love story: at a café, Benjamín refers to the way Gómez looks at Liliana, "adorándola." Yet he expresses some doubt about the ability of eyes, and the look, to convey truth: "Los ojos . . . hablan. Hablan al pedo los ojos. Mejor que se callen. A veces mejor ni mirar." "Hablar al pedo" is Argentine slang for "to bullshit" or "to talk for the sake of talking." Benjamín's complicated reaction to the photo—that the look itself speaks, but also speaks of nothing ("Los ojos . . . hablan al pedo")—and that eyes could actually be quiet ("Mejor que se callen") or spectators should avoid looking—seems contradictory. Further, that eyes can "speak" demonstrates Elsaesser and Hagener's argument that image and sound depend upon each other—here, indeed, a simple look must be supplemented by at least the possibility of speech.

In this same scene, the power of the loving look between him and Irene appears at this moment, although their feelings remain unspoken—"¿Qué mirás?" he asks her as he finishes this piece of dialogue. In addition to the actor's speech, the mise-en-scène itself suggests that eyes can speak; their look may hold either violent passion (as with Gómez's gaze at Liliana) or romantic love (Irene's look at Benjamín). In "Crímenes de 'guerra sucia': derecho penal

[5] Irene typically leaves the door ajar for professional matters but closes it for personal ones, as when she thinks Benjamín is about to confess his love for her (in fact, he tells her he wants to reopen the Coloto case). She also closes the door in the final, romantic scene in which the two protagonists decide to pursue their relationship.

internacional y jurisdicciones de la memoria," Peter Rush confirms that the camerawork in the film offers "prueba visual" of the protagonists' hidden feelings because "Mientras que el contenido del diálogo se refiere a la mirada del delincuente, el trabajo de cámaras durante el intercambio ofrece la prueba visual, y revela la historia secreta de la relación entre Espósito y Hastings" (115).

Proof of Liliana's rape and murder in *El secreto* is highly visual: her rape, filmed graphically and chaotically, stands out for its brutality. It is filmed objectively, mostly over the shoulder of her rapist, who is only seen from behind. Benjamín, attempting to write the story as novel, appears to experience a personal flashback to the rape (there are shots of him bookending the flashback, with the second being a close-up of his eyes). The proof of the perpetrator's identity is suggested visually in Liliana's school pictures: exemplifying the voyeuristic, probing nature of the eye—manifested in Gómez's rape of Liliana—the killer stares fixedly at the young woman in photo after photo. The letters Benjamín finds at Gómez's mother's house provide further visual evidence. However, the final proof of Gómez's guilt, for Morales, is not visual but aural: he calls Gómez's mother, who tells him Gómez had moved to Buenos Aires but had known Liliana from their neighborhood. Both types of evidence (visual and aural), therefore, appear trustworthy in the film. The spectator, then, comes to rely on the visual and aural evidence, filtered through the trustworthy testimony of two of the film's heroes.

This is compounded by Benjamín's realization, at the end of the film, that Morales was lying about having murdered Gómez. A close-up shows him reviewing the evidence in his mind, which is then presented to the spectator in flashback: Ana Moraña in "Memoria e impunidad a través del imaginario cinematográfico: *La mujer sin cabeza* (Lucrecia Martel, 2008) y *El secreto*

de sus ojos (Juan José Campanella, 2009)" contends that the spectator has his or her own role to play in the discovery of the truth:

> La mirada del espectador descubre la mirada de los personajes que revelan amor y deseo; también hay miradas como la de Benjamín al salir de la finca de Morales: un primer plano que Campanella hace del perfil del veterano investigador un ojo que se abre y un pómulo que se distiende, un perfil contra el paisaje de la campaña argentina, para marcar la comprensión repentina de los hechos en su inmenso contexto, en el momento justo en que se produce la anagnórisis, cuando el personaje tiene la completa certeza de la naturaleza de los acontecimientos en su dimensión trágica. Espectador y personajes son inquisidores, y esto se expresa en la mirada. Unos saben lo que el otro no sabe . . . . (391).

Thus, the film's various looks become an expression of what the characters as well as the audience finds out over the course of the narrative.

Yet *El secreto*'s focus on vision and seeing is supplemented by its use of sound. Campanella employs sound bridges to suture gaps in time and space, as well as, more conventionally, sound effects to emphasize the noises of everyday life. After Benjamín's early flashback to Liliana's death, he visits his old friend Irene at the Palacio de Justicia to tell her he is writing a novel about the Morales case but having trouble getting started. As she tells him to begin with the image that is most clear in his mind, a sound bridge connects this scene with the next—the sequence showing Benjamin and Irene's first meeting in the 1970s. Back in the 1990s, we see Irene speaking but the volume of her voice slowly lowers as it is overtaken by the voice of Judge Fortuna Lacalle (Mario Alarcón), who is introducing Irene to Benjamín. She introduces herself, and as Benjamín stares at her for a moment, Irene is heard checking in with the distracted Benjamín, asking, "Che . . . che . . . ¿te colgaste?" in the 1990s. The next shot shows

Benjamín in the present, still gazing at Irene. As they finish their conversation, a phone rings in Pablo and Benjamín's office in the past, while viewers continue looking at Irene and Benjamín in the present.

These sound bridges weave together sounds and images from different times, appealing to the spectator's aurality. They also demonstrate the film's emphasis on interrupted, incomplete, and fragmentary communication, which is also apparent in the use of open and closed doors and which, as previously mentioned, also has to do with what is allowed to be seen and what is not: in this section of the film, Irene silences a phone call while chatting with Benjamín, and back in the 1970s, Pablo answers the phone to what he jokingly says is a wrong number. Meanwhile, Irene asks Benjamín if he has hung up ("¿te colgaste?"). Campanella does not stray from the traditional "where?" "here" call-and-response of classical cinema: that is, the sound asks, "where?" and the image replies, "here," if somewhat belatedly. Sound here is primary, although the suspense involved in waiting to know where the sound is emanating from duplicates the lack of communication within the film on the level of technique. Through this auditory mechanism the film successfully, and paradoxically, reveals that it is hiding something from us, reproducing the mystery on both the romantic and legal levels.

A phone call later in the film also acts as a sound bridge between present and past: when Benjamín and Irene meet in a cafe to discuss Liliana's case, Irene's husband calls. This time Benjamín encourages her to answer, and she gets up from the table to answer, interrupting Benjamín's discussion of how he cannot stop thinking about Morales and how everything seems to be "leading" him to the widower. As if in response to Benjamín's assertion, the voice of a woman—Gómez's mother—in conversation with Morales is layered over an image of Benjamín examining at the old case documents. The camera lingers on Benjamín just long enough for the

viewer to hear Morales speaking with Gómez's mother; in the next shot, Morales is in the 1970s, distraught and trying to find out as much information as he can about the whereabouts of his wife's murderer.

Yet another sound bridge links the investigators' questioning of Morales after Liliana's murder with Benjamín in the 1990s. In this scene, Benjamín stands against a wall as he and Inspector Báez (José Luis Gioia) question Morales in his kitchen. Báez, out of frame, asks Morales about any suspicious people who may have been harassing or stalking Liliana. Morales sits with his back facing Benjamín, looking down. A low, canted camera angle captures him and Benjamín in the background, while in the foreground the handle of a tea kettle is visible, so close that it is out of focus. Báez asserts that Morales came home each day at lunchtime, casting suspicion on the husband. Yet Morales' explanation—that they had a custom of watching *The Three Stooges* every day—is coupled with melancholy piano music that seems to confirm Morales' statement. Báez's voice fades out as the kettle starts to whistle, steadily increasing in volume, as steam emanates from the kettle's spout. In the next shot, a blurry Benjamín is seen in profile looking at his own steaming, whistling tea kettle. He turns back to the page he is writing, about Morales' desperation at Liliana's death. The sharp, piercing noise of the tea kettle raises an alarm that signals something is not right—although the melancholy music in this scene appears to confirm for the spectators that Morales is not the perpetrator, the shrill sound of the kettle signals that Morales may still be guilty of something.

Other sounds of daily life permeate the film and frequently emphasize the sense of tension or dread. For example, as Benjamin flips through a photo album at Morales' apartment, the sound of a speedily ticking clock is heard alongside melodramatic extradiegetic music. This clock sound is also audible in the scene following the sound bridge with Morales speaking with

Gómez's mother, further emphasizing the pressure Morales feels to bring Liliana's killer to justice. At this moment, Benjamin notices the photo of Gómez staring at Liliana in a school picture. There is a close up of the picture, followed by a slow pan up to Gómez's face. The dramatic music intensifies as the ticking clock goes silent. Just as the music comes to a climax (low-pitched, slow piano chords create an atmosphere of tension), the camera focuses on an extreme close up of Gómez's eyes, looking not at the camera but at Liliana. Then the music cuts out and the clock noise returns.

The noises used for sound bridges—a ticking clock, whistling tea kettle, and ringing phone—are complex in their implications. Their volume and repetitive rhythm allow them to take on a kind of visual quality, one that is emphasized in similar imagery from the shots that are attached by the sound bridge—for example, the tea kettle in Morales' apartment is replaced in the next shot with Benjamín's kettle. They draw attention to themselves, as if to say, "Look at this; listen to this." The sounds tell the spectator, "You have to do something": literally—you must turn off the stove or answer the phone. As previously mentioned, for Michel Chion rhythm is neither totally auditory nor totally visual, but rather transsensorial: "when a rhythmic phenomenon reaches us via a given sensory path—this path, eye or ear, is perhaps nothing more than the channel through which *rhythm* reaches us. Once it has entered the ear or eye, the phenomenon strikes us in some region of the brain connected to the motor functions, and it is solely at this level that it is decoded as rhythm" (136). A whistling tea kettle, ringing phone, and ticking clock are all urgent noises that suggest something needs to be attended to. Their transsensoriality causes them to reach out to the spectator, almost mimicking his or her internal rhythm (heartbeat) with their own mechanical noises. Although a kettle's sound is less rhythmic than that of a phone or clock, its urgency does appeal to the spectator's sensorial perception in a

similar way (through a combination of seeing and hearing), since the film's sound and image emphasize the kettle's physical appearance and the sound it makes.

Yet sound, in particular music, also has an effect on audience response: the film's melodramatic use of music provokes emotions, which in turn provide *El secreto* with a tactile quality. In "Emotions and Transitional Justice," Jon Elster describes two types of transitional justice: political and personal, the latter being when "individuals or groups take justice in their own hands, because they do not want to wait for legal trials, do not believe there will be any trials, or do not believe that the legal punishment will be sufficiently severe" (21). This fact is evident in Morales' obsession with Gomez's punishment: he tells Benjamín, gravely, "Ud. me dijo perpetua." Morales's love for Liliana is evidenced by Benjamín's assertion to Irene that, "Usted no sabe qué es el amor de este tipo. Conmueve. Es como si la muerte de la mujer lo hizo dejado ahí detenido para siempre. . . ."

Moreover, when Benjamín visits Morales at the end of the film and the widower recounts to Benjamín what happened to Gómez (that Morales hunted him down and killed him), Morales' mouth is obscured by Benjamín's shoulder in an over-the-shoulder shot. The only visible part of his face are his eyes, which have a dark, serious look in them. The shot appears to point out the untruth of the aural confession, emphasizing the truth of the look—in other words, the look in Morales' eyes tells the truth (that he kidnapped Gómez and kept him as a prisoner for over twenty years), while his mouth tells a lie. And while on the one hand spectators infer through camerawork that Morales is lying, their suspicions will only be confirmed through Benjamín's realization later on. Private justice here is also motivated by revenge and emotion and takes place in a remote place where the law cannot reach.

In addition to Morales' emotion, the emotion that Benjamín feels about the case plays an

important role in the film and its relationship to the spectators. In Adriana Bergero's "Estructuras emocionales y archivistas de la memoria en *El secreto*: Benjamín y la espera en solitario de Ricardo Morales," the author proposes (following Sara Ahmed) that emotion has the ability to connect people on a tactile or physical level: she argues that emotions affect our epidermal borders, allowing us to distinguish outside from inside; further, we are affected by our contact with others. For this reason, a person's epidermal border is defined by the "impresión dejada por el otro en mí" (346). These "geografías afectivas" (inside-outside identification caused by emotion, or affect), as Bergero terms them, show that memory

> es retenida *en* la espacialidad de los cuerpos y . . . es por medio de los registros corporales (de las múltiples combinaciones hápticas de ver, oír, sentir, oler, palpar, etc.) que se accede a un espacio-relacionalidad desde el cual reposicionarse personal/identitariamente a partir de la impresión dejada por el otro. El discurso fílmico se asegura de transferir la fisicalidad de estas emociones por medio de marcadores textuales como ser el tracking y enfoque de cámara, la música, el sonido, el mise-en-scène, la iluminación, el lenguaje corporal (Smith, *Film Structure* 43). Todos ellos instruyen acerca de cómo posicionarse respecto a la historia que se cuenta (45): estos "[h]ighly visible textual cues" (46) orientan el involucramiento emocional de la audiencia (45) y *El secreto* los materializa especialmente por medio de flashbacks con tomas del cadáver de Liliana flashbacks que en el *cuerpo* receptor/audiencia magnifican la fisicalidad de la violencia sufrida por la víctima, mientras hacen circular el dolor y la gestualidad del cuerpo fatalmente herido. (Bergero 346)

When Benjamín remembers Liliana's body, he needs only to look for "*el referente en su cuerpo*, en su cara consternada, en su estremecimiento; tal vez en su náusea" (Bergero 347). Here, he

becomes a "cuerpo-archivo" (Bergero 347). Bergero goes on to argue that in remembering, Benjamín becomes a "cuerpo receptor" (he receives the emotion of the memory), just as the audience does when they experience his memory. At the same time, he becomes an "emisor" because "*la/mi* impresión dejada por el otro está *en mí*, *la/mi* impresión del otro *soy yo*. Para recordar no necesito ser tocado por el otro: ese momento tuvo ya lugar—outside-inside—y ahora soy yo el que es tocado *por mi propia impresión*, por la impresión dejada *en* mí *por el otro* (outside-in, inside-out)" as a result of his emotional involvement with the victim (Bergero 347). The transference of receptor-transmitter is multiplied in the readers of Benjamín's novel (Irene and Morales) and in the film's audience (Bergero 348). Benjamín's flashback, then, becomes a deeply felt, even haptic experience not only for him but for the audience as well.

In addition to emotion, music also plays an important role in influencing audience reaction. Here, diegetic music confirms what is presented in the various looks. Extradiegetic noise offers, in traditional style, a more immediate, haptic guidance to what is going on in the plot. Melodramatic strings warn the viewer of what will happen—for example, while Benjamín complains to a colleague about something trivial as he walks into Liliana's crime scene, the swelling sound of strings indicate that Benjamín is about to find a gruesome scene. The music also seems to confirm Morales' alibi (his distraught look is echoed in the dramatic music) and reinforces the dark look in Gómez's eyes when Benjamín finds him in Morales' photo album. Meanwhile, images and photos specifically offer a certain type of concrete visual proof at some points: during Pablo's murder, for example, we learn that he had hidden pictures of Benjamín and his family that would have revealed to the killers that Pablo was not the "Espósito" they were looking for. Benjamín also examines photos of Liliana, alive and dead—both during the investigation (when she is lying on the floor, he looks at photos of her on the wall) and later,

when he flips through a book of evidence and sees pictures of her both alive and dead. And most significantly, the look in Gómez's eyes proves to Benjamín that he is the killer. Finally, the looks between Benjamín and Irene also suggest to the spectator that they have feelings for each other, which is confirmed by their reunion at the end of the film. Hence, while *El secreto* experiments with senses other than vision (most notably hearing), it privileges seeing and the look.

3.4 *La isla mínima*: Beyond Sight and Sound

Alberto Rodríguez's *La isla mínima* deals with similar notions of justice as those portrayed in *El secreto*, although it takes place in one time period (1980—during the transition from Francoism) rather than the several portrayed in Campanella's film. In *La isla*'s plot, two big-city detectives—Pedro Suárez and Juan Robles—are sent to Andalucía to investigate the disappearance of two teenage sisters. They meet with the girls' parents who assure the detectives that their daughters are average girls; however, the detectives glean from townspeople that they were known for their promiscuity. Their mother Rocío (Nerea Barros) hands over a film reel with photos of the girls posing naked with a man whose face is obscured. Soon after, Pedro and Juan find the two bodies with evidence of rape and murder in a nearby marsh.

The detectives start following the boyfriend of one of the victims, Quini (Jesús Castro), who is now dating another local girl named Marina (Ana Tomeno). After Quini hides in their vehicle and threatens them with a knife, they strongly suspect he is involved in the murders. Then, another local man, Castro (Miguel Ángel Díaz) informs Pedro and Juan that his girlfriend was also close to Quini and was found dismembered in the marsh with her suitcase. As the investigation continues, the detectives learn that the area is supporting a thriving heroin trade and

the girls' father Rodrigo (Antonio de la Torre) has recently sold a stolen kilo of it. Several local men admit to being involved in the drug trade but claim to have nothing to do with the murders. One man gives the detectives a tip, advising them to look out for a white Dyane 6 that he saw at the church where one of the girls' belongings were found.

Pedro and Juan discover that Quini and another man, Sebastián (Manuel Salas) had been promising young women that he would find them work abroad and then luring them into sex slavery in a remote hunting lodge. However, a journalist[6] (Manolo Solo) reveals to Pedro that Juan once shot a girl at a protest years before, while a member of the Brigada Político-Social. Pedro is wary but continues working with Juan and together they chase Sebastián's car off the road and pursue him on foot through a swamp; eventually Juan stabs him to death to protect Pedro, who Sebastián has nearly murdered. The detectives then find Marina, alive but badly bruised, in Sebastián's trunk. The case appears solved; however, on their last night in town the journalist shows Pedro photos of Juan brutally murdering the girl at the protest. He reveals to Pedro that while working under Franco Juan tortured over one hundred people. *La isla*'s double mystery offers a complex reading of social issues, in which sexual violence against women acts as a stand-in for the state violence of the dictatorship period. This metaphorical relation is paralleled in *El secreto*, in which Liliana's murder shines light on the state's injustice.

Where *El secreto* emphasizes the importance of seeing and the look while using sound bridges and music to confirm oral statements and to draw the viewer in, *La isla* appeals to the eye and ear but also to the baser senses of touch and smell. Still, like *El secreto*, Rodríguez's

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[6] The unnamed journalist is said to work for *El Caso*, a newspaper that in real life, according to Whittaker, "pioneered the practice of investigative journalism in Spain, becoming best known for a tenacious reporting style that dared to cover crime stories that no other medium would touch at the time. . . . its team of investigators chronicled the dark underside of Spanish society during the regime, one that ran counter to its official narrative of civil order, peace, and security" (47).

film emphasizes the tension between sound and image. In Campanella's film over-the-shoulder shots tend to include a character's entire shoulder, rather than just the top of it, as is customary to establish subjectivity. For this reason, *El secreto* tends to incorporate more of the body than films typically do, as in the scene where Benjamín's shoulder prevents us seeing Morales' (lying) mouth. *La isla* also includes obstructed views, although in this case it is not people who block the image but rather objects. For example, as Juan and Pedro first approach a house on the *coto de caza* or hunting reserve (the lodge thought to be the scene of the crime), they observe Marina and Quini entering the house from what appears to be several hundred yards away. The shot shows us this scene but bisecting it on an angle is the metal part of the detectives' car that lies between the windshield and passenger window. The same visual is later repeated when Juan, driving alone, spots Quini on a motorcycle as he picks up Marina. Here the same part of his car obstructs his view and that of the spectator. While staking out the *coto de caza*, Juan also observes a mysterious man in a hat (Alfonso Corrales, played by Alberto González) who the detectives believe to be one of the culprits, going into the house along with Quini. However, his (and our) view is obstructed by a mound of thick bushes. These scenes heighten the sense of realism and subjectivity, forcing the spectator to see what the characters see. However, like Benjamín's shoulder, these visual obstructions also suggest that the characters—and thus viewers—are not seeing the whole picture.

The film's obstructed shots highlight its suggestion that there is always something the spectator cannot see—Juan's illness, for example: while at several points in the film he takes a handful of pills, and at one point he urinates blood, his condition is otherwise never mentioned or explained. However, the idea of things not being as they seem (i.e. Juan appears healthy but the spectator knows otherwise—a fact which is kept from Pedro) is reinforced by the film's use of

sound. María Delgado points out in her review of the film that the film's soundtrack mixes "the sinister stringed music of a mandolin with the ambient noise of animated fairgrounds and bars, cicadas and local wildlife, rippling waterways and ferry propellers—the latter used to sever the feet of one of the murdered women." And as Whittaker contends, citing composer Julio de la Rosa,

> We constantly hear a low-frequency drone throughout the film, whose discordant bass notes produce a discomfiting aura of dread. This is often accompanied by the notes of mandolin or flamenco guitar, played in a series of short and subtle refrains, their gentle movement like ripples on the surface of water. De la Rosa has commented that he wanted to "mostrar ese ambiente enrarecido de un lugar donde el mal se puede esconder detrás de cualquier cara conocida" (Campos 2015). The drone here evokes the undertow of violence that was simmering underneath the surface during these years. Indeed, in writing on the fractious convivencia of the two Spains during this period, Rodríguez comments that "esa tensión, que como un rechinar de dientes, tenía que oírse por debajo" (Rodríguez 2014). (Whittaker 51)

The tense relationship between past and present, then, is echoed in the relationship between the visible and the invisible.

This seen-unseen relationship also manifests as a tension between light and dark and sun and rain. Much of the film is shot in the bright sunlight of the southern Spanish region of Andalucía. These shots tend to show that "the actors' movement is frequently staged in a sustained depth of field, a visual strategy which emphasizes the vastness of the landscape that surrounds them. This is further compounded by the film's striking use of anamorphic widescreen, deployed to dramatic effect when the detectives are searching for clues" (Whittaker

43). In contrast, certain scenes—such as those in hotel rooms, the house of the murdered sisters, bars, the police station, and the boat (where Juan and Pedro are taken to receive information about the murders) maintain a claustrophobic atmosphere where light fails to penetrate the ambient darkness. This is particularly true in one of the *La isla*'s final scenes, in which the two detectives pursue Sebastián through the pouring rain—an image so striking it was used in the film's poster.

The most striking example of light and dark is during Juan and Pedro's interrogation of Marina. Here, the two detectives and Marina sit around a table; Juan and Marina are illuminated by a shaft of light while Pedro remains in the shadow. In this scene, a frustrated Pedro bangs his fist on the table when Marina refuses to answer his questions. It is one of Pedro's only outbursts of violence, in contrast to Juan's many pugilistic moments; for example, Juan smacks Quini, chokes the landlady at the *coto de caza*, and pushes Juan up against a wall. It suggests that the difference between "dark" (Juan, with his violent behavior and mysterious past) and "light" (Pedro, the democracy proponent) is not so simple. María Delgado concurs in her review of the film: noting that Juan's last name is "Robles," she asserts that this testifies "to a noble strain in his character: loyalty to his partner. Pedro, meanwhile, is not averse to employing violence where he feels it is necessary. He is keen to differentiate himself from Juan, but the fact that their disagreements happen during shared activities—shooting at the fairground's rifle range, for example—suggests they may have more in common than Pedro is willing to admit" (Delgado). The lighting in this scene further insinuates that Pedro is, perhaps willingly, being kept in the metaphorical dark about Juan's past. And much like *El secreto*, *La isla* places significant emphasis on the look, a fact underscored by camerawork in the slow movement of the camera toward a person or object. Hence the look is both to that of the camera and that of characters.

This technique is typically used to portray some kind of realization, either on the part of the spectators or of the characters; it also occurs with a close-up of Sebastián's suitcase and Pedro's discovery of the viewfinder in the Málaga hotel.

At the same time, the film places a heavy emphasis on particular images—most notably drawings and photographs. For example, Juan is seen several times sketching figures in his notebook when witnesses provide him with descriptions. When the fisherman Fermín (Juan Carlos Montilla) describes the bumper sticker on the back of the culprit's car, Juan sketches the figure of a woman with long hair and a large hat. The sticker was also on a folder of promotional materials for the Málaga hotel where several girls in the town had signed up to work. At a bar, Juan flirts with a woman by handing her a sketch of her figure that he has just drawn. The spectator, as with *El secreto*, must store the memories of these images to piece together the evidence as the characters do. However, the role of photos in the film is also significant.

There are different types of photos of victims in the film: those that show the victims alive (such as the framed pictures hanging on people's walls, or Castro's locket containing his girlfriend's image), the negatives of Carmen and Estrella that their mother gives to the detectives, and the crime photos of their severed feet. The portraits of victims when they were alive act as a kind of memorial, a testimony to their onetime existence. They portray the victims alive, but also emphasize their absence in death (in line with Barthes' theory of the photograph-as-death[7]). In the scene where Castro shows Pedro and Juan the locket containing a photo of his

[7] In her notes on *Camera Obscura*, Kasia Houlihan summarizes Barthes' notion that "When we look at a photograph, it is not the actual photo that we see, for the photograph itself is rendered *invisible*; thus the photograph is unclassifiable, for it resists language, as it is without signs or marks—it simply is. . . . Furthermore, the subject that is photographed is rendered object, dispossessed of itself, thus becoming, 'Death in person.' (14) (*note that it is customary to say that a camera '*shoots*' a picture.)"

girlfriend, who was also murdered, a close-up of the locket's photo reveals Pedro's fingers around the edges. It is one of the film's first examples of highlighting the framing around the photo—namely the detectives' hands and fingers.

The film emphasizes here the hapticity of the handling of photographs: their physical rather than merely visible presence. The power of touch becomes clear when Juan holds the locket: a close-up shows his hand, holding a cigarette, trembling as he inspects the photo. In the next scene, he urinates blood and desperately swallows a dose of medicine. As he turns around, he sees a strangely out-of-place, colorful bird perched on top of a lamp and immediately faints. Juan's physical, bodily reaction to touching the photograph is echoed later, when Rocío (the mother of Carmen and Estrella) meets with Juan to reveal that Marina was not with Quini the night that her daughters disappeared and pats his hand. Juan appears overcome by his ailment and has hurriedly searches his jacket pocket to locate his medication, which he again tosses into his mouth.

During the detectives' conversation with Castro, he mentions that the only part of his girlfriend Adela's body that was found was her foot, which still had on it a shoe that he had given her as a present. This parallels the photos of the sisters' feet that Juan and Pedro inspect. Not only do these body parts, unattached to their owners, accentuate the gruesomeness of the crimes committed, they also suggest the impossibility of escaping their small, isolated, town—a journey cut short. The detectives examine pictures of Carmen and Estrella's feet both at the crime scene, in a shoe, and then shoeless in what appears to be a crime lab. The limited context within the photos (in terms of where the photos were taken and who the feet belong to) is diminished by the way the camera again captures the context within the film's frame, which includes, again, the hands of the detectives.

Rodríguez also highlights the materiality of photos, extending Elsaesser and Hagener's notion of embodied sound to visual material as well. This is evident when Pedro (twice) holds up the negatives of Carmen and Estrella to the light; this happens while driving in the car with Juan and also while he is talking to his wife in the phone booth at the hotel. The idea of holding something up to the light, illuminating it, of course refers to light's ability to signal truth whereas darkness is associated with mystery. At the same time, in the phone booth scene it seems that the photo's materiality itself is at issue, rather than what the photo portrays: Pedro notices the numbers along the top of the film strip that, the photographer informs him, comes from an uncommon imported brand. It is later proved that Quini ordered the film from a shop in the city. Thus, the film strip's materiality (the information along the edges of the strip, as well as the way the film shows Pedro handling it) adds evidence to the case for Quini as the culprit.

Perhaps the most significant example of the hapticity of looking at photos is when the detectives receive the developed negatives of Carmen and Estrella. In the stairwell at their hotel, Juan and Pedro pass the photos back and forth. The film strip on the edges is often visible, as are the hands of the detectives. Whittaker argues that Rodríguez's film "alerts us to the materiality of the photo most explicitly when it serves as visual evidence" (45), confirming that the "photographic negative was once, as it were, in touch with the object it depicts" (46). Yet Whittaker also points out that photos can be unreliable, noting that, "While Carmen's face can be clearly seen, the flare of the flashlight obscures the face of the man. The blurred and decentred composition of the snapshots, spontaneously taken in succession of one another, also points to intervention of another absent subject: the mysterious figure of the photographer himself, who as participant or voyeur was ostensibly involved in their abuse and murder" (45). The film strip's

twisted edges, scratches, and tears also “illustrate the fragility of photochemical film stock” (Whittaker 46).

On the other hand, the importance of sound is introduced at the beginning of the film, when Pedro tells Juan he “heard” that Juan extorts sex workers and bars. “Tengo un buen oído,” he remarks. Juan replies, “¿Y qué más has escuchado?”—thus planting doubt about his background and casting Pedro’s “buen oído” as faulty. As in *El secreto*, verbal communication is sometimes untrustworthy or even impossible to achieve, as when Pedro cannot hear his wife speaking on the phone or the fact that Juan refuses to call his own wife for unknown reasons. At times, the film’s sound is overwhelming, almost drowning out what the characters are saying—as with the sounds of birds and crickets that emphasize the location’s oppressively hot and dangerous atmosphere. The diegetic music heard in three bar scenes is similarly prominent. As the two detectives pass by a strike going on in the town, their conversation is barely audible over the strike leader’s loudspeaker announcements. At other times, the lack of sound can be just as oppressive, as when Pedro chastises Juan for remaining silent in the face of the Guardia Civil’s abuse of power or during Quini’s interrogation. Angelita, the town’s “vidente,” supposedly “ve cosas.” Indeed, in the middle of the film she tells Juan that “Lo de usted sí lo vi” and continues by revealing that the dead are waiting for him and it will not be long now. Yet Angelita also speaks to the dead; thus, she is not only a seer, but a hear-er, emphasizing the necessity of auditory perception in receiving the truth.

The tension between image—touchable, yet not without its weaknesses—and sound often has to do with the truth of Juan’s past. For example, Pedro hears Juan hitting Carmen and Estrella’s father as they are interrogating him. He also listens to Juan choking the landlady of the *coto de caza*. However, he chooses to ignore his partner’s violence: although he has seen Juan’s

outbursts before (as when Quini sneaks into their car and Juan begins vigorously slapping Quini in the head), it is easier to do nothing when he merely hears what is going on. Elsaesser comments that some things are audible but not visible (113); here, Pedro willfully chooses to remain in the dark. His belated intervention at the end of this scene is eclipsed by a later sequence in which he, frustrated with the landlady's lies, chokes her himself. Sounds, then, portray evidence of Juan's past as well as Pedro's inability to detach himself from the same kind of violent behavior in which his partner engages.

In general, the film's use of sound is nearly as haptic as that of visuals, manifesting embodied sound in the close relationship between human touch and mechanical recording. Juan's wiretap of Marina's phone results in a scene in which he and Pedro listen to the recording in their car. Although the recording is primarily aural, the playing of it is heavily focused on the touching of the machine, with shots of Juan pausing, rewinding, and replaying the recording. Here, three layers of sound are layered on top of each other: the voice of Marina asking Quini when she will be able to go to Málaga, and the sound of the recording itself, with the squeaky noises of the tape spins on the metal reel, as well as the sound of rain hitting the outside of the car. The camera's intent focus on Juan's hand holding the tape player reinforces that hapticity of sound as it slowly approaches the image of the spinning tape until pausing in an extreme close-up.

Yet the film is also highly haptic and physical in other ways. Aside from the rain and mud of the film's poster, a constant presence of animals pervades the film. The geese in the trunk of a hunter's car (which he grabs by the neck) and the child playing with the crab outside a witness' house draw attention to the proximity of the animal kingdom—a sense that is reinforced through the omnipresent birds, the horse found inside the *coto de caza*, and, most viscerally,

Angelita's gruesome slaughter of fish at the docks. Some of these images (such as the horse or the bird that Juan finds in his hotel room) suggest the fish-out-of-water experience of the two detectives. Beyond their brute materiality, the presence of animals and the theme of hunting, portrayed through the stag heads on the wall of the *coto de caza* as well as the idea of a killer stalking his prey, demonstrate that people—murderers—can be "animals" in the disparaging sense of the word.

A highly-visceral example of touch and smell is the scene between Juan and Alfonso Corrales, the man in the hat. Rocío tells Juan that Marina spent a night with two men, Quini and another man whose face she did not see: she did, however, notice that he smelled strongly of cologne and had soft hands. When Juan later spots Corrales at a protest he approaches the man to introduce himself. There is close-up of the two men shaking hands, as well as a shot of Juan smelling his hand as Corrales walks away. It is not clear from Juan's face what he smells, but the shot (a lingering close-up) suggests that he has found the man Marina met. The pulsing music in this scene almost mimics a physical heartbeat. Thus, the film appears to offer smell as an evidence-providing sense. Whereas Marina's eyes failed her, Juan's nose seems to know the truth. Indeed, *La isla* contains several moments of hapticity, including the crunching noises, forceful rain, and evocative stabbing at the end of the film when Juan kills Sebastián in the marsh to save Pedro's life.

An open question at this point in the film is who exactly murdered Carmen and Estrella. Yet the film actually offers proof of two crimes: the murder of two young girls, and Juan's brutality during the dictatorship. With the murders, the proof of guilt is acquired mostly through sound, smell, and touch; visual proof is somewhat lacking and, as previously mentioned, photos sometimes hide more than they reveal or can become damaged and useless. Although the girls'

mother gives the detectives some negatives, the photos show deer antlers, a man (who turns out to be Quini, one of the culprits) with a triangle tattoo on his wrist, and the two girls, naked. However, at the end of the film, the journalist gives Pedro the photos he asked for. One shows a man's arm, but his face is obscured by a flash. A photo of the two sisters with Quini establishes the connection between them. But the proof is also predominantly aural—the journalist tells Pedro that Quini bought the camera with which the photos were taken. Later, Pedro and Juan listen to a recording from Marina's phone where she tells a man that she hopes the hotel in Málaga calls to offer her a job as she is desperate to leave town. Earlier, Juan and Pedro learn that several young women in the area have been lured into false promises of work in the city and subsequently murdered. Marina's mother also reveals to them that Quini tied Marina to a bed naked and returned with another man. The mother did not see the man's face but did remember that he wore cologne and had soft hands. The film's final proof is visual: after a climactic car chase and shootout in the rain, Pedro and Juan find Marina alive in a car trunk, covered in bruises and cuts. Her appearance somewhat mirrors that of the murdered sisters—except that she is alive. Although this proof is visual, the physical manifestation of violence is on Marina's body.

There is little evidence for the dark side of Juan's history until the end of the film, other than Angelita's fearful stare at him after their first encounter. However, as briefly mentioned before, Juan's anger occasionally appears in the form of violent outbursts: for example, when the victims' father refuses to reveal any information on who might have kidnapped his daughters, Juan slaps and brutally chokes him until he confesses to having sold drugs in order to support his family. The journalist from *El Caso* asks Pedro if his partner can sleep at night, since he was in the Brigada Político-Social and killed a girl at a demonstration in Vallecas in 1971, shooting her

twice in the back. A furious Pedro asks Juan about the incident, but Juan grabs him and says he doesn't know anything about it and that he was covering for his friend when he took responsibility for the crime—but he never even drew his gun. While Juan has several angry fits throughout the film, his history of violence is not confirmed until the end of the film.

The real evidence of Juan's past is photographic rather than aural: in the penultimate scene (which is ostensibly celebratory as Juan mingles with locals at a festive bar), the journalist passes Pedro a photo of Juan in Vallecas with his gun pointed at a young woman. He tells Pedro that Juan was known as "El Cuervo" and alone tortured over one hundred people. Pedro rips up the photo, apparently refusing to believe that his partner engaged in such brutality. But in the film's final scene, the two men stand on either side of their car as they prepare for the drive back to Madrid. Juan glances menacingly at Pedro as they get in, asking, "Todo en orden, no?" The audience likely interprets the ominous conversation as proof of Juan's violent history. Whittaker indicates that this line refers to how

> the persistence of the photographic object suggests crime has not been fully solved and order has not been restored—at least, not in any narrative sense. Yet his failure to address the true implications of the image nevertheless points to the *continuismo* of the Francoist order and its institutions during the transition. The clientelistic and corrupt power structure that was sustained by the regime . . . . (51)

As we have seen in this section, while *La isla* highlights the materiality of photographs it also points to their physical and ontological weakness; the film further reinforces the importance of senses such as sound, touch, and smell in verifying evidence.

3.5 Conclusion: Sense Connection and (Un)deniable Proof

La isla and *El secreto* share several characteristics, particularly the way both films highlight sound and image. However, *La isla* makes greater use of the more traditionally haptic senses of touch and smell. Sound in *El secreto* could be considered haptic as well, however, in the sense that it is more three dimensional than image and thus can be thought of as surrounding or enveloping the spectator (Elsaesser and Hagener 138). More significantly, its use of sounds that are characterized by urgency (such as the ringing phone) connect to the interiority (heartbeat) of spectators, reaching out to them and demanding attention. Like Campanella's film, Rodríguez's uses extradiegetic music to reinforce images presented onscreen. However, the photographic object in *La isla* is also treated more haptically, as pictures are continually flipped through, touched, and handled.

Both films also demonstrate the tension between the beauty of the landscape (the Spanish and Argentine countrysides) and the horror contained within them (rape, murder, and extrajudicial imprisonment). Moreover, *La isla*'s many aerial shots of the southern Spanish countryside are simultaneously orienting because they show our geographical location, and disorienting, as their geometric and maze-like patterns could represent other, foreign landscapes and also force the spectator to wonder what exactly he or she is beholding. *El secreto*'s concentrated focus on interior shots can be similarly disorienting as the film generally lacks establishing shots. The two films, further, share an intense focus on the brutal treatment of women's bodies, which are shown to be bruised, bloodied, and, indeed, lifeless. *La isla*'s double mystery offers a complex reading of social issues in which sexual violence against women acts as a stand-in for the state violence of the dictatorship period. This metaphorical relation is paralleled in *El secreto*, in which Liliana's murder shines light on the states injustice.

However, the sense of place in the two films differs dramatically: while Campanella's film takes place mostly in Buenos Aires (with the exception of a few scenes in Chivilcoy and the countryside of Buenos Aires province), Rodríguez's film is located in rural southern Spain. The remoteness of Morales' country home and the marshland region of the Iberian Peninsula both suggest a kind of Wild West where the law cannot reach. *El secreto* also contains almost all interior shots (inside Benjamín's and Morales' apartments, cafés and bars, and the interior of the Palacio de Justicia), with the exception of establishing shots on the steps of the Palacio de Justicia, a street shot outside Liliana and Morales' apartment, exteriors of Chivilcoy when Benjamín and Pablo break into Gómez's mother's house, and most significantly, the Argentine countryside when Benjamín visits Morales at the end of the film. After so many dark interior scenes which often take place at night, the light and open space is striking. The sun sets as Benjamín returns to Morales' property, highlighting the dark mood surrounding Gómez's imprisonment. In contrast, *La isla* takes place almost entirely outside, usually in blinding daylight. The exception to this light-filled atmosphere is one of the final scenes, in which Juan and Pedro pursue Sebastián through a driving rain. Only a few scenes are interior shots, including inside the detectives' hotel and the interior of the home of Carmen and Estrella's parents. The claustrophobia of Campanella's film hints at the recurring cycles of crime and injustice in Argentina, a darkness that cannot be escaped; the open spaces and bright sunlight of Rodríguez's film, in contrast, highlight the coming-to-light of past crimes and a(n incomplete) reckoning with history. It emphasizes paradoxical visibility, as opposed to the "secret" in *El secreto*.

The two films are both generically thrillers, although *El secreto* also incorporates elements of melodrama and *La isla* is a more traditional detective drama in the way it presents

evidence. Both titles employ generic conventions to depict the horror of the past; as Rodríguez remarks in an interview with *El País*, "Es muy interesante en el *thriller* tensar de la cuerda. Me refiero a ver hasta dónde te acompaña el público sin desengancharse. Me pasó en *Grupo 7* y a ti en *Celda 211.* Que el espectador acabe aceptando acontecimientos puramente repulsivos. Como cineasta es abrazar el riesgo" (Belinchón). In the case of *El secreto*, Moraña argues that

> La mirada del espectador descubre la mirada de los personajes que revelan amor y deseo; también hay miradas como la de Benjamín al salir de la finca de Morales: un primer plano que Campanella hace del perfil del veterano investigador un ojo que se abre y un pómulo que se distiende, un perfil contra el paisaje de la campaña argentina, para marcar la comprensión repentina de los hechos en su inmenso contexto, en el momento justo en que se produce la *anagnórisis*, cuando el personaje tiene la completa certeza de la naturaleza de los acontecimientos en su dimensión trágica. Espectador y personajes son inquisidores, y esto se expresa en la mirada. Unos saben lo que el otro no sabe, lo cual es el procedimiento formal del *thriller*; otra apelación de la narración a un espectador familiarizado con el lenguaje que Hollywood. (392)

In other words, through the progression of the montage the audience knows, due to its familiarity with the thriller genre, that the film's editing is leading to Benjamín's great revelation. Similar Hollywood techniques occur in *La isla*, such as the piecemeal gathering of evidence. Yet while *El secreto* neatly ties up all of its narrative threads, Rodríguez's film leaves both of its mysteries partly unsolved (for example, Corrales' role in the murders is not entirely clear; nor is Juan's past violence fully confirmed).

The texts also feature some of the same tropes, such as the wise fool who speaks the truth. Examples include the journalist in *La isla* and Pablo in *El secreto*, a man whose "inability

to control his drinking and [whose] erratic behaviour continuously plays against Espósito's search for justice in the Coloto murder" (Rocha 9).[8] Another shared trope is the good cop-bad cop relationship. The audience's tendency to trust characters partly emerges from these conventions, shaping their view of the evidence presented in the film. For example, if the audience is made aware that the wise fool in Rodríguez's film is telling the truth about Juan, they understand that Pedro is in denial about his partner's past. Yet the relationship between film text and spectator fully manifests itself in the way these works convey proof. *El secreto* presents evidence overwhelmingly via images, and the film's enigmas, including Irene's and Benjamín's romantic feelings for each other and the question of Pablo's murder (which is explained via a flashback at the end of the film), are fully solved by the final scene. The issue of Gómez's whereabouts after his release from prison is much more convoluted, as he repeatedly escapes justice and requires tracking down more than once. In a striking exterior scene, Benjamín and Pablo attend a soccer game to look for the criminal; in this sequence, as we hear the two characters lamenting that there is little chance of finding Gómez there, he appears in a shot of the crowd. In this sequence, then, the spectator sees the perpetrator before the investigators do, in a scene that demands active viewership and again highlights the power of looking and its dominance over hearing. The film also appears to address the spectator's sensorial perception directly here, rather than through the mediation of the characters' senses.

Gómez's guilt in Liliana's rape and murder is determined through the "secret" in his eyes referenced in the film's title, as well as by oral confirmation: his confession—acquired during an

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[8] Pablo's role as the film's comic relief (as when he answers the office phone claiming to be the receptionist at a sperm bank) is counterbalanced by his investigative abilities: it is he who realizes that Gómez will be at the soccer game.

interrogation by Irene and Benjamín—sparks the failed process of official justice. Despite initially denying the rape, Gómez finally confesses, while still arguing that Liliana enjoyed the experience. After Irene doubts his masculinity, he exposes his penis and shouts at her, "Vos sabés cómo la cogí . . . " and even implicates her in the action, saying, "Sí, te gusta." Irene uses her femininity to humiliate Gómez as she touches him condescendingly. She grabs his chin and shakes his head as if he were a misbehaving child, while insulting his physicality and calling his arms "dos tallarines" and doubting his ability to "calentar a una mujer." Irene furthers the insult by adding that "la profundidad de las lesiones vaginales [de la víctima] permite deducir que el atacante se trataba de un hombre muy bien dotado. Obviamente no se refiere a este microbio que debe tener un maní quemado."

Irene's power in the diegesis of this scene is reaffirmed on the technical level as well: her belief in Gómez's guilt (as confirmed by a slow, deliberate pan of her reaction to Gómez staring at her chest) seems to confirm Benjamín's suspicion: until now, the audience has had only Benjamín's hunch—based on a single photograph—to go on. Gómez's guilt is thus established for the spectator through, first, his objectifying gaze toward Irene, and, second, the way the camera captures Irene's horrified reaction. Thus, while this sequence confirms Gómez's criminality via an oral confession, the spectator also understands through his look (at Irene here but also at Liliana in the school photo), again highlighting the dependence on the different senses to confirm one another.

In contrast to *El secreto*'s presentation of evidence through photos, looks, and other visual proof, evidence in *La isla* appears via different senses, including vision and hearing, but typically these sensorial perceptions work together to create a mere illusion of the truth. This security in having uncovered real verification is fleeting, however, as the film resists fully

resolving either of its two main mysteries (the girls' killer and Juan's past). Proof here is muddled, and rendered all the more so by abundant lies and obfuscations: nobody, not even the police, tells truth in this town. The film's main mysteries—Juan's history and the girls' killer(s)—are resolved occasionally progressively and intermittently through visual confirmation, as the spectator follows detective work in typical police thriller style. The perpetrator's car, pamphlets on how to find hotel work that the killers used to lure in the girls, and photos of Carmen and Estrella with a tattooed man (we learn later that the tattoo belongs to Quini) are all examples of visual evidence here. And while the cassette tape recording of Marina's tapped phone provides aural and haptic proof, Juan's physical contact with (and Rocío's description of) Corrales' hands and even odor further the extension of evidence to other parts of the body.

Meanwhile, the journalist's hints at Juan's sinister past are seemingly confirmed by the photo he gives to Pedro at the end of the film. Juan's previous brutality is repeatedly suggested through his abrupt fits of violence, which provide more haptic proof. However, Pedro chooses to ignore the facts that would resolve both mysteries: he rips up the photo of Juan and, when the photographer passes him a picture of the sex game containing an image of a shirt and watch that resemble those of Corrales, he chooses not to pursue this apparent accomplice (Whittaker 50–51). Therefore, although *La isla* appeals to the body, it also suggests that no kind of evidence, visual or otherwise, is enough to overcome the deep injustices of the (post-) dictatorship period.

Despite their differences in conveying evidence of the truth, both films emphasize the difficulty in obtaining justice in a system where a person's—even a criminal's—utility to the state often holds more value than veracity. And while *La isla* and *El secreto* appear to confirm the proof in different ways—in *La isla* through smell, touch, and photos; in contrast to *El secreto*' focus on unmediated looking—both films do ask spectators to witness by appealing to

senses other than just vision. This creates an often-haptic, enveloping effect that draws the spectator in and fosters a closer connection between viewer and cinematic text. Moreover, the films rely on verification from a variety of senses; neither characters nor spectators can fully confirm the evidence presented by the films without proof from more than one sense; in this way Elsaesser and Hagener's theory on the interdependency of sight and sound can be extended to other senses as well. These texts, then, connect to the spectator's own bodies by appealing to a range of senses, undermining the privilege that cinema has traditionally bestowed upon vision.

Both *La isla* and *El secreto* are mainstream but have been credited with artistic value and prestige, as demonstrated by the presence of star actors like Raúl Arévalo and Ricardo Darín in their casts, as well as the fact that *La isla* also won 10 Goyas, including Mejor Película, and *El secreto* swept the awards of the Academia de las Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas de la Argentina and won Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards in 2010. Both films, then, fall into a middle-brow category of commercial cinema which aspires to artistic value: Belinchón describes *La isla* as forming part of a trend that rejects dichotomies such as "cine social contra cine de entretenimiento." Carolina Rocha in "*El secreto de sus ojos*: An Argentine Male Melodrama" cites Jens Andermann on Campanella's film, noting that it is "high-grossing yet aesthetically satisfying" (3). In "Secrets, Trauma, and the Memory Market (or the Return of the Repressed in Recent Argentine Post-Dictatorship Cultural Production)," Silvia R. Tandeciarz is much more critical of the film's mass-market and cross-cultural appeal, contending that its global success is due to Argentina's eagerness to view these events as firmly in the past, as well as the international appetite for horrific narratives that have happy endings:

> Ideally functional for neoliberal democracy and the global marketplace, the film deploys the melodramatic mode masterfully, demobilizing audiences by redirecting our

> investment away from collective, politicized demands for accountability. . . . While calling an end to the show of horror, it ably turns a last trick, trafficking in the misery that ravaged a nation to assert itself in a global marketplace whose appetite for such images has not subsided. And it works because it facilitates cross-border empathy while asserting the exceptionalism of the outsider. (68, 70)

Tandeciarz argues that the film's portrayal of the past allows the present to appear "in a much better light: as Argentina enters the 21st century, order has been restored, the ever-growing chasm between rich and poor is nowhere to be seen, and functioning state institutions make cross-class allegiances possible. Given the current state of affairs, any nostalgia for the past appears misplaced, as does the residual reflex to look back" (67). Yet I argue that while *El secreto* perhaps suggests that the period of state terror is long over and dealt with, the film's appeals to spectators' sensorial perception neutralize that complacency: the whistling tea kettle, for example, stands out as a wake-up call against silence and complicity. Yet it is not just sounds that connect us to the past as well; images have similar powers. Whittaker affirms, for example (and citing Laura U. Marks), that the digitalization of still and video photography has created an "analog nostalgia," which she describes as a 'retrospective fondness for the problems of decay and generational loss that analog video posed' (Marks 2002, 152). In *La isla mínima*, the remediation of the analogue within the digital similarly produces a set of questions and anxieties around the indexicality of the image" (47).

The focus on sensorial perception here, particularly the traditional senses of seeing and hearing, carries over into my next and final chapter on television. Yet we should note that while historically film began as a visual medium, television was developed from the aural mechanism of radio. As we will see, the sometimes sense-based techniques that the two versions of

Cuéntame cómo pasó (from Spain and Argentina) employ enable today's viewers to reenact the witnessing processes of historical spectators. With these series, experiencing the past vis-à-vis television produces an effect of meta-witness as viewers also watch television characters witness history on their own TVs.

CHAPTER FOUR

Televisual Narratives of Dictatorship: *Cuéntame cómo pasó*(s) (Miguel Ángel Bernardeau, 2001–Present/Moser and Villamagna, 2018)

4.1 Introduction: The *Cuéntame* Story in Spain and Argentina

While the question of film spectatorship has been a subject of scholarly study for decades, the relationship between spectator and televisual text remains somewhat niche. Scholars such as John Fiske, John Hartley, and Toby Miller (among others) have worked on television theory, as well as John Ellis, whose *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* deals with modern-day witnessing through the televisual medium. He applies the psychoanalytically-derived notion of "working through" to television, arguing that, as a medium of witness, it processes material for its audiences to more easily comprehend (79). To what extent, though, can series accomplish a working through of traumatic national history if some viewers lived through the events while others are only learning of them now? This chapter examines the long-running and extremely popular Spanish weekly series *Cuéntame cómo pasó* as well as its Argentine version, which aired as a daily *telenovela* in autumn 2017.

Cuéntame's Spanish network, TVE (Televisión Española), was launched under Franco, with regular broadcasts beginning at the late date of 1956. Historically, the channel first filled its eighteen weekly hours of programming with content filmed at TVE's studios (Amiguet). Sixty years later it is now of course home to an enormous variety of programming, including regular series, documentaries, sports, news, and more. Televisión Pública Argentina—*Cuéntame*'s Argentine network—was founded earlier in 1951, with its first broadcast being Eva Perón's

speech for the Peronist Día de la Lealtad (Varela 30). Although each version of *Cuéntame*, Spanish and Argentine, is adapted to its particular place and time, both series feature similar characters who are members of a nuclear family of six and who retain the same names: Antonio, the father; Mercedes, the mother; Inés, the oldest child, who works in a hair salon; Toni, a college student with leftist tendencies; Carlos, the youngest child; and Herminia, Mercedes' mother. Despite some slight variation among the characters in the two versions, their general characteristics are identical.

This final chapter will analyze differences and commonalities among these texts, focusing on how television mediates history and interrogating how *Cuéntame* asks today's viewers to witness the dictatorships in the Spanish and Argentine contexts. The analysis will center on the premiere episodes of each version, which anticipate the way the two series develop. The chapter will also examine not only how today's spectators witness dictatorship through television, but also how TV characters themselves experience the that same period through the same medium: both texts center around a family that lives through these regimes in real life but also through TV and radio. Spectators' passivity will be challenged as the medium (the physical television set) enters their own living space, while the abundant use of archive footage in both versions as well as the nostalgic and pedagogical aspects of the *Cuéntame* series highlight the tension between fiction and nonfiction. This is true especially for the second section of the chapter, which evaluates nonfiction episodes from each series.

The way contemporary spectators encounter history is particularly important here: Ellis praises the vividness of television, which is based on the medium's inclusion of minor and peripheral details such as in the rooms in which dramatic action takes place (12). Although not specifically referencing television at this point in his argument, Ellis explains that the

“superabundance of information” in photography and sound recordings could also be extended to the televisual medium. Thus, that the experience of witness “is underwritten by the presence of the unremarkable within an image as well as an atmosphere of sound” (Ellis 12) applies to television as well. The “sensation of witness” requires understanding (including context and seemingly unimportant details), so an entirely unmediated event—such as one captured solely through photography or sound—would fail to provide the full feeling of witness (Ellis 13). This “superabundance of information” appears in the two *Cuéntames* in shots that include the mundane details of daily life that might appear to be superfluous. This, in combination with the series’ focus on domesticity and affective response, described by Paul Julian Smith and others, creates a true experience of witness. The series clearly appeal to the older generations through nostalgia; the question is whether they appeal to younger citizens through pedagogy, a perhaps unlikely form of pleasure, or another means. I examine, then, to what extent younger Spaniards and Argentines already know this history: does *Cuéntame* teach new material or invite viewers to work through what they know already?

4.2 Theory: Television and Witness

In their overview of television studies, Jonathan Gray and Amanda D. Lotz point out that although television’s popularity allows it to communicate ideas widely it is, in some ways, a “battleground” over what constitutes culture (7). Yet TV also has an everyday quality to which critical analysis can be applied (Gray and Lotz 43). With specific regard to the Spanish *Cuéntame*, in her article “*Cuéntame cómo pasó/*Tell Me How It Was: Narratives of Memory and Television Drama in Contemporary Spain” Abigail Loxham posits that the drama differentiates

between the “then” of the events portrayed and the “now” of the present, but also suggests that, though the political situation has changed, daily life and family relations remain essentially the same (715). Hence the

> generational element of memory—another means by which continuity is ensured and a common trait of all memory narratives in Spain—is addressed through this intimate domestic mode of address, specific to television. Indeed, the veracity of this scenario and its replication in the contemporary consumption of this series adds to this feeling of proximity to the lives and emotions of these characters. Domesticity is central to the way in which memory is approached by the series as both intensely private and yet mediated by the television that becomes the nexus of the personal and the public in terms of the family’s relationship to wider political issues, mirroring the imbrication of the personal and the political which has forced the issue of memory narratives to the fore in Spain. (Loxham 715–16)

Gray and Lotz further stress the importance of mass culture, attributing its popularity to the audience’s ability to find personal meaning in it; for this reason (following de Certeau) audiences “‘make do’ with mass culture that through acts of bricolage, repurposing, and personalization could become domesticated” (Gray and Lotz 65). Gray and Lotz go on to explain active audience theory, in which, citing Fiske, they note that mass media is not merely about consumption but rather becomes an active process of “generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system” (Gray and Lotz 65). The authors conclude that, in these risky times, television can help with what sociologist Anthony Giddens’ terms “ontological security,” or protection in one’s being: a metaphorical safety blanket (Gray and Lotz 82). Ellis also challenges the assumed passivity of television spectators, arguing that although the powerlessness of television

spectating goes hand-in-hand with the safety of watching at a distance; by giving viewers multiple angles and distances, television offers them a certain measure of spectatorial power (11).

Along these same lines, Ellis situates television as part of two contexts, one of witness in which "we cannot say that we do not know" and another of working through (1). He thus traces the history of photography, film, and television in the twentieth century, which he defines as the "century of witness" (9). Before the advent of photography, newspapers tended to commission engravings that were based on eyewitness accounts. Photography allowed for an apparently more "direct" witnessing, since it did not require delegating the artistic rendering to a second party (the artist)—instead, the photographer could capture the image independently (Ellis 17–18). Moreover, cinema first added motion to photographs (Ellis 20) and later the ability of sound cinema to act as a "witness to utterance" further augmented film's realism (Ellis 28).

Ellis also compares photography, radio, theater, film, and television within time and space. For example, theater is similar to live television in that the audience experiences the action in the same moment that it happens, but while theatergoers and actors gather in the same place, television spectators and television productions are separated by physical distance (32). He argues that as in television (and unlike cinema), audiences see things as they happen: the illusion of simultaneity still dominates (31). Even non-live series can be made to appear live through direct address to the camera and language such as "now," "we," and "stay with us" (33). This apparent liveness succeeds through integrating itself into the everyday, temporal rhythms of the viewer—for example, a dating program called *Blind Date* was broadcast on Saturday nights, just as young people would be preparing to go out (33). When television emerged, it transcended the "absent presence" of cinema (present because the film is there in front of you, but absent because

it was filmed elsewhere) and added "instantaneity"; thus, "television made the act of witness into an intimate and domestic act" (32). TV also fosters a "sense of togetherness in separation" (32) with other audience members. This co-presence of television, in Ellis' estimation compensates for the loss of other senses such as smell and touch in the TV experience.

Related to his notion of collective identification is Ellis' theory that television assists in "working through," the process "whereby material is continually worried over until it is exhausted":

> [Television] works over new material for its audiences as a necessary consequence of its position of witness. Television attempts definitions, tries out explanations, creates narratives, talks over, makes intelligible, tries to marginalize, harnesses speculation, tries to make fit, and, very occasionally, anathemizes. (79)

In working through, the "link between 'my' present with 'their' present and the present of 'others' lies behind many of the rituals of news-watching, catching the news nightly to confirm a sense of connectedness which can assuage the feelings of complicity that are part of the process of witness" (Ellis 75). However, since television can also help process events into "a more narrativized, explained form" (Ellis 78), its power to work through may also extend to fictional representations of the past. This is a process of "making and remaking meanings, and of exploring possibilities," that explains, redefines, and reimagines (Ellis 79). This chapter, then, will draw on Gray and Lotz's model of active spectatorship and Ellis' characterization of television as accessible, instantaneous, collective, and capable of working through to argue that that these series invite audience connection, participation, and an active, communal assimilation of the past.

4.3 *Cuéntame cómo pasó* in Spain and Argentina: Capítulo(s) 1

Televisión Públic Argentina's attempt to replicate the success of the Spanish *Cuéntame* series exemplifies the long-standing trend of television exports. In *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity*, Albert Moran explores to what extent national television has become globalized (6), suggesting that the manner in which series are chosen for TV can lead to national enculturation (8). In his explanation of how formats are adapted in foreign countries, he argues that the format is the "crust" of the pie, while the "filling" can vary from country to country (Moran 13). A drama format consists of an outline of the general narrative situation and possible storylines, as well as sketches of characters and miscellaneous other materials such as scripts, footage, special software, and a "Bible" (that is, the backstories of the main characters and settings). Information on scheduling, the target audience, demographics, and ratings is also relevant (Moran 14).

Moran further describes three models of television's relation to national identity: cultural imperialism (a kind of "Trojan horse" that fails to serve the needs of the new nation [170]), technology transfer (in which "technology consists of interdependent parts with characteristics different from those of its isolated components and existing in a social, political, and economic environment outside its control but that may influence its course" [174]), and semiotics. The most appropriate model in this discussion, semiotics, emphasizes the creative aspect of television adaptations in which the new text includes the original message, a new message, and a "language lesson" about the codes at work (Moran 172). Remakes demonstrate meaning via reception and interpretation, which is "defined by the common experience of recipients objectified in social memory" (Moran 175). If, as Benedict Anderson posits, national identity is imagined, then it is

nonetheless based on negotiation and our relations to one another (Moran 175). And if national identity is influenced by the state, state-controlled media such as public television must be a vital tool in this process (175). Moran concludes that genres such as soap operas are more mimetic of everyday, modern life, even creating "mnemonic energies", than other television genres (176). Mass culture therefore mediates political ideology and everyday life (Moran 177). As we will see, Moran's notion that television series contribute to national identity even when they are based on formats from foreign countries plays out in the different modes of representation used by the two *Cuéntame*s.

4.3a *Cuéntame cómo pasó* Capítulo 1 (Spain)

Cuéntame debuted in Spain on September 13, 2001 (Bordería Ortiz 57). Starring Imanol Arias as the patriarch, Antonio, and Ana Duato as his wife Mercedes, the series also features the couple's adolescent children, Toni (Pablo Rivero) and Inés (Irene Visedo) and is narrated in voice-over by an adult version of the family's youngest child, Carlos (played by Ricardo Gómez, voiced by Carlos Hipólito). The series dramatizes the daily lives of the Alcántara family, who live in a fictional working-class neighborhood of Madrid. In his article "Los medios audiovisuales y la historia: memoria del franquismo y la transición en la serie *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," Enrique Bordería Ortiz argues that each family member is archetypal, with several main and supporting characters representing the stereotypical personalities of the era, such as the hardworking father, the housewife and the (slightly) rebellious children (57). At the time of writing the series is still on the air and is currently in its twentieth season. Bordería Ortiz states that the series' cultural and commercial success was essentially unprecedented: until *Cuéntame*

began in 2001, very little had been shown on television about the dictatorship and transition periods (Bordería Ortiz 56); yet, the award-winning series is the most successful of its extended era (Bordería Ortiz 57). This TV drama actively and openly attempts to keep alive Spanish history of the late-twentieth century; in the words of its creators, it aims to be "'una crónica humana y cotidiana de nuestro pasado inmediato para fortalecer la memoria colectiva y evitar que esta caiga en el olvido'" (Bordería Ortiz 58). Bordería Ortiz notes that this purpose, and the series' popularity, dovetail with the current interest in the theme of historical memory in Spain (61).

The first episode of the Spanish series, "El retorno del fugitivo," references the American television series *The Fugitive*, which aired from 1963–67. Its plot, too, dramatizes the significance of television in that era (the episode takes place in 1968—just as, according to the episode, television was becoming popular in Spain). One main plotline is the Alcántaras' acquisition of a television set and the family members' various reactions to the new TV's prominence in their home. As the synopsis below shows, the plot is complex and the cast of characters ample, as a result of the lengthy running time of each episode of some seventy minutes, which is typical of Spain but much longer than the international norm. The series premiere opens with young Carlos watching an episode of *The Fugitive* through his neighbor's window. His sister Inés returns home after a date with her boyfriend, Jesús (Zoe Berriatúa) and the family gathers around the dinner table, where they discuss the television set that the family's patriarch Antonio has ordered. In the next scene, Carlos and his friends play in an abandoned car in a deserted parking lot, from where they set out on a mission to collect alms for their church parish. The family's priest, Don Venancio (Fernando Fernán Gómez), buys a new sound system for the church but complains at length about the price to the man who sells it to him. Carlos and

his friends then work their way through town to collect alms, on the way visiting the candy seller Cervan (Tony Leblanc), Inés at her job at a hair salon, and Antonio at work at a printing press. In church, Don Venancio chides members of his congregation for being too obsessed with material goods like electronics and, specifically, televisions.

Finally, the family's television set is delivered. Reluctant to set it up, Inés, Mercedes, and Herminia work on their sewing while listening, still, to a *radionovela*. The doctor, Don Vicente (Francisco Merino) arrives to treat Carlos, who is sick after getting caught in the rain. He warns Mercedes that she has accidentally given him the birth control pills that Inés received from her friend Pili (Lluvia Rojo) but has not yet used. With the help of his friend Ramón (Manolo Cal), Antonio installs the television set. After overhearing the family's conversations, Carlos misunderstands their description of the birth control pills and thinks he is dying of cancer. Not wanting to be a burden to his family, he runs away and hides out in an abandoned car. Toni, Inés, and Mercedes hatch a plan to keep Antonio occupied until they can locate Carlos.

Later, Carlos' friend Josete (Santiago Crespo) confesses to the Alcántaras that Carlos is hiding but refuses to say where. The kiosk owner Cervan, meanwhile, stumbles upon Carlos in the abandoned car and advises Herminia, who passes the message along to the rest of the family except Antonio. Toni picks up Carlos from his hideout and explains that he is only sick with the flu, not cancer, while Mercedes distracts Antonio with the promise of sex. At the end of the episode, the family gathers around the television set to cheer on Massiel's winning performance in the Eurovision contest, an example of the live programming that Ellis finds so significant. The episode ends with the credits rolling over Massiel's performance and a voice-over stating ". . . España . . . ha saltado al primer plano de la actualidad. Tiene muchas cosas que decir, España. Creo que España y nosotros somos así, y seremos así siempre." This ending emphasizes the

lasting change brought about by the incorporation of television into the national culture, characterizing TV as the catalyst of that change in creating a mass audience that is nonetheless made up of individuals.

The family is obsessed with the arrival of the television set: at dinner in the first scene Carlos asks Antonio, "¿Cómo es?" and hangs on every word as his father describes the size and shape of the TV. Although Carlos states in his voice-over narration that, before television, his family used to talk at dinner, here their conversation is focused entirely on the acquisition of this new technology. After its delivery, the Alcántaras become so excited that, unable to sleep, each member sneaks into the living room in the middle of the night to look at it—despite the fact that the set has not even been installed yet. When Antonio and Ramón do finally connect the television, Mercedes and Herminia point out the new technology's disturbing physical proximity. As the first images appear onscreen and the two women rise from the sofa, bending over to put themselves at eye level with the television (fittingly, one of the first shots is a close-up of a woman's eye, from the program "Conozca Ud. España"), Mercedes argues that they should stay a few feet away from the television, as its closeness can cause eye damage. Herminia, transfixed, describes the initial experience as tied directly to the senses, saying "se ve, se oye."

The camera is placed mostly behind the television or in the space between the TV and the characters. However, when shooting the television set, it is always a medium close-up that captures within the frame the whole apparatus, its stand and some of the wall behind it. Television is thus established in its domestic context. These shots emphasize the TV's physical placement in the home and suggest perhaps the deleterious effects (eye damage, according to Mercedes) it may have on viewers. Herminia's statement, mentioned earlier, reinforces the relationship between television and the senses as she makes reference to sight and hearing.

Moreover, the position of the camera between the TV set and the actors also proposes an intermediary relationship of *Cuéntame*'s viewers between the characters and what they see on television. The fact that the viewers in the first episode are mainly female also points to the privileged role of women as spectators of the new medium.

At times the sounds produced by the Alcántaras' television even mimic the action onscreen. When Inés calls Antonio to tell him to stay at the bar so they can plan a way to find Carlos, the flute music from Herminia's television series matches the mischievous tone of the scene. This integration of meta-television sound (that of Herminia's TV entertainment, from 1968) with television action (that of *Cuéntame*, from 2001) creates an overlapping representational and chronological structure—one that reveals the similarities between past and present and the equally-mediated nature of both eras. At the same time, characters are sometimes inserted within archive footage that similarly diminish chronological differences. In this episode, Carlos dreams that he meets the fugitive, Dr. Richard David Kimble (David Janssen): in the scene (which is reproduced from the original black-and-white American series) he pops up in the back of the fugitive's truck. The clip is presented within the main frame of *Cuéntame* but with shots of Carlos asleep in his bed just before and after it, suggesting a dream sequence. Again, the archive material parallels with the events portrayed in *Cuéntame* and demonstrates the potential interchangeability of sounds and images through time. And the insertion of the character into the original TV text is a clear example of (unconscious) working through and active viewing.

The most significant example of TV-watching occurs at the end of the episode, as the family gathers in front of the television to watch the Eurovision contest. As with other shots of the TV set, this one is fixed; however, reaction shots to the family become slightly more dynamic as they originate from different angles and include pans and close-ups. While many shots of the

television set are mediated, that is, seen with the frame of the TV set around the main image, those that show the archive footage of the results being tallied lack the framing provided by the apparatus; this is also true of some shots of the TV showing Massiel performing her hit "La, la, la." These unframed shots make an appeal to the spectator's witnessing experience. Whereas when *Cuéntame*'s viewers see the Alcántaras' television set playing archive material they witness via the mediation of the TV series without this frame of the television set they experience the past more directly. In this way, the episode encourages present-day spectators to witness the past more authentically: visually, it is presented the way that people in the 1960s would have experienced it.

This Eurovision sequence transitions into a montage of black-and-white archive footage showing other Spaniards witnessing the contest, hinting at the collective nature of the country's win and—more importantly—that it was witnessed nationwide on television. The family is shown interacting with the footage, applauding for Massiel and singing along to the chorus. In this way, they act out the responsibilities of a live audience and, along with the excitement portrayed in the archive material, suggest to the contemporary viewer the general atmosphere surrounding Spain's win in the contest. When Massiel wins, the camera slowly approaches the family head-on; meanwhile, the diegetic sound of the family cuts out while Massiel's diegetic singing transforms into extradiegetic-sounding, all-encompassing sound. We see the frameless shot of Massiel, followed by a slow pan over the family set to Carlos' voice-over: "Ahora que somos altos, guapos, y europeos todo esto nos parece ridículo. Pero hay que comprender que en aquella época nunca ganábamos nada. . . . Y yo seguí creciendo sin darme cuenta de que se estaba acabando un mundo y empezaba otro." The credits then run over Massiel's performance.

Again, television is characterized as driving change—specifically Spain's transformation into a modern, cosmopolitan democracy.

Diana Rey's "We the People Shall Inherit the Past: The Re-imagining of the Self within Post-Francoist Collective Memory in the Spanish Television Series *Cuéntame cómo pasó*" similarly supports a positive view of *Cuéntame*'s representation of the past. Although sometimes characters are inserted into archive footage or happen upon history as it is occurring, more importantly the series' employment of TVE archives and well-known images allows the characters to "re-enact the roles of viewers." This is emphasized by the family's gathering around the television set at important moments in history (126). *Cuéntame*, then, "relates to pre-existing or contending historical interpretations within the social memory of a post-dictatorial Spain that has enthusiastically embarked upon the adventure of reprocessing its recent past" (Rey 126). The series' incorporation of archive footage allows modern spectators to experience the past directly, showing us (now) what viewers would have seen (then) and, in some cases, as they would have seen it, through the unframed shots of the Alcántaras' television. *Cuéntame*'s pilot episode further enhances the past-present connection through overlapping sound.

However, in addition to television, radio also plays a significant role in the episode, as it signals the transition to the newer technology of TV, as well as a more collective and symbolic move toward modernity in Spain. At the beginning of the narrative Herminia is seen knitting while sitting next to the radio, which is broadcasting the news of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. The camera slowly approaches to narrow in on the scene. When it cuts to other action (Antonio reading the paper, Mercedes serving dinner, and Carlos gazing out the window) the sound of the radio remains present—even during a cut to Inés entering the apartment from the hallway. In another scene, there is a medium shot of a radio broadcasting a *radionovela* and a

slow pan to the face of Cervan, the candy seller. Adult Carlos' narration explains that Cervan dreams of the return of the Spanish king, as he is a devoted monarchist. Again, the sound of the radio penetrates the entire scene, even as Carlos and his friends squat in front of the candy stand to listen to the *radionovela*. Listening to his own radio in the candy stand, Cervan also interacts with the aural narrative, reacting and asserting out loud which parts are true and false. In other scenes the sound of Eurovision coverage emanating from the Alcántaras' apartment is also audible when Inés and Jesús are kissing in the hallway and when Carlos lies sick in bed. It creates, again, sonic ambiance at the bar Antonio frequents. The episode thus emphasizes radio's materiality: its ability to be present through sound even when visually absent. However, this is true of television as well, as its sound emerges from the living room and enters the hallway (where Mercedes, Toni, and Inés are talking to Josete and his mother) and various bedrooms. These sequences demonstrate the coexistence of the two media and the continuity of sound in the transition from radio to TV, also exemplifying Ellis' "togetherness in separation." Sound's penetrating quality also demonstrates the pervasiveness of popular media in everyday life. I would suggest, then, that the Spanish series' complex use of sounds (overlapping, permeating) and images (inserted, archival) encourages the spectator to take on the role of historical witness.

4.3b *Cuéntame cómo pasó* Capítulo 1 (Argentina)

The Argentine version of *Cuéntame cómo pasó* premiered on August 21, 2017 on Televisión Pública Argentina which, as with RTVE, is the national public broadcaster (Stiletano). However, unlike the Spanish network, TV Pública suffers some of the country's lowest ratings and its version of *Cuéntame* did little to improve them. Despite a strong beginning

and ending, the series' "bajo rating . . . se mantuvo a lo largo de toda la emisión. En su último programa . . . la serie alcanzó 1.9, lo que le permitió ser lo más visto del día en la TV Pública. Sin embargo, el bajo rating provocó más inconvenientes en la crisis que vive el canal" ("Bajo rating"). The drama's nuclear family shares the same names and personalities as those of the Iberian series, although they take the more commonplace surname Martínez in contrast to the much rarer Spanish Alcántaras. In Marcelo Stiletano's review of the series for *La Nación*, the author points out that the writers strived to represent a typical Argentine family, just as with Bernardeau's version. It aired in the fall of 2017 in the *telenovela* format with nightly episodes that were broadcast Monday through Thursday in an evening time slot. In addition, each Friday, an episode of a chat series titled *Cuéntame un poco más* aired in *Cuéntame*'s nightly hour. Hosted by journalist and TV presenter Teté Coustarot, the series featured interviews with journalists, historians, critics, and actors in which the guests and host discussed the context of events portrayed in the episodes that aired the previous four days. As with the Spanish version, many of the occurrences in each forty-five-minute episode appear to be happening on the same day, producing a heightened sense of simultaneity.

Loxham argues that the nostalgia of the Spanish series, although it appears in the Argentine adaptation as well, is not an attempt to redeem the crimes of the past. She maintains rather that the series shows that the political can begin in the private sphere (718). Loxham also counters the argument that our relation to the past has become spectatorial by noting the series' focus on dynamism (on remembering and forgetting) in television spectatorship (719). *Cuéntame* is thus "not only experienced through the content of the images but also through the lived experience of the family" (as with the Argentine pilot's opening scene around the dining table), and this familial focus is reinforced by the dinnertime broadcast hour of the series which itself

often features scenes of family meals (720). Yet unlike the Spanish original, the first Argentine episode, "El día que cambió la historia," deals directly with politics, specifically, the uncertainty surrounding the impending death of Argentine president Juan Perón. As with the death of Franco (shown in a much later episode of the Spanish series), the news of Perón's passing is transmitted to the family via radio and television.

This episode begins with the Martínez family sitting around the dining table, listening to the radio and discussing Perón's approaching death. A scene at the neighborhood bar shows the establishment's owner Alberto (Carlos Portaluppi) interacting with his difficult wife, Josefina (Carola Reyna). We then see Mercedes (Malena Solda), wife of Antonio (Nicolás Cabré), mending clothes with her mother, Herminia (Leonor Manso) while the daughter of the family, Inés (Candela Vetrano) chats on the street with her boyfriend, Jesús (Federico Ottone). Meanwhile, Antonio deals with a problem at work and Carlos' older brother Toni (Franco Masini) meets a young radical at school named Marta (Malena Sánchez), with whom he later goes to a café. Inés then gossips with friends at her job at a hair salon and the youngest child of the family, Carlitos (Luca Fernández Ciatti) looks at magazines with his friends in an abandoned shed that serves as their hideaway. Herminia meets her church's young new priest, Eugenio (Ludovico Di Santo), of whom she disapproves. Antonio meets up with some friends, including Father Eugenio, at the bar. He invites the priest to his home for dinner—where Inés appears smitten with him. Finally, we see the reactions of the main characters as they learn via television and radio that Perón has died. As with Carlos in the original series, Carlitos notes in voice-over that at that moment "empezaba otra historia . . . otro país." Of course, Carlos refers to television as the impetus for a national new beginning, while for Carlitos it is the death of a political figure. Still, television also features prominently in the Argentine episode's action.

The first image of this episode shows Carlitos (Luca Fernández Ciatti) as he backflops onto his bed. The adult is narrated by Martín Seefeld: he notes that he was born in 1964, the same year as Mafalda, the famous Argentine comics character. A shot of a Mafalda comic strip follows, which shows the year 1964 in the corner of the screen. A montage of events from 1964 to 1974 follows, narrated by the elder Carlitos. He presents the montage by stating that many things happened in those years, "buenas, y de las otras." As he says "buenas," we see clips from *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964) and *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965) and with "de las otras" there appears black-and-white footage of a person being arrested, presumably in Argentina. The history depicted in the montage is thus both international and domestic, refers to both pop culture and politics, and is presented in both black and white and color (according to how the footage was originally broadcast). Clips from popular films are made to mingle with archive news footage about hippies, Neil Armstrong's moon walk and the rise of the Beatles and Rolling Stones, among other events. These, in turn, are interspersed with more serious news coverage of events such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s Selma March, the Prague Spring and "Events" of spring 1968 in France, and the U.S. pulling out of Vietnam.

There is also footage from regional occurrences or those concerning the Spanish-speaking world, for example, the crash of Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571 and the release of Joan Manuel Serrat's album *Mediterráneo*. Events specific to Argentine history also appear, with archive images of the release of Los gatos' debut single "La balsa" and Almendra's first album (later mentioned by Inés in the first episode), as well as more political news footage like the volatile presidential politics that resulted in one after another president being ousted (the narrator specifically notes Onganía's and Cámpora's rises to power, and the return of Perón from exile in Spain). In voice-over, Carlitos explains that Perón had reappeared in Argentina with his wife,

Isabel, who was to replace him if he died. He adds that even though Perón was unlikely to perish soon, everything would soon be turned upside down with his death. This lengthy montage, then, incorporates news events from the U.S., Europe, and Latin America. Here these events intermingle, and each receives only a few seconds of explanation, creating the sensation that the show places equal importance on all of them. While the lengthier attention given to the Argentine situation demonstrates the main focus of the series, the montage places that series in a global context while nonetheless attempting to develop a connection with the Argentine public at the same time. Argentines are thus addressed as a national and an international audience.

The sequence is fairly pedagogical, organized with the year of each event listed in the bottom corner of the screen. Occasionally, diegetic sound from the news clips is slightly audible beneath the narration, as with a speech by Che Guevara and Mohammed Ali's fight with Oscar Bonavena. And some of the footage retains its original markings from dust and scratches—a technique that highlights the apparent authenticity of the material. The narration is accompanied by a thumping rock tune that seems designed to sonically mirror the chaos of the era and prepare the viewer for the equally turbulent time period to come. Carlitos' voice-over mostly refrains from subjective commentary, with small exceptions such as his noting that a "miracle" occurred when the survivors of the Uruguay Air Force crash were found alive. Yet, in general, the narration is fairly neutral and its most evidently-Argentine aspect is the narrator's *porteño* accent. However, the sequence does assume that its audience is at least somewhat knowledgeable about Argentine culture and history—the narrator offhandedly invokes 1970s rock musicians Spinetta and Los gatos, as well as historical events such as the civil uprising called the Cordobazo and the assassination of politician José Ignacio Rucci. The montage, then, positions the viewer in time and space in a fairly objective way, but also makes clear that some prior

knowledge of Argentine history may be useful. Adopting an intermediate space between comfort and discomfort, known and unknown, it appeals both to memory and to nostalgia, while aiming to include less-informed spectators as well.

This montage appeals to both those who have direct knowledge of the events depicted in it (for example, by mentioning Spinetta and Los gatos without further verbal explanation) and to younger generations (by providing an image track to explain the context). It also invokes secondhand memories as the viewers' own: by casually mentioning past events as if they were common knowledge, it suggests that even young people are included in the collective memory of the country. Meanwhile, it subtly closes any gaps by illustrating via sound and image what the narrator mentions in his voice-over. Thus, while the montage will surely trigger memories in older viewers, it remains inclusive of younger ones and—significantly—treats their experience of the series as equally valid.

Loxham emphasizes that mass media creates memory, not just nostalgia. Further articulating the role of the present in dealing with the past through television; she writes that the Spanish series' "aesthetic properties are uniquely placed to elucidate the way in which memory is made present and visible within Spanish society today" (711). The author's argument, drawing on Huyssen's notion that the past is alive because of memory's dependence on the present (713), also applies to the Argentine series. Moreover, Loxham argues that

> These are narratives of memory that, because of the law's emphasis on the private and domestic nature of recollection, are navigated and discussed within popular culture. The perceived 'ordinariness' of the situation and its domesticity work to establish an emotional connection to the events being described, an empathetic tendency that is also operational in our relationship with television texts. (714)

Like Loxham, in “Reconstrucción del pasado histórico: nostalgia reflexiva en *Cuéntame cómo pasó*,” Ana Corbalán endorses the present as reference point for the past. She cites Steve Anderson, who writes that “‘historical meanings evolve over time, reflecting, among other things, the extent to which our relation to the past is conditioned by present circumstances’” (345). Material such as vintage advertisements, black and white sequences, and music tend to create a realistic ambience, or what Corbalán terms an “halo de realidad” (344). Thus, following Fiske, TV may be seen as “un espejo que refleja la propia realidad del televidente” (Corbalán 343). Affect and emotion also play a role in an individual’s relationship to the past, as spectators empathize and identify with the characters and reappropriate their lives in an “espacio personal que refleja sus propias experiencias” (348).

Aside from the evocations of the past presented in the montage, archive footage in this first episode also includes a broad spectrum of material, from period publicity spots to interviews to sports and news. Some of the material is watched by the series’ characters, and some is not; some is presented with context (typically the frame of the TV set) while other portions are shown unmediated. The flipping of a film strip and a short clip of an interview between actress Susana Giménez and her then-boyfriend, Carlos Monzón, with whom she starred in the 1974 film *La Mary* (directed by Daniel Tinayre) transitions to a scene in the hair salon with Inés and her workmates discussing film stars. The film strip motion-image is the only introduction the audience has to the interview, which provides no titles or explanation for what is shown onscreen. In the following scene at the hair salon, Inés’ friend Nieves (Romina Moretto) reveals that in *La Mary* their kissing scene was real. Nieves initially forgets the name of the film and relies on the other girls to remind her of it, thus emphasizing the name of the film and its stars, as well as the importance of collective memory processes and remembering. This sequence, then,

presents out-of-context archive material which it then supplies with background information (Pili [Olivia Viggiano] and Inés swooning over the two actors), followed by Nieves further reinforcing the point. It answers questions ("Who are these people?" and "What movie are they talking about?") that would occur to younger viewers watching the interview. Yet, in initially presenting the clip without context, it also appeals to those who may already be familiar with the actors and their work.

Other archive material is presented without the frame of the television set, including two soccer matches from the World Cup of 1974. The first appears via a sound bridge from the previous scene, employing the Ricardo Iorio tango "Gol argentino," while the second opens with a kind of channel-tuning sound and image that consists of a scratching noise and flurry of mixed images. Both clips, like the Giménez-Monzón interview, are presented without the frame of the television set, but do provide specific context: in addition to "Mundial Alemania 1974" on the bottom-left portion of the screen, the score of each game also appears. With the first clip, another sound bridge (Iorio's tango, which transforms into diegetic sound in the following scene) connects the soccer-playing with the next scene at the bar, where Antonio, Eugenio, and Alberto discuss the weaknesses of the Argentine squad. The second soccer clip transitions to a shot of Antonio's newspaper showing the headline "Perdió Argentina: Eliminada." Here, the extradiegetic bossa nova music from the soccer clip stops abruptly rather than transitioning through a sound bridge. As with the Giménez-Monzón interview, this archive footage presents historical events with additional context that explains what was happening. Again, it supplements the memories of viewers and provides necessary background for those who did not experience the 1970s firsthand.

The final type of archive footage not shown as directly experienced by the series' characters are shots of bustling Buenos Aires streets. This includes color footage of commutes on the *subte* and the monumental exterior of the Universidad de Buenos Aires' Facultad de Derecho, which directs the viewer to the next scene at the law school where Toni is studying. As with the Giménez-Monzón interview and soccer matches, which place the spectator in time (the 1970s), this footage locates us in space (Buenos Aires). The shot of the exterior of the Facultad de Derecho is directly followed by a scene of Toni inside the building, although this appears to be a set. This footage, along with a later sequence of similar Buenos Aires scenes, opens with tinkling xylophone music and the sound and image of a spinning film strip, lending the scene a vintage feel and emphasizing its materiality, tangibility, and therefore accessibility.

The lack of framing in these examples contrasts with the frame of the television set in commercials, news programs, and films that the Martínez family and surrounding characters witness directly. In this way, the series seems to present unmediated media (those images that lack the frame of the TV set and are uninterrupted by the context of the show) differently from mediated media (what characters watch on TV). The series' modern spectators therefore witness some things, such as the Giménez-Monzón interview, the soccer matches, and the footage of 1970s Buenos Aires directly, and other media genres like commercials, interviews, and the news via the witnessing experiences of the characters.

Commercials, such as one for Crespi wine and another for McDonald's, create additional ambiance. The Crespi ad first appears frameless, followed by a shot of it on the bar's TV. From the low angle of the shot looking up at the mounted television and the sound of billiards it is clear where this next scene will take place. The bar scene between the bickering couple Alberto and Josefina emphasizes the simultaneity of daily life and television: the scene occurs within the

time frame—approximately one minute—of the commercial. In addition to the sequence's opening with the beginning of the commercial, it finishes with the ending of the commercial as well. This sequence also reflects an ironic tone, because in the ad a young wife reveals her pregnancy to her husband, who is thrilled at the news, an emotional register that differs greatly from the one portrayed in *Cuéntame*'s narrative in this scene. Although the television is the background of the sequence, it still ties thematically and temporally to the action of the episode. Unlike the Spanish *Cuéntame*, in which narrative action matches with the mischievous tone of Herminia's TV program, here the meta-television experience provides the opposite effect, ironically contrasting with reality. Still, both episodes emphasize the close connection between what characters see on TV and what they experience in their daily lives.

A television program more directly witnessed by the series' characters consists of black-and-white footage of a news interview on the street. While Mercedes and Herminia work on their sewing, they watch a reporter asking people their opinions of the hippie movement. The confusion of the interviewee, whose misunderstanding of the question amuses Herminia, produces a dose of humor. Here, the first, unframed shot zooms out to a shot from the side of the television set and its dials. Reverse shots capture the reactions of Herminia and Mercedes while the camera, placed between the television and the actors, cuts between the two (as with the Alcántaras at the end of the first episode). When Herminia steps out of the room, we cut from a shot of Mercedes to a wider shot of the television while the sound of the interview increases and a nondiegetic sound bridge (Los Náufragos' "Otra vez en la vía") starts to play. With Herminia gone, the TV set appears to be Mercedes' new companion, replacing her mother. On an auditory level the sound of the interview, which continues to be heard outside the living room, demonstrates once more the penetrating quality of television sound. On a visual plane the

inclusion of household details within the frame exemplifies Ellis' theory of the importance of "unremarkable" background aspects in photography that heighten the realism of the image and the "superabundance of information" that provide realistic context. As in the Spanish *Cuéntame*, the sequence also suggests the primacy of women as the intended audience for television.

As the episode nears its close, another commercial—this time for McDonald's—appears on the television at the bar. Again, it is first presented with the channel-flipping device and then transitions into a black-and-white commercial. This tuning mechanism then transitions to history as the commercial is interrupted for an announcement from the president's residence in Olivos. The men in the bar watch the president's cabinet members assemble for Isabel Perón's announcement of her husband's death and her assumption of the presidency. The audio continues over disparate shots of various characters gathering around the television (or radio, in the separate cases of Eugenio and Inés), including Alberto and his mistress, Victoria (Mónica Scapparone), and Mercedes and Herminia with Carlitos. The main focus of this sequence is Isabel's voice, which sonically connects all of the characters—from Inés in her salon to Mercedes at home and Antonio at the bar, in a montage of characters witnessing the news. The editing here emphasizes the collective nature of this traumatic national event and the way television brings together citizens despite their geographical distance from one another. Once more this demonstrates Ellis' "togetherness in separation."

In this sequence there is a medium shot of the television at the bar (framed), as well as slightly tighter shots of the screen—although the shadow of the television set in the corner reminds us of the apparatus. Carlitos, sitting on his grandmother's lap, comments that "para mí a mis diez años era como estar viendo una película. Era el fin de una época. Para todos el primero de julio de 1974 empezaba otra historia. Otro país." Then, for the first time in the episode, the

series reframes a piece of archive footage as it pans across a shot of Isabel Perón's cabinet members and lands on her. As she finishes her speech the background music strikes a final chord. This editing intervention demands that viewers focus on Isabel's face, whereas the characters on the series do not experience that kind of interpretative influence. At the same time, Carlitos' comment that it felt as if he were "viendo una película" when in fact he was watching television (although he is surely referring to his experience of Perón's death more generally) calls into question the concreteness of the closing images.

Still, radio is presented as an even less trustworthy type of media. In two scenes, characters discuss Perón's current state of health while listening to news reports on the radio. In one Marta and Toni chat at a café about the president's imminent death and Marta expresses uncertainty about whether he is dead or alive while the radio plays in the background. However, and more significantly, in another, the first scene of the episode (post-montage) the family is sitting around the dining table while listening to the radio. The very first image of this scene is a panning shot from the side of the radio with the family in the background; the focus shifts here from the radio (playing Roberto Carlos' nostalgic "La distancia") to the family. As an announcer interrupts the music, Antonio rises to increase the volume. Isabel Perón begins to speak, and the family begins talking over the radio announcement, interjecting with proclamations of "Se murió" and "No se murió."

This scene depends more on reaction shots of the characters than shot-reverse-shots between them and the device. However, there are two lingering long shots of the radio in deep focus (similar to that of the television in the Mercedes scene, with unfocused household objects framing the apparatus) that emphasize the prominence in the family home of a device that is located in a main room and interrupts their meal. Finally, Antonio orders Carlitos "apagala."

Although there is some ambiguity regarding the episode's ending , television on the whole appears to affirm that seeing is believing, —whereas radio prompts confusion and speculation. The unknown incident from the beginning of the episode, then, is confirmed by the TV news at the end. At the same time, the centrality of radio and television in the homes and lives of the Martínez' replicates that centrality in the lives of the Alcántaras and confirms the important role of spectatorship in daily life.

In the Argentine remake of *Cuéntame*, channel tuning and film reel spinning draw attention to the materiality of the televisual and filmic mediums, highlighting their superficiality. However, media are shown as penetrating daily life (their sound is often heard in the background) and punctuating its rhythms. As we have seen, through sound TV sometimes seems present even when not visualized. Moreover, it also serves within the series a concrete purpose for the viewer, orienting us in time—through street scenes and ads—as well as space—at home or in the bar—according to the framing of the shot. In the Argentine series, scenes in the home have more direct, frontal shots of the TV set while those at the bar show the television from a low angle because of the physical placement of the apparatus, which is mounted high on the wall. Here, framed and unframed archive material seem to serve different purposes: in the former, montages of Buenos Aires street scenes and commercials suggest to viewers that this material is just for them, while, in the latter, meta-watching (when *Cuéntame* viewers watch the series' characters watching television) invites the viewer to experience period television through the perspective of the characters. This process, however, relies on memory for those who lived through the period, or the agency of younger viewers who must piece together the atmosphere of the era (presented through street scenes and commercials, for example) from different points in the episode. The process of filling in the blanks, then, is an active one that requires the

participation of the spectator. And, significantly, news items are presented via framing rather than being inserted without context. This technique—in combination with reverse shots of the characters' reactions—invites viewers to identify with characters as they witness history. In contrast, unframed material allows a more direct witnessing experience.

Writing on the Spanish *Cuéntame*, Loxham argues that, although small tensions are resolved in each episode, there are overarching, open-ended problems that linger. Loxham employs Rigney and Erll's term "dynamic memory" to define this "ongoing process of remembrance and forgetting in which people continue to refigure their relationship to the past and reposition themselves in relation to established and emergent memory sites" (716). Hence the series contributes to this process in complicated but significant ways: it locates the complex

> process of narrating memory within the domestic sphere and situates the media, particularly television, as a transitional device which links private and public space, and it emphasises the emotional import of these memories and the generational transmission of them, highlighting the blockage in the nation's memory as one which was reproduced within the home through fear and an unwillingness to relive endlessly a painful past. In such ways, it performs "dynamic memory" in this negotiation, participating in the process of memory rather than reconstructing an established version of history. (715)

What do the two episodes of the two versions of *Cuéntame* have in common? While both center around a family and a current event, the Alcántaras discuss pop culture (Eurovision) while the Martínez' conversations are about politics (Perón's death). The more overtly political tone of the Argentine premiere results partially from its different chronological moment: 1968 in Spain was a much less overtly political time than 1974 in Argentina. At the same time, as previously mentioned, the confusion surrounding Perón's death resembles the Spanish original's later

episode “Los pingüinos del invicto caudillo,” in which the mysterious circumstances of Franco’s death leave the Alcántaras confused. The only mention of Franco in “Retorno” is a passing reference to the rumor that Spain will not win the Eurovision contest until he dies. That the Argentine producers would choose 1974 to begin their adaptation suggests that the changing political scene post-Perón resembles the new world that Carlos mentions in his closing narration at the end of the Eurovision contest. In other words, there is a suggestion that politics and television can be equally influential in creating a new country or world. Both narrators state that as the old world was ending, a new one was beginning. The parallel between pop culture (Eurovision) and politics (the death of the head of state) perhaps reflects their perceived equal legitimacy in effecting social change.

On a more technical level, the camera in the Alcántaras’ *Cuéntame* is generally much more static and fixed, depending on cuts to show different angles. In the Martínez’ version, the camera’s mobility facilitates the use of tracking shots to capture the action. In this version, also, the shots of the TV set are either tighter (showing only the dials of the TV or no frame at all) or wider (exposing much of the surrounding room). In contrast, the TV in the Spanish version is almost always shot in the same manner: straight on with the whole apparatus in view as well as part of the background. In general, the Argentine *Cuéntame* provides archive material presented without a frame that seems more intended for the enjoyment (or education) of today’s audience. Its choice of popular music from the era also fosters this connection with contemporary spectators, while the nondiegetic music in the Spanish version is less identifiable and more melodramatic (as when Inés and Mercedes make up after a quarrel, for example). The Spanish performance style is also more typical of melodrama, particularly that of Mercedes, as portrayed by Ana Duato through exaggerated gestures and emotions. Both versions, however, place the

camera between the television and the TV families, positioning us as present-time intermediaries between secondary representations of the past, the TV series, and primary ones like archive material.

“Día” shares several other characteristics with “Retorno.” The beginnings of each episode are similar, as both begin with Carlos’/Carlitos’ interior monologue: Carlos ruminates on how much he wants to watch the Eurovision contest on TV, while Carlitos narrates the historical montage of archive footage. As would be expected in pilot episodes, they also both establish the personalities of their family members, which are nearly identical in both versions. These narrations draw on the differences between past and present, using today as a reference point: Carlos, for example, draws a somewhat ironic or humorous contrast between modern Spaniards who are “altos, guapos y europeos” and those of the 1960s who “nunca ganábamos nada.” Similarly, in his explanation of why the unhappy Alberto and Mercedes remained married, Carlitos notes that people in those days did not divorce but rather “se aguantaba.”

A more pedagogical reference to the past, in addition to the opening montage that provides historical context for the events of the series, is the conversation that the Argentine Inés and her workmates have about Susana Giménez and Carlos Monzón, in which they explain the interview between the two stars from the previous scene. In other words, this scene appeals to both nostalgia via out-of-context archive footage and pedagogy vis-à-vis context provided through fictional narrative. Similar pedagogical items in the Spanish version of *Cuéntame* include historical references to Franco and the hysteria surrounding the acquisition of the television set. While the Spanish version might seem to appeal less to younger viewers and more to those of an older generation who are drawn in by the nostalgia for 1960s pop culture, it was in

fact addressed to a family audience with characters of all ages (from infants to grandparents) intended to stand in for and connect with spectators of all ages.

Rey suggests of the Spanish series, following Paloma Aguilar, that those who have not personally experienced an event share in collective memory because their version "may, in some way, have become predominantly accepted within the community as a whole . . . which is possible because 'the collective memory of a society becomes a kind of common patrimony, which the individual experiences since the moment he is born" (124). Aguilar terms this "dominant memory" (Rey 127). Rey then addresses criticism that *Cuéntame* is unable to account for historical process because (according to historian Javier Tusell) the transition was "exemplary and unrepeatable" (128). Pointing to the series' didactic value, she argues that it is a "soap opera adaptation of previous documentary experiences, which, in turn, are the adaptation of a canonical historiographical narrative, or else as an adaptation of both. *Cuéntame* could be seen as a history textbook for TV audiences" (128). For this reason, "*Cuéntame*'s tale is one we already know, and the series updates it so we can repeat it, and by repeating it, learn it and remember it, knowing that it explains our world-view, that it provides the collective with a familiar, safe and stable cosmogony" (Rey 129). Drawing on Aleida Assmann, Rey affirms that individuals may retrieve a piece of information from "storage memory" (a collective archive), use it ("functional memory"), and upload it back into the storage memory (129). In this light, the active witnessing encouraged by both *Cuéntame*s allows audiences to reenact historical spectatorship in a constant process of working, and reworking, through.

4.4 *Cuéntame cómo pasó* in Spain and Argentina: Pedagogy and Working Through

The central location of the television in the home and its significance in the premiere episodes highlight the importance of experiencing history through media. Yet, if we move beyond the pilot to address nonfiction special episodes, how does the series depict the brutality of the Franco regime? Is it true to life or a sanitized version of past events? The main question around the Spanish version of *Cuéntame* is thus whether its nostalgic representation of the past lacks criticism of the brutalities of Franco's regime. For Abigail Loxham, Diana Rey, Ana Corbalán, and Paul Julian Smith, the series' representation of dictatorship, nostalgic though it may be, still leaves room for criticism. Moreover, its appeal to affective response does not distract but rather offers the viewer a direct personal connection to the events portrayed. Conversely, Isabel Estrada and José Carlos Rueda Laffond, among others, argue that *Cuéntame* does not go far enough in its criticism of Francoism. These negative critiques of the series deny the very possibility that popular entertainment is a way to experience the past and the power of television to work through tragedy. And with several hundred episodes broadcast over some seventeen years, critics inevitably focus on a small sample of the entire TV text, which varies greatly in tone, focus, and political perspective from season to season.

As we have seen, Ellis meanwhile praises the immediacy of television as a medium, which is based in part on the medium's inclusion of minor and peripheral details. This, in combination with the series' focus on domesticity and affective response, described by Smith and others, can be seen as creating an effective experience of witnessing. In "The Emotional Imperative: Almodóvar's *Hable con ella* and Televisión Española's *Cuéntame cómo pasó*," Smith defines the emotional imperative as the "urgent requirement to speak and tell" that is inseparable from the goal of understanding subjects and institutions (365). It seems evident that the series can appeal to the older generations through nostalgia; but how does it appeal to the

those who never experienced the dictatorship firsthand, who were avid viewers of the Spanish series at least? That is, to what extent were younger audiences learning new material or working through what they already knew?

In his chapter from *Television in Spain* entitled "The Approach to Spanish Television Drama of the New Golden Age: Remembering, Repeating, Working Through (*Cuéntame cómo pasó* 2001–)," Smith first applies the concept of "working through" (later taken up by Loxham) to the Spanish series, arguing that this process as different from Manuel Palacio's notion of "pedagogy" which is central to the Spanish scholar's influential interpretation of post-Francoist television (14). Comparing the series to Golden Age dramas, he asserts that "it speaks a language of its own which we must first learn" (23). Aspects of this language include camerawork that suggests that "private media narratives must be placed in a collective or public context," as well as music (which aids in interpreting dialogue), blue screen action (which inserts characters into documentary footage), and original period footage (Smith 22). In his conclusion, Smith favors implicit working through to explicit pedagogy in this case, as "non-verbal, ambiguous techniques like this seem to represent not so much pedagogic witnessing of national history as an emotional working through of traumas which can have no clear conclusion" (22). Citing Laplanche and Pontalis, Smith contends that this process allows individuals to move from "'rejection or mere intellectual acceptance to a conviction based on lived experience'" (25). As we will see, although their methods differ slightly, nonfiction episodes of both the Spanish and Argentine series facilitate working through.

4.4a "Háblame de ti" (Spain)

Episode 33 of Spain's *Cuéntame*, "Háblame de ti"—the final episode of the first season—relies heavily on archive footage combined with fictional scenes of the Alcántara family. As with the *Cuéntame un poco más* series in Argentina, the episode uses the channel-tuning technique after the opening credits to make viewers aware that the station is changing—that is, it makes clear that they are not going to see a normal episode but rather a behind-the-scenes look at the making of *Cuéntame*. The episode begins with archive footage of street scenes as the theme song mixes with Tony Ronald's period pop hit "Help (Ayúdame)" and we see archive footage that establishes the chronological and geographical background: a church, a military parade, a "Franco, sí" sign, and footage of hippies. An unseen female narrator (who we later learn is journalist Victoria Prego) explains in voice-over more of the national and international context of the 1960s—including topics such as divorce, *radionovelas*, the Beatles, Vietnam, student protests against Franco in Madrid, emigration from Spain, and Massiel's Eurovision win.

When first we see Prego, she is inserted into black-and-white archive footage, standing on a boat. As she continues to explain the context of the period, she notes that at that time taking a train to the beach would have been an adventure. At this point, the background behind her fades and reveals a blue screen, thus demystifying televisual technology. Prego makes her way over to the Alcántaras, who are frozen in action as they wait for a train: as she introduces the actors who portray the family members one by one, they begin moving and talking without breaking character. The black and white color fades back in again, but as the family boards the train a right-to-left wipe exposes the blue screen once more, as well as the staircase (used to represent the stairs leading up to the train car) and the workers on set that help the cast members with their bags. The black and white returns and the family waves goodbye to Prego. At the

beach, Prego narrates each family member's activities, replacing Carlos' omniscient narration in the normal episodes.

In this first section of the episode, then, the removal and replacement of 1960s context (the black and white images and train station setting, all projected on the blue screen) highlights the mechanics of television as well as its potential falseness. And with the insertion of Prego into the drama, it demonstrates the ease with which TV images can be manipulated—while also creating a chronological dissonance through the placement of the twenty-first-century woman into twentieth-century drama. Yet, perhaps revealing the series' physical and artistic innards serves to create a more active viewing experience by stripping away the fictional layer. This critical activity relates to ideas suggested by Corbalán, who draws on Boym's theory of "reflexive nostalgia"—the idea that yearning for the past is not incompatible with a critical attitude toward it—applying it to an empirical study of publicity and viewer responses of the series' audience (342). Corbalán affirms the series' accessibility to all: it is for "todos los públicos" (349) and suggests that its popularity can be only partially attributed to its appeal to consumerism, to its combination of comedy and drama, and its recreation of "ambiente"—including objects, clothing, food, television ads, and historical events (352). However, the behind-the-scenes look at the inner life of a television series provides a very different connection with the audience by demystifying, momentarily at least, the very televisual process that has provided viewers with the pleasures of nostalgia.

Throughout the episode, Prego passes from one area of the set to another, often showing the inner, hidden parts of the soundstage that viewers never see. For example, after the first scene she reminisces about how sounds of Spanish culture (like that of people calling the night watchman in the night) and smells (like *fritanga* made with unrefined oil) have changed over the

years. As she speaks, a tracking shot passes from the Alcántaras' balcony to the family's living room, including shots of cameras and camera operators. The exposure of the series' inner workings, like the previous scene's many background transformations, once more exhibits the artificiality of television. The playing of bloopers at the end of this episode has a similar effect. The series' technical aspects draw further attention to its artificiality: an interview with director Antonio Gano, for example, includes an explanation of how the process of the insertion of actors into archive footage is accomplished. Again, however, these techniques can also be seen as fostering a connection between viewer and text, as they demonstrate the series' backstage action, an intimate viewpoint that is normally hidden from the audience. This special episode also features a montage of inserts with a green screen making an occasional appearance. Although the acknowledgment of the televisual apparatus may create a temporary distance from viewers, Prego's insistence on fostering connections with those viewers (for example, by appealing to their nostalgia about *fritanga*) closes the gap between spectator and text once more. The audience's ability to view the inner workings of their favorite TV series heightens that connection even as it calls attention to the artificiality of the fictional world represented in the series.

Prego then visits the spaces inhabited by each character, which are of course sets located in the studio. For example, she speaks with Ana Duato and Imanol Arias, who play the main couple, in the living room and she interviews Irene Visedo (who plays Inés), Lluvia Rojo (Pili), and Rosario Pardo (Nieves), at their hair salon. In addition to physical transitions from one part of the set to another, there are also logical thematic transitions from one group of actors to another. After speaking with veteran Pastora Vega (who plays Marta's mother Doña Celia), she moves to Toni's room, where she chats with juveniles Pablo Rivero (Toni) and Ana Allen

(Marta). As she wanders around the set, she repeats the same questions to the actors, asking what they like and dislike about their characters, as well as what awaits them in the future ("¿Qué le espera?"). As she asks, she uses the actor's real name in conjunction with his or her character's name, reinforcing the duality of television (fact and fiction). For example, with Imanol Arias and Ana Duato, she begins, "Imanol y Ana, Ana e Imanol, Antonio y Mercedes." The interviews are also interspersed with clips from the show that illustrate the points the actors make while chatting with Prego. Irene Visedo, for instance, says that she likes how Inés is nonconformist; this is followed by a clip of her refusing to do what Nieves says. This technique acts like a suture, connecting the disparate parts (reality and narrative but also present and past) of the drama.

This alternation is again played out through small play-acting sequences between Prego and the cast. For example, the priest Eugenio (Pere Ponce) hears Prego's simulated confession, in which she acts the part of a 1960s housewife and admits to having worn a bikini and taken birth control. Ponce then emerges from the confessional and quickly sheds his character. The same process occurs when José Sancho begins acting like his strict, franquist character Don Pablo, then removes his false mustache and begins to converse pleasantly with Prego, and again when Eusebio Lázaro, who plays Carlos' stern teacher Don Severiano, pretends to berate Carlos and his friends for being off-task before also coming out of character. The older characters of Herminia (María Galiana) and Doña Valentina (Alicia Hermida) are similarly presented within a fictional framework, as they prepare *rosquillas* and Herminia chides Valentina for drinking the anise liqueur that is meant for the doughnuts. They maintain this act until Prego enters, then drop their characters to answer the journalist's questions. The episode thus plays with the viewers' knowledge of the characters and the borderline between real life and the artifice of television,

thus refuting the commonplace idea that TV audiences are unable to distinguish between fact and fiction. Indeed, it suggests that viewers may take pleasure in meditating on that distinction.

There is also a certain tension between the memory and nostalgia performed by the older generation and the didacticism in which the younger actors participate. Prego asserts that *Cuéntame* is successful because it depicts a Spain that people recognize, and viewers are able to identify with the series' characters. There is also the younger generation, however, who must learn about the period's history secondhand. Ana Allen, who plays Marta, remarks that she asked several script writers as well as her mother and friends of her mother about that era. Pablo Rivero (Toni) mentions that he spoke with his grandparents and father to learn more. In another interview, Prego asks the children Ricardo Gómez (Carlos) and the two actors who play his friends, Santiago Crespo (Josete) and Manuel Dios (Luis), who Franco was. They cannot provide a specific answer, but have a general idea of the history, potentially gleaned from the production of the series itself. In this way the series serves a pedagogical function not only for viewers but for the actors as well; it also demonstrates the knowledge gaps that grow with each generation.

The vagueness and lack of direct experience that they boys voice contrasts with the testimony of Hermida (Doña Valentina) and Galiana (Herminia), both of whom admit that they lived through "la escasez." Galiana tells a moving story about her family's suffering during the Spanish Civil War and after. During Prego's interview with Duato and Arias, Arias explains that his family resembled the Alcántaras to some extent—they lived in a similar neighborhood and his father also worked two jobs. The actor also mentions that he uses his own father as inspiration for Antonio. Duato discusses the pleasure of remembering along with everyone else, but also being able to learn something new every day. Duato further describes why children enjoy the series: because they want to know what happened and it prompts them to ask their

parents questions about their experience of the era (for example, "¿Estabas en esa manifestación?" and "¿Por qué estaba prohibido eso?"). Of course, the relationship between one's own experience and the direct experiences of older family members applies to viewers as well as actors, suggesting that no single person's knowledge is sufficient: whatever our age we all depend on one another to complete our experience of witness.

As with the Argentine version, which will be analyzed next, the special Spanish episode is directly devoted to the medium of television and its impact on the national culture. The theme of television and its role in daily life appears throughout the regular episodes of the series, taking on particular emphasis, as we have seen, in the pilot episode "El retorno del fugitivo." At the end of "Háblame de ti," Prego states, somewhat controversially, that of all the changes between the 1960s and 2000s that she has mentioned in the series, the biggest is that of television itself. With the arrival of television, Spaniards stopped seeing reality just in still photos but rather in full motion. She argues that TV has been not merely a witness but also a "notario mudo" of all the many social and political changes. Hence television is not only a medium for witnessing but an active witness itself.

4.4b *Cuéntame un poco más* (Argentina)

In Argentina, nonfiction episodes were not occasional as in Spain but rather aired weekly. The documentary series *Cuéntame un poco más* analyzes the context of the events portrayed in *Cuéntame*'s fiction episodes. Three episodes, the first ("Puntapié inicial de C*uéntame un poco más*"), last ("Diez años después"), and an episode explaining the political context of 1975 ("El contexto político de 1975"), provide background on the dictatorship and its effect on the daily

lives of Argentines. “Puntapié,” the opening nonfiction episode, examines the first four episodes of the series with guests Malena Solda (the actress who portrays Mercedes), essayist and philosopher Esther Díaz (who testifies to how family relationships in Argentina now differ from those in the 1970s), journalist Jorge Lafauci, historian and journalist Marcelo Larraquy, and sports journalist Alejandro Fabbri. In the fourth episode, “El contexto político de 1975,” host Teté Coustarot discusses the political situation of the mid-1970s with *Cuéntame* actor Osvaldo Santoro, political scientist and journalist Astrid Pikielny, journalist Marcelo Zlotogwiazda and writer and journalist Hugo Paredero. Finally, “Diez años después,” which discusses the end of the dictatorship in the early 1980s, features journalist Andrea Petti, historian Felipe Pigna, lawyer Luis Moreno Ocampo, and writer and journalist José Ignacio López, as well as one of the series’ screenwriters, Marisa Grinstein.

Each episode features a combination of clips from the series—often intercut with archive footage—as well as the studio guests discussing the events they have just watched. In the clips, the channel-tuning device appears between scenes from the fictional and nonfictional parts of the series. The archive footage in *Cuéntame un poco más* includes clips shown on the series as well as supplementary material. In this way, the program first demonstrates the interconnection between fiction and nonfiction, much like “Háblame de ti,” and second fills in the historical voids by adding extra archive footage. This supplementary information expands the viewers’ understanding of the context surrounding the fiction onscreen. The guests also discuss the state of television at the time, proposing TV itself as a cultural object worthy of study. The inclusion of the reminiscences of the presenter Coustarot and guests enables them to act out the collective, collaborative retrieval of memories that also appears in the series’ regular fictional episodes.

As mentioned above, this nonfiction program emphasizes the similarities between fiction and nonfiction by intercutting scenes from the show with archive footage that aired in the episode in addition to extra historical material. For example, "Puntapié" incorporates a complete commercial for Crespi wine, a supplement to the ad shown only partially in the premiere. Other events such as the repatriation of Eva Perón's remains, the coup d'etat that brought the military dictatorship to power, and the Malvinas War are also represented via archive footage. The program presents these events in a variety of ways: some, like a clip of Videla talking to the Argentine soccer team, are shown on the television set of the Martínez family, with the diegetic background noise of someone stirring a cup of tea (again exemplifying Ellis' notion that the value of television is in its presentation of the smallest details of daily life). Sometimes the archive footage appears within a white frame—one that resembles the edges of an old photo—surrounded by *Cuéntame* graphics. Most of the footage, however, appears without any frame at all. Still, the variety of ways in which this archive material is presented demonstrates the many ways viewers may experience (or may have experienced) the 1970s and 1980s: at home, through archive footage, and through the dramatized reconstruction of *Cuéntame* itself, in a manner that replicates the witnessing performed by the characters we see on television. The special episode therefore appeals to those who lived through the dictatorship and those who are just learning about it now.

The episode that deals with the context of 1975 breaks down thematically into segments on the political (the Tucumán military operation that crushed the leftist guerrilla group Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo), the economic (the Rodrigazo, a series of economic policies put in place by Isabel Perón's Minister of Economy Celestino Rodrigo that led to an economic crisis), and the social (International Year of the Woman and Gender in Argentina in the 1970s) life of

the day. As in other special episodes, the archive material and clips from the series itself are edited together. The combination clearly points to the human side of politics: for example, interspersed with footage about the military operation is a clip from the series where Pili tells Inés that her boyfriend is being sent to Tucumán. Another segment announces that the Martínez family is having money problems with the explanatory title "El Rodrigazo: un golpe al bolsillo de los argentinos." This is followed by the tuning device and a radio announcement by Celestino Rodrigo from *Cuéntame*, a clip of Antonio at work, and finally archive news footage of the CGT (Confederación General del Trabajo de la República Argentina) strike in 1975 (here, the title "Paro General de la CGT" appears at the bottom of the screen). Coustarot's announcement that 1975 was the "Año Internacional de la Mujer" initiates a montage of archive footage of women from the 1970s with a voice-over of Isabel Perón expressing excitement over the Year, transitioning into a clip from the show with Isabel Perón's voice as a sound bridge and more *Cuéntame* clips demonstrating Mercedes' difficulty finding employment.

The titles that accompany these montages—for example, "1975: El Año Internacional de la Mujer"—appear not only during the montages but also during the guests' discussions of the issue, linking the evidence from the period (fictional and nonfictional) with the present-day analysis. These phrases can be explanatory as well, as with the "Contexto político" title that explains habeas corpus ("Hábeas corpus: Una herramienta contra la detención ilegal"). In addition to the many conversations among the guests, this inscription explains to young or uninformed viewers the context of the time. While the montages call attention to the televisual device on a technical level, *Cuéntame un poco más* guests also discuss television at the time in a more direct way, just as Victoria Prego does in the Spanish behind-the-scenes episode. In "Puntapié" their chat turns to television and the "espectáculos" featured in the episode,

emphasizing the study of television as well as—or as part of—history. The guests reminisce, recalling memories of TV series and stars they liked. For example, in "1975" they discuss "*Hupumorpo*: Humor importado del otro lado del charco" (a Uruguayan sketch comedy group), and the American series *The Six Million Dollar Man* (known in Latin America as *El hombre nuclear*) with the title "Televisión: Las series de la época" running at the bottom of the screen. Coustarot includes her own memories in the discussion, as when she shares that she met variety show ("teatro de revistas") star Nélida Lobato—who, as a title explains, was the "número uno de la calle Corrientes." She also becomes emotional when the theme of the telenovela *Piel Naranja*, "Queréme . . . tengo frío" is played, exclaiming "¡Qué lindo!"

This nonfiction episode also transitions between montage fragments (clips from the series and archive footage) with the television-tuning image and sound, as if the channel were being changed. If the footage is being shown on the Martínez' screen, the channel change occurs not on their screen but on the larger one being viewed at home. This device highlights the tangibility of television (you can touch and manipulate the apparatus, unlike with cinema) as well as its variety because you can simply change the channel if you want to watch something else. Moreover, as Coustarot announces that they will pause for a commercial break, we see a vintage, black-and-white ad for Arcanco peaches within a frame of *Cuéntame* graphics. While sections of musical performances are occasionally played at commercial breaks (such as Silvana di Lorenzo singing "Palabras, palabras" in "1975"), this particular device—inserting an archive commercial where a modern-day one might be—encourages the viewer to identify with 1970s television spectators. However, the 2010s frame around the commercial reminds us that we are not witnessing directly the TV of the era, but rather through a present-day filter. Along with Coustarot's own memories of the 1970s, other guests share their recollections in a process of collective remembering. In

"Puntapié" this includes Esther Díaz recalling Perón's death, noting that there was a silence in Buenos Aires as if the city were holding its own wake. As the guests discuss the "militancia universitaria" of the 1970s, presented via a clip of Toni meeting Marta, Marcelo Larraquy explains the increasing clandestinization of the Montoneros. When he briefly forgets a politician's name, the other guests help him remember it (just like when Nieves depends on Inés and Pili to help her recall the title of *La Mary*). Memory is thus shown once more to be a collective process.

In "1975," the political background of the era takes center stage. As archive images are projected on screens behind them, the guests note that the first disappearances by the "Triple A" (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina) were a "laboratorio" for what came later. They offer personal memories of having to have one's documents in order at all times. For example, Coustarot remembers that anyone driving on the highway could be stopped several times to have their documents checked. Coustarot also mentions that she did not remember that the Casa de Gobierno was guarded because of fear of attacks against Isabel Perón. The chat series, then, not only offers a place to rework memories but also to remind people of them. Its host also suggests that the series can trigger memories of more personal family connections, noting that the montages associated with the International Year of the Woman must make people think of their mothers and grandmothers. The other guests also contribute to the conversation: Osvaldo Santoro asserts that this was all happening as a woman was president, while Astrid Pikielny points out the different attitudes toward the changes in the 1970s among the three generations represented in the series (Inés, Mercedes, and Herminia).

Coustarot also offers commentary on the montages, declaring of the series' first batch of clips, for example, that this footage helps to "ir recordando." The host's comments and

conversations with guests highlight the program's emphasis on individual memories, remembering, and experience of the past—as well as on collective, collaborative remembering of that past. In "Diez años" Andrea Petti remarks that *Cuéntame* is important for Argentines to learn from their mistakes and not repeat them. Coustarot's last words, in which she argues that the series "nos ayudó a pensar . . . a soñar . . . con un país mejor . . . y en paz" reaffirms the connection to the past by mentioning a country at peace, which Argentina was not in the 1970s, but extends her vision of the nation from the present to the future as well ("soñar"). It also forges a connection with the forward-looking ending of the Spanish "Háblame de ti," in which Prego repeatedly asks what will happen to each actor's character in upcoming episodes. Therefore, through these nonfiction episodes both versions of *Cuéntame* transcend their fictional depictions of the past to look toward the future as well.

4.5 Conclusion: Nostalgia and Pedagogy

Both series feature two levels of witness (us, the spectators, and the characters), as well as a tension between reality and fiction. The domestic nature of television, as documented by Gray, Lotz, and Ellis, is clearly demonstrated in the first episodes of both the Spanish and Argentine versions, as TV sets are placed prominently in homes and allow characters to witness national events collectively. At the end of each episode, there is a strong sense of the collective or the national, as with the main characters gathering around their televisions and radios to hear the news of Perón's death and the montage of archive footage of Spaniards watching Eurovision. The fiction episodes also share the same sense of parallel time, as if several scenes involving different characters are happening simultaneously. In the first half of the

Spanish episode this spontaneous temporality is woven together by Carlos and his friends traveling around the neighborhood asking for alms: at home, at Cervan's stand, and at Antonio's and Inés' workplaces. This relates to Ellis' feeling that television fosters a "sense of togetherness in separation" (32).

Moreover, the pedagogical aspects of the series, like the opening montage in "Día" and archive footage in both versions, are placed within the specific context of the series (on a TV set on set) and in the larger context (on the modern spectator's TV set at home). Especially in Argentina, these pieces of archive footage are explained by the characters and guests on *Cuéntame un poco más*. In both the fictional and nonfictional format then, Argentines watching *Cuéntame* and *Cuéntame un poco más* attempt to collectively understand the past, filling in the gaps that others have in their memories. This also happens to a lesser extent also in the Spanish context, as "Retorno" is less overtly pedagogical than "Día." However, as we have seen, "Háblame de ti" does reinforce the idea that younger generations require the acquisition of knowledge that only older generations can provide. At the same time, appeals to nostalgia such as the inclusion of pop music, vintage ads, and period TV series, provide an emotional connection or attraction for viewers who lived through the time period. In each case, however, the series demands active participation from spectators who must either employ their own memories or piece together information from the series itself as well as from sources outside the series such as nonfiction texts, parents' or grandparents' memories, and old movies. This apparent tension between pedagogy and nostalgia diminishes over the course of the series as the two *Cuéntames*, so similar and so different, demand active viewing on the part of their respective viewers, young or old, as both versions do throughout the many episodes that follow the first.

CONCLUSION

"Present-ing" the Past: Holistic Memory, Ethics, and Witness

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag defends the image of atrocity—and indeed seeing itself—from criticisms commonly made against them: images have

> been reproached for being a way of watching suffering at a distance, as if there were some other way of watching. But watching up close—without the mediation of an image—is still just watching. Some of the criticisms made against images of atrocity are not different from characterizations of sight itself. Sight is effortless; sight requires spatial distance; sight can be turned off. (117–18)

Against this commonplace critique of representation, Sontag suggests rather that the "standing back from the aggressiveness of the world" offered by photography, for example, frees us "for observation and elective attention," processes that can be identified with the functions of the mind itself (118).

Can the texts treated in this dissertation also provide a real-life impact, overcoming the percepticidic effects of time and representation? Might the past be brought into the present? While only a thorough quantitative investigation could reveal in-depth empirical spectator response, I have suggested that at a more theoretical level these films and series activate spectators vis-à-vis the viewing experience. Still, these texts have their shortcomings: as I have argued, some are more successful than others in avoiding the creation of a too-pleasurable viewer experience—see for example the contrast between the representations of torture in *Garage Olimpo* and *La voz dormida*. *Los pasos perdidos*, too, attempts to show Mónica's liberation but enforces her passivity on both the narrative and technical levels. And while both *El*

secreto de sus ojos and *La isla mínima* engage sensorial perception, Rodríguez's film appeals to more bodily senses in addition to the relatively cerebral sight and hearing. The two *Cuéntame*s, meanwhile, employ different methods of educating their audiences—nostalgia and explicit pedagogy—that produce a similar effect.

However, many of the films and series treated here are especially problematic with regard to gender since, narratively, few provide female characters with agency. Despite María's defiant looks in *Garage Olimpo*, she is deprived of the relatively happy ending enjoyed by *Crónica de una fuga*'s Claudio and *La voz dormida*'s Pepita (whose own representation of torture fetishizes the female body). And while the imposition of identity on Mónica in *Los pasos perdidos* emphasizes her passivity, the brutal treatment of women's bodies in *El secreto de sus ojos* and *La isla mínima* play into further stereotypes of women as objectified. These conventions are again reinforced by the strict gender roles in the two versions of *Cuéntame*, although as the Spanish series develops over multiple seasons the female characters change radically. These narrative issues are sometimes reproduced technically as well, as with the menacing camera movement and voyeurism in *Los pasos perdidos.* Still, as I have shown, on the spectatorial level, both men and women alike are encouraged to participate actively in the drama through the many appeals to the bodies and minds of viewers. This is particularly important since, as is well known, Mulvey aligns male-identified characters and spectator positions with activity and female-identified with passivity; yet the masochism of spectatorship "bridges the active versus passive divide" (Aaron 52).

These audiovisual texts engage in several types of memory (re)production, some of which are more ethical than others. As described in my final chapter, some argue that *Cuéntame* relies on the storage-functional memory mechanism in which people may download a memory

from a collective archive (what Aguilar terms the "dominant memory"), use it, and return it to that shared storage memory. In Rigney and Erll's "dynamic memory," also discussed in Chapter Four, citizens participate in an active remembering and forgetting in which they continually reposition themselves (Loxham 715–16). Hirsch's postmemory, as outlined in the second chapter, is a powerful model in that its source is mediated not through repetition or reenactment but rather through a previous representation that itself becomes the object of projection and recreation (*Generation* 76). These memory types refer to earlier portrayals of traumatic events. Embodied memory as it appears in the third chapter further approaches ethical treatment of dictatorship representation, as does prosthetic memory which I have mentioned throughout.

As audiovisual texts, films and television series (unlike still photographs) exhibit an extra layer of sensory perception. The third chapter of this dissertation elaborated the theories of embodied spectatorship as well as those of sensorial perception put forth by Elasesser and Hagener and Chion. Chapter One's focus on torture wounds also outlines the connection between victims and spectators. In *Cinema of the Dark Side: Atrocity and the Ethics of Film Spectatorship*, Chaudhuri elaborates the notion of "embodied spectatorship" and considers film as a multisensory experience engaging haptic visuality and synesthesia and appealing to touch, smell, and taste (18). For Chaudhuri, these less "ocularcentric ways of seeing" are more ethical (18). Through embodied spectatorship, the memory of the past reaches out to the body of the viewer him or herself.

Of all the memory types outlined in this dissertation, prosthetic memory perhaps most closely resembles the remembering processes that occur in the majority of these texts. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, prosthetic memories are those that can be figuratively strapped on by people who were not alive during the era, or who were present but were obligated to remain

ignorant due to political circumstances. Landsberg points out that those "who acquire these memories are led to feel a connection with the past but, all the while, to remember their position in the contemporary moment" (9). The notion of prosthesis is apt, as it refers to a supplement to the body and suggests that a trauma has occurred, as with the collective distress inflicted by dictatorship. And as many secondary sources on *Cuéntame* have noted, the past is worked and reworked via years of cinematographic and televisual representations; this is how we learn; it becomes part of our muscle memory. Perhaps, after decades of watching these stories, that past becomes part of the body—no longer muscle memory but, symbolically at least, muscle itself, thus joining the corporeal aspects of embodied and prosthetic memories and physically manifesting Caruth's notion of "repeated possessions" of trauma as these representations become metaphorically part of us.

What is an ethical representation and how do the techniques used by these films and television series approach a more ethical representation? In these countries' current democracies, are spectators still subject to a kind of percepticide, and is the way this historical violence is represented "ethical," according to Levinas' conception of ethics as responsibility for the Other? For Levinas, "'being-for-the-other' defines who I am" (Mkhwanazi 134). Responsibility does not originate in the subject but is projected onto him or her by the Other; therefore, "To be Self" is to be unable to "get out from under responsibility'" (Mkhwanazi 134). Examining the depictions of dictatorship of the last twenty years from both Spain and Argentina clarifies the extent to which these modern-day representations of past events could be seen as ethical. This is particularly important since, as Taylor indicates, spectating prompts viewers to question their own complicity in state terrorism as they must define their position "vis-à-vis spectacles of violence" (xi).

Perhaps an ethical version of cinema in some sense implicates viewers in the action onscreen, connecting them to the Other. Chaudhuri, for example, examines films that depict state violence in several different contexts and suggests that focusing on film form rather than merely content can shed light on the ethics of spectatorship. Chaudhuri's book examines how cinematic representation "moves beyond an appeal to spectacular violence and icons of victimisation that elicit compassion for an oppressed Other" (12). She also examines complicity as the "'locus of analysis and modality of critique,'" considering

> how films implicate spectators by 'set[ting] in motion an imaginative and empathizing process through which viewers can determine for themselves the degree to which they might be unwittingly involved as subjects in historical circumstances that might not initially qualify even as objects of remote concern for them.' [Chaudhuri's book] asks how films make us engage with a past (or present) that we didn't think we were part of. (Chaudhuri 15)

These texts encourage imagining through the portrayals of scars in both *Crónica de una fuga* and as *Garage Olimpo*. Moreover, the piecing together of narratives in *Garage Olimpo* and *El secreto de sus ojos* also requires spectator participation, while the absences highlighted through negative space in *Pasaje de vida* might, according to Landsberg, invite an empathetic viewer response (128). Finally, the ability of today's audiences to identify with fictional television viewers in the *Cuéntame*s enables them to witness themselves in the very act of viewing.

Following Deleuze, Chaudhuri further writes that, "cinematic images can reorder experiences in a similar way to memory and make that reordering evident to our senses; 'sheets' of the past can be placed alongside each other in a single image, provoking viewers to search for corresponding sheets in their own memories" (89). This kind of memory does not necessarily

implicate the viewer in the atrocities committed onscreen but rather fosters a closer relationship between viewer and text. In films that represent the Argentine dictatorship, heightened sensory effects and haptic cinema "solicit our identification with experiences that might normally be considered distant from our own" (Chaudhuri 96). The references to sensorial perception in *El secreto de sus ojos*' use of sound and *La isla mínima*'s incorporation of touch and smell encourage embodied memory. Yet examples in other films also emerge, as in *Garage Olimpo*'s representation of torture via sound and scars or *Los pasos perdidos*' emphasis on aurality (the cassette tape on which Mónica plays a game with the parents who kidnapped her) to hint at the truth of her origins.

This process is expanded by the many appeals to the body and the senses in these texts, as well as the invitation for spectators to participate in the narrativization of the story, thus overcoming the distancing effects of time and representation style. What I deem "holistic memory" is a close relative of prosthetic memory that draws on embodied spectatorship but includes more direct invitations to spectators' cognitive processes: here, body and mind come together to create an (ethical) experience of witness. The audiovisual texts treated in this dissertation engage spectators' cognition as well as their physical bodies. And while those bodies always remain steadfastly in the present, the minds attached to them can easily travel to the past. The mind-body equilibrium in these films and television series therefore drags history from a perhaps long-ago, faraway past into the geographical and chronological present. Often, these films and television shows do not just pre*sent* the past in the sense of depicting it, but rather reenact it, thereby rendering it utterly *pre*sent. This is particularly important since, as indicated throughout this dissertation, both Spain and Argentina continue grappling with their violent histories even today.

For Chaudhuri the difference between ethics and morality often lies in the contrast between the individual (ethics) and the collective (morality). Morality, then, refers to "normative values, law and codes of conduct" while ethics examines how that morality is constructed (14). However, she adds, these "norms" can also be constructed through cinema (14). Thus, I suggest a movement away from the conceptual (individual) spectator and toward the historical (collective) spectator—that is, the Spanish and Argentine publics. Both Spain and Argentina have proven to have global appeal with their productions in this field, as *El secreto de sus ojos* took in nearly $34,000,000 worldwide and either won or was nominated for various awards throughout Europe and Latin America ("*The Secret in Their Eyes*," "*The Secret in Their Eyes*: Awards"); meanwhile, Spain's *Cuéntame* spawned a successful international franchise and is now the longest running and most loved television series in the country's history. These fictions, although focused on individual characters, have thus proved truly collective phenomena due to their massive audiences.

Interestingly, there is also a great deal of overlap among the performers in these works: Irene Visedo appears in the Spanish *Cuéntame* while also starring in *Los pasos perdidos* (both of which were released in the same year), Javier Godino plays the villain in *El secreto de sus ojos* and the protagonist, Mario, in *Pasaje de vida*; he also appears in a small role in *La voz dormida.* His *Pasaje* costar Carla Quevedo portrays the victim Liliana Coloto in *El secreto de sus ojos*. And *La isla mínima*'s Raúl Arévalo even had a small part on *Cuéntame* in one of its early seasons. Transatlantic characters abound as well, in particular Mónica in *Los pasos* and Miguel in *Pasaje de vida* (whose own father fled Franco's Spain and immigrated to Argentina), as well as the grandmother Herminia in the Argentine *Cuéntame.* In addition to further justifying my own focus on the two nations in this dissertation, these geographical overlaps provide a

touchstone for considering how the highly localized film industries of the past have given way to a more globalized mechanism. This is especially true considering the multitude of countries that have also experienced dictatorships and the violence, unjust imprisonment, torture, and forced disappearance that often accompany them.

The transcendence of time and space also relates to the geographic focus of this dissertation. As previously mentioned, Spain and Argentina share facets of their histories and processes of historical remembrance. Perhaps aside from this commonality, we may take these two countries as a starting point from which to examine other examples of audiovisual texts that engage in holistic memory, a place from which to initiate a study of global spectatorship. For Landsberg, writing on prosthetic memory,

> a commodified mass culture opens up the possibility that people who share little in the way of cultural or ethnic background might come to share certain memories. Mass-mediated memories are not premised on any claim of authenticity or "natural" ownership. One's engagement with them begins from a position of difference, with the recognition that these images and narratives concerning the past are not one's "heritage" in any simple sense. . . . prosthetic memory creates the conditions for ethical thinking precisely by encouraging people to feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the "other." (9)

Hence the techniques in the first chapter that encourage spectators to witness torture up close without fostering identification with victims, or those in the second chapter—like the camera's circular movements around Mónica—highlight that we can see, but only via the camera. Providing different proof for characters and spectators in Chapter Three further demonstrates this recognition of the self as distinct from the other, as do the pedagogical methods employed in the

Cuéntame series that aid the spectator in acquiring or remembering memories of events that the characters are living. At the same time, however, the majority of these films and series are accessible to today's audiences: while their narratives may require activity, they are comprehensible; their actors are often well-known, and their employment of genre (thriller, melodrama) conventions provides a link between spectators and the representation of dictatorship.

Further, as I have established, an ethical portrayal requires empathy. Empathy, in turn, needs cognition; these two components together open spectators to ethical thinking (Landsberg 149). Drawing on Levinas, Landsberg writes that people may have concern for the collective wellbeing of their fellow humans without losing their individuality; thus, "in its most progressive versions, prosthetic memory creates a feeling for, while feeling different from, the other" (152). For these reasons they may enable the construction of "new political alliances based not on blood, family, heredity but on collective social responsibility" (Landsberg 155), thus allowing for the possibility of action prompted by the act of spectatorship itself.

As we have seen, in varying degrees the texts examined here challenge the spectator's passivity, often provoking viewers to participate mentally or physically in the narrative. Often this involves the physical body—the mutilation and torture of bodies in Chapter One, their absence in Chapter Two, their sensuality in Chapter Three, and their proximity (as in the nearness of the spectator to the television set) in Chapter Four. And through the techniques of masochism, suture, the senses and embodied spectatorship, and meta-witnessing they address viewer's cognitive processes, demonstrating that the Spanish and Argentine dictatorships need not appear as distant events but rather something happening even here and now. This is particularly important since, as detailed in earlier sections of this dissertation, both countries

continue to deal with the social and legal fallout of the dictatorships. Hence the title of this dissertation as outlined in the Introduction addresses the temporal and geographical aspects of the verb *presenciar*. To *pre*sent the past is one method of overcoming the potentially percepticidic consequences of time and representation styles. Encountering many of these texts, even for those who did not live through the dictatorships, may supply an experience that approximates that of witness.

These texts are thus not effortless, as the critics of images of atrocity cited by Sontag wrongly claim, because they require active participation. They also do not provoke a sense of distance, as they transport experiences from the past to the present. While certainly spectators are free to look away or turn off these films and series, they likely will not as they simultaneously combine a certain mass market appeal with an engagement that requires memory work on the part of the audience. My films and series are thus, in general, aesthetically attractive, narratively interesting, and through their use of genre, relatively familiar to the spectator—yet they still enable critical thinking. Finally, watching is not just watching, because viewers are invited to connect their own memories to those of those who lived and suffered under the dictatorships. Can watching a film give a spectator a true experience of witness? Perhaps not—but it may yet be possible to provide a clearer picture, a more holistic and connective experience, of the past. These films and television series perhaps, therefore, produce global spectators who are not only active within the fiction but are potentially socially and politically activated within the world as well.

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