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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

Biopolitics and Sexuality in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Latin American Dictatorships

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Spanish

by

Rose M. Phillips

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Horacio Legrás, Chair  
Professor Gonzalo Navajas  
Professor Kristen Hatch

2016

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## **DEDICATION**

To

Irving, Noah, and Vincent:  
who loved me even when I didn't  
love myself.

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Noah and Irving, you are my childhood friends; we grew up together in la Urb. Dolores; played in the park, went to Yumina, and attended church three times a week. I still remember the hard times we experienced when we immigrated to the US, I can't believe we made it (thanks to Irving's financial aid). Irving, you have always protected me, your kindness makes the world a better place. Your unconditional love gives me hope in the darkest hours; I know I always have you. Noah, I admire your tenacity, you never give up even when the odds are completely against you. You always looked out for the downtrodden, even when we were little you made sure to defend me or those that needed help.

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# CURRICULUM VITAE

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“Positioning Art as Psychoanalysis: Lucaks and Adorno Debate” 19<sup>th</sup> Colloquium on Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Linguistics. University of Texas, Austin. February 2011.

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“Entre la espada y el tintero: la escritura de Catalina de Erauso y Sor Juana.” *El Cid: Sigma Pi Delta Journal*. Edición XX, Primavera 2008. Online link: <http://www3.citadel.edu/mlng/elcid/>

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Biopolitics and Sexuality in 20th Century Latin American Dictatorships

By

Rose M. Phillips

Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Professor Horacio Legrás, Chair

The dictatorships of the Southern Cone implemented egregious neoliberal states in the late 20th century; the military regimes resorted to practices of torture, disappearance, and death to eliminate the political opposition. Drawing from Michel Foucault's definition of biopolitics, which establishes that modernity places the biological at the center of the political realm, I analyze how the new modalities of power excluded political activists, women, indigenous, and the indigent. Through the dissertation I demonstrate that the dictatorships and post-dictatorships were both guided by the same principles of biopolitics. An important element in the development of biopolitics was the deployment of sexuality; therefore I explore the relationship of patriarchy and authoritarianism in an effort to find forms of resistance. I develop my analysis through the works of Damiela Eltit, Luisa Valenzuela, Marco Bechis, Alonso Cueto, and Claudia Llosa; their representations trespass the boundaries of normative behaviors providing new forms of subjectivity.



## INTRODUCTION

My dissertation compares the political, economic, and social transformations that Chile, Argentina, and Peru experienced during the authoritarian governments of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In varying degrees the Pinochet dictatorship, the Argentine Proceso, and the Fujimori regime dismantled social programs, eliminated the labor movement and unions, gave unrestricted power to the corporate sector, and invited international investors to plunder the countries' natural resources. To implement an egregious neoliberal state each authoritarian regime resorted to practices of torture, disappearances, and murders; suspended basic human rights, and promoted a discourse of fear and oppression. The dictatorships of the southern cone justified the violation of human rights under the rationale of national security and the protection of the nation. Once the opposition was eliminated the regimes transitioned to democracies; the newly elected governments insisted in keeping the same neoliberal economic model. The population was placated by the astute democracies that emphasized the difference between the dictatorships and their political system, by stressing the protection of human rights.

I examine the dictatorships and post-dictatorships to demonstrate that both were guided by the same principles of biopolitics. The paradox of biopolitics is that two models of power coexist, one that promotes the health of the population, and the other that eliminates threats that endanger the population. In *Society must be Defended* Michel Foucault was the first to explore the relationship between modern governments and biological life. Following Foucault, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben proposed that western politics do not make the classical distinction between *zoe*—natural life—and *bios*—a particular form of life, “the importance of this distinction in Aristotle is that it

allows for the relegation of natural life to the domain of the household (*oikos*), while also allowing for the specificity of the good life characteristic of participation in the polis—*bios politikos*” (20). Agamben draws from ancient Roman law the concept of the homo sacer; who cannot be sacrificed to the gods, yet whoever kills him will go unpunished.

Biopolitics finds a new way to eliminate the opposition, under the justification that political dissidents constitute a danger to the population, “and the reason this mechanism can come into play is that the enemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population” (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 256). The dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, and Peru killed and disappeared many political activists under the banner of national security:

En el caso del Cono Sur, esta tentativa de exterminar los cuerpos de individuos, cuya presencia física y política no es tolerada por el Estado militar, expresado con el exterminio y persecución de izquierdistas y disidentes a los regímenes fascistas se quedó en nuestra era re-democratizada y así indicaré que el fascismo de las dictaduras militares es donde cambia el manejo de los cuerpos de vidas desnudas, a través de la erradicación radical (Choi 9).

When the dictatorships were replaced by democratic governments the modalities of exclusion remained in place; the neoliberal states continued to exclude sectors of the population. The new democracies ceased to use torture, murder, and disappearances to control the population; in part because the political opposition had already been eliminated during the military regimes. The neoliberal modalities of oppression centered on unfair

working conditions, low wages, lack of healthcare and education, and limitation on workers organization and mobilization. In the new democracies—or neoliberal states—the working class was controlled through hunger, diseases, poverty, lack of opportunities, and the inability to protest.

In the first chapter I examine Damiela Eltit's novels *Los vigilantes* 1994, *El cuarto mundo* 1989, and *Mano de obra* 2000. Drawing from Foucault's characterization of the body as a contested site of cultural meanings, Judith Butler argues that there is a materiality of the body that is different from the culturally inscribed body. I contend that the a-priori body escapes the limits of biopolitics; an individual that rejects the norms of society becomes a site of resistance. Jacques Lacan states that an individual finds a place in society by accepting the norms and social conventions of any given culture. However, if the child refuses to accept the symbolic order—which includes language, cultural codes and conventions—he will remain in the imaginary realm, outside of society. A person that inhabits the imaginary realm lacks coherent language, and is usually diagnosed as psychotic or abnormal. Not surprisingly, resistance in Damiela Eltit's characters takes the form of abnormal behaviors in response to their controlling and asphyxiating lives. Damiela Eltit integrates characters that trespass the boundaries of normal behavior; their abnormal, eccentric, and at times insane behavior forces them to the margins of society. Nonetheless, they rather be homeless, sexual deviants, or drug addicts than remain within the confines of their oppressive societies. By questioning established norms of conduct, the characters embark in a journey that challenges prescribed behaviors enforced by the institutions of power.

The second chapter concentrates on Luisa Valenzuela's short stories "Cambio de armas" and "Cuarta versión", and the film *Garage Olimpo* by the director Marco Bechis. The representations focus on the intersectionality of authoritarianism and patriarchy; through the depiction of female political activists that experience political and sexual violence. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault outlines how sexuality became the nexus of the mechanisms of control; political systems gained control of the population through sexuality. The fictions reflect the authoritarian and patriarchal ideology of the Argentine Proceso, through the representation of male characters, who are members of the national military forces and sadistic sexual lovers. The heroines are sexually abused, yet at the same time they use their sexuality to subvert the power dynamics of their relationships. The fictions deconstruct the process of self-formation of the female protagonists through the use of imagery, narrative strategies, and language. In a way, the heroines try to find areas of resistance by challenging their own subjectivities.

In the last chapter I consider forms of patriarchy that developed within the Fujimori dictatorship during the internal war against Sendero Luminoso. The novel *La hora azul* by Alonso Cueto and the film *La teta asustada* by the director Claudia Llosa depict the rape of indigenous women, and the children conceived during this sexual violence. Both fictions critique the racial and social disparities of Peru; highlighting the exclusion of the indigenous population from the national project. Claudia Llosa and Alonso Cueto integrate customs from the Andean culture into their fictions; thus rescuing a valuable sector of the Peruvian landscape. The indigenous culture fomented communal interests in direct opposition to neoliberalism, "a technique of governance based on the use of rules and incentives to promote self-interested utility maximizing in all spheres of life. These

measures also serve to discourage collective action and collective identification” (Cameron 22). Through the inclusion of the Andean culture the authors intend to create a metaphoric space for the indigenous communities in modern Peru.

## **Chapter 1: Psychosis as Resistance in Bio-politics: Subversion of Power in *Los Vigilantes y El Cuarto Mundo* by DamIELa Eltit**

Aspirábamos, sí, sí, para alegrarnos y, por una vez, lograr conversar y reírnos con el afecto, la decencia y la sinceridad que caracteriza a los seres humanos.  
-DamIELa Eltit, *Mano de obra*

In their recent book *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval examine how neoliberal philosophies have become entrenched in governments and societies despite the consistently negative consequences for the majority of the members of those societies. But how did neoliberalism come to prevail as an economic system even when there is ample evidence of its failings? Their questions engage the contemporary dialogue on the role of neoliberalism, the intersectionality of bio-politics and neoliberalism, and the role of culture and art within such systems. Central to this dialogue is an understanding of the historical roots of the “free market” policies in Chile that gave rise to and were propagated during the Pinochet dictatorship<sup>1</sup>. Considerable disagreement exists on the precise meaning of neoliberalism. The text *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* argues that the inability to define it clearly contributes to its victory, because how can one make a stand against it without understanding the mechanisms at play? Pierre Dardot, Christian Laval, and Wendy Brown contend that neoliberalism is not an ideology or economic theory, but rather a political rationality: “neoliberalism is the rationality of contemporary capitalism, neoliberalism can be defined as the set of discourses, practices, and apparatuses that determine a new mode of government of human beings in accordance with the universal principle of competition”

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<sup>1</sup> See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

(3). Thus they propose that neoliberalism is a modality of governance, the logic by which a capitalist government lends legitimacy to its practices. The intention of neoliberalism is to shape the mentality and behavior of individuals, to guarantee that the economic system is not challenged.

In the article “With reason on our side” Wendy Brown<sup>2</sup> examines the strong commitment to rationality in late capitalist societies—she uses the term of rationality as the equivalent of reason. Wendy Brown unmasks Habermas ardent attachment to rationality in every area of his text *Legitimation Crisis*—an attachment shared by Al Gore in his book *The Assault on Reason*. She delineates the strong influence of the Enlightenment project in the normativization of reason—to warn the reader of the implicit dangers of believing that reason leads to social democracy:

This is not only because Gore cites Habermas directly but because of a deep conviction shared by Gore and Habermas, one that is as attractive as it is dangerous. This is the conviction that reason is the key to democracy understood as both citizen participation and transparency of power, and that the commitment to it will produce liberal consensus, progressive policy, and intelligent, workable political undertakings. Secular reason is the foundation of critique, the foundation of the rational society, and the foundation of the good society (Brown).

The term “rationality” also appears in many of Foucault’s lectures—however for Foucault rationality is not the equivalent of reason—instead he defines political rationalities as the

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<sup>2</sup> Wendy Brown demonstrates the dangers of using reason as the basis for the formation of a political society. See “With Reason on Our Side.” *Theory & Event* 2004.

methods and ways human conduct is administered through a state administration. The text *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* outlines the relationship between biopolitics and neoliberalism; by concentrating on analysis of governmentality and the history of liberal governments. Thus, biopolitics is a “new way of thinking— a new rationality— about the exercise of power, characterized by an ensemble of institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that have as its target populations” (Nieto 142). In the same vein, neoliberalism is the political rationality of contemporary capitalism; a set of discourses, practices, and apparatuses that organize society based on the principle of competition.

In 1973 Chile became the site of a neoliberal experiment; the Chicago Boys with the aid of the military overthrew the democratically elected president Salvador Allende (Klein 8). During the following years of the dictatorship, the state would impose an ideology based on three quintessential bio-political guidelines; which in turn facilitated neoliberal practices:

The policy entailed control for people, freedom for things, especially for capital and commodities. The discourse put forth by the regime fed of three basics sources: 1) The geopolitics of the Doctrine of National Security: Chilean society suffered from a disease and some body parts had to be “amputated” to cure it; 2) conservative Catholicism: Chile, in its “essence,” belonged among Western Christian nations and social egalitarianism equaled blasphemous atheism; 3) nationalist populism: Chilean people were by nature peace-loving, quiet. Such ideology found its counterpart in monetarist neoliberalism: the freedom to restructure every corner of social life according to market logic (Avelar 46).



Idelber Avelar delineates how the military ideology of the dictatorship was necessary for the implementation of a free market. Avelar claims that Pinochet's dictatorship was "the barbaric origin" that helped impose a neoliberal state in an insidious underhanded manner; in fact the transition to a democratic state did not mean the end of the neoliberal system that was implemented during the dictatorship.

In like manner Alessandro Fornazzari contends that the Chilean transition to neoliberal capitalism offers a unique opportunity for study and analysis<sup>3</sup>. Chile is considered the first state used for neoliberal economic experimentation; furthermore, the Chilean neoliberal transition did not occur within the same context as the rest of Latin American countries. Fornazzari emphasizes that neoliberal economic reforms were implemented in Chile years before the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund applied a neoliberal ideology towards Latin America (Fornazzari 5). An in depth analysis of Chile's dictatorship and post-dictatorship period can shed light on the intricacies of current neoliberal political systems. In order to avoid a simple and superficial explanation of neoliberalism; I propose an examination of the bio-politics of neoliberalism. Instead of solely focusing on specific economic policies—austerity plans, privatization of institutions, deregulation, free trade—we must understand the philosophy of neoliberalism and its fundamental underpinnings.

Laval and Dardot claim that neoliberalism has prevailed because, "neoliberalism is not merely destructive of rules, institutions, and rights. It is also productive of certain kinds of social relations, certain ways of living, certain subjectivities" (5). One must examine the

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<sup>3</sup> Fornazzari, Alessandro. *Speculative Fictions: Chilean Culture, Economics, and the Neoliberal Transition*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013. Print.

bio-politics at play in Chile's political landscape; taking into consideration that bio-politics is a political modality that claims to protect the population and the propagation of life<sup>4</sup>. Notwithstanding the overwhelming triumph of oppressive political rationalities; there was considerable resistance to Pinochet's regime from the humanities and arts. The 1973 coup affected deeply Chile's cultural sphere; the goal of the dictatorship—to suppress any opposition coupled with the exile of many artistic voices—left a void in the artistic and cultural scene. As a response to the military and economic hegemony, small interstices of resistance surfaced in opposition to the authoritarian and patriarchal system that dominated all spaces of public and private life in Chile. It was under these circumstances, that the group CADA<sup>5</sup> started to perform throughout Santiago:

Las acciones del CADA abrieron un espacio dentro del discurso autoritario que permitió que fuera posteriormente ocupado por el movimiento democrático. El CADA cambió la manera en que se conceptualiza lo que es arte y lo que es política en Chile. El objetivo de este libro es ofrecer una mirada a los trabajos del Colectivo Acciones de Arte, como un ejemplo de resistencia cultural contundente, cuyas raíces se han diversificado en una red artístico-política de suma importancia en el Chile contemporáneo (Neustadt 14).

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<sup>4</sup> In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault proposes that “there has been a parallel shift in the right of death, or at least a tendency to align itself with the exigencies of a life-administering power and to define it accordingly. This death that was based on the right of the sovereign is now manifested as simply the reverse of the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its life. Yet wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations” (137).

<sup>5</sup> Colectivo Acciones de Arte, CADA.

In 1979, the poet Raúl Zurita, the sociologist Fernando Balcells, the visual artists Juan Castillo and Lotty Rosenfeld, and the writer Damiela Eltit created the group CADA. Throughout the next decade, CADA played a political role intent in destabilizing the hegemonic and patriarchal discourse imposed and defended by the Chilean government. Not only did Damiela Eltit participate in many of the group's political-artistic acts, but she also published novels that engaged with themes of political resistance to authoritarian and machista discourses.

In this chapter I examine three of her novels—*Los vigilantes 1994*, *El cuarto mundo 1989* and *Mano de obra 2000*—using as a backdrop Lacan's theories on the subject and the constitution of the self, and Judith Butler's position on bodily inscriptions, among other theoretical approaches. In the same fashion as Nelly Richards highlighted the importance of the role of literature; indicating the ways in which the “transgressive energy of art and literature” dislocated the armature imposed by the hegemonic power;<sup>6</sup> I plan to show how Eltit's novels questioned and disrupted the Chilean political hegemony.

Drawing from Michel Foucault elaboration of the body as a contested site of cultural meanings, Judith Butler argues that there is a materiality or essence of the body that is different from the culturally inscribed body<sup>7</sup>. Thus I propose that the a-priori state of the body escapes the limits of biopolitics; the pre-discursive body is an area that does not fall under the power of biopolitics. If there is a place of resistance and subversion to the political hegemony it can be found in a body that is not part of culture. In effect, Lacan

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<sup>6</sup> Richards, Nelly. *Cultural Residues: Chile in Transition* (Cultural Studies of the Americas). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. Print.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, Judy. “Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions” *The Journal of Philosophy*: Vol. 86, No. 11, Nov. 1989, pp. 601-607.

proposes that a child finds a place in society by accepting the norms and social conventions of any given culture. However, if the child refuses to accept the symbolic order—which includes language, cultural codes and conventions—the child will remain outside of society in the imaginary realm. A person in the imaginary realm lacks coherent language, usually diagnosed as psychotic or abnormal. Not surprisingly, resistance in Eltit characters the form of an almost psychotic style in response to their controlling and asphyxiating lives. I examine Eltit's novels—*Los vigilantes*, *El cuarto mundo* and *Mano de obra*—concentrating on the character's language, sexual and gender politics as well as on the form of the novels, specifically female writing and female aesthetics. My intention is to find areas of defiance to hegemonic political rationalities through cultural products; at the same time to demonstrate how the cultural-artistic sphere is affected by the biopolitics of the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship period.

## Historical Background of Chile

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chile's history reflects the intricately symbiotic relationship between the economic interests of a powerful minority, and the politics of governance of the country. During the administrations of Jorge Alessandri (1958-1964) and Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970), policy making was directly influenced by the economic interests of the Chilean oligarchy and the powerful international corporations. Lubna Z. Qureshi writes an accurate study of the United States involvement in the 1973 coup d'état; her analysis integrates the relations between Washington and the former presidents of Chile, among them Jorge Alessandri, Eduardo Frei and Salvador Allende. In her book *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende*, Qureshi demonstrates how the United States involvement in Chile was a result of economic concerns and pressures from the powerful multinational corporations. The ability to influence Chile's politics with impunity can be attributed to the rhetoric of fear employed by the government of the United States, and most of Chile's governments with the exception of Allende's administration.

In 1958 Alessandri took office with a political platform based on the principles of laissez-faire; the new Chilean president claimed that free trade and a free market would be the solution to Chile's economic malaise. During his administration, Alessandri lowered tariffs, proposing that international competition would benefit the country's economy, as a result:

Imports, U.S. goods in particular, overwhelmed the Chilean market. [...] With his acceptance of U.S. loans, Alessandri ensured that Chilean reliance on that powerhouse to the north would last for many years. A grand total of \$130 million traveled southward from the U.S banking industry, the U.S Treasury

Department, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Cooperation Agency. (25)

Not only did Alessandri lowered tariffs to entice U.S. corporations, he also gave them tax breaks as an incentive to overwhelm the Chilean industry. The policies of *laissez-faire* instituted by Alessandri failed at stabilizing inflation and devalued the nation's currency of the *escudo*, worsening the economic crisis of Chile (26). As a consequence, multiple strikes broke out in protest of the unbearable living conditions, the scarcity of public schools, the lack of sanitation, and the condition of the roads. The CUT, *Central Única de Trabajadores*, organized a general strike, with the participation of miners, poor neighborhoods, employees from the National Health Service, banks and the steel industry. The strike ended in a confrontation between the police—armed with rifles and tear gas—and the workers who only carried stones, as a result many were injured and six protesters died.

Alessandri's administration demonstrates the collusion between the multinational corporations and the Chilean government—a complicity that benefited American corporations—in exchange the Chilean president and the Chilean elite continued to enjoy the support of the U.S. government. The expiatory victim was the rest of the nation; who continued to suffer under the pressure of highly elevated inflation rates, unemployment, and lack of opportunities. This type of arrangement continued to prevail during the presidency of Eduardo Frei Montalva, who ran in the national election campaign as a Social Democrat. After the catastrophic inflation and destabilization caused by Alessandri's administration, the right had to support Eduardo Frei's campaign, a candidate from the center of the political spectrum. It was untenable for the Right to propose a candidate since Alessandri's policies had left the country in a horrible recession. Even though, the Social Democrat party tenants

were based on Catholic principles, they had separated from the Conservatives, thus they represented a viable alternative that could reconcile capitalism and socialism (Qureshi 26). To appeal to the middle class, the party presented a secular attitude to social problems, their platform promised free primary education, the construction of 360,000 houses and to provide 100,000 families with land (Qureshi 27). During his campaign Frei would receive support from the Chilean elite and the United States government not because they endorsed his political platform but because it represented a better choice than Salvador Allende as president of Chile:

According to a 1975 report by the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, both the Kennedy and the Johnson administration dispatched their campaign contributions to the Christian Democrats. [...] "The Special Group authorized over three million dollars during the 1962-1964 period to prevent the election of a Socialist or Communist candidate," the Senate report noted. [...] The perennial Marxist candidate annoyed Washington for many reasons. U.S. business assets in Chile, including the copper mines were worth \$700 million. The election of Allende in 1964 would have threatened those assets. (30)

As this report suggests the actual agenda of the White House during Kennedy's presidency did not reflect the ideals of the Modernization Theory. According to the Modernization theory the United States was to invest in Latin America to improve both economies—which eventually would help Chile become a developed country—nonetheless many of the investments were used for manipulation of Chilean politics to ensure the economic interests of the United States were protected abroad.

The economist Walt Rostow was one of the many White House intellectuals that espoused Modernization Theory; he claimed that the small Latin American countries should be designed after the capitalist American model. Rostow argued that, "U.S. investments in Latin American societies would lead to the take off, the point at which those societies would have accumulated enough capital to sustain its own industry" (28). Since the wealth would eventually reach the lower classes, social programs were not necessary. This economic model was blatantly flawed as Raúl Prebisch—the Argentine economist and director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America—demonstrated in his work, "the region would remain poor if it only specialized in the production of raw materials for the benefit of the industrialized First World. For their own economic advancement, therefore, the Latin Americans would have to control their own natural resources" (28). How could Latin America build its own infrastructure if most of the industry was owned by foreign investors? It is quite clear that the transition from a dependent nation to a developed country was impossible under the principles of the Modernization Theory. Furthermore, even if Rostow's economic plan would eventually enable the development of a sustainable industry in Latin America; such a situation would not be propitious to the capitalist interests of the United States. On one hand, Latin American countries would impede access to their natural resources; on the other hand, they would cease to import goods produced by the United States; both actions would constitute a hard blow to the American economy (Michaels 75).

The United States and the Chilean oligarchy supported the election of Eduardo Frei Montalva in 1964 in order to avoid the election of Salvador Allende. Despite their continued efforts, in 1970 Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile in a close three-way race. The Unidad Popular nominee promised to "confiscate all haciendas possessing more than eighty



hectares for redistribution among the peasants [...] to socialize Chile's banking and insurance industries." (Michaels 48) Under Allende's administration the common people would have more of a role in the economics of the country, at the same time the Unidad Popular platform was able to bring together different factions of the left, Socialists, Communists and other Radicals favored Allende as president. The promise of Salvador Allende's platform overshadowed the negative campaign led by the CIA, the Department of State and the Embassy in Santiago against the political party Unidad Popular. Their collusion was unable to dissuade the Chilean people, and Salvador Allende was elected democratically in 1970.

## **Bio-politics: a campaign of terror and fear**

The previous segment details the political atmosphere of Chile during the presidencies of Jorge Alessandri, Eduardo Frei Montalva and Salvador Allende; the three administrations prior to the military coup of 1973. The historical events that led to the dictatorship elucidate the reasons for the military takeover, as well as evince why an authoritarian regime overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. Throughout the last half of the 20th century, Chile's politics have been influenced by the economic interests of Chile's oligarchy, the United States government, and multinational corporations. Ironically, the most prevalent rhetoric of that time period was anchored on principles of democracy and freedom; the insidious greed of the Chilean elite and the corporate sector was hidden behind a discourse of national security. The political rationality of the Pinochet dictatorship operated under the premises that anyone that contested the new regime was a threat to the well-being of the nation. The conduct of the Chilean people was structured and organized through specific regulatory and disciplinary methods.

During the presidencies of Jorge Alessandri and Eduardo Frei, military intervention already played a key role in enforcing the economic interests of the elite and of the United States. For instance, the modernization theory espoused by John Kennedy had another darker side; military intervention was deemed necessary to ensure that capitalist economic policies would remain in place, "military interventions were one application of modernization theory; economic investment was another." (28) John Kennedy's programs such as the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps—seemingly benign—also included counterinsurgency schools in Latin America. In his article "The Alliance for Progress and Chile's 'Revolution in Liberty,' 1964-1970", the historian Albert L. Michaels outlines how

President John Kennedy carried out an "interventionist, counter-insurgency foreign policy." (74). As Chile became less dependent on the United States government, during the administration of Allende, the corporate sector pushed for a stronger intervention in Chile. Multinational corporations in collusion with the Chilean oligarchy and the CIA overthrew the presidency of Allende, replacing it with a military regime which instituted neoliberal economic policies.

One might wonder how is it possible that they were able to dismantle an entire country and turned it into a laboratory for Milton Friedman's free market economic plan? The military regime with the support of the Chicago Boys<sup>8</sup> was able to manipulate the citizens of Chile through fear, and by portraying themselves as the saviors of Chile. On one hand, the military regime claimed that they were saving the nation from communism—that a neoliberal state meant positive change for the workforce. On the other hand, they preyed on the fear of the population by exaggerating the danger that the dissidents posed against the system. People that disagreed with the new government were described as dangerous "gangrene" that needed to be cut off to safeguard the rest of society. This type of seemingly positive discourse combined with suppressive practices were part of the biopolitics of the dictatorship. Michel Foucault describes the transition from the sovereign power to biopolitics; claiming that before the 19<sup>th</sup> century a king had the right to kill or let live. Under the new system the sovereign's right was, "replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (*History of Sexuality* 138). Under this new power life is fostered and protected; hence political decisions are made based on the well-being of the population.

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<sup>8</sup> In general the expression is used to refer to all those trained at the University of Chicago under the tutelage of Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger. See: Letelier, Orlando. "The Chicago Boys in Chile: Economic Freedom's Awful Toll," *The Nation*, August 28, 1976.

Since the onset of modernity the mechanisms of power have undergone a transformation; the institutions of power have increasingly concentrated in generating life—through social programs, welfare, lowering infant mortality rates, and focusing on public health—among other practices that promote the health and life of the population. At the same time, the 20th century has been a witness to extremely violent wars, genocide, dictatorships, tortures and disappearances. Foucault claims that the paradox of biopolitics can be explained by the discourse employed to protect the population. The rationality of biopolitics proposes that war must be waged to defend the population—not to protect the sovereign—as it was in done in the past:

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughtering the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 137).

If power's main role is to protect the life and survival of populations then such power must exterminate any threat to the well-being of those populations.

Foucault claims that once power assumed the role of promoter of life, a great necessity arose for an ideology that would allow governments to kill people without seeming to contradict its humanitarian principles. Power assumed such right by categorizing certain individuals as biological threats, "one had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others" (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 138). Modern states established a biological relationship between the healthy population and their political adversaries. Thus,

it is not only a case of killing one's adversaries because their death will ensure one's safety; but furthermore their death guarantees that the rest of the population will be healthier. In the biopower system, "killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race" (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 256). The political rationality of the Chilean dictatorship functioned under the same paradox: the regime presented itself as a protector of the nation while spreading fear throughout the population. Their rhetoric stated that anyone that protested against the military regime was a dangerous nihilist that wanted to destroy the rest of society. The justification of tortures, disappearances and killings were based on lies—political dissidents were not dangerous ex KGB Russian spies as the military claimed—actually "80 percent of political prisoners in Chile were workers and peasants" (Klein 132).

One can see how the rhetoric of fear developed and finally reached its zenith during Pinochet's dictatorship. A few years earlier Richard Nixon had claimed that the presidency of Salvador Allende threatened the national security of the United States:

For self-justification, [...] the president claimed that the UP enjoyed the generous support of the Communist bloc without presenting specific evidence. Nixon claimed that this support gravely threatened the physical security of the United States. "I believed, as had my two predecessors, that a Communist regime in Cuba exporting violence, terrorism, and revolution throughout Latin America was dangerous enough (Qureshi 52).

There is ample evidence that indicates that actually Nixon did not consider Chile a dangerous military threat to the United States. Various recordings of the president's private

conversations revealed that Nixon was not actually worried that Chile endangered national security. Furthermore, the CIA Intelligence Estimate of 1969 determined that an alliance between Chile and Russia was highly unlikely; thus there was no reason to fear a powerful communist union between both countries. Nixon's quote exemplifies the discourse of fear and shock used by multiple administrations to influence public opinion. This form of rhetoric would achieve its pinnacle during Pinochet's regime through the economic model of neoliberalism.

In her book, *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein seeks to challenge the claim that freedom of the market means freedom of the people:

This book is a challenge to the central and most cherished claim in the official story—that the triumph of deregulated capitalism has been born of freedom that unfettered free markets go hand in hand with democracy. Instead, I will show that this fundamentalist form of capitalism has consistently been midwived by the most brutal forms of coercion, inflicted in the collective body politic as well as on countless individual bodies (22-23).

Following World War II, most of the developed nations paid attention to the economist John Maynard Keynes warnings; if countries allowed a free market they would have to contend with a devastating depression and high rates of unemployment. Subsequently, the First World nations decided that it was better to guarantee citizen's basic needs as to avoid a worse situation; if most of the population was extremely exploited they would fall for ideologies such as Communism or Fascism. While the Developed Nations instituted certain Keynesian regulations—nationalism and developmentalism spread in Latin America which meant that oil and other industries were nationalized or highly regulated (Klein 66). The

United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America led by the economist Raul Prebisch was established in Santiago; economists from different countries came to train in Chile to later help their governments implement Developmentalism in their own countries. Juan Peron's investments of governments funds into the creation of highways and steel plants—as well as the imposition of high tariffs on foreign imports—is one illustration of developmentalism in Latin America (Klein 67). The economic success the developed nations experienced by following Keynesian economic principles, as well as the economic growth that benefit Latin America by adhering to developmentalist policies, constituted a problem and a hindrance to the multinational corporations and to the Milton Friedman school of economics .

Naomi Klein emphasizes that in the 1960s the corporate sector and the Chicago School of Economics decided to join forces for a symbiotic relationship. The logic behind this alliance was that on one hand the Chicago School of Economics would gain prestige and recognition as economic advisors; and on the other hand the multinationals could have their agenda of deregulated capitalism championed by a respectable academic institution. Milton Friedman, the star professor of the Chicago School of Economics proposed the “shock treatment” as a solution; “using methods of collective trauma to engage in radical social and economic engineering” (Klein 9). At any rate, Milton Friedman needed a country to test his economic plan; and he found an incredible opportunity to prove his free market theory in Chile. Many decades before circa 1956 Albion Patterson—director of the United States International Cooperation Administration in Chile—and Theodore W. Schultz chairman of the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago launched an exchange program; Chilean students came to study economics at the University of Chicago under the

sponsorship of the United States government<sup>9</sup>.

Once Allende won the presidency in fair and democratic elections, the Chicago Boys and the most powerful businessmen in Chile colluded to oust the Allende administration:

In September 1971, a year into Allende's mandate, the top business leaders in Chile held an emergency meeting in the seaside city of Viña del Mar to develop a coherent regime-change strategy. According to Orlando Saenz, president of the National Association of Manufacturers (generously funded by the CIA and many of the same foreign multinationals doing their own plotting in Washington) the gathering decided that "Allende's government was incompatible with freedom in Chile and with the existence of private enterprise, and the only way to avoid the end was to overthrow the government" (Klein 86).

This group with the aid of the military shocked the nation with the military coup, and immediately after dismantled the economy through privatization of multiple national institutions. Indeed, taking advantage that the nation was unstable and afraid Pinochet under the advisement of the Chicago Boys rapidly:

Privatized, though not all, some state owned companies (including some banks), he allowed cutting-edge new forms of speculative finance; he flung open the borders to foreign imports, tearing down the barriers that had long protected Chilean manufacturers; and he cut government spending by 10

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<sup>9</sup> "During the 1950s-1960s, the United States provided economic assistance to Latin America in an effort to spread support for market-oriented ideas. The Department of Economics at the University of Chicago served as an important facilitator in the United States' attainment of its political and economic goals" Biglaiser, Glen. "The Internationalization of Chicago Economics in Latin America," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. Vol. 50, No. 2 (January 2002), pp. 269.



percent—except the military, who received a significant increase. He also eliminated price controls— a radical move in a country that had been regulating the cost of necessities such as bread and cooking oil for decades (Klein 96).

The political discourse of the coup and the dictatorship demonized political dissidents; anyone who protested against the implementation of neoliberal practices was portrayed as a threat to the health and prosperity of the nation. Before the military overthrew Allende's government, several American trainers many of whom were members of the CIA, "had whipped the Chilean military into an anti-Communist frenzy, persuading them that socialists were de facto Russian spies, a force alien to Chilean society" (Klein 92-93). In this quote the leftists are described as an alien entity; terms that became part of the hegemonic discourse which intended to dehumanize them and facilitate their extermination. During these years anyone who opposed the dictatorship was compared to a disease; in fact Pinochet responded to international criticism of torturing and killing subversives by retorting: "if you have gangrene in your arm, you have to cut it off, right?" (Klein 139). Not surprisingly torturers would compare themselves to doctors or surgeons; who were in charge of, "administering a kind of medicine to their prisoners, who were often referred to as *apestosos*, the dirty or diseased ones" (138). As one can surmise, a pattern starts to emerge through these quotes; the military regime used a medical lexicon— diseases, body parts, gangrene— to describe the disappearances, tortures, kidnappings and assassinations; and in turn terms such as— medicine, amputation— were used to justify human right violations.

The emergence of a biological terminology in political discussions has been explained at length by Foucault; who points out that with the advent of modernity the relationship of

war turned into a biological-type relationship. For a state to function in bio-power mode, Foucault claims that the extermination of the opposition:

This is not, then, a military, warlike, or political relationship, but a biological relationship. And the reason this mechanism can come into play is that the enemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population (*Society Must Be Defended* 255-256).

The military forces intimidated the citizens—instilling the fear that the diseased *socialists* were harmful—as a result many Chileans were shocked into passivity and even complicity. In this manner, the military regime with the help of the Chicago Boys was able to implement a neoliberal economy in Chile extremely fast, and efficiently eradicate the opposition.

The post-sovereign organization of power while it integrated previous disciplinary techniques it also advanced new regulatory mechanisms<sup>10</sup>. Foucault explains that the history of transition of power is not a compilation of well-defined periods, instead there was a continuity of the old mechanisms to which new power mechanisms were integrated. The first adjustments to sovereign-judicial authority—the sovereign right to kill—were placed on the anatomo-politics of the human body:

Essentially centered on the body, on the individual body. They included devices that were used to ensure the spatial distribution of individual bodies (their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance) and the organization, around those individuals, of a whole field of visibility.

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<sup>10</sup> In *Society Must be Defended*, Michel Foucault analyzes the transition from sovereignty to bio-power through the analysis of the mechanisms and techniques of power.

They were also techniques that could be used to take control over bodies.

*(Society Must be Defended 242)*

These techniques were used during the Pinochet regime, the military forces used disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms to control the population. The government limited any type of group meetings—any type of club or organization was strictly forbidden—enforcing a specific spatialization of bodies according to which only two bodies could congregate in the same place. If the number of people increased, the military would disperse or even arrest them. Surveillance increased disproportionately—activities previously considered innocuous were reported and catalogued—women could be arrested for wearing slacks and men for having long hair (Klein 130). Likewise the military police disciplined the individual body—through torture the detainees were forced to change their beliefs and provide information to the government—which in turn help the regime to increase their control and surveillance over the population. The organization of bodies and space was controlled by the regime; the dictatorship mobilized the spatial distribution of its citizens, military personnel would infiltrate private homes, remove dissidents, and place them in torture camps.

America' Watch report *Chile: Human Rights & the Plebiscite* gives a detailed report demonstrating significant evidence of arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, disappearances and many incidents of torture during the Pinochet dictatorship. The military conducted arbitrary and illegal arrests—when conducting an arrest they did not identify themselves—proceeded without arrest warrants and lacked to inform the arrestees and their families where they were going to take them. The report indicated that while the state of emergency was in place, “detainees may be held up to twenty days, in places other than prisons, before the filing

of charges. The widespread use of incommunicado detention, with or without appropriate order, facilitates a policy of torture” (70). With complete impunity the authorities detained many civilians and never filed charges—if they were fortunate the detainee was released—however most of the time they were never seen again. In 1978 “the government decreed an amnesty which covered crimes committed by the military since the coup. The amnesty law (Decree Law No. 2,191) has been cited to justify the government’s lack of cooperation on the legal cases brought by the relatives of the disappeared” (72-73). In addition brief abductions, also known as kidnappings, became extremely common during the dictatorship. An armed group of men would abduct the subversive, drive him around in a car while beating him to obtain information on clandestine political activities; afterwards they dropped them off in some abandoned spot. Not only would the secret police kidnap leftists, they also would pretend to execute them, “in the case of Dr. Francisco Acevedo Toro, who works with the Human Rights Commission of Viña del Mar and was abducted on November 30, 1987, his abductors, after beating and threatening him, tied him to a tree and carried out a mock execution” (74-75). The regime searched homes without a court order; in some cases an individual home was searched however massive *allañamientos* were a common practice too. During these *massive allañamientos* the police or military sealed a whole section or neighborhood, entered and searched every house in that section illegally appropriating for their own personal use any costly possessions they found in the homes (75).

The second adjustment in the history of transition of power was enacted at the level of the population; however it is important to establish that both adjustments were not mutually exclusive:

For example, if discipline is focused on epidemics (i.e. containing and

correcting temporary outbreaks that threaten life), then bio-politics is focused in a complementary manner on endemics (i.e. regulating permanent threats against life throughout a population). Together, discipline and bio-power are thus described as taking “control of life in general with the body at one pole and the population at the other.”<sup>11</sup>

The new mode of power integrated both types of control mechanisms by establishing a *state of exception*, which enabled the regime to continuously violate human rights, camouflaged by the claim that it was protecting the nation. The dictatorship established several states of exception, under which the rights and guarantees contained in the constitution were suspended<sup>12</sup>.

During the previously mentioned states of exemption—the Chilean dictatorship tortured and shocked individuals into a state of compliance—while simultaneously shocking and torturing the whole nation as a body politic. Torture has been used by an amalgam of regimes to implement neoliberal policies:

From Chile to China to Iraq, torture has been a silent partner in the global free-market crusade. But torture is more than a tool used to enforce unwanted policies on rebellious peoples; it is also a metaphor of the shock’s doctrines’ underlying logic. Torture, or in CIA language “coercive interrogation,” is a set of techniques designed to put prisoners into a state of deep disorientation and shot in order to force them to make concessions against their will (Klein 19).

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Coleman and Kevin Grove. “Biopolitics, Biopower, and the Return of Sovereignty”

<sup>12</sup> States of Legal Exception were instituted in the following periods; September 1973 until March 1978, November 1984-June 1985 and from September 1986 to January 1987. A state of emergency was called on March 1978 and a state of danger, described as the state of danger of disturbance to internal peace, was placed on March 1981. Report Watch, p.54.

The CIA provided Pinochet's secret police force with torture manuals; these handbooks enumerated a set of techniques to disorient the prisoner, to the point that they were so afraid and mentally regressed that they could not think rationally anymore. The handbook's first rule instructed that the interrogator isolated the prisoners from all sensory input—by covering their eyes, using earplugs, and by giving them meals at different times—in case the prisoner was trying to keep track of time through the schedule of meals or daylight. The next rule dictated that the interrogator should overwhelm the prisoner with extreme stimuli—such as lights, loud music, electrical shocks, and different types of corporal abuse. The integration of both types of abuse ensured the complete destruction of the detainee:

There is an interval, of suspended animation, a kind of psychological shock or paralysis. It is caused by a traumatic or sub-traumatic experience which explodes the world that is familiar to the subject as well as his image of himself within that world. Experienced interrogators recognize this effect when it appears and know that at this moment the source is far more open to suggestion, far likelier to comply, than he was just before he experienced the shock (Klein 19).

The same sensory and shock techniques applied on the individual subversives were used on the Chilean nation as a whole. The nation was in a state of shock after seeing the governmental buildings bombarded, the president killed, countless people being arrested and taken to the Stadium. Chilean citizens were paralyzed and confused with fear and shock, which provided an open opportunity for the corporatist sector with the aid of the military to take over the nation.

## **The Role of Literature: Allegory**

The most commonly accepted political theory maintains that the Southern Cone dictatorships were gruesome authoritarian regimes that fortunately transitioned into democratic legitimate governments. In reality, the dictatorships were the transitional periods; during Pinochet's regime power was transferred from the State to the Market. Willy Thayer and Thomas Moulain propose that the dictatorship itself was a transformation of the economy and politics:

Según el análisis de estos intelectuales que sostienen una postura crítica frente al gobierno de la Concertación, la dictadura chilena no se ha disuelto ni caído, sino que se han legitimado las estructuras económicas, sociales, y jurídicas del régimen para perpetuar los engranajes escondidos de la máquina dictatorial. Se trata de la nueva versión del sistema autoritario, ahora (trans) vestido de democracia liberal (Neustadt 12).

The dictatorships provided the order and brute force necessary to implement a deregulatory, aggressively pro-corporation economic system. The suppression of any resistance enabled the protection of corporatist interests to the full extent of their rampant desire for profit at all costs. The social sciences developed a fictitious dichotomy between the authoritarian regime of Pinochet and the subsequent democratic governments of Patricio Aylwin and Eduardo Frei. They argued that since the newly emergent government opposed the dictatorship, it clearly meant that the new democratic administration would change the dismal economic situation. In reality the new government maintained the same neoliberal-economic model, continuing to protect the interests of the corporate sector. Furthermore the idea of the free market was equated with the freedom of the individual:

“Transition to democracy” meant nothing but the juridical-electoral legitimation of the successful transition carried out under the military, that is, the ultimate equation between political freedom for people and economic freedom for capital, as if the former depended upon the latter, or as if the latter had somehow been hampered by the generals (Avelar 59).

The discourse of legitimation proposed that if the economic market was free from regulations from the oppressive government, then in the same manner people would be free from torture, disappearances, and assassinations from the authoritarian government. With this discourse the corporate sector was able to keep in place an unfettered free market once the military regime was removed from power.

Given the triumph of neoliberalism, one must turn to aesthetics and cultural products to gain insight into the political processes that were at play during this period; in particular to understand the role of literature after the military coup in 1973. Idelber Avelar and Alessandro Fornazzari explore how literature engages with the southern cone’s past and present political milieu, trying to determine what kind of writing is possible given the circumstances. In his book *The Untimely Present*, Avelar advances that allegories can help articulate the zeitgeist of a dictatorship, which he classifies as the “unrepresentable catastrophe”; he argues that an allegorical text can make a stand against a capitalist-commodified society through the remembrance of the past. To support his argument, Avelar concentrates on Walter Benjamin’s work *The Arcades Project*, to highlight the connection between commodity-culture and allegory. In his book *Speculative Fictions: Chilean Culture, Economics, and the Neoliberal Transition* Fornazzari agrees with Avelar to a certain extent—he concedes that the allegory was useful as a mode of expression in the



past—however Fornazzari advances that allegory failed with the rise of neoliberalism. According to Fornazzari the allegory was only useful as a form of expression during the transitional period of religious societies to secular societies. The allegory allowed the articulation of such transitional time which otherwise could not be expressed through older forms of literature.

However with the advent of commodification the allegory failed as a form of transitional literature “this failure of allegory to continue to function as a transitional mode of thinking is due to its logic of abstraction being exceeded and rendered obsolete by the commodity form.” Fornazzari observes that allegory lost its ability of representation with the rise of neoliberalism because the idea of commodification is quite analogous to how the allegory works:

The two prove to share some striking similarities. Allegorization and commodification are both processes of debasing the “thingliness” of things. In both cases, objects are no longer meaningful in themselves; they can only point to a ghostly meaning that does not inhabit their material realm (in the case of allegory this would be abstract meaning or commentary, and in the case of commodification it would be exchange value(35).

In a commodified society, things are debased when they are given a monetary value; by the same token a transitional experience described through allegory becomes empty and pointless. Fornazzari points out that when the reader figures out the equivalencies of the allegory—when all the parts are matched with its correspondent pair—then there is no more room for analysis.

In contrast to Fornazzari’s view, Avelar rescues the importance of allegory in

confronting commodification in his text *The Untimely Present*. He argues that unfortunately prior scholarship has reduced allegorical works to a simple censure issue; claiming that for the most part allegorical novels are viewed as a vehicle to avoid censure and retaliation during periods of authoritarian rule. Avelar rediscovers other uses of allegory in literary works; to portray the unrepresentable, enact remembrance, and help resist the commodification of society. Allegory can help articulate experiences for which one has no basis of comparison since, "it is both, narrative and discontinuous; its inner dynamics is modeled around a relationship of breaks, gaps, discontinuities, inner distances and incommensurabilities" (34). Moreover allegorical novels resist commodification through the depiction of the past in two ways. On one hand, the portrayal of Chile's past events reminds us that the current neoliberal system was established by the dictatorship; on the other hand, a novel about the past functions completely different than a commodity:

Growing commodification negates memory because new commodities must always replace previous commodities; send them to the dustbin of history.

The free market established by Latin American dictatorships must, therefore, impose forgetting not only because it needs to erase the reminiscence of its barbaric origins but also because it is proper to the market to live in a perpetual present (Avelar 2).

The powerful hegemonies in Latin America want to squelch literature's fixation with the past; the multinationals with a complicit government prefer to camouflage the unrestrained freedom they gained during the dictatorship. Literature must fight to remember the past; to mourn those that were trampled during the implementation of a neoliberal market.

In essence, the relationship between an artifact and mourning is analogous to the relationship between a novel and the remembrance of the Chilean past. On side of the analogy presents the bereft person who has lost a loved one; mourning his grief by fixating on an article of clothing, or any object that belonged to departed. The concrete object becomes allegorically the body that has ceased to exist; it rescues the loved one's memory from complete oblivion. The other side of the analogy is the allegorical novel—the text represents those who were vanquished during the dictatorships—thus forcing the reader to remember the past and mourn the people that were tortured, disappeared, and silenced. Both the object and the novel do not have a great monetary value, their worth is based on their importance to the grieving person or the reader:

To recall the famous Marxian dichotomy, mourning does not deal with use values. There is no “use” for an epitaph or a memorial—they dwell outside all utility. The work of mourning includes, as well, a moment of suspension of exchange value, for the mourner will always perceive his/her object as unique, resistant to any transaction, substitution, or exchange [...] that is, and the exchange implied in mourning includes an acknowledgment of the limits of exchange. If the mourner does not achieve true introjection of the lost object, no healing of the loss will ever take effect without leaving behind an unassimilable residue (Avelar 4).

The article of clothing or former possession of the departed has no practical use; their monetary value is unimportant to the mourner. In a capitalist society a sentimental memento has no specific place and rejects commodification because one cannot put a price on it. Similarly the allegorical novel is not supposed to be marketable, it should not be sold

in large quantities for profit or for entertainment of the masses.

Nelly Richards proposes that only a surprising and unexpected response to this imposed amnesia can make a dent on the establishment and the status quo. In effect, the group Colectivo de Acciones de Arte adopted this posture through a series of politico-artistic performances that provoked different reactions ranging from enthusiastic approval to angry criticism. The right considered the group disrespectful, and tried to dismiss them as young ruffians that needed to learn to how to behave in a civilized society. Meanwhile, leftist artists considered CADA's art actions as elitist; their performances were considered at times too hermeneutic and highly theoretical. In spite of all the criticism, the impact of the group cannot be denied:

A pesar del desacuerdo político y estratégico de aquellos artistas que querían privilegiar un discurso directo hacia las masas, este no fue capaz de borrar ni atenuar el tremendo impacto que el CADA tuvo en los círculos intelectuales de la época. La forma en que el CADA refirió su primera acción sirve para caracterizar su obra entera: "No se la puede contemplar con tranquilidad, provoca la polémica; no se la puede enjuiciar desde la brillantez exquisita de entendidos; no transita plácidamente desde la observación refinada a un salón acomodado" Contemplando ahora en retrospectiva, se puede ver la trascendencia del grupo. El CADA cambió la manera en que se conceptualiza lo que es arte y lo que es política en Chile (Neustadt 14).

One can extrapolate the responses and the impact of the group CADA to the literature of Daniela Eltit, who is considered one of Chile's leading avant-garde and experimental writers. She started her writing career as a member of the artistic movement; hence her

literary texts reflect similar aesthetics and responses of CADA. Her experimental writing challenges normative grammatical rules:

En *Lumpérica*, Damiela Eltit también extiende el lugar de su texto escrito más allá hacia zonas extraverbales. Cortando su cuerpo para literalmente inscribirse con signos, y subrayando la violencia de estos signos en el contexto de un prostíbulo en el Chile dictatorial, Eltit hace con su libro una acción política. Como escribe Eugenia Brito en *Campos minados*, la performance de Eltit ayudó a crear un espacio para la literatura de resistencia dentro del Chile dictatorial. (. . .) Eltit (con)funde signos narrativos, cuerpos sub-urbanos e imágenes visuales, y así carga su escritura con un potencial político performativo (17-18).

At the same time Eltit writing has been criticized as obscure, enigmatic, and difficult to understand. In fact it is this non-traditional essence that provokes a debate; her unexpected writing intends to dismantle the hegemonic establishment.

In her book, *Marginalities: Damiela Eltit and the Subversion of Mainstream Literature in Chile*, Gisela Norat provides a germane biographical account of Damiela Eltit noting that Eltit's interest in language started while attending Saint Rose School in Santiago. She became interested in the evolution of the Spanish language from Baroque Spanish to the contemporary Spanish spoken by Chileans. Incidentally, Eltit introduces in several of her novels the vernacular as a form of transgression. Norat proposes that Eltit's feminist, postmodern, and highly symbolic works challenged Chile's mainstream culture, "Eltit's ability to reconcile the sort of pragmatic women's issues espoused by feminism and the apolitical/ahistorical devices of postmodernism while at the same time exposing state

repression is apparent from her first book” (23). Considering the strong emphasis on the form—linguistic experiments, fragmented discourse, and the eradication of the subject—Eltit’s novels can be classified as postmodern. Postmodern literary works are characterized by the presence of subaltern figures—such as the indigenous, the homosexual, or the insane—indeed many of Eltit’s novels have marginal characters, “Eltit concentrates on pariah bodies- among others, the politically persecuted, incarcerated, mentally ill, homeless, sexually deviant, and the impoverished. In my view, the author transforms a marginal cast of characters into literary symbols” (24). For instance in her novel *Los Vigilantes*—the homeless characters, linguistic neologisms, deconstruction—as well as the symbolic plot of a family feud evince her postmodern literary tendencies.

One of the main postmodern characteristics of *Los vigilantes* is the emphasis placed on the aesthetics of the form. Damiela Eltit’s texts deal with the task of achieving new forms of representation; by conceiving alternative types of narrative to portray the Chilean experience:

Her work submits to a vertiginous fragmentation shatters of experience no longer representable as coherent wholes or as symbolic totalities. One cannot paraphrase Eltit’s text; there is no such thing as a “plot” to be retold. Hers is a text that confronts the reader with snapshots, imagistic kernels that, whatever various uneven relations they maintain with the novel in which they appear, also function as poetic monads. The fundamental work performed by Damiela Eltit has to do with recapturing, though a violent encounter with writing, experiences, and memories irreducible to informational records. [...] No recent Chilean fictionist reestablishes the

charged question concerning the narrative status of experience in a more innovative and risk-taking fashion (Avelar 164-165).

Eltit's novels are concerned with new forms of narration that can be used to relate the experiences and memories of the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship state. In particular, the novel *Los vigilantes* advances a new type of narrative by depicting the Chilean political experience through an allegory of the nation. The figurative language enables the novel to overcome the limits of language; through the trope of allegory Eltit is able to portray the unsayable. The memories of the Chilean experience are represented with emblems in order that the reader can grasp the horror and suffering.

Judith Butler critiques Foucault's theory of a culturally constructed body; suggesting that the body can be a separate entity from its own construction. In different texts Foucault proposes that the body is a nodal point where regimes inscribe themselves; in *The History of Sexuality: Vol. I*, Foucault argues that the body is a "site of culturally contested meanings," and in *Nietzsche, Genealogy and History*, he argues, ". . . nothing in man (sic) -not even his body-is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men (sic)"<sup>13</sup>. Judith Butler claims that even though Foucault seems to deny the existence of a body outside of cultural constructions; however his argument has an implicit contradiction:

I shall argue in the following that, whereas Foucault wants to argue that bodies are constituted within the specific nexus of culture or discourse/power regimes, and that there is no materiality or ontological

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<sup>13</sup> Judy Butler quotes different texts of Foucault to emphasize the contradiction in her article, "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions" *The Journal of Philosophy*: Vol. 86, No. 11, Nov. 1989, pp. 601-607

independence of the body outside of any one of those specific regimes, his theory nevertheless relies on a notion of genealogy, appropriated from Nietzsche, which conceives the body as a surface and a set of subterranean "forces" that are, indeed, repressed and transmuted by a mechanism of cultural construction external to that body. [...]

Butler demonstrates how the body is ontologically different from the process of culture attainment; she points out that for Foucault the body is a blank page, whereas cultural construction is history, "history is understood as that creator of values and meanings". Since the body and its process of construction are different, an independent body can exist outside of cultural constructions. Therefore, I propose that the characters in the novel *Los vigilantes* reject inscription, by refusing the symbolic order imposed by the law of the Father.

In *Los vigilantes* the reader encounters a repressive society in which the mother and her son are constantly watched—all their actions are rigorously followed by an ever vigilant eye—as in the panoptic model of prisons. The absent father controls their lives trying to normalize their behavior; he orders them to eat at specific times, tells the mother to send the child to school, and to stop helping the poor. In response to the suffocating surveillance the mother recriminates her husband in one of her letters:

Mi vecina me vigila y vigila a tu hijo. Ha dejado de lado a su propia familia y ahora se dedica únicamente a espiar todos mis movimientos. Mi vecina sólo parece animarse cuando me ve caminar por las calles en busca de alimentos. Me enfrento a sus ojos que me siguen descaradamente desde su ventana. Sale después hacia afuera y hasta sería posible asegurar que algunas veces me ha



seguido. Tú sabes que poseo un fino sentido cuando me siento acechada. (. . .) Sabes pues que soy vigilada por mi propia vecina. Las preguntas que me haces, sólo duplican en mí la vigilancia. (. . .) ¿Por qué pues debo entonces obedecer tus órdenes? Permanecemos, nos quedamos por tu voluntad en una ciudad que enloquece de manera progresiva (51).

In the following letter, one notices how the vigilance has extended to the rest of the city, “la vigilancia se extiende y cerca la ciudad. Esta vigilancia que auspician los vecinos para implantar las leyes, que aseguran, pondrán freno a la decadencia que se advierte” (53). As addressed earlier on this chapter, the bio-politics of modern systems proposed the control of individuals with disciplinary methods such as the panoptic. *Discipline and Punish* describes the panoptic explaining how the subject internalizes vigilance, “He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power ... he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (Foucault 201). In the novel the mother believes that she is being surveilled by her neighbor, her husband and even by the rest of the city. It’s notable how she does not have tangible proof that the neighbor has followed her throughout the city however she senses it, “poseo un fino sentido cuando me siento acechada”. She has internalized the vigilance and started to police herself; she writes that her husband’s questions have increased her own surveillance, “duplican en mi la vigilancia”. Furthermore, she remains in the city that controls all of its subjects; she stays since she perceives that her movements are under constant surveillance hence submitting to her husband’s orders.

The concept of the body is highly present throughout the novel; the bodies of the

mother and the son are constantly surveilled and controlled. The hegemonic power is represented by the father who tries to control all their actions; for instance he demands that his son return to school, “tu hijo no puede volver a la escuela por ahora. Sería nocivo para él y para mí. No quiero discutir esta decisión pues tus mandatos solo consiguen agotarme” (59). The biopolitics of the dictatorship promoted the health of the population, hence in the novel the health of the child is another area of tension between the parents, “Te suplico que no vuelvas a insistir en su palidez ... Tu hijo pertenece a la especie de los que poseen una tenue armonía y me resulta absurdo e insidioso de tu parte adjudicar a una enfermedad lo que constituye el centro de su belleza” (59). The father’s allegations of the child’s sickness represents how the mechanisms of power control the population; the bodies that refuse order and discipline are eliminated. Since the child refuses to attend school—the child speaks incoherently and behaves irrationally—his father deems him sick because his lack of discipline menaces the norms of society.

In the same vein, the father condemns the mother for giving shelter to a group of forsaken people who are being hunted throughout the city:

Dices que los desamparados pretenden aniquilar el orden que con dificultad la gente respetable ha ido construyendo y que yo no hago sino hacerme cómplice de ese desorden. (...) No pensé, reconozco, en lo que tú tan bien pareces comprender, no tuve en mente nada más que el terror de enfrentarme a seres que estaban destinados a una muerte segura. Si yo no los acogía, el fin para ellos era cuestión de horas. No vi en sus cuerpos esa deliberada insurrección a la que te refieres, solo repare en el frío, en la terrible consecuencia del frío sobre unos organismos totalmente

desprovistos. (. . .). Lo que vi en ellos fue a figuras victimizadas, los inciertos sobrevivientes de no sé cuál misteriosa guerra. Como ves, abrí pues las puertas a quienes portaban el estigma de los moribundos (Eltit 98-99).

In the allegory the “desamparados” represent the political leftists that resisted the dictatorship; who are blamed of creating chaos and problems for the “respectable people”. A distinction is made between the “desamparados” and the respectable members of society, the former ones are the excluded that can be eliminated to enforce order. The leftists threatened the dictatorship; by helping them the mother becomes implicated.

The *History of Sexuality* proposes that—with the onset of Modernity—societies started to monitor and regulate sexual behavior:

Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for the regulations. This is why in the nineteenth century sexuality was sought out in the smallest details of individual existences; it was tracked down in behavior, pursued in dreams; it was suspected of underlying the least follies, it was traced back into the earliest years of childhood; it became the stamp of individuality—at the same time what enabled one to analyze the latter and what made it possible to master it. But one also sees it becoming the theme of political operations, economic interventions (through incitements to or cubs on procreation), and ideological campaigns for raising standards of morality and responsibility: it was put forward as the index of a society’s strength, revealing both its political energy and its biological vigor. Spread out from one pole to the other of this technology of sex was a whole series of

different tactics that combined in varying proportions the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations (Foucault 146).

In *Los vigilantes*, the father accuses the mother of having a lover and engaging with men as a harlot, “Dices también que me atrevo a hacer de mi casa un espacio abierto a la lujuria que atemoriza y empalidece aún más a tu hijo ... El amante que inventas resulta pues que es un fiel imaginado doble de ti mismo” (88). The father’s restriction of the mother’s sexuality represents how the dictatorships monitored the sexual behavior of the population. He claims that her behavior is dangerous to her son’s health, once again exaggerating the fear and danger that the subversives posed. In brief the bodies of the mother and her son represent the nexus where power regimes try to inscribe themselves, “el concepto de ‘cuerpo’ posee una connotación inminentemente política. Es en el cuerpo donde se simbolizan los juegos de poder; con esto nos referimos a la necesidad de todo sistema dominante de educar, institucionalizar, controlar, vestir, homogeneizar, uniformar y vigilar a los cuerpos que tienden a la deformación” (Clambor 2).

Let’s return to Butler’s argument that a pre-discursive body exists outside of cultural inscriptions, and examine how such *a priori* body can escape the limits of biopolitics. A person can be outside the limits of biopolitics if it refuses to accept cultural values and norms; failing to integrate into society. Power regimes inscribe themselves on a body through cultural constructions; thus by refusing the rules of any given culture a person can find pockets of resistance. Jacques Lacan believed that societies were formed through rules that regulate social behavior; he reconfigured Freud’s oedipal metaphor by replacing the taboo of incest with a metaphorical structure:

One might describe his Oedipal structure as the obligation every child is

under to submit his or her sexuality to certain restrictions and to the laws of organization and exchange within a sexually differentiated group, and in this way find her or his place within that society ... The crisis is resolved when the rules are accepted and acceded to. These rules are conveyed by what Lacan calls the Symbolic order ... by “symbolic” he means that order of life which includes language, cultural codes and conventions (Ragland-Sullivan 7).

Within Lacan’s formation of the subject, the trauma of incest is not biological but a representational drama; in which there are two different systems of meaning, the symbolic and the imaginary. A child’s identity resides first in the Imaginary realm—the infant fuses with the mother during this stage—his sense of self is connected with the mother. The mirror period occurs between six and eighteen months of age; when the infant starts to communicate and develop an identity of his own by realizing he is a separate being from his mother. The infant accepts language by obeying the No of the father; he starts to access a set system of norms and values, in turn he develops his own separate identity. By understanding the symbolism of language, a child understands and adapts conventional codes, meanings, normativity; in summary, culture.

In *Los vigilantes* the child does not gain access to the symbolic order. The boy remains in the imaginary realm since he does not communicate coherently; the first section of the novel “BAAAM” depicts the child’s thought process:

Subiré como una larva por la vasija. Pero la vasija se convierte en una pantorrilla. Es musculosa. Musculosa. Yo no. Mi cuerpo laxo habla, mi lengua no tiene musculatura. No habla. Mi lengua es tan difícil que no impide que se me caiga la baba y mancho de baba la vasija que ahora se ha convertido en

una pantorrilla y quizás así se me pegue un poquito de musculatura. Mi corazón me habla todo el tiempo de su precoz resentimiento sexual, me lo dice en un lenguaje difícil (ya ahora mismo / vi uno de esos pedazos que sueño / a pedazos sueño con pedazos / me duele duele duele / aquí / aquí mismo / calentito (35).

The child has not developed coherent verbal skills—he remains in the imaginary realm—he lacks a sense of unity and awareness of his own body. He views his body as a limp and helpless form; he communicates through bodily functions instead of language because his tongue is not yet developed. He has not developed an understanding of society and its rules; for instance he thinks he can climb like an animal form (a larvae) and believes that one of the receptacles is his body part. In fact the child continuously identifies with the mother's body, “mamá y yo estamos siempre unidos en la casa. Nos amamos algunas veces con una impresionante armonía” (37) and “mamá y yo terminaremos por fundirnos” (132). According to the Lacanian theory of subject formation, the infant identifies with the mother in the pre symbolic stage in order to attain a sense of self. Eventually, an infant should distinguish his own separate identity through the presence of the father; the father's presence forbids the merging of the child with the mother. In contrast, in the novel the child does not develop his own separate identity since he remains in the imaginary realm.

As the novel progresses the mother's identity and behavior start to change; her language becomes psychotic and fragmented. She starts to imitate her child and her identity starts to deteriorate; she behaves like a child that is caught in the imaginary order. Her last letters reflect how her behavior and language have changed; her writing is a compilation of incoherent thoughts:

Ah, la criatura siempre fue más sabia que todo mi saber. Durante meses, años, días, hemos transitado desde el juego a la angustia de la guerra. De la angustia de la guerra hacia la solemnidad de la palabra. Juguemos infinitivamente, infinitivamente y con solemnidad lo más valioso que tenemos; la calavera, el hombro, el hambre, el fémur, la sílaba, la orgullosa cadera. Ah, sí, y toda nuestra intensa, extraña, creciente, airada piel. La criatura y yo ya estamos experimentando la plateada profundidad de la vasija. Ah, la criatura y yo la estamos alcanzando con este nuestro antiguo, terrible y poderoso sol entre los dientes (126).

The mother reaches the conclusion that her son was right to use incoherent language, she follows him to the imaginary realm. Consequently she begins to perceive her body in fragments; she enumerates body parts such as the “el hombre” (shoulder) in conjunction with parts of words like “la sílaba” (syllable). Her communication skills deteriorate in synchrony with the fragmentation of her sense of self. Furthermore, she uses the possessive pronoun “nuestra” (our) to refer to their skin, insinuating that she and her son now share one skin, they have become fused into one identity.

At the end of the novel they leave the house to wander throughout the city until they reach margins of the city. The mother and son abandon their former lives to escape the father’s vigilance; it is outside the city where they can find a place to resist the power structures that are trying to control them:

Al no poder aprehender la madre el orden simbólico, deriva en un discurso psicótico, porque es el símbolo el que otorga a la palabra el reflejo de su acto, quedando sin éste en el vacío. [...] anulación del entendimiento lingüístico

por el uso continuo de figuras metonímicas -especialmente en el habla del niño- figura utilizada por el inconsciente para burlar la censura, la vigilancia del super yo y expresar así el deseo reprimido: 'Mamá y yo nos acercamos extasiados mientras yo olvido mi hambre por su cuerpo, mi deseo de fundir mi carne con la suya' (Clambor Bono 12).

In the novel the mechanisms of power represented by the father, try to control the mother and child by manipulating their access to the symbolic order. The mother and the child do not want to accept normalized language, as a result they are isolated from all society, ostracized by their neighbors, and finally unfold into the psychotic. The mother and the child refuse the symbolic order that supports male superiority; their rejection of the symbolic order allows them to escape the father's control. Their escape stands as an allegory for political dissidents that were able to evade the repressive dictatorship; correspondingly the outskirts of the city represent areas of resistance outside the system of power.

Similarly to the novel *Los vigilantes*, the fiction *El cuarto mundo* explores themes of repression, resistance, sexual politics, and psychoses; it also criticizes the neoliberal state by juxtaposing the market with literature. *El cuarto mundo* depicts the sexual crises and dysfunctional relationships of a family; in which the father rapes the mother, the son and daughter have an incestuous relationship, and the female twin gives birth to their inbred child. In her article "Alienation, Incest, and Metafictional Discourse in Diamela Eltit's *El cuarto mundo*", Judy Maloof proposes that this novel can be read as a political allegory of Chile's political crisis during Pinochet's military dictatorship. The feelings of alienation, anxiety, and impotence of each member of the family reflect how the brutal repression of



the dictatorship affected the citizens of Chile. The family's home appears as a hostile environment; in which each family member feels alienated and oppressed to the point of insanity, "as the story unfolds the lives of the members of this dysfunctional family fall apart, revealing the private obsessions, illness, fantasies and insanity of each of these characters" (111). As we saw earlier on this chapter, after the 1973 military coup the dictatorship rampantly established free-market policies which contributed to a horrible disparity in the distribution of wealth. Throughout the dictatorship, the military regime murdered thousands, violated human rights and tortured multiple leftist guerrillas and organizations; thus, one can argue that the family's alienated members and abusive relationships in *El cuarto mundo* stand as an allegory for Pinochet's authoritarian practices and the dehumanization of Chilean citizens.

At a first glance, it seems that the abnormal sexual relationship of the twins is caused solely by the father's abuse; who in this allegorical novel represents the Chilean authoritarian regime. The twins first experience the father's abuse in utero—he rapes their mother when she is pregnant with them—after they are born he either ignores or abuses them. The twins' incestuous relationship can be interpreted as a negative consequence of their prenatal trauma and childhood abuse—if one accepts the cultural premise that incest is abnormal sexual behavior with dire consequences. Nevertheless the twin's sexual deviation—as well as other sexual abnormal behaviors present in the novel—can also symbolize forms of resistance to the phallogentric and authoritarian regime. The sexual deviances of the characters question traditional sexual norms, which are typically enforced in patriarchal societies:

Each member is trapped in his or her own private hell at the same time they

act out on their fantasies of omnipotence and domination through rape, incest and violent interactions with each other ... Through the representation of homosexual relations, and incest as "normal" behaviors, traditional binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity are called into question and subverted. This textual strategy can be considered feminist and postmodernist because it unsettles the traditional categories of gender (Maloof 112-113).

Their incestuous relationship simultaneously represents the trauma left by the authoritarian regime, and at the same time weakens the power structures by unsettling rigid traditional gender categories. The depiction of sexuality through dysfunctional sexual relationships, illustrates how sex and psychotic behavior can be used to subvert power. The twins develop alternative subjectivities that do not adhere to normal sexual development; in effect the children refuse to "submit their sexuality to certain restrictions and exchange within a sexually differentiated group and in this way find his or her place within that society" (Ragland-Sullivan 7). Their refusal of culture manifests through sexual deviance; they reject the prohibition of the father by disobeying accepted codes of sexual behavior. Their refusal of the symbolic order challenges traditional gender roles; proposing alternative sexual behaviors to the rigid Chilean patriarchal value system.

From the womb the twins develop have a co-dependent relationship to survive their hostile environment:

Also, the twins—bound together in a symbiotic relation—struggle to define themselves against one another, in the mirror-image of each other. The problem of the twin's co-dependency is linked to their abnormal psycho-

sexual development. From Chodorow's feminist psychoanalytic perspective, the twins are suffering from incomplete boundary differentiation. This blurring of the boundaries between the self and other stems from an incomplete separation from the mother and an unresolved oedipal drama (Maloof 114).

Their rejection to separate from the mother impedes their development of a normal psycho-sexual identity. Although at first the male twin despises the constant presence of his sister; soon after he realizes that there is no alternative for his own independent identity, becoming pathologically dependent on her presence. Once they leave their mother's uterus they begin a codependent relationship:

Obligados a yacer en la misma cuna, percibimos fragmentariamente las sombras y las voces que nos aludían. Habitado al olor de mi hermana, todo lo demás me parecía detestable. Por primera precisé de ella. Mis extremidades la buscaban y, si no la encontraban, yo caía en un llanto más agónico que el hambre y más urgente que la vida. (. . .) Mi hermana ni por un instante me había abandonado. Yaciendo juntos, su cuerpo se subordinaba al mío (157).

His incestuous desire for the sister—the forbidden woman—prevents him from becoming a well-adjusted adult. Vice versa she remains close to him, submitting her body to his body.

By refusing the symbolic order, the male twin can only perceive himself as a fragmented being; he lacks the self-awareness of his own identity:

Pronto sentí que mi cuerpo se resquebrajaba consumido por una fragilidad indescriptible [...] me hundía cada día más en mi doloroso estado, llegando a

temer permanentemente por la integridad de mi cuerpo. [...] Mi madre, como fracaso de su propia institución, era la masa que me había aprensado contra sus grietas, cercenando en mí la posibilidad de navegar tras mi propio naufragio. Con el mundo partido en dos, mi única posibilidad de reconstrucción era mi hermana melliza. Junto a ella, solamente, podía alcanzar de nuevo la unidad. [...] Mi hermana melliza armó pieza por pieza mi identidad, mirándome obsesivamente y traspasando su conocimiento (171).

According to Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage, an infant experiences his body as fragmented until he sees his undivided image reflected in the mirror. In the passage above, the image of the mother holding her son so hard against her crevices that it cracks his body, symbolizes how his inability to separate from the mother makes him feel incomplete. In reality his sister is the one that builds his identity piece by piece; she looks at him as if she was his reflection looking back at him; she becomes his reflection. The female twin is the one that gives him access to an identity; therefore she subverts the phallogentric formation of the subject.

The second half of the novel is narrated by the female twin who begins her autobiography describing their incestuous sexual encounter:

Mi hermano mellizo adoptó el nombre de María Chipia y se travistió en virgen. Como una virgen me anunció la escena del parto. Me la anunció. Me la anunció. La proclamó. Ocurrió una extraña fecundación en la pieza cuando el resto seminal escurrió fuera del borde y sentí como látigo el desecho. Decidí entregar a María de Álava la custodia del niño que acabábamos de gestar. Me incliné para excusarme por mi sexualidad terrestre. María Chipia y María de

Álava apelaron al erotismo de las masas. Yo, una de ellos, caí en una laxitud después de la lujuria, sin forma ni cuerpo y con una espantosa fractura moral (211).

The female twin portrays their sexual act through literary tropes such as metaphors, repetition of the same sentence, and figurative language. These narrative techniques are used to subvert the patriarchal order of the phallogentric family (allegory of the Chilean nation) that is represented in the novel. The twins oscillate between both genders—he adopts the name of María and transforms into the Virgin Mary—likewise the female twin becomes a male when she constructs his male identity. The novel proposes unstable sexual and gender identities as an alternative to the traditionally rigid gender roles of patriarchy. The unstable gender roles and the female's girl's fragmented language aim to subvert the symbolic order.

The female twin's depiction of the sexual act is quite different from the traditional masculine voice which tends to favor logical and linear arguments, complete sentences, and correct syntax. Through the female twin's voice, Daniela Eltit proposes new forms of narration for Latin American women writers:

Eltit employs postmodernist literary techniques such as fragmentation, a decentered subject, multiple (unreliable) perspectives, narrative ruptures, silences, and discontinuity, as well as incomplete sentences and irregular syntax in order to convey a woman writer's quest for her own voice in opposition to the restrictions imposed by a cultural and socio-political climate of severe repression ( ).

Eltit uses literary techniques to subvert the male narrative—the twin's sexual act is difficult

to imagine by the reader because Eltit uses figurative language—hence the reader is not able to form a concrete visual image of the sexual act. The novel *El cuarto mundo* demonstrates how the medium of the narrative plays an important role in the visual representation of sexuality. The narrator chooses to sketch the sexual act using figurative and fragmented language to subvert the phallogentric and authoritarian system. The figurative description impedes the visual formation of the sexual act; thus breaking the pervasive male gaze. Correspondingly, the metaphorical language proposes the subversion of the symbolic order by proposing a new type of narrative.

Damiela Eltit's texts are concerned with female authorship particularly with the experience of Latin American female writers; highlighting their double oppression in patriarchal and politically repressive societies. The metafictional aspect of the novel *El cuarto mundo* draws attention to the writing process; Eltit juxtaposes the experience of Latin American female writers with the harrowing situation of the female twin. In an interview Eltit explains that she used her own name in the novel to compare herself to the twin; she equates the process of writing a novel with gestation and birth<sup>14</sup>. The twin gives birth to a "niña sudaca que irá a la venta"; in this sentence the baby girl represents the novel that will be sold as a commodity:

She also alludes to the commercialization of art, and more concretely, to books as commodities, whose production and sale are regulated by the demands of the market. For example, the following comment in the novel's

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<sup>14</sup> In an interview, Eltit claims: "el intento en *El cuarto mundo* fue hacer visible la problemática latinoamericana. Utilicé mi propio nombre como hija para pasar a productora de textos, madre de textos: la novela sudaca ('la niña sudaca irá a la venta,' frase final del libro), que desde el punto narrativo elegido va a la venta teñida por su condición de desamparo y resistencia" See "Resistencia y sujeto femenino: entrevista con Damiela Eltit." *La Torre: Revista de la Universidad de Puerto Rico* 4.14 (1990): 229-41.

final chapter, reiterates the notion that the book=baby=nation will be sold on the market to the highest bidder. (. . .) Eltit is pessimistic about her country's future, whose destiny seems to be determined by the marketplace (Maloof 117).

The adjective *sudaca* is a pejorative term used against South Americans, and in this novel it qualifies the marginalized Chileans living in poverty under neoliberalism, as well as the female writer's position of marginality in a patriarchal society. The metaphor of female reproduction evinces women's struggle to find a voice from the margins; the difficulties faced by female writers in Latin America are portrayed by the pain and hardships of a physical birth.

Yet the birth can also signify an act of resistance; the creation of new forms of narrative for female authorship in Latin America. Julio Ortega maintains that Daniela Eltit's intention is not to replace patriarchy with gynecocracy, but to contest the binary system of female and male sexual-gender roles:

Se trata, por lo tanto, de poner en crisis el sistema mismo de la representación, la lógica que divide y define lo masculino y lo femenino como destino biológico, roles sociales, economías discursivas, fábulas de la identidad y verificaciones del poder. Deconstruir el discurso de la representación para construir el habla de un sujeto femenino plural, hecho por su deseo y su rebeldía, por sus carencias históricas y sus promesas actuantes, es el proyecto que la escritura de Diamela Eltit adelanta como un drama (desgarrado, novelesco) y un programa (crítico, radical) (Ortega 55).

Eltit accomplishes this task through a dialectical approach to meaning and language. She

assigns double meaning to sexual deviance, gender roles, psychosis, marginality, and female reproduction among others; the ambivalence of significance subverts the hegemonic system. Eltit offers a new type of narrative, consisting of fragmentation and irregular syntax; yet at the same time continues to engage with words and the process of writing. Eltit does not discard previous standards to replace them with completely new ones, instead she proposes a myriad of meanings that coexist in ambiguity.



## Post-Dictatorship and Neoliberalism

In 1988, the citizens of Chile responded with a powerful “No” to the plebiscite that decided the future of the Pinochet regime. The referendum started the period of La Concertación commonly known as the democratic transition:

The multiparty Concertación coalition has since led Chile through two Christian Democrat presidents (Patricio Aylwin Azócar 1990-1994 and Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle 1994-2000) and two moderate Socialist leaders (Richard Lagos Escobar 2000-2006; Michelle Bachelet 2006-present), but in most ways the neoliberal economic model launched during the dictatorship has sailed on course regardless of who is steering the political ship. (Alexander 1).

In the six month period—between the plebiscite and the first free elections in seventeen years—grassroots political groups were purposefully kept outside of the negotiations allowing the powerful elites to demand that the economic model of the dictatorship be kept in place. Some critics<sup>15</sup> of the Concertación described the period after the dictatorship as a combination of neoliberalism and neocorporatism; under which civil society was regulated by an authoritarian pluralist state and the deregulation of the economy was not reversed. The negotiations led to an unfair compromise—foreign investment was welcomed with many seductive concessions, owners of capital were given differential treatment, and many social programs were defunded—which left much of the population in poverty<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> William L. Alexander outlines different criticisms of the Concertación in his book *Lost in the Long Transition: Struggles for Social Justice in Neoliberal Chile*.

<sup>16</sup> “Many key public services were underfunded as a means of punishing those not in lockstep with the ruling party. For example, because many teachers and academics opposed the dictatorship, there were extreme

In his book *Lost in the Long Transition: Struggles for Social Justice in Neoliberal Chile*, William L. Alexander contends that the new governments of the Concertación were unable to reconcile their promises to reduce poverty while trying to comply with the demands of the capitalist elites. At first the Aylwin administration made certain changes within the parameters of neoliberalism—he increased taxes to help fund social programs for the poor—however the government was unable to raise wages while still attracting foreign capital. In theory, the governments of the Concertación did not oppose the idea of social welfare; nonetheless the mentality left by the dictatorship was that, “efforts to reduce inequities in wealth and income distribution were seen as standing in the way of the mechanism of the market and were often pegged as unnecessary since economic growth was promoted as the means for curing poverty” (Alexander 11).

The book *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973-2002* is a compilation of essays written by contributors from a wide range of academic disciplines; who researched the impact of free market policies in the industries of copper mining, textile, fishing, forestry, and agriculture:

They also explore changes in work processes and working conditions, labor relations, and labor politics, including repression and resistance in both places of work and communities. Moreover, most of the authors take a “bottom-up” approach to these issues, where previous scholarship has tended to remain at a national level. The analyses of this book are grounded

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cutbacks in funding for public schools. In general, the cut back of public services was so great as to hamstring the state’s capacity to provide basic education, health, and infrastructure services.” (Alexander 11).

in original subnational case studies that include extensive interviews with workers and their leaders. (5).

The essays explain how these economic policies affected the life of Chile's workers; these studies go beyond statistics and reveal the human toll left by neoliberal practices. During the Concertación, social security and health care continued to be private institutions, tariffs and exchange rates from the dictatorship were maintained. Even though some changes were enacted towards human right violations; they fell short of just. For example, the Aylwin administration was unable to prosecute members of the Pinochet Regime, "throughout the Aylwin presidency, Pinochet maintained an army "shadow cabinet" that acted as a political pressure group. In response to these threats, Patricio Aylwin maintained the dignity of his office but often backed down in practice" (50). The following president Frei jailed the ex-commander of the DINA; however put an end to other human right prosecutions and trials, and allowed Pinochet to be appointed senator for life. In many ways, the democratically elected governments, "did more to legitimate and consolidate Pinochet's economic and social "revolution" than to reverse it" (Winn 51).

In 2000 Damiela Eltit publishes her novel *Mano de obra* as a critical take on post-dictatorship socioeconomics and the dismal socio-economic situation of the labor class:

The text reflects on a profound rift in the sociopolitical landscape of post-dictatorship society: the way of life of one class –or, more precisely, the prevailing logic of the socioeconomic system itself –threatens the existence of other sectors, and yet under current conditions there would seem to be no effective way in which to symbolize this threat. In exploring this situation, Eltit's text marks the limit of the political and sociological concept of

‘transition’ in so far as it presupposes a permanent ground—such as ‘national history’ –against which change could be measured (Dove 83).

The novel takes place in a supermarket; which functions as a metaphor for Chile’s socioeconomic situation after the dictatorship. *Mano de obra* addresses the history of the labor movement through the titles used in the first section; all the titles allude to important dates in the history of the Chilean working class or the names of national labor newspapers. The first title “El Despertar de los Trabajadores (Iquique, 1911) is similar to the name of the newspaper *El Despertar* founded by the father of the Chilean labor movement, Luis Emilio Recabarren. The year “1911” is a reference to the year the newspaper served as the headquarters of the Partido Obrero Socialista; furthermore “Iquique” has an important connotation since on December 21, 190 a group of miners were massacred in the school Santa María de Iquique. The newspaper *El Despertar* published articles exposing the deplorable working conditions of the miners, essays written by European socialist thinkers, and provided information about strikes<sup>17</sup>.

The following eight titles of the first section correspond to Chilean newspapers published by members of the Labor Movement at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. In her

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<sup>17</sup> All the information on the labor newspapers was taken from “Paratextualidad y metaficción como discurso contestatario a la lógica capitalista en *Mano de Obra* de Damiela Eltit” Lola Colomina-Garrigos.

<sup>18</sup> “Los títulos son los siguientes: *Verba Roja* (Santiago, 1918), uno de los periódicos anarquistas que alcanzó mayor tiempo de publicación (1918-1927). *Verba Roja* publica poemas de crítica social, biografías de revolucionarios famosos e informaciones sobre el movimiento obrero en Chile y en el extranjero; *Luz y Vida* (Antofagasta, 1909), periódico de gremio de influencia anarquista y centro de estudios sociales fundado en dicha ciudad en 1908... El año de 1909 es también el año de la fundación de la Federación Obrera de Chile (FOCh); *Autonomía y Solidaridad* (Santiago, 1924) órgano de la Federación de Organizaciones Autónomas de Resistencia, informa sobre actividades obreras en general (*La prensa obrera*, 71); *El Proletario* (Tocopilla, 1904), fundado también por Recabarren, es uno de los primero periódicos en anunciar mítines obreros [...-] *Nueva Era* (Valparaíso, 1925); *Acción Directa* (Santiago, 1920), órgano (1920-1926) de los Trabajadores Industriales del Mundo [hacia fines de 1919 se llama a un gran congreso obrero en Santiago que dará nacimiento a la sección chilena de la internacional anarquista de los Trabajadores Industriales del Mundo-o IWW (*Industrial Workers of the World*) que, a nivel internacional, cree urgente el levantamiento del

article “Paratextualidad y metaficción como discurso contestatario a la lógica capitalista en “Mano de Obra” de Damiela Eltit”, Lola Colomina-Garrigos traces the connection between the titles used in the novel and the labor movement. According to Colomina-Garrigos, the titles insert the novel in the socio-economic dialogue; while emphasizing the stark contradiction between the emancipatory nature of the labor movement and the exploitation of neoliberalism. The reader is forced to reassess the meaning of the paratext when faced with a narrative that lacks coherence, “la falta de correspondencia entre los contenidos de ambos discursos provoca una interrupción del ejercicio de lectura [...] y que tiene como resultado la reflexión por parte del lector” (8). The insertion of a paratext—a footnote, preface, subtitle, epigraph, etc.—creates a space for a new narrative; the reader becomes an active participant in the writing process. Colomina-Garrigos proposes that the paratext in *Mano de obra* induces the reader into an active role, “el que el lector, al haber activado su rol actuante, rompa el ciclo de consumismo pasivo que el mercado impone también a nivel crítico, literario, y editorial” (9).

The narrative of the novel centers on the daily struggles of the workers in the aftermath of the dictatorship. The rationality of biopolitics that was present in the dictatorship continues to prevail in the democratic neoliberal state; under which the body is disciplined, regulated, and watched by the mechanisms of power:

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proletariado extranjero que, revelándose contra sus capitalistas, ayude a los revolucionarios y, a nivel nacional, informe sobre el movimiento obrero, principalmente de huelgas (*La prensa obrera*, 65): en 1920, los IWW llaman a una Huelga General en la capital por la jornada de ocho horas y en contra de la carestía de la vida]...*El Obrero Gráfico* (Valparaíso, 1926), otro gremio y núcleo anarquista (1926-1927) propiedad de la Federación de Obreros de Imprenta de Chile que da a conocer las actividades gremiales de los gráficos del país y algunos del extranjero. También ataca al clero, “grande sostenedor del criminal régimen capitalista” (*La prensa obrera*, 79): y *La Voz del Mar* (Valparaíso, 1920), del que no encontré referencias pero sí sobre *La Voz del Marino* (Punta Arenas, 1917) y *Mar y Tierra* (Valparaíso, 1917).

Por otro lado, en *Mano de obra* el signo del cuerpo se revela en conexión al trabajo excesivo, donde el cuerpo disciplinado por el mercado se explota para la acumulación de capital. La conexión entre dinero, cuerpo y trabajo se observa claramente en *Mano de obra*, en la cual los personajes son cuerpos disciplinados y abusados para el progreso del mercado y la acumulación de capital (Park 72).

In the novel's first section the narrator—through schizoid monologues— describes the arduous and tortuous working conditions of the supermarket. The supermarket employee has no protection against the abuses he experiences at work; at one point he is forced to work for twenty-four hours straight with no bathroom breaks. The narrative describes in excruciating detail how the body of the employee is molded, abused, and watched. At all times the vendor must appear welcoming to the clients:

Me obligo a la mansedumbre (ya no me cuesta nada, nada en absoluto. Quizás finalmente sea manso ¿no?) Y me esmero en conservar la calma, apaciguar todo sobresalto que pudiera invadir mi ánimo. Estoy presto a cultivar una notable impasibilidad para conseguir una presencia solícitamente neutra. Debo (es mi función) lucir limpio, sin sudor, sin muecas ¡Cómo no! Es urgente cumplir con el deber externo de parecer pálido. Obvio. Bien peinado, preciso, indescifrable, opaco. Yo formo parte del súper –como un material humano accesible—y los clientes lo saben (261).

In a neoliberal state a person's value is based solely on his production. The protagonist must hide his humanity—he cannot sweat, or make gestures, he has to be indecipherable—meaning he should avoid showing what he thinks. He tries to emulate a machine; as the

quote says he has *a function* thus he must be *precise* just as another cog in the machinery of the supermarket.

The second part of *Mano de obra* is written in the first-person plural *nosotros*; a polyvocal narration by the supermarket employees who share living quarters, an abusive workplace, poverty, and the fear of losing their jobs. Similarly to the protagonist of “El despertar de los trabajadores” their bodies are exploited, and watched to enforce their production. The supermarket promoter Isabel resorts to her body and beauty to provide for herself and her baby:

Isabel puede trabajar porque tiene un cuerpo delgado y estéticamente “apto” para “promocionar” y auspiciar los productos del super. El narrador de la segunda parte describe su condición biológica y cómo su cuerpo maquillado y fabricado por la estética sexual del mercado le ayuda a tener este trabajo de promotora. Literalmente, su cuerpo sirve para llamar la atención del cliente que compra el producto-imagen que ella “vende”. (Park 88)

Not only Isabel has to use her body to entice the clients, her manager also takes sexual advantage of her. Since Sonia—originally a cashier and later demoted to butcher—is not attractive like Isabel; the owners of the supermarket capitalize on her strength, speed, and concentration. Sonia’s hands get inflamed by constantly handling money, her bladder deteriorates because they do not give her bathroom breaks, “Ni mear podía. Especialmente ella que trabajaba encadenada a la caja” (Eltit 318). Eventually she is relegated to the back of the store to work as a butcher, where she accidentally cuts off her finger with an ax. She must work hard and fast to the point of injury; otherwise she will lose her job to the many other applicants that line up every day hoping to get hired. The mercilessness of the market

is shown by the reaction of the supervisors and her co-workers to her accident:

Sí, porque Sonia permanecía doblada (“la culiada torpe”) después de un descuido absurdo que había enfurecido a los carniceros y a los supervisores, enardecidos ante los gritos de dolor (y de pánico) que salían por su boca abierta (y monstruosa), una boca imperfecta que se entregaba, enteramente, a un estúpido y peligroso descontrol. Ay Sonia clamaba por su dedos desde el fondo de la carnicería, asustando a los clientes mientras nosotros, más aterrados todavía... pensábamos que se avecinaba un final irremisible porque Sonia había ejercido una traición con su hacha (y con su dedo) para que, finalmente, consiguieran partirnos en pedazos a cada uno de nosotros (346-7).

Sonia’s worth decreases after her accident since neoliberalism bases human’s worth on their ability to produce. The supermarket managers become angered because the scene she causes scares away the clients; which in turn affects the profits of the supermarket. Her co-workers are scared because any accident that imperils the profits of the supermarket, might make them lose their jobs. The commodification of human labor leads to the disregard of Sonia’s well-being; the lack of solidarity between the coworkers and managers demonstrates the individualistic attitudes that permeate a neoliberal society.

As we saw earlier on this chapter, under the modality of biopolitics bare lives were included in the political realm, “es decir, son todavía animales, seres naturales desde punto de vista del poder soberano cuyos cuerpos son un *problema político* para el Estado soberano; sin embargo deben estar incluidos como seres políticos en la modernidad” (Park 9). These natural beings become part of the political; however during modernity they



become an embarrassment, “starting with the French Revolution, when it becomes the sole depository of sovereignty, the people is transformed into an embarrassing presence, and misery and exclusion appear for the first time as an altogether intolerable scandal” (Park 8)<sup>19</sup>. To avoid this problem the State categorized this group of people as *homo sacers*, as the sacred man that one is allowed to kill to sacrifice to the gods. Thus, one can paradoxically claim that modernity, “fue la *exclusión inclusiva* de los seres naturales en la esfera política [...] con el control absoluto proveído por los dispositivos, la (pos)modernidad supera la desintegración entre los bios y los zoe, a través de eliminar radicalmente lo que no pueden ser incluidos, sino lo logra, segregarlos.” (Park 9). The exclusionary practices of biopolitics were more obvious during the dictatorship—when the police and military forces eliminated any dissident voice—torture, death and disappearances were common practices. Nevertheless when the new democratic government replaced the Pinochet’s regime, the modalities of exclusion continued to prevail.

The new democracies simply resorted to other methods of exclusion, “esta violencia extendida a la gran demografía, disfrazada en la forma de la privatización de los recursos nacionales, naturales y sociales (el seguro y la medicina pública) la posmodernidad política y el proyecto de otro *tipo de violencia* amenaza con exterminar a los que no *pueden ser* incluidos” (Park 10). One can see the manifestation of these measures in *Mano de obra*: the workers of the supermarket are not allowed to form a union, they have no contracts, and they are pushed to the limits of their physical endurance in order to keep their jobs. If during the dictatorship—the tortures, killings, and disappearances were at the hands of the

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<sup>19</sup> Moisés Park quotes Homo Sacer in his dissertation *La recuperación de lo imaginario utópico: literatura, film y movimientos sociales durante el neoliberalismo bajo las dictaduras y las posdictaduras en el Cono Sur*.

state—in the subsequent democracy the market is in charge of the abuses and exploitation. The success of neoliberalism in part is due to the level of vigilance and surveillance enacted during the military regime:

Los hijos de la Transición internalizan esta vigilancia para evitar el castigo del crimen del consumidor—el hurto de mercancía sin la transacción monetaria. Esta vigilancia interna confirma la efectividad del panóptico que requiere de menos guardias y de la internación del panóptico en los prisioneros. En palabras de Blanco, “los mundos vigilados impuestos por la dictadura en Chile dan paso a mundos autorregulados por la conciencia que tienen las generaciones adultas de los 90 de ser los herederos de los perdedores (Park 98).

Eltit's novel *Mano de obra* alludes to the use of surveillance in the supermarket in both sections. In the first part, the narrator mentions the cameras as a tool the supervisors use to watch him all day—to enforce that he never takes a break or breaks any rule. In the second half the supervisors use the cameras to ogle Isabel, as well as to manage the behavior of the workers at all times in all the areas of the supermarket.

Throughout the novel the fear of the employees is quite palpable; they constantly manage their behavior under the impression that they are being watched. During periods of democracy the system controlled the population by denying them public services such as healthcare and benefits. In *Mano de obra* the workers are forbidden to form unions:

En la sucursal más importante acababan de borrar de las nóminas a un grupo de pendencieros que conspiraban para poner en marcha un sindicato. Con el fin de precaver la posibilidad de que el movimiento fuera mayor, se había

deshecho de todo el personal que ocasionalmente almorzaba unido. En realidad habían despedido al turno completo. Por eso nosotros no teníamos un contrato. Para que jamás se formara un sindicato (306).

The elimination of the labor movement during the dictatorship resulted in the absence of worker rights such as the right to form unions, to strike, and to demand better working conditions<sup>20</sup>. In the novel Alberto's roommates find out that he has been hiding—under his mattress—paraphernalia about unions and attending clandestine meetings. They react with anger at the possibility of losing their jobs; and Gloria denounces him to the manager of the supermarket. Their reaction highlights how they have internalized the self-surveillance, and assume that they will be caught and fired unless they confess preemptively. Even though the only evidence against them are some documents hidden under a mattress, they instinctively assume that they are in trouble. Their behavior exemplifies their belief—which perhaps is subconscious—that they are being watched even in the privacy of their own home.

In a similar manner as in *Los vigilantes* and *El cuarto mundo*, the characters in *Mano de obra* start to show signs of abnormal behavior as a response to their unbearable working and living conditions. However their abnormalities can be interpreted as forms of resistance. For instance if one looks at Isabel's change—she starts as a beautiful employee who is ogled by clients and sexually exploited by her supervisors—but she ends up looking like a homeless beggar. She refuses to shower, change her outfits, or smile anymore; she starts to lose weight and consequently her womanly curves. Her loss of sex appeal angers

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<sup>20</sup> “En cuanto al contexto socio-político, cabe señalar que a poco del golpe de estado que derribara al gobierno de Salvador Allende, se instaura una ideología económica regida por el mercado. A las organizaciones sindicales se les prohíbe la negociación colectiva y el derecho a la huelga” (Tompkins 115).

the managers and guards:

Que sonriera, que caminara como la gente, que se lavara el culo, que limpiara y planchara su vestido para recorrer el super, bien presentada, como les gustaba a los supervisores más viejos e indecentes, a los guardias y a los que controlaban las cámaras de video. Especialmente a los vigilantes de las cámaras, porque Andrés había escuchado lo que decían; ese comentario tan descalificador e hiriente en la sala de los monitores: “Esa huevona ya no calienta a nadie” (333).

Isabel might look insane but her abnormal behavior is a form of rebellion against the sexual exploitation she has endured. The guards insult her because they are impotent; she has the best revenge when they are unable to gain sexual pleasure from her body. The managers are no longer able to use her sexually; furthermore the supermarket loses profits because the clients buy less of her products since they are no longer enticed by her beauty.

Although not in a sexual manner, the supermarket has also profited from Sonia’s body, “sus manos veloces contaban y contaban los inacabables billetes o bien ordenaban los cheques o certificaban las tarjetas o manejaban las monedas hasta que las manos se ponían rojas. (. . .) Pero era una excelente cajera. Tan rápida. Eficaz” (Eltit 317). Sonia works hard and efficiently, pushing her body to its limits she eventually becomes undone. When they demote her and send her to work in the back as a butcher, she appears to have regressed mentally, slobbering on herself as she cuts the meat:

El desprecio que le ocasionaba Sonia ante la caída inexcusable que la había empujado al ritmo absurdo de un hacha parcial que caía y caía junto a una saliva descontrolada que se le deslizaba por el mentón abajo hasta fundirse

con el filo del hacha (abiertamente sangrienta y grasosa y ya dañada) una saliva que al carnicero más próximo le resultaba intolerable. “Límpiate la boca huevona o te van a cagar” (340).

The slobber could indicate that Sonia’s body is reacting to the hunger she feels and has to endure while she prepares food for others to enjoy. She looks deranged—slobbering while she cuts the bloody meat—as her coworker complains, her behavior trespasses the boundaries of propriety. Her inappropriate behavior could affect her job since it’s a testament to the hunger she must be enduring, her body is denouncing the exploitation of the market. Not to mention that customers will be revolted from buying meat at the supermarket if the butcher causes them disgust.

As the novel develops so does Sonia’s inappropriate behavior; when she gets her menstrual cycle, she lets the blood flow in front of her coworkers and housemates:

Encuclillada en un borde del pasillo ‘la culiada exhibicionista’ porque le había bajado la regla y la sangre corría arrastrando unos coágulos densos, una masa viscosa y móvil que hedía con una degradación sin límites. La sangre y los coágulos parecían recordarle a Sonia el peor momento de su dedito. Y doblada en el pasillo “esta chancha hedionda quiere que la miremos” ya solo era capaz de aferrarse a la toalla con ese rictus conocido que la hacía mascullar unas frases sin sentido que nos alteraban los nervios: “los culiados, estos maricones chuchas de su madre, caras de pico, ay, ¿qué se creen? Los maracos. Pero, ¿qué diablos es lo que se creen estos huevones, conchas de su madre? (348).

Her relentless period condemns the unfair way she lost her finger at work, her menstrual blood symbolizes the blood she lost in her work accident. While Sonia's behavior seems demeaning and obscene; it's also empowering because it's condemns her oppressors and influences her coworkers to change. At the end of the novel when they all get fired from the market, they realize how blind they had been in allowing the system's oppression, "Pero Sonia estaba anonadada, presa de una extenuación impúdica que nos empujaba a recriminarnos por nuestra estupidez, por la ceguera que nos había invadido" (357). Sonia's abnormal behavior is a catalyst for the workers to shed the chains of the supermarket and join forces against the rentiers. The irrational behaviors of the housemates conjointly with their worsening work situation will push the workers to unite and fight back.

Damiela Eltit uses the image of Sonia's hands as a metonym for the workforce—in Spanish "mano de obra"—which literally translates to "labor hand" or "work hand":

Eltit muestra que en la post-dictadura se amplifica este sometimiento del cuerpo, utilizando la mano como metonimia, y representa otra "mano derrotada" en el supermercado de *Mano de obra*. La mano agarrotada se disciplina para convertirse en la "mano de obra barata", reduciendo a los individuos en meras partes del cuerpo—la mano—porque la mano define al sujeto que obra (trabaja) (Park 73).

Sonia's hands are described as separate objects; as an efficient machine that should be pushed to its limits. Sonia cuts her own hand with her other hand—yielding an ax she cuts off her own finger—because she is forced to work fast disregarding her own safety. Sonia's self-mutilation symbolizes the political rationality of neoliberalism that destroyed the solidarity of the unions, "las relaciones humanas se destruyeron entre los trabajadores

chilenos en una competencia que los lleva a sus propios exterminios (Blanco 199)” (Park 90). The workers in *Mano de obra* live together but they are constantly competing against each other; they abuse each other to survive. When Gloria loses her job—and no longer is able to contribute to the rent—the rest of her housemates force her to be their housekeeper, and the male housemates start to use her sexually. Similarly, when Isabel loses weight and her beauty; they stage an intervention not to inquire if she needs help, but to harass her so that she continues to please sexually their employers. Eventually all the supermarket workers end up behaving abnormally because they are using cocaine to ease the emptiness of their lives. The lack of solidarity between the workers culminates in Enrique’s betrayal—who denounces their drug habits to their employers—he gains a promotion in exchange since he provides an excuse to fire them. The owners of the market wanted to fire the senior employers so they could hire more part-time workers, who would be paid less and receive no benefits.

The abnormal behavior of the characters positions them in a marginal situation; they lose their jobs and have to abandon their place of residence. Even within their behaviors that verge on the insane—or at least break with normativity—one can find pockets of resistance. At the end of the novel the workers of the super leave the house as a united group; they finally understand that their only hope of survival lies on their solidarity:

Mientras salíamos desolados de la casa hacia lo que se iba a convertir en un nuevo destino para nosotros, Gabriel empezó a decir las primeras palabras después que se hubiera desatado la catástrofe. El estallido de su ira callejera nos devolvió una inesperada plenitud. Gabriel dijo que teníamos que

querernos, lo ordenó con un tono parco, duro, mirándonos, con un grado de reconocible inquina. Aseguró que iba a implementar con urgencia una nueva organización. (. . .) Por eso por el cariño y el respeto que nos inspiraba, asentimos cuando nos dijo: “vamos a cagar a los maricones que nos miran como nosotros no fuéramos chilenos” (360).

The workers transcend into a different type of community; in which they will have to care for each other instead of exploiting each other for personal gain. Gabriel says he will establish a new organization, a word that harks back to Allende’s administration when workers formed unions. Furthermore Gabriel’s harangue criticizes those that do not consider them Chilean; against those that deny them their citizenship. The rationality of biopolitics functions by classifying the excluded beings as not members of the polis—they are not citizens hence they have no rights—they can be eliminated or at least denied basic survival needs. By claiming they are also Chileans, the workers insist in their humanity and citizenship; protesting against a system that institutionalizes bare lives.

In the three novels discussed in this chapter—*Los vigilantes*, *El cuarto mundo* and *Mano de obra*—Daniela Eltit integrates characters that trespass the boundaries of normal behavior. Their abnormal, eccentric, and at times insane behavior places them at the margins of society. In *Los vigilantes* the mother and her child leave their house to escape the father’s control; their journey takes them to a site where the homeless sit by the fire. The characters in *Mano de obra* engage in incest; which will bar their integration into society. Tantamount to the characters of *Los vigilantes* the characters of *Mano de obra*, who lose their jobs and their home, end up in the streets. However, there is a degree of resistance in their final situations because they reject the control and demands of the



systems of power. The mother and child from *Los vigilantes* no longer have to be under the father's oppression; the twins from *El cuarto mundo* find a certain solace and companionship in their incestuous relationship; and the workers from *Los vigilantes* do not have to work like slaves for the owners who only become richer and richer. Even though they are destitute—pariahs of society—they have a degree of agency because they chose to break the norms of society. They rather be homeless, sexual deviants or drug addicts than live within the confines of their oppressive societies. By questioning the norms of conduct, the characters embark in a journey that challenges the standard behaviors prescribed and sanctioned by the elites of power.

## Chapter 2: Sexuality and Political Discourse in Argentina

“Representaos a un hombre cuyo cuerpo y alma estaban igualmente relajados por la voluptuosidad, y a quien amenazan los horrores de un suplicio cruelmente prolongado. Creí ya sentir los dolores de la tortura, y los cabellos se me erizaron; el estremecimiento del terror recorrió mis miembros; no obedecieron ya a mi voluntad, sino a súbitos impulsos convulsivos...”

-Jan Potocki

### Historical background of Argentina

On the morning of March 24 1976, the military took power over the government of Isabel Perón. On the day of the coup the capital was eerily quiet—people were indoors watching the soccer game between River Plate and Union Portuguesa— the President Isabel Perón remained inside the Casa Rosada avoiding the social unrest that plagued the country. This seemingly peaceful coup d’état would be the beginning of one of the most repressive and violent periods in the history of Argentina. Under false pretenses Isabel Perón—who had not resigned the presidency—was taken to the Ezeiza Airport where she was met by three senior military officers. The military Operación Bolsa was in full effect as she was taken prisoner to the mansion El Messidor in the province of Neuquén<sup>21</sup>. The death of Juan Perón<sup>22</sup> had left his wife Isabel Perón—a former exotic dancer with no political experience—with a country deeply enmeshed in political and economic unrest:

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<sup>21</sup> Simpson, John and Jana Bennet. *The Disappeared and the Mothers of the Plaza*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985, p. 36

<sup>22</sup> Juan Peron died of a heart on July 1, 1974. See Lewis, Daniel K. *The History of Argentina*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. p. 138.

Although the armed forces lacked unity, the political and economic chaos that settled upon Argentina after Juan Perón's death created a power vacuum that ambitious officers aimed to fill. Less than two years after surrounding power to its Peronist enemies, the military again returned to the political arena (Lewis 143)

In the short period between [1973 and 1976 Argentina had four different presidents—Héctor Cámpora, Raúl Lastiri, Juan Domingo Perón, and Isabel Perón—Cámpora had the support of left-wing intellectual and guerrilla organizations, while Lastiri identified with the right-wing block of the Peronist Party. Juan Perón enforced his populist policies until his death; after his death, Isabel Perón—under the advisement of the minister José López Rega—instituted a markedly shift to the right:

Isabel Perón, on the other hand, favored right-wing groups (under the strong influence of her minister of social welfare, José López Rega). The right wing program had five main goals: a) moving toward market-oriented policies; b) curtailing union power; c) eliminating subversion and guerrilla activity; d) gaining the support of the military; and finally, e) eliminating left wing-intellectuals from the university (Di Tella 1973) (quoted by Sturzenegger 83).

During her administration the different factions of the Peronist Party engaged in a constant struggle; which led to the collapse of her government and the beginning of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional.

According to James P. Brennan, the Peronist governments of 1973 to 1976 constantly experienced internal struggles which contributed to their demise:

After Peron's death...The labor bosses were caught in a quandary. On the one hand, the prestige of a Peronist government allowed them to reassert their dominance within the trade unions and the Peronist movement... On the other hand, the conservative economic program adopted by this same government meant that the failure to respond and adopt militant tactics in defense of workers' interests would provide the *clasista* currents with the opportunity they needed to contest the labor bureaucracy's control of the unions (133).

The union leaders chose to protect their position within the unions by launching a strike in 1975, that would heighten the instability of Isabel Perón's administration. The military taking advantage of the lack of unity within the Peronist party, was able to set in motion a military takeover. Unfortunately with the rise in power of the Junta Militar—many of the objectives of the Three Year Plan<sup>23</sup> as well as the key Peronist policies—were rescinded and overthrown.

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<sup>23</sup> "The Three Year Plan was an extensive document [...] considered to represent the main lines of thought regarding economic policy held by the government or the people in the Peronist Party at that moment [...] Among the objectives considered in the plan was that of social justice, which was defined as fair distribution of income with special concern for eliminating extreme levels of poverty and unemployment. The plan endorsed 1) strong reactivation of the economy by means of developing specific industrial activities; 2) national unity...3) reorganization of the state, in order to fully realize its new activities as a guide for the economy as a whole, as a mechanism for income redistribution, and as a producer of goods and services; 4) economic independence, to be achieved by a strict control of capital flows, foreign investment, and international trade; and finally, 5) integration with Latin America." Sturzenegger, Federico A. *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America*. Chapter Title: Description of a Populist Experience: Argentina, 1973-1976. P 84-85.

The Peronist Party was founded when Juan Perón rose to power in 1946; his first six years in the presidency were, “characterized by aggressive demand policies, industrial protection, import substitution, a hostile attitude toward foreign capital, progressive labor legislation, and a substantial increase in state intervention in the economy” (Sturzenegger 82). Perón’s antagonism towards the church and sectors of the military—as well as his tendencies for political totalitarianism and censure of the press coupled with the payment crisis of 1952—led to the military coup of 1955 when Perón was exiled of the country and his party was banned from the electoral process. As the new military government lost support, Perón returned from exile to hold office as President from October 1973 until his death in July 1974. During his second administration he continued to support strong unions, government intervention, import substitution, and redistribution of income.

Argentina’s history has been plagued by military coups and totalitarian regimes; however nothing could prepare the nation for the level of violence and oppression enforced by the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. At the beginning the junta<sup>24</sup> gained power through deceiving tactics that lulled—the country and the rest of the world—to believe that it would uphold the laws of a civilized society. The day of the military takeover Argentine embassies throughout the world sent out a statement, “which promised that the regime which had just come to power in Buenos Aires would have full respect for ‘law, human dignity, and Argentina’s international obligations” (Simpson 39). Shortly after Spain and Peru recognized the validity of the new Argentine government. National newspapers welcomed unanimously the military government, insomuch that the *Buenos Aires Herald*—

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<sup>24</sup> The military junta was formed by the following three members: General Videla, Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera and Air Force Brigadier Orlando Ramón Agosti.

a newspaper that would later turn into an ardent critic of the dictatorship—published that, “the new government will be able to guarantee the basic requirements of a civilized society—honesty, decency, concern for human life, and the will to uphold the law and justice—that will make it possible to rebuild democracy once again, this time on firmer foundations.” (Simpson 39). General Videla earned the trust of the national press when he directed them to be honest in their coverage.

During the first hours of the dictatorship, the military junta portrayed the image of a moderate government; a strategy that facilitated their complete takeover. For instance preying on the people’s religious beliefs General Videla publicly asked for the nation’s prayers to guide him in his new role. Knowing full well that Argentina was tired of political corruption the military junta announced that, “military officers holding government posts would not be drawing their government salaries, but would simply continue to receive their military pay” (Simpson 40). In this vein, when the new government suspended union activities they claimed that they were only reorganizing the unions so, “that they would operate within the bounds of order and justice, in the national interest” (40). The military leaders insisted that the suspension of union activity was not related to their anti-union policies. Although the junta militar ordered that political parties remove their signs from their offices—many judges and provincial governors were relieved from their posts—the government justified these actions as necessary to save the nation.

Once the regime gained a secured position of power, the military junta resorted to terror and violence to eliminate any opposition. The junta promoted an ideology of national security to rationalize the implementation of a free market economy. A wide range of

contemporary scholars have written on the use of state terror to subdue populations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular the political theorist Hannah Arendt—who wrote about the Nazi state terror—she emphasized the connection between totalitarian governments and the ideology of national security:

Hannah Arendt first proposed that unprovoked terror could find its origins in the ideological dispositions of state leaders (Arendt, 1951:6). The purpose of totalitarian ideology was to construct a “fiction” about the nation’s ills that elites and masses alike would readily consume (1951: 341-53). As Arendt explains, the doctrine was fully internalized by the Nazis. Devoid of factual content, their anti- Semitic doctrine was nonetheless touted as scientific, prophetic, and infallible, turning the extermination of Jews into a matter of historical necessity (Pion-Berlin 66).

Drawing from Arendt’s examination of the Nazi regime, this chapter proposes that the Proceso disseminated an ideology of fear to promote the necessity of constant war against any opposition movement.

Most states have national security measures, however they differ from the National Security Doctrine, which claims that the main purpose of the government is to protect the nation. Since the state authorities guarantee this security—without oversight—the state can and does violate human rights in the name of national security. During the 1970s, the National Security Doctrine became a common ideology in Argentina and throughout Latin America:

The Argentine variant of the NSD had its genesis at the intersection of two external currents of thought. The first current was French, which found its way to Argentina in the late 1950s [...] The French, deeply entrenched in counterinsurgency operations in Algeria, spoke from experience when they urged the Argentines to confront the communist threat in a similar manner. The second current of thought was North American. By the early 1960s the specter of communism had come to haunt Latin American military establishments in the form of Cuban revolution (Pion-Berlin 69)

The Argentine military regime constantly broadcasted the attacks of the guerrilla movement, to emphasize the violence perpetrated by the *Montoneros*<sup>25</sup> and the ERP<sup>26</sup>. It's important to note that the specter of communism was a rhetorical manipulation not based on concrete facts, likewise the threat of a domestic enemy was greatly exaggerated<sup>27</sup>. The military junta used the *Montoneros* and the ERP violent attacks to justify the extermination

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<sup>25</sup> Montoneros: Argentine left-wing group.

<sup>26</sup> Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo: "The ERP was the only organization established as the armed wing of a political party. In 1965, a group active among sugar cane workers in the northwest, the Popular Indoamerican Revolutionary Front (FRIP) merged with a Buenos Aires group called Worker's Word (Palabra Obrera) to form the Worker's Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores or PRT). The PRT was an uneasy alliance from the start, blending the FRIP's nationalist and anti-imperialist exaltation of the indian heritage in Latin America with Palabra Obrera's Trotskyism. At the Fifth Party Congress in 1970 the PRT decided to launch the ERP as the party's armed wing. Party and army were supposed to be separate entities. (...) But the official launching of the ERP came in September 1970 with an attack and theft of arms at a Rosario police station. Distributions of foodstuffs in slums, occupations of schools and factories. In May 1971 the ERP carried out the first political kidnapping for ransom in Argentine history. The victim was Stanley Sylvester, manager of the Swift meat-packing plant and honorary consul in Rosario. A \$50,000 ransom was used to purchase food and clothing for the poor, and Sylvester was released unharmed" (Moyano 27).

<sup>27</sup> "By the time of the 1976 coup the ERP was already considerably weakened through the attempt to maintain the rural and urban fronts. In July 1976, it was reduced to 1969 operational levels. (...) Following the demise of the ERP dealership, the Montoneros' National Leadership went into exile. The rank and file were supposed to "hide among the masses." The masses, unfortunately, were in no position to offer protection from the paramilitary squads. By the time Argentina hosted the 1978 World Cup, the Montoneros had, by their own admission, lost 70 percent of their forces to the repressive apparatus. (. . .) in Argentina the dirty war raged on, but by 1979 the revolutionary war was over" (Moyano 42).



of political militants including peaceful protesters, and even citizens without political alliances, “what the public did not realize was just how wide the meaning of ‘subversive’ had become” (Simpson 81). According to the CONADEP report the anti-guerrilla campaign generated the death, disappearances and torture of at least 9,000 civilians; including the disappearance of 125 senior citizens, 268 pregnant women, and 150 children<sup>28</sup>. It is obvious that the Junta hyped the danger that the guerrillas posed to national security; since everyone will agree that the elderly, pregnant women, and children were not going to defeat the military and take over the nation.

In December of 1983 President Raul Alfonsín, “appointed a blue-ribbon commission (the Argentine National Commission of the Disappeared, CONADEP) to investigate the nature and level of the forced disappearances practiced by his military predecessors” (Brysk 680). This commission gathered quantitative and qualitative information on the violation of human rights during the Proceso, which was then used to convict military personnel through civil courts. These trials faced strong opposition from the military forces; after several military uprisings the government decided to concentrate solely on the military members that had committed excesses<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore in 1989-1990 the president “Carlos Menem pardoned all officers accused or convicted of human rights violations” (Brysk 680). As a result of their investigation the CONADEP commission issued the report

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<sup>28</sup> CONADEP report “The Politics of Measurement: The Contested Count of the Disappeared in Argentina. P. 690

<sup>29</sup> Crenzel 1071. “*Nunca Más* challenges the official distinction, which limited the bringing of criminal action against perpetrators to those who had committed excesses, by warning that “the cases transcribed are not considered excesses, for there was no such thing, if we understand excesses to mean the occurrence of isolated and especially abhorrent actions (...), because the abhorrent was a common and widespread practice, and the ‘especially atrocious actions number in the thousands.’ They are the ‘normal’ actions”

*Nunca Más*<sup>30</sup> a detailed account of human rights violations; among them disappearances—citizens were taken in the middle of the night from their homes by secret military forces—and multiple forms of torture<sup>31</sup>. Other violations mentioned were rape, murder of pregnant women, and the illegal adoption of their children:

The Argentine military even introduced a new form of human rights abuse: the kidnapping of missing children. Pregnant women were detained, mistreated until they gave birth. The mothers were killed, while the children were taken and illicitly adopted by friends and relatives of the torturers. Human rights violations in Argentina have been extensively documented by Argentine and international investigations (679).

The report also confirmed the destruction of military records, and other types of evidence in the detention centers; a measure taken by the military forces to ensure their impunity in the future.

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<sup>30</sup> Crenzel 1063 “CONADEP’s investigation and the *Nunca Más* report had a significant impact worldwide. As the first truth commission and report to expose human rights violations in the context of Latin America’s democratization processes, governments and human rights organizations viewed them as models for exposing the political violence suffered by these societies in the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, ‘truth commissions’ and their reports became the main vehicles for the construction of historical truth in several countries across the continent- many of them even using the title “Never Again”- and the production of transitional justice policies.

<sup>31</sup> The methods of torture were varied depending on the detention center, the torturer and the torturee, however, “there were a number which were common to all. The electric cattle prod, the picana, for instance, was used in the official as well as the clandestine prisons. So was the method known as the submarino, in which the prisoner was lowered into a bath of water with his or her head covered by a cloth hood which stuck to the nose and mouth when it became wet and made breathing almost impossible? In a number of places, police dogs were set on prisoners; some people died in this way. In almost all the clandestine prisons, men as well as women were liable to be sexually abused and raped by their guards, and many of the torturers paid a particular and sadistic attention to women who were pregnant” Simpson, 89

*Nunca Más* authenticates the veracity of the reports by using multiple testimonies from a wide range of victims and documents from different sources. It gave a platform to the testimonies of survivors, and reports made by family members of the disappeared. The report also incorporates testimonies from perpetrators and from involuntary witnesses:

However, *Nunca Más* not only incorporates these voices, it also includes the testimonies of the perpetrators. (. . .) Although they account for only 2% of the testimonies, their words confirm the truthfulness of the testimonies of relatives and survivors. The report also includes testimonies of people who were “involuntary witnesses” to one or more stage of the disappearances: neighbors that witnessed abductions, people who lived near the camps and hear gunshots or screams, or civilians that helped materialize the disappearances, like a group of morgue workers who participated in clandestine burials (Crenzel 1070).

The style of narrative of the report gives credibility to the events: each disappearance is described with its unique particularities, stating the specific location and concrete physical characteristics of the Detention Centers. The commission reported the existence of 340 clandestine detention centers<sup>32</sup>, which evinces the magnitude of the abuses and violations

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<sup>32</sup> Under the dictatorship some detention centers were officially recognized while most of them were clandestine, and their location kept secret. “In Buenos Aires itself: Escuela Mecánica de la Armada, or ESMA – the Navy Mechanics School – which was called without too much hyperbole, the Auschwitz of Argentina [...] the Navy Prefecture; the Police Superintendencia, Orletti and the Club Atletico, both run by the police as well, Olimpo and Palermo, run by the First Army Corps, and a number of police stations around the city. In the province of Buenos Aires: El Banco, Vesubio, and Ezeiza, which were also run by the First Army Corps: Quilmes, Banfield and Villa Budge, all run by the provincial police; La Cacha (First Army Corps), Arana and two other police stations in the provincial capital, La Plata [...] and several others which were run variously by the Marines, the Army Command, the First Air Brigade, and so on; as well as centres at Mar del Plata, Puerto Belgrano and elsewhere” (Simpson 88).

of human rights. Throughout the report survivors describe their kidnapping, the types of torture the military inflicted on them, the detention centers where they were prisoners, and the names of their torturers and other prisoners. The reiteration of, “places, dates, circumstances, and names in the testimonies establishes important framework for evocation, restoring the reality and veracity of crimes, and recomposing the spatiality and temporality of these events, as well as the identity of the victims” (1069).

The report *Nunca Más* became an international bestseller—it was translated into many languages—currently it is considered a valid text on human rights violations and used in college courses. Recently Emilio Crenzel did a comprehensive analysis of the complexity of the report in his article “Between the Voices of The State and The Human Rights Movement: *Never Again* and The Memories of The Disappeared in Argentina.” Crenzel points out how the report integrates two contrasting narratives of the political violence that took place during the dictatorship; one narrative presented by the human right organizations, and the other interpretation articulated by the Alfonsín administration:

This paper offers a new and more complex perspective, showing how the Report combined the interpretation of political violence made by the Alfonsín administration with the narrative articulated by human rights organizations to denounce crimes committed during the dictatorship. This conclusion enables hegemonic memories to be conceived as the result of the integration of different accounts of the past by actors, who, from various positions of power and through struggles and negotiations, composed a shared interpretation and account of the past (1064).

After the Proceso ended, President Raúl Alfonsín decided that both the guerrilla leaders and military juntas should be charged and tried for their crimes. Emilio Crenzel argues that this order implicitly justified the State's violence as a necessary response to the guerrilla movement.

The official document excludes cases of disappearances that occurred during the administration of María Estela Martínez de Perón; which made it seem like the disappearances were a unique phenomenon of the Proceso:

Thus it proposes an institutional timeline for the violence, based on a democracy-dictatorship dichotomy which ignores the Peronist administration's political and moral responsibilities for the disappearances occurring before the coup. The disappearances are instead presented as a product of the dictatorial State. Society as a whole is depicted as assuming a dual position, which is nonetheless always innocent: it is the potential victim in a "witch hunt," or an external observer which only justifies the horror-when it justifies it at all— because of the prevailing terror. (1066)

The prologue does not explore the different power relationships at play during the dictatorship—it simply situates the dictatorship as the root of all the abuses and human rights violations. Without explaining the reasons for the violations of human rights committed during the dictatorship—the report establishes the dictatorship as a bad regime without a context. The lack of the historical and political background of the Proceso, contributes to the idea that any other regime in comparison is a positive change. The report highlights the human right violations—to show the difference between the dictatorship

and the Alfonsín administration—positioning the new democratic government as beneficent because of its respect of human rights. The account does not compare the economic policies or social problems of both administrations; a comparison that would show a strong similarity between the Proceso and the subsequent democratic period.

The document presents an apolitical interpretation of the dictatorship in two ways: first it describes the victims in humanitarian terms exempt of any political affiliation; secondly, it eliminates the historical and political explanation of the violence during the dictatorship. The second chapter of *Nunca Más* is comprised of the sections ‘Victims’ ‘Adolescentes’ ‘Disappearances of Children and Pregnant Women’, ‘The Family Victimized’, and ‘The Repression Spared Neither the Disabled nor the Injured’. These titles portray them as innocent victims with no political affiliation:

The report restores the humanity of the disappeared, this restitution takes on the shape of an abstract humanization, presenting their generic lives and blurring their conditions as concrete historical beings and their political lives, which are precisely those aspects that underscored the confrontations that divided Argentine society. Thus, the Report gives them a *new political significance* to the identity of the disappeared with respect to the dictatorial government’s perspective, which identified them as guerrilla members. At the same time, it renders them *apolitical* by effectively excluding their political commitments (1067).

*Nunca Más* used the language of humanitarian groups—to bring international attention to the violation of human rights—by portraying them as innocent victims with no ideological agendas. This argument is flawed because it implies that due to their morally innocent

character they should have been protected; not because they are humans and therefore have civil rights even if they were political activists. Furthermore it glosses over the political reasons why they were persecuted in the first place.

Even more the report does not explain the economic or political reasons of the 1976 coup or how the dictatorship changed the power structure in Argentina:

The Report says nothing about the institutional stance taken by political and labor leaders. [...] the Report never raises the question of what made the horror possible. This absence is complemented by the lack of an attempt to explain mass violation of human rights under the dictatorship though references to some sort of continuity with the authoritarian practices of the second half of the 20th Century. Instead, the key question posed by *Nunca Más* is forward-looking: how can we prevent this from ever happening again?

This hope rests on the continuity of the restored democratic order (1066).

The Proceso did not take place in a political or historical vacuum—it was not senseless and demoniacal regime with a vendetta of revenge. The regime resorted to violence in order to enable the powerful corporate elites to institute neoliberal policies that would solely benefit them. In the transition of power to the democratically-elected presidency of Alfonsín, these policies were not rescinded, yet continued to be upheld throughout the subsequent administrations.

In 1976 the military joined forces with the upper fractions of the bourgeoisie—the agro-export elite, the transnational sector, and the conservative Catholic Church— to institute a new economic and social program:

Finally, the virtual “colonization of the State by the military,” as Roque labels it, [...], was by no means a product of chance. To the contrary, it was done precisely to bestow an aura of professional neutrality on what was basically the transparent intent of the financial/ transnational and agro-export elites to reassert their dominance over the rest of Argentine society after a period during which this dominance had been seriously- and often violently- questioned (Buchanan 349).

For the last decades, the agro-export, financial, and transnational elites had opposed the reforms of the Peronist administrations. The first Peronist government had promoted national industrialization—an economic program that had emerged as a response to the Great Depression and World War II. The elites abhorred the Keynesian economic program just as much as they opposed social programs or social welfare. The Proceso championed a “neoliberal” economic program to reduce real wages by at least 40%, eliminate taxes on agricultural exports, reduce import tariffs, eliminate social services such as healthcare and housing, privatize public industries, and deregulate the exchange and finance markets (Buchanan 357).

To implement their economic program the transnational and agro-export elites formed an alliance with the military forces. The military shared their conservative vision of returning to a pre-Peronist era:

The return to a situation of respect for traditional authority such as the military and the Roman Catholic church, the elimination of corrupting influences such as feminism, nontraditional religions, and “delinquent” art



forms and the reassertion of the “proper” role of both men and women within the family and society at large (Buchanan 356).

Even though the Catholic Church officially supported the Proceso; various clerics and nuns were involved in movements of resistance against the military regime. By siding with the military regime the Catholic Church was able to hinder the political activism of many clerics—who through the teachings of liberation theology—had been changing the traditional catholic message to the chagrin of the official church. Liberation theology focused on liberating people from poverty and oppression:

Liberation theology is a critique of economic structures that enable some Latin Americans to jet to Miami or London to shop, while most of their fellow citizens do not have safe drinking water. In particular, liberation theologians have critiqued the ideologies that justify such inequality, including their use of religious symbols. Military dictatorships have often practiced torture to defend what they are fond of calling Western ‘Christian’ Civilization (Berryman).

Liberation theologians<sup>33</sup> turns to the teachings of Jesus as a tool to change the status quo; highlighting how Jesus advocated for the poor and the downtrodden. These teachings endangered the profits of the Catholic Church who for years had pocketed the tides of the poor in exchange for their forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. The Proceso overhauled the education system, banning humanist and class-conscious subjects, and replacing them with traditional Roman Catholic teachings (Buchanan 365).

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<sup>33</sup> See Gustavo Gutierrez for Liberation Theology

To impose the hegemony of the church and the elites, while protecting their interests, the military state deemed violence necessary. The militarization of the state apparatus was unparalleled by any other military regime in Argentina; “every major branch of the state was staff through the department level with military personnel” (Buchanan 352). The Navy controlled the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Welfare; the Air Force was in charge of the Ministry of Transportation; while the army supervised the Ministries of Labor and Interior, the federal police, customs, and internal revenue. The executive branch became the most powerful; since the legislative branch was eliminated, and the judicial branch was placed under the control of the military:

The presidency, however, was reserved for an army officer, since he was the representative of the largest service. Consequently, General Jorge Rafael Videla was named to the presidency, which was also significant because the main Argentine intelligence agency, Servicio de Inteligencia del Estado (SIDE), was under the direct control of the Office of the President (Buchanan 353).

The Proceso replicated to an extent Pinochet’s military regime: in the same way that the military controlled the nation while the elites—in Argentina’s case the agro-export and transnational elites—deregulated the market. My first chapter shows how the democratic government of the Concertation was not the transitional period; in fact Pinochet’s dictatorship marked the transitional period from state to market. As Willy Thayer deftly stated in “Crisis Categorical de la Universidad”:

No se entiende aquí la “transición” como el proceso pos-dictatorial de redemocratización de las sociedades latinoamericanas, sino, más ampliamente, como el proceso de “modernización” y tránsito del Estado nacional moderno al mercado transnacional post-estatal. En este sentido la transición es primordialmente la dictadura. Es la dictadura la que habría operado el tránsito del Estado al mercado. Tránsito que eufemísticamente se denomina “modernización (2).

In Chile the complete transition from State to Market was achieved during the Pinochet dictatorship. In Argentina the Proceso did not accomplish a total transition from State to Market; however by targeting unions, deregulating the market, and privatizing public institutions it prepared the path for the governments of Alfonsín and Menem to finalize the process.

In *The Untimely Present*, Idelber Avelar identifies specific reasons as to why the Argentine dictatorship did not accomplish a complete transition as its Chilean counterpart. Due to historical reasons, Argentina counted with an extensive working class, “whose degree of organization and unionization was unparalleled in the continent” (60). The history and geography of Argentina were key factors that helped the working class obtain levels of organization and expectations higher than in other Latin American countries. As a geographically vast country Argentina’s population was not as dense as other Latin American countries; in so much that the workforce could demand better conditions without the fear of competition. It was harder for Argentina’s military junta to dismantle the strong welfare and social state supported by the unions and powerful workforce, than it

was for the Pinochet regime to implement a neoliberal system in Chile. In order to massacre and eliminate any opposition movement, Argentina's junta militar created the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina<sup>34</sup>:

The elimination of these barriers was evidently a condition sine qua non for the epochal transition. The Argentine generals performed that groundwork, so much so that today the task of deregulation and unrestricted privatization is being carried out by the very Peronism that once was — or was believed to be, such ambiguity being the mark of Peronism— the major obstacle to that task's full actualization (Avelar 60).

Even though the Junta Militar would cede power to democratic governments, the deregulation and privatization that started in the Proceso continued to be carried out during the democratic administrations.

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<sup>34</sup> "López Rega organizó el escuadrón de la muerte conocido como la Triple A (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina) y condujo la campaña clandestina contra políticos e intelectuales" See Clara E. Lida. *Argentina, 1976: Estudios en torno al golpe de estado*.

## Biopolitics and the History of Sexuality

In this section I address the intersectionality of sexuality with biopolitics in two literary fictions by Luisa Valenzuela, *Cambio de armas* and *Cuarta versión*, and in the film *Garage Olimpo* (1999) by the director Marco Bechis. I analyze the narrative and film strategies of these works focusing on how sexuality weakens, strengthens or subverts the political order. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault questions, “Why has sexuality been so widely discussed, and what has been said about it? What were the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power and the pleasures that were invested in them?” (11). The issue at hand is not the repression of sex or sexuality in any given modern society, or whether a society forbids certain sexual behaviors and allows others; his principal concern is the fact that sexuality is put into discourse. Freud follows the injunction to speak about sexuality, to make public a behavior that has been private. Speaking about sexuality is not liberating for Foucault, to discuss sexuality means making which was not previously an object of power attention, an object enclosed inside the discursive networks of power and repression.

At the same time one must notice who talks about sexuality and their viewpoints; which institutions speak about sex, namely how is sex “put into discourse.” Foucault seeks to find how systems of power used sex and sexuality to penetrate and control people’s behavior:

My main concern will be to locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behavior, the paths that give it access to rare or scarcely

perceivable forms of desire, how it penetrates and controls everyday pleasure — all this entailing effects that may be those of refusal, blockage, and invalidation, but also incitement and intensification: in short, the “polymorphous techniques of power” (*History of Sexuality* 11).

Sexuality became a conduit of power because the mechanisms of power made it the nexus of control, “if sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was only because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it.” (98).

With the advent of modernity, sexuality was constituted as a means to control the body and the species; it was used to set regulations and discipline. Now if sexuality is not a separate area to power but instead sexuality is an instrument of power; I propose that power circulates through sexuality. As Foucault postulates that power circulates, and it is exercised through a complex set of social networks:

Power is something that circulates” (1980, 98); “is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another”. Thus, power is conceived of both as omnipresent, limitless, and constantly generated, and as a practice which is politically constructed and subsequently exerted throughout complex social networks. Foucault has further argued that the mechanics of power do not primarily work in order to possess it, but rather in order to control its terms of deployment—that is, “power is not possessed, given, seized, captured, relinquished, or exchanged.

Rather, it is exercised. It exists only in actions. It is a complex set of ever-changing relations of force” (Zozaya 454).

Every sexual relationship is a power relationship: sexuality can be used to oppress and control a body at the same time it can be used to challenge oppression. If power can be exercised in different directions, sexuality can also work as means of resistance and subversion. Hence, I explore the role of sexuality as means of oppression and subversion in Luisa Valenzuela’s short stories *Cambio de armas* and *Cuarta versión* and in Marco Bechis’ film *Garage Olimpo*.

To further analyze how sexuality and power are interconnected, this chapter seeks to explore the relationship between patriarchy and authoritarianism in the Proceso. Unlike earlier coups and authoritarian regimes in Argentina—the military coups of 1973 had a specific political ideology—the Proceso aimed to establish order throughout all areas of society. In her book *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family Under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*, Mala Htun advances that gender was an important component in the political discourse used by military regimes:

Many of the world’s political regimes have expressed authority relations in polity and society through gendered imagery. Conservative, fascist, and fundamentalist governments for example, upheld the patriarchal family as the basis of public order. Regimes from Nazi Germany and Vichy France to Afghanistan under the Taliban have emphasized male power in the household, traditional motherhood, and a rigid sexual division of labor (McGee Deutsch 1991; Pollard 1998; Scott 1988). Latin American military

governments similarly expressed their right and reason to rule in gendered terms and appealed to traditional virtues of feminine care and devotion (19).

The Proceso promoted traditional gender roles in the domestic realm; they reasoned that a traditional household would bring stability to society, which in return would facilitate the investment of multinationals in the country. The Proceso aimed to exterminate any opposition to the transition from state to market —through different maneuvers— whether by torturing, and disappearing people who voiced their dissent, or by promoting patriarchal values. They believed that if they eliminated any opposition; whether it was in the public or private sphere; the possibilities of attracting foreign capital would increase.

This chapter outlines the ideologies of the Proceso; describing the social and historical events of the dictatorship, and the realities Argentinians faced during those years. According to Nancy Caro Hollander, social environment affects the human psyche to a great extent—and in turn—our subjectivities impact our socio-cultural reality. In her book *Uprooted Minds: Surviving the Politics of Terror in the Americas*, Caro Hollander contends that specific historical events affect the constitution of the subject. Her book draws from the work of Jacques Lacan, Jean Laplanche, and Louis Althusser to explain how ideology is internalized by the self. Lacan's work advances that infants are born without a sense of bodily or psychic unity:

The emergence of the self develops over time in the relationship with the primary adult(s), whose conscious and unconscious identity, saturated with constituents of the social order, is internalized by the infant as an aspect of its own psychic structure. At the same time, the child is shaped by larger



external forces (unconscious expectations of others, language, patriarchy, and so on), and this otherness is also internalized to become part of the self. (Caro 10).

An infant finds his place in society when he attains a unified sense of self; which is influenced by the ideologies that surround him. Therefore individuals gain subjectivity that has been mediated by the dominant ideologies of their social environment

Louis Althusser suggested that the subject unconsciously found his place in society, by adopting and accepting ideas without questioning them. In his or her desire to escape a fragmented constitution of self, “the individual locates him-or herself through ideology, which is a thought-practice—in other word, both and unquestioned set of ideas and ingrained customs located in concrete behaviors of everyday life” (Caro 12). These ideas are disseminated through social institutions—which Althusser defined as State Ideological Apparatuses. Caro Hollander probes the effects of ideology in the formation of subjectivity; with the goal of finding how individuals can free themselves from predominant ideologies. In order to analyze the relationships of power in the stories *Cambio de armas* and *Cuarta Version*, one must understand how ideology influences subjectivity. The Proceso promoted an ideology of patriarchal and authoritarian values which were disseminated through different state apparatuses. Valenzuela’s stories reflect the patriarchal-authoritarian ideology of the Process through the depiction of male characters as members of the military forces, and sadistic lovers. The stories also deconstruct and subvert the process of self-formation through the use of imagery, narrative strategies, and language. In a way, the female characters tried to find areas of resistance, by challenging their own subjectivities.

## **Sexual Politics in Luisa Valenzuela's novels and the film *Garage Olimpo*.**

In the introduction to her book *The Art of Transition: Latin American Culture and Neoliberal Crisis*, Francine Masiello examines the cultural representations of trauma and neutrality, of the dictatorship and the post-dictatorship respectively. Throughout the Southern Cone intellectuals have experimented with different styles of representation to reflect pain and loss, as *The Art of Transition* asks: "are there artistic avenues of access through which a particular loss might help make sense of a social whole?" (2). Masiello establishes that the difficulties lie between the chasm of the experience of the dictatorship and language. To draw attention to the difficulty of its representation, certain intellectuals have used metaphors of subalternity and gender, "the gendered field activates an anxiety about the shortcomings of representation; it introduces unevenness and double readings in a field where conflict once appeared settled" (3). Artists and intellectuals do not only face the difficulties of representation, but they also have to battle against the efforts of the post-dictatorship to erase the past. The subsequent neoliberal states aim to gloss over the abuses of the dictatorship:

If neoliberalism, as a celebration of free-marketing, paints a sheen of apparent neutrality on social contradictions, erasing strands of memory that bound individuals to their past and suppressing discussion of "value," literature and art cultivate tension, revealing the conflicts between an unresolved past and present, between invisibility and exposure, showing the dualities of face and mask that leave their trace on identitarian struggles today (Masiello 3).

As a response, art and literature developed cultural representations that not only address themes of trauma and memory—but works that promote further analysis because they do not provide facile answers.

The *Art of Transition* examines Chile's and Argentina's cultural production of the last three centuries; specifically their approach to the "appraisal of the real" (4). Historically the literary production from both countries has differed—while Argentina has focused on grand narratives—Chilean writers and artists have favored the micronarrative:

Argentine culture, for its record of state authoritarian practice dating from the nineteenth century, has provoked countless intellectual meditations on the crisis of liberal thought and the failures of history; consequently it generates, as its dominant note, a peculiarly masculine narrative about one's quest for authenticity and subsequent intellectual disillusion. More recently, the abuses by military governments and the corruption of neoliberal democracy have prompted desires among artists and writers to recuperate a totalizing story that might tell the fate of the nation. (3).

On the other hand, Chile places no faith on totalizing stories; instead its literary production is concerned with violence, fragmented bodies, and dismemberment. Masiello cites as examples of micronarratives the texts of Lastarria, Vicuña Mackenna<sup>35</sup> and Quintrala. Chile follows this literary tradition in which Chilean writings are plagued by dismembered

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<sup>35</sup> "Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna fue un periodista y prolífico escritor. Sus obras recorrieron variadas materias como las guerras civiles en Chile, la historia urbana de ciudades como Santiago y Valparaíso, la Guerra del Pacífico, hombres del periodo de la conquista de Chile [...] obras relativas al americanismo como la Confederación Americana y otras temáticas." See Museo Nacional: Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna.

corpses and body fragments, “grotesque metaphors for the decomposition of any desired social whole” (Masiello 4).

Even though Argentina and Chile differ on their representations of the real—due to the disparity of their respective literary traditions—Masiello ventures that intellectuals from both countries have shared an interest in marginal characters:

They announce the troubled plight of the “outsider,” a figure who has become feminized in relation to the eye of the patriarchal state. The deliberate emergence of the gendered drift as a metaphor for identitarian struggle bears uncanny fruition in the cultural texts of post-dictatorship years and often supplies a dimension of representation that subalternity alone no longer affords. (4).

The representation of otherness—mediated through metaphors of gender and sexuality—emerges in the literary production of both countries. Since the marginalization of the subversive or the indigenous aligns with women’s exclusion in patriarchal societies; narratives depicting subaltern figures or political dissidents begin to integrate themes of gender and sexuality. Luisa Valenzuela’s writings are particularly germane— to Argentina’s cultural production post the 1976 coup—since her thematic preoccupations range from political oppression to feminist concerns. Her stories focus on the intersectionality of authoritarianism and patriarchy; through the portrayal of female political activists that experience political and sexual violence.

The Argentine novelist Luisa Valenzuela<sup>36</sup> started her career as a journalist for the Buenos Aires newspapers *El Mundo* and *La Nación*, and as an editor for the political magazine *Crisis*<sup>37</sup>. Julio Cortázar has said that to read Luisa Valenzuela, “is to enter our reality fully, where plurality surpasses the limitations of the past; to read her is to participate in a search for Latin American identity, which offers its rewards beforehand” (Magnarelli 9). Valenzuela’s work does not offer solutions to socio-political problems; she does not attempt to provide the truth, instead her work suggests a variety of interpretations to the reader. In 1982 Luisa Valenzuela published *Cambio de armas*, which consists of five short stories that deal with the tension between political and erotic relationships. The plots of the stories center on the pseudo romantic relationship between a man and a woman, while containing a strong political subtext.

Each of the stories in *Cambio de armas* appears to be emphasizing the sexual relationship over the political content:

Significantly, too, each of the tales evokes the tension between political and erotic relationships while centering on the latter, no doubt because the erotic

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<sup>36</sup> “Born in 1938 in Buenos Aires. Her mother, Luisa Mercedes Levinson, was also a writer, and Valenzuela mentions that during her childhood, Argentine literary notables made frequent visits to her home: Jorge Luis Borges and Ernesto Sábato. More recently, she has been director of the New York Institute for the Humanities and writer in residence at both New York University and Columbia University, where she has also taught creative writing. Like her prose production, she is actively involved in combating repression and censorship, on the political, sexual, and literary levels. She has worked with Amnesty International, is currently a member of the Freedom to Write Committee of PEN International, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Fund for Free Expression” See: *Spanish American Women Writers: A Bio-Biographical Source Book*. Ed. Diane E. Marting. Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1990.

<sup>37</sup> Crisis is a publication of literary and political criticism. “CRISIS fue un largo acto de fe en la palabra humana solidaria y creadora. Por creer en la palabra, en esa palabra, CRISIS eligió el silencio. Cuando la dictadura militar le impidió decir lo que tenía que decir, se negó a seguir hablando” Eduardo Galeano.

is what can be narrated; the political must be censored to a greater or lesser degree. Still, it is the erotic that functions throughout the text as a metaphor or synecdoche and thus a shield behind which the subtext, the political rests.

One merely reflects and/or disguises, distracts from the other, Valenzuela purports (Magnarelli 541).

The reader senses this tension, between the political and the erotic relationships, in both short stories “Cambio de armas” and “Cuarta versión”. However, one should not read the sexual component as an apolitical matter; as Foucault has extensively shown the interconnectedness of sex and power in *The History of Sexuality*. During Modernity sexuality became the nexus of the mechanisms of control; biopower gained greater power and more control of the population through sexuality. If sexuality is a conduit of power, a tool used to control, I venture that it is used by the female characters to subvert the power dynamics of their political and sexual relationships. In the eponymous tale *Cambio de armas*, sexuality functions as a method of power deployment for the regime as well as for the political prisoner Laura. “Cambio de armas” is the story of Laura, a political activist engaged in clandestine activities aiming to overthrow the dictatorship; eventually a member of the military forces arrests her, imprisoning her in his apartment as his sexual slave. In “Cambio de armas”, the political interacts with the sexual in positive and negative ways. At first, it seems that sexuality is a conduit of power for Roque—who represents the dictatorship in the novel— thus their abusive sexual relationship strengthens the regime’s power. However, the story also portrays how Laura through sexuality subverts Roque’s position of power.

Let's examine first how sexuality strengthens Roque's control and power in "Cambio de armas". The female protagonist has no memory of her past, "No le asombra para nada el hecho de estar sin memoria, de sentirse totalmente desnuda de recuerdos [...] En cuanto a ella, le han dicho que se llama Laura pero eso también forma parte de la nebulosa en la que transcurre su vida" (113) Laura's inability to gain her freedom is directly related to her lack of memory; she cannot run away from the apartment as she does not even know her real name, her address, or the names of her contacts. Laura's memory loss symbolizes the lack of a phallus; as patriarchal societies have viewed women as a lack in juxtaposition to men, who possess the phallus. In her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey observes that:

The paradox of phallogentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynchpin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence. [...] Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic commands by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning (833).

The reader gleans through several clues in the text that Roque —through torture and rape— has erased any inkling of Laura's previous world that could trigger her memory. The story "Cambio de armas" depicts the practices of the military members; who used their power to act out their depraved sexual fantasies on female political prisoners. Many leftist

women were raped and sexually exploited in the Detention Centers; some of them were even forced to pretend to be their torturer's girlfriend or wife<sup>38</sup>. The men would temporarily release them from jail-- to accompany them to galas or dances-- even though at these public events they could have ran away or asked for help the women remained silent. Similarly in *Cambio de armas* Laura does not grab the keys—that Roque leaves on a shelf—and does not escape.

Yet one can interpret Laura's inability to remember as a subversion of power. Laura finds strangely comforting her lack of memory as if she was almost afraid to remember and confront her situation, "algo se le esconde, y ella a veces trata de estirar una mano mental para atrapar un recuerdo al vuelo, cosa imposible, imposible tener acceso a ese rincón de su cerebro donde se le agazapa la memoria. Por eso nada encuentra: bloqueada la memoria, enquistada en sí misma como en una defensa" (116). In order to survive, Laura represses the fact that her lover was killed; that Roque is not her boyfriend but her warden and torturer. By forgetting her past, Laura can pretend to herself that she has a normal life—that she lives in a nice apartment with her boyfriend—deluding herself with the narrative that she is well taken care off and that she even has a maid. For a while, Laura is able to gain some comfort from her current situation:

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<sup>38</sup> Sexual abuse was a systematic practice of the armed forces and the police during the Argentine Proceso. "Nuestra investigación de casos judiciales en el marco del nuevo proceso de justicia en el país ha producido información valiosa que demuestra que la violencia de género se ha ejercido en forma tan sistemática como el resto de delitos que son investigados, en todo el territorio argentino." "Esta pluralidad y heterogeneidad de sujetos activos, agregadas a la extensión territorial, refuerza lo expresado respecto al uso deliberado de estas prácticas, las cuales de ninguna manera configuraron episodios aislados u ocasionales producto de la acción de algunos pocos individuos que aprovecharon el contexto para cometerlos." See Balardini, Lorena. "Violencia de género y abusos sexuales en centros clandestinos de detención. Un aporte a la comprensión de la experiencia argentina." *CELS, Hacer Justicia. Nuevos debates sobre el juzgamiento de crímenes de lesa humanidad en Argentina* (2011).



Eso de estar así, en el presente absoluto, en un mundo que nace a cada instante o a lo sumo que nació pocos días atrás (¿cuántos?) es como vivir entre algodones: algo mullido y cálido pero sin gusto. También sin asperezas. Ella poco puede saber de asperezas en este departamento del todo suave, levemente rosado, acompañada por Martina que habla en voz bajísima (116).

Laura's situation could be worse, she could be imprisoned in a Detention Center being raped by multiple men, undergoing continuous torture sessions. As the quote suggests her life is soft and warm, it might not have gusto or flavor, but at least it does not have "asperezas" or roughness.

Laura's amnesia is peculiar—in that she can remember words and names—yet she is unable to connect them with the specific object or person. For instance she has difficulty remembering her maid's name, "Martina la atiende en sus menores pedidos. Y sabe que se llama así porque la propia Martina se lo ha dicho, repitiéndoselo cuantas veces fueron necesarias para que ella retuviera el nombre" (113). Laura fails to remember the real name of her pseudo boyfriend<sup>39</sup>, "después está el hombre: ése, él, el sin nombre al que le puede poner cualquier nombre que se le pase por la cabeza, total, todos son igualmente eficaces y el tipo, cuando anda por la casa le contesta aunque lo llame Hugo, Sebastián, Ignacio, Alfredo o

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<sup>39</sup> "En los centros clandestinos de la Capital Federal, la 'convivencia forzada' prolongada en el tiempo provocaba la elección de detenidos, en particular mujeres, como esclavas sexuales de alguno de los perpetradores. Esta situación de sometimiento las colocaba en una condición de absoluta indefensión y riesgo inminente para sus vidas. Algo similar ocurrió en 'la Cueva' en Mar del Plata." Algunos testimonios: "En este aspecto yo fui abusada sexualmente. A... me hizo llevar por el suboficial M... en varias oportunidades a un departamento al que luego concurría él y me obligaba a mantener relaciones sexuales. No tenía siquiera espacio para oponerme ya que sabía que de negarme, A... podía ordenar mi traslado." "Viajó acompañada de F... quien intentó plantear una relación como si fuera mi "salvador". Me veo obligada a mantener relaciones íntimas con él... Me llevó mucho tiempo entender que se trató de una situación de abuso sexual." See Ibid.

lo que sea” (114). Roque responds to any name, refusing to correct her because he does not want Laura to know his real identity. Even worse Laura cannot connect words to the objects they represent:

— Van a venir amigos míos mañana a tomar unos tragos— le dice como al descuido.

— ¿Trago?— pregunta ella.

— Sí, claro. Un whisky nada más, antes de comer, no se van a quedar mucho rato, no te preocupes. ¿Whisky? está a punto de repetir pero se contiene a tiempo.

— Mira, te voy a comprar un vestido nuevo. Así los recibís contenta y mona.

— ¿Me tengo que poner contenta con un vestido nuevo? ¿Un vestido nuevo es algo? (126-7)

Laura’s problem with language is her inability to connect the idea of the signified with the signifier. The torture and abuse Laura has suffered has affected her grasp of language and memory. Jacques Lacan defined the abstract concept of the phallus as language, “Hence, he suggests, society is structured around a valorization of male discourse as represented in the association between possessing the phallus, possessing the word, and possessing the authority” (Diaz 752). Thus Laura’s difficulty with language due to torture and rape is symbolic of the limitations women face in phallogocentric societies; wherein male discourse and authority overpower women.

Throughout the story Roque encourages her amnesia; particularly during the visit of his colleagues—other members of the secret police. The men reminisce about past guerrilla insurrections and attempt to involve Laura in the conversation:

—...fue aquella vez que pusieron las bombas en los cuarteles de Palermo ¿recuerda?— estaba diciendo uno y naturalmente se dirigió a ella para hacer la pregunta.

— No, no recuerdo. En verdad no recuerdo nada.

— Si, cuando la guerrilla en el norte. ¿Usted es tucumana, no? Como no se va a acordar.

Y el sinnombre, con los ojos fijos en su vaso: —Laura ni lee los diarios. Lo que ocurre fuera de estas cuatro paredes le interesa muy poco. Cuando por fin los colegas se van después de mucha charla ella queda como vacía y se saca el vestido nuevo queriendo despojarse. Él la observa con el aire del que está conforme con la propia obra” (128-129).

Before Laura can answer, Roque interjects that she does not remember anything; speaking in her behalf. He insinuates that Laura is not interested in politics or the news; he only wants her to be seen as a beautiful girlfriend; which is why he buys her a new dress for the occasion. When the men leave, Laura feels empty and upset; she divests herself rejecting the role of a docile girlfriend. In this passage, the men are the owners of knowledge and language because they know when the insurrections occurred, and they are the ones that speak, “por fin los colegas se van después de mucha charla” (129). The word “vacía” and

her lack of information are further examples of how women are seen as empty because they lack a phallus.

Under the rationality of biopolitics factions of society considered dangerous are exterminated; since Laura was aiming her gun at the colonel when she was apprehended, she is classified as a threat. The dictatorship marginalized any leftists who opposed the regime by stripping them of all their human rights. Roque is able to prey on the protagonist because anyone who opposed the regime ceased to have any rights during the Proceso:

Yo te salvé, ¿sabés? parecería todo lo contrario pero yo te salvé la vida porque hubieran acabado con vos como acabaron con tu amiguito, tu cómplice. [...] y él insistiendo fui yo, yo solo, ni los dejé que te tocaran, yo solo, lastimándote, deshaciéndote, quebrándote como se quiebra un caballo, para romperte la voluntad, transformarte [...] Eras una mierda, peor que una puta, te agarraron cuando me estabas apuntando. ¿Me odiabas? mejor, ya te iba a obligar a quererme” (42).

The insult *una mierda* alludes to the discourse of biopolitics that promotes the importance of the population's health; eliminating people that allegedly imperil the health of the nation. The epithet *peor que una puta* shows how sexuality works as a conduit of power in the dictatorship; he uses patriarchal discourse that denigrates women if they are impure. Furthermore, he forces her to love him; he reproduces a pseudo relationship in which he is the lover-torturer and she is the girlfriend-victim. Roque is basically saying that he saved her life by forcing her to be his girlfriend; when in fact he is taking advantage of the system that allows him to be a sexual perpetrator with impunity.

In the section “Los espejos”, Roque forces Laura to look at herself in the mirror he has installed on the ceiling above their bed:

Abrí los ojos y mirá bien lo que te voy a hacer porque es algo que merece ser visto. Y con la lengua empieza a trepársele por la pierna izquierda, la va dibujando y ella allá arriba se va reconociendo, va sabiendo que esa pierna es suya porque la siente viva bajo la lengua y de golpe esa rodilla que está observando en el espejo también es suya, y más que nada la comba de la rodilla—tan sensible—y sería muy suya la entrepierna si no fuera porque él hace un rodeo y se aloja del ombligo (123).

In Lacan’s presentation of the mirror stage an infant experiences his body as fragmented until he sees his image as a whole in the mirror. Laura recognizes each part of herself in the mirror only after he traces his tongue through it; she realizes the leg and knee are part of her body after he licks them. She does not incorporate her inner thigh as part of her whole body because he avoids touching it. Laura sees her reflection in the mirror through an intermediary; in contrast to Lacan’s mirror stage in which the child engages directly with the mirror. Laura’s identity continues to be mediated by Roque during sex, in the same manner that he has invented a whole new identity for her as his wife.

In spite of this evidence, the story also depicts changes in the power dynamic between Roque and Laura. The narrative of “Cambio de armas” appears to conform with phallogocentric forms of representation— that depict women as objects of visual pleasure— since it contains detailed descriptions of Laura’s body and graphic sex scenes. Laura

Mulvey has criticized how mainstream film portrays women as objects of pleasure for the male gaze:

Women displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle. [...] in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*." (837).

Notwithstanding the myriad of exhibitionist scenes in "Cambio de armas", Valenzuela uses narrative strategies to subvert the male gaze in the story. One of her strategies is to align the reader's perspective with the viewpoint of the woman. Laura and the reader have the same amount of information throughout the story; the reader gathers information through Laura's memory flashes or by small clues the other characters give Laura. Laura and the reader finally figure out the whole story when Hector tells her the truth, "Pues lo vas a saber todo. Mucho más de lo que me proponía contarte en un principio" (144). Since the reader is not privy to the background story, he or she feels the same confusion as Laura. The reader does not consider Laura an object of pleasure because by empathizing with her, he or she ceases to look "at" Laura but instead looks "from" her perspective.

Another narrative tactic that subverts the relationship of power is Laura's refusal to confess; her denial symbolizes the Lacanian negation of the name of the father. The

protagonist refuses to confess the names of her comrades when Roque rapes her under the reflection of the mirrors:

“Abrí los ojos, cantá, decime quién te manda, quién dio la orden, y ella grita un *no* tan intenso, tan profundo que no resuena para nada en el ámbito donde se encuentran y él no alcanza a oírlo, uno no que parece hacer estallar el espejo del techo, que multiplica y mutila y destroza la imagen de él, casi como un balazo aunque él no lo perciba y tanto su imagen como el espejo sigan allí intactos, imperturbables, y ella al exhalar el aire retenido sople Roque, por primera vez el verdadero nombre de él” (124).

Laura refuses to divulge any information that might compromise the leftist resistance; which eventually overthrows the authoritarian regime of the novel. At the end of the story Roque has to flee from the apartment, and Laura regains her freedom. Gwendolyn Diaz notes that Laura’s NO, “underscores the fact that she has neither confessed the names of her accomplices nor accepted his perception of her as a sex object” (753). Furthermore her NO can be connected to Lacan’s “nom du père” that stands for the father’s prohibition and for the law of the father. In this scene when Laura yells No, she appropriates the power of the Father because she is the one that is making the prohibition to her body. Luisa Valenzuela shows how the power of language destroys the visual gaze; a simple monosyllable breaks the mirrors thus destroying the visual imagery of Laura’s body and rape.

The phrase “y ella al exhalar el aire retenido sople Roque, por primera vez el verdadero nombre de él” (124) can be interpreted in two different ways. The verb “soplar”

means to blow softly—or in the vernacular it can mean to willingly confess, help someone in an exam, or to betray someone by snitching on them. The sentence can mean that Laura softly says his name; it can also imply that Laura snitches on Roque by informing the reader of his real name. During the Proceso, the government withheld information on the whereabouts of the people they arrested; many people were disappeared and their families were not able to contact them ever again. Laura is a *desaparecida*; thus by remembering his name and telling the reader she denounces the name of her torturer. With this scene Valenzuela suggests that the dictatorship's violations will come to light no matter how hard the regime tries to hide them. "Cambio de armas" deploys sexuality to subvert the phallogentric order of the dictatorship; providing a certain degree of agency and resistance.

In a similar manner, Luisa Valenzuela generates reconfigurations of sexuality and political activism in the short story "Cuarta versión". The protagonist of "Cuarta versión" Bella—a famous actress who has an affair with an ambassador—uses her position of power to fight against the dictatorship. The story is written as a cliché romantic affair; revolving around the forbidden love between the famous actress Bella and the married ambassador Pedro. The sexual story appears explicitly as a decoy to the political sub-plot, "sifting through Bella's papers, time and time again, writing one version after another (thus the title of her story), the narrator is frustrated by the repression of information in Bella's diary. This repression, she believes, privileges the sexual as a mask for the political" (Metzger 295). The story contains multiple layers of meaning; their affair not only functions as a decoy to the political subtext, but even more their sexual relationship is political in itself.



As a famous public figure Bella is invited to social events; at the reception to welcome the new ambassador, she and Pedro meet and start an illicit affair. On the surface, the reception resembles a typical pretentious soiree that might be given in an embassy:

Fue un saludo protocolar y breve como corresponde y Bella se vio libre para atravesar salones hasta alcanzar, más allá de entorchados y de escotes fulguerosos, el jardín del fondo donde como era previsible se encontró con un grupo de amigos [...] Pero los mozos que a cada rato le llenaban el vaso y la colmaban de bocaditos la volvieron condescendiente. Y no solo a Bella, a juzgar por la alegre aprobación con la que el resto de los invitados aceptaron la sorpresa: el Gran Escritor, la figura preclara de las letras locales, leería con bombos y platillo—perdón, con acompañamiento de guitarras—su épica obra cumbre (8-9).

The guests appear to be interested in the evening's entertainment; engaged in superfluous conversations while they degust the champagne and hors d'oeuvres. Underneath the merriment, there are dark and dangerous allusions to clandestine activities. When Bella encounters her friends at the reception, someone anonymously informs her that one of her contacts has become part of the resistance, "Hola, se dijeron alegrándose de verse, volver a verse era un alivio, en esas circunstancias, y también se dijeron, La situación está peor que nunca, aparecieron otros 15 cadáveres flotando en el río, redoblaron las persecuciones. Y alguien le sopló al oído: Navoni pasó a la clandestinidad. Olvídate de su nombre, bórralo de tu libreta de direcciones" (8). Bella maintains her composure, behaving as a beautiful actress would at a social event, while at the same time she's on the alert:

Por encima y por debajo de la fiesta se percibía el murmullo de los pasos de tantos asilados políticos, su ansiedad por participar de los festejos, sus ganas de asomarse una vez más al mundo, ignorantes como estaban del martirio: el escritor ya abre la boca, comienza la balada. Acompañada, desde lejos, por el ulular de sirenas de los patrulleros policiales. Bella estaba atenta a esos sonidos inaudibles mientras buscaba un sillón bien alejado para aposentar la parte más ponderada de su ponderada humanidad (9).

While the acclaimed writer reads his masterpiece—Bella is concerned about the situation of the political refugees hiding in the embassy—aware that the police sirens might mean that other political dissidents are in danger. While seated in the sofa preoccupied with political matters Bella attracts the attention of the ambassador and begins a flirtation. Bella use her sexuality and beauty to cast diversion from her political involvement. Similarly to her performance the narrative subtlety inserts allusions to political unrest within the romantic story.

Freud traces the relationship between culture and sexuality, proposing that psychoanalysis can help study repressed human sexuality:

Freud had already postulated a connection between homosexuality and civilization in an essay that predates *Totem and Taboo* by four years: “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Disease” of 1908 (see Appendix A1). There Freud outlines his view that civilization represses sexuality and, frustrated in its aim, lays the groundwork for “perversion” and

“inversion,” i.e. fixations and homosexual “object of choice” (SE 9: 189)  
(Dufresne 22).

It might seem that “Cuarta versión” operates under a Freudian understanding of sexuality because it juxtaposes sexual repression with political repression. The narrative presents sexuality as a normal topic, whereas political issues are depicted as taboo. It is important to notice that “Cuarta versión” does not subvert power by speaking about sexuality openly but by using sexuality as a conduit of power. Foucault expanded on Freud’s theory that sexuality had been repressed in previous societies. Repression of sexuality understood as the prohibition to speak about sexuality —to make public a behavior that was private. However, Foucault postulated that societies considered sexually repressive in fact were constantly speaking of sex, and monitoring private sexual behaviors. For instance, feligreses were expected to confess their sexual acts and desires to their priests; women were admonished constantly that they must remain pure until marriage, and as a married women they must fulfill their wifely duties. For Foucault speaking about sex is not liberating, however sexuality can be the means to power. Thus I argue that “Cuarta versión” manipulates sexuality as a tool to hide the political, not as a reversion of sexual repression.

As the title “Cuarta versión” suggests the reader receives the fourth version of the story sifting through an intricate web of multiple versions. As Liliana Trevizan indicates in her article “Luisa Valenzuela: los riesgos de una versión plural y democrática”:

“Cuarta versión” es un cuento largo—o una novela breve, de 64 páginas—  
que presenta una escritura de perspectiva feminista incluso a nivel formal. La  
escritura de Valenzuela hace un gran esfuerzo por presentarse desde una

perspectiva pluralista: la lectora se hace partícipe del proceso de elaboración de un cuento de una escritora argentina. Lee las notas de la escritora en su primera versión de la historia- presentadas en letra cursiva (lo cual agrega valor de testimonio a la ficción narrada)- y también las reflexiones de la misma respecto a esas notas, lo que sería la segunda versión y, por último, conoce el comienzo de una tercera versión que nunca fue escrita pero que es la que oralmente va a contar uno de los personajes al final del cuento. La “cuarta” versión, título del cuento, hemos de asumir que es la que el lector es capaz de construir—renovada, incompleta—en su lectura (100).

The female narrator of the second version is constantly interrupted by the insertion of her own notes in cursive; the dissonance caused by the contradictions between both versions break the flow of the story. This can be seen when Pedro retains Bella in the embassy—cajoling her to stay with him by offering her delicacies—he proceeds to serve her champagne and flirts outrageously with her. In the second version, the narrator presents this incident as Pedro’s desire to have an affair with Bella, and the reason Bella responds to Pedro’s enticements resides on the fact that she herself desires the ambassador. However the own narrator’s notes contradict this interpretation:

No entiendo por qué la información crucial ha sido omitida en la relación de este encuentro clave. Según parece, el día de marras Pedro le dijo a Bella desde un principio que esperaba una comunicación urgente de su ministerio y necesitaba tenerla a su lado. Bella ya convertida para Pedro en la

encarnación de ese país al que necesitaba aferrarse, con el que no quería romper relaciones diplomáticas si le llegaba la orden telefónica (26).

As the quote evinces Pedro had informed Bella from the beginning that he needed her presence during a business phone call. Pedro fears that his country will ask him to give up his post, since it wants to break diplomatic relations with Bella's country due to the human right violations. Pedro believes that Bella's presence during the conference call might influence the outcome.

The first and second version are at odds throughout the story, casting doubt on each other at times or providing different interpretations of the same event. Valenzuela's tale possesses postmodern qualities, which are made apparent through fragmentation—as we have seen earlier—and the use of nonlinear narratives. The first and second version of “Cuarta versión” end with the beginning of the third version:

Bella comenzó su lentísima caída y Pedro no encontró fuerzas para sostenerla, solo pudo abrazarla e ir la acompañando hasta abajo. *Y con la boca pegada a su oído comenzó a narrarle esta precisa historia:*

—Cuando mi tío Ramón conoció a una actriz llamada Bella.... (63).

The second version ends with the death of Bella; whereas the first version (in italics) function as the preamble for the third version. The third version starts at the end—told by Pedro to a dying Bella—who will not hear his whole story. I argue that this ending suggests that the male narrator only has a voice if there is a female recipient; thus implying that men need women and vice-versa if there is to be a dialogue.

Valenzuela compiles an array of voices and narratives into “Cuarta Versión” to contrast the univocal tone of the Proceso official story:

No se trata aquí de la estructura circular presentada en *Cien años de soledad* o en *Pedro Páramo*, sino de la voluntad deliberada de aceptar el desafío de una escritura que se resista al proyecto autoritario de lectura uniforme, unívoca, que representa la dictadura militar. En este cuento la pluralidad procura la búsqueda de una “versión” diferente y opuesta al mundo en donde lo que opera es el terror producto de la versión oficial de los hechos. La entrega de las diferentes versiones acentúa la noción de que no existe “otra” versión que sea verdadera, sino que la noción de “verdad” surge sólo como ejercicio democrático en el cual las diversas opciones se permiten (Trevizan 100).

The dictatorship tried to subdue dissenting voices; eliminating those who dare oppose the regime. During and after the Proceso, the government held onto the official story that there was one version of events that the authoritarian regime had acted correctly by saving the nation from the dangers of communism. Valenzuela does not provide the reader with one history—one that contradicts the official story—because to do so would be to behave within the same parameters of the dictatorship. Instead “Cuarta versión” challenges the idea that there is one truth, invalidating the belief that one perspective is true and the other one false. To understand the past, the reader must actively engage with a web of dialectical versions that do not provide a simple or airtight answer.

Throughout her life Bella has more agency than the heroine Laura; however the ending of “Cuarta Versión” suggests that Bella loses power. At the end of “Cambio de

armas” Laura regains her memory and freedom; whereas Bella is killed by the regime’s forces. I argue that Bella’s death does not imply defeat necessarily; if one interprets her death—using as a backdrop the fairytale of *Sleeping Beauty*—as an inversion of the trope of the damsel in distress. “Cuarta Versión” reformulates the fairytale *Sleeping Beauty* in a modern setting:

Yet, on still another level, we are presented with a modern-day fairy tale—*Sleeping Beauty*, “la bella durmiente,” who will awaken with the proper (male?) stimulus: “Pero saber que después habrá que despertar de una vez por todas. Para siempre. Despertarse después de la fiesta. Como corresponde” (58). But it is a fairy tale reexamined under the light of the twentieth century politics and feminism (Magnarelli “Hay Que Sonreír” 12).

In the original romance, the beautiful princess is awakened from a cursed sleep by the kiss of a prince. After saving the beautiful girl, the prince marries her and they live happily ever after. In Valenzuela’s remake of the famous fairytale, Bella awakens from political inactivity to a militant activism, “Bella’s trajectory is the reverse. Inactive, apparently politically ignorant at the beginning, Bella metaphorically awakens to the political atrocities occurring in her unnamed country and takes an active role in opposing the tyrannical regime” (Hay Que Sonreír 13). Instead of marrying Pedro and living happily ever after, Bella sacrifices her life to save the life of many political prisoners. In the reversal of roles in Valenzuela’s remake of the fairytale, the female character saves the others and does not need a prince to save her. When the guards invade the embassy Bella faces them in the same manner as Pedro confronts them, “Todos se pusieron de pie al mismo tiempo,

alarmados, y Pedro se adelantó unos pasos porque por fin sabía. Los demás se replegaron a sus espaldas, solo Bella se mantuvo a su lado, decidida, y avanzó con él hacia el jefe de la guardia” (63). Bella does not seek cover behind Pedro, in fact she stands next to Pedro as an equal and faces the danger. One can postulate that Bella’s death is a feminist alternative to the phallogentric plot in which the men rescues the princess to later marry her; especially because Bella does not marry Pedro, she actually has an extramarital affair. However the tragic ending of “Cuarta versión” also implies that life is not a fairytale, and that the Proceso was a tragic and horrible period in the history of Argentina.

Up to this point I have concentrated on the narrative form by analyzing two of Luisa Valenzuela’s short stories “Cambio de armas” and “Cuarta versión”. In a similar manner to the literary works, the film *Garage Olimpo* addresses the representation of sexuality under an authoritarian regime. However, to be able to produce a valid examination of the film one must take into consideration the differences between verbal and cinematic articulation. The canonical text *Film Theory and Criticism*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, explores the correspondence between the phonemes of language and the signifying units of cinema. Film theorists claim that cinema has no distinctive units of its own:

Even with respect to the signifying units, the cinema is initially deprived of discrete elements. It proceeds with whole “blocks of reality,” which are actualized with their total meaning in the discourse. These blocks are the shots [...] The filmic shot therefore resembles the statement rather than the word. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that it is equivalent to the



statement, for there are still great differences between the shot and the linguistic statement. Even the most complex statement is reducible to discrete elements (words, morphemes, phonemes, relevant features), which are fixed in number and in nature (74-75).

When analyzing a film one must examine individual shots instead of words; keeping in mind that a filmic shot holds more meanings than one word. A shot is more analogous to a statement, a speaker makes up a phrase or statement in the same manner that a filmmaker makes up a shot; whereas words already exist in any given language. However one cannot reduce a shot like a statement, one can only decompose it into smaller elements such as the interior montage. To interpret a shot one has to analyze each single shot; while at the same time scrutinize the order and interactions between each shot. One can argue that it is more difficult to ascribe a specific interpretation to a film than to a narrative, since each shot can be interpreted in more ways than a word in a sentence.

Although the film *Garage Olimpo* was nominated for many awards in European and Latin American festivals, it had limited viewership in Argentina:

Before it opened in Buenos Aires in September 1999, the city's fashionable shopping malls were plastered with the film's compelling poster: the face of its star, Antonella Costa, blindfolded, beneath blood-red lettering on a black background. The Australian owner of the malls was perfectly happy to sell advertising space to display this image (Gallotta, "Entrevista"). However, during the first week of the run, box office workers in the upscale cineplexes showing the movie told patrons that the film was sold out (Beladrich). This

meant not only that those who wanted to see *Garage Olimpo* did not get in, but that first-week receipts were so low that the film was largely withdrawn from circulation (Kaminsky).

The film was aired in 1999— many years after the dictatorship ended—however the fear of repression still permeated Argentina; to show a film that exposed the violent past was a risk that many were not comfortable undertaking. Amy Kaminsky points out that interestingly the owner of the malls had no qualms selling the space to advertise the film. This alleged contradiction can be explained by the neoliberal nature of the Proceso; within this logic the freedom of the market was respected but not the freedom of the people.

Marco Bechis film depicts the torture and sexual abuse of Maria Fabiani (Antonella Costa) in the detention center *Garage Olimpo*. María works as a literacy teacher in the shantytowns of Buenos Aires; she lives with her mother Diane (Dominique Sanda) in a large house who takes boarders to make ends meet. In the detention facility she is placed under the supervision of Félix (Carlos Echevarría) who incidentally rents a room in her mother's boarding house. Even before her arrest Félix has an unrequited sexual obsession with María; he carries a picture of María in his wallet pretending that she is his girlfriend. His sexual obsession crystallizes in the detention facility when he is finally able to force María to be his sexual partner. One morning a group of soldiers come to Maria's house and take her under the pretense that they are going to question her. Her mother desperately looks for Maria at the police headquarters where they supposedly have taken her; however no one seems to have any information on her location. As Diane searches for her daughter, she meets other women that find themselves in the same situation, looking for a loved one

that was taken by the military forces and disappeared. In the meantime Maria is being tortured in Garage Olimpo, once they have obtained all the information she can provide, they dispose of her in a flight of death. During the Proceso thousands of prisoners were taken in a plane drugged and thrown alive into the Atlantic Ocean.

The military forces target Maria because of her involvement with the poor as their teacher —by torturing her they hope to obtain information on other leftists— a common practice during the Proceso:

El director de *Garage Olimpo* comenta el cambio particular de esta técnica que da la vuelta al sentido de la tortura y dice, la tortura en Argentina “dejó de ser un castigo, tal y como lo eran los suplicios medievales dirigidos a conseguir una confesión, fuera falsa o verdadera. En Argentina la tortura se convirtió en un ‘dispositivo tecnológicamente nuevo en el cual el cuerpo del secuestrado es el instrumento para recoger la información. Ya no tiene como fin la expiación de la culpa, sino la acumulación científica de datos” (“Nota del director” 3) (Quoted by Choi, footnote 37).

This can be seen in the film’s torture scenes that develop in a methodical and scientific manner. During a torture sessions Maria Fabiani has a cardiac arrest, the doctor who is summoned to resuscitate her recriminates the soldier for not following the guidelines of the dosage table. On the wall of the torture chamber—which incidentally is referred to as the operating room—there is a table that designates how many volts should be applied to each individual based on their weight. Once the doctor shocks María back to life, he informs the soldier that he can proceed with the torture session.

Akin to the torture rooms, the entire detention center functions under methodic rules, the director of the detention center wears a dress shirt with a tie and walks around with a clipboard. He has regular meetings with his workers to go over the situation of each detainee—whether more information can be gained from torture sessions— if the prisoners have no more information their death is planned. When new prisoners arrive to the center they are assigned a code number; the torturers force them to undress to forfeit their belongings. The detention center functions as an efficient factory; each torturer has to clock in and out as to monitor his work hours:

El centro de tortura es también un lugar de trabajo pretendidamente común y corriente. El ambiente muestra la opresión de la represión como si se tratara de la opresión de una oficina. En *Garage Olimpo* no hay malos perfectos ni demonios. Los torturadores hablan con naturalidad con su familia, cumplen eficientemente su trabajo, necesitan ver una tabla para decidir cuanta carga eléctrica aplicar, juegan al ping pong como si estuvieran en un club, tienen rivalidades mezquinas (Kaplan 186).

The efficiency and methodic rules of the detention center are part of the institutionalization of torture by the political system; the Proceso sanctioned the torture, forfeiture of belongings, and murders of political dissidents. The Proceso had an agenda to eliminate the opposition; which they implemented in a calculated and regulated manner. The soldiers in the film are not psychologically evil or monsters, “Anna Arendt llamó “banalidad del mal” (refiriéndose específicamente a Eichmann, el general nazi capturado en Argentina): la maldad no se deduce de la psicología del torturador, sino de su obediencia reflexiva (no

ideológica) a un sistema de normas creadas para la aniquilación de personas” (Kaplan 187).  
The damage perpetrated in the detention center was not committed by demonic monsters but by uncritical minds that followed orders of an oppressive system.

Hannah Arendt wrote about the banality of evil in reference to the Third Reich and the extermination of the Jewish population in the concentration camps. In the article “La exposición de la víctima: miradas cruzadas entre el cine alemán y argentino,” Bernhard Chappuzeau explores how the aesthetics of German cinema influenced the Argentine films. The idea to compare the two cinemas was born out of:

La observación de interferencias intermediales que nos dejan suponer la existencia de un discurso internacional respecto de los tramas políticos y sociales más destacados de sus tiempos. Considerando una vinculación estrecha entre la imagen, la imaginación y lo imaginario como término del psicoanálisis, las interpelaciones de una historia traumática no forman solamente una realidad extra-cinematográfica sino son inherentes de su propia construcción de imágenes tanto a nivel de producción como recepción activa (2).

The new German cinema and the new Argentine cinema are linked to the traumatic events that devastated both countries, respectively the Nazi Reich and the military Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. The exponents of the new cinema, Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Raúl de la Torre represent in their films the traumatic events in an implicit manner. In a similar manner *Garage Olimpo* alludes to the violence and torture without showing them explicitly:

*Garage Olimpo* es creíblemente violenta porque hace que la violencia radique en los espectadores, en sus conciencias. No hay escenas gráficas de tortura (hay algunos cuerpos desnudos; hay una escena terrible que simula una ejecución). Lo que existe es una muestra ineludible, monotemática, claustrofóbica de situaciones concretas y personajes creíbles en torno a un centro de desaparecidos y a dos individuos que son parte del mismo infierno. Así esta película plantea una estética de la alusión para representar el horror (Brescia 190).

The viewers only see Maria Fabiani's body after it has been electrocuted in a session of torture; or before she is going to undergo physical abuse at the hands of Félix. In the same vein, when the voltage machine breaks down one of the soldiers decides to apply electricity to a male prisoner without using the protective electrodes. The audience sees the soldier show the naked ends of the electrodes to another prisoner, then he closes the door, and we can only hear the horrific screams of the man being tortured.

The film reproduces the panoptic through the surveillance cameras in the detention center and the panoramic views of the whole city being watched constantly. There are surveillance cameras in each of the torture rooms—in the main office the director of the center oversees the cameras—the soldiers know they are being monitored during the sessions. Félix is aware of the constant surveillance thus even though he loves Maria—in a sick and twisted manner—he has to torture her to avoid facing repercussions in his job. One day Félix takes María out of the detention center—they wander around the city, he lets her play in the swings of a park and then takes her to a hotel—she is constantly looking

over her shoulder as if she knows that she is being watched. Her awareness of their surveillance ties into the scenes in which the film shows, through the lens of a camera, panoramic views of the whole city. These scenes appear at intervals throughout the film—each of them shows various sectors of the city at different times of the day—making the audience aware that the city is invariably under surveillance. Félix has internalized the vigilance of the panoptic, this is why even when he manages to sneak Maria out he realizes that they must return to the prison.

María tries to gain her freedom by using her sexuality as a weapon— thanks to Félix's romantic interest in her she receives special privileges in comparison to the rest of the prisoners. María exercises power over Félix's sexual desire; she initiates a sexual relationship in the detention center by kissing him and asking for help:

La relación entre María y Félix adopta la dinámica del “amor” (y me parece que la palabra le queda demasiado grande al contexto de la película) entre victimario y víctima. Él la quiere a su manera: le consigue buena comida, logra un tratamiento preferencial, un día la lleva de paseo a la ciudad. Ella se aferra a su única esperanza: que Félix logre sacarla del garage. Los encuentros sexuales, uno en la cárcel y otro en un hotel de paso, durante aquel paseo donde la luz ciega constantemente a María, están teñidos de locura, de represión, de ternura manchada de asco (Brescia 89).

The rest of the soldiers start to notice Félix's interest in the literacy teacher, for instance he pays another soldier to give María breaks during the torture sessions; they also see him bring her food and flowers. Félix prevents another soldier from raping María by arriving

just in time to the garage. When Félix was a renter in her mother's house—before her arrest—María did not pay attention to him even though he showed his romantic interest. During her incarceration María takes advantage of his sexual attraction—and to a certain extent feelings—to avoid torture and rape. Even though María is the victim in their pseudo relationship, she attains a degree of agency through her sexuality. At the end of the film, Félix promises her that he will speak with his commanding officer so that María is allowed to live and be his girlfriend. Unfortunately when they return to the detention center María is taken away to be killed, and Félix is ordered to go meet his officer. He will be sanctioned for taking the prisoner out for a stroll; Félix risks his job and earns the ire of his supervisor by giving María special treatment.

In the film *Garage Olimpo*, as well as in the stories “Cambio de armas” and “Cuarta versión”, the heroines are involved in unequal sexual dalliances. Even though they are in unfair relationships forced to play the role of a caring girlfriend, they employ their sexuality to earn a degree of autonomy. As Foucault advances that in modern societies sexuality became a conduit of power; in the fictions mentioned the female characters gain power with their sexuality. The power of the male characters is subverted by their own sexual desires that betray them, they are more prone to be manipulated.



### Chapter 3: Death and Bio-politics in the Andes.

When I searched women, the first thing I did was undress them. Old or young, I stuck my fingers in them just the same. You may not believe me, but there was a time when I found one explosive, pardon me, two. It's because they have big cunts.

~"Pancho"

#### Historical Background of Peru

In May of 1980—after twelve years of military rule—Peru held democratic elections for the post of the presidency. As the whole country eagerly followed the outcome of the elections, very few paid attention to the reports that four Sendero Luminoso militants had burned ballots in the small Andean town of Chuschi in the province of Ayacucho. Earlier that year—on April 19—the leader of Sendero Luminoso Abimael Guzmán<sup>40</sup> had delivered the summons to war “We Are the Initiators” at the First Military School of Sendero Luminoso. Both events would be the prelude to one of the most violent insurgencies in Latin America:

It is estimated that between 1980 and 2000, close to 70,000 Peruvian people died at the hands of state, the Sendero Luminoso and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru. Of those 70,000 people, it is estimated that

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<sup>40</sup> Abimael Guzmán: “in full Manuel Rubén Abimael Guzmán Reynoso byname Comrade Gonzalo (born December 3, 1934, Arequipa, Peru), founder and leader of the Peruvian revolutionary organization Shining Path (Spanish, *Sendero Luminoso*). Guzmán was the illegitimate son of a wealthy Peruvian businessman, and his mother, Berenice Reynoso, died when he was five. He excelled as a student but showed little interest in politics until his late teens, when he began associating with leftist intellectuals. He became the protégé of the painter Carlos de la Riva, who was an ardent admirer of Joseph Stalin, and he joined the Peruvian Communist Party in the late 1950s. In 1962 Guzmán was appointed professor of philosophy at the National University of San Cristóbal del Huamanga in Ayacucho, a remote, desperately poor province where many of the students were of Indian heritage and often the first in their families to obtain an education. He began to hold weekly political discussions with students and colleagues and spoke passionately against the injustices of Peruvian society and the need for Indian peasants to rebel. By the late 1960s the discussion group had become a political faction calling itself the Communist Party of Peru” Encyclopedia Britannica.

75% were indigenous. The people of Ayacucho, where the Shining Path began, undoubtedly suffered most during the war between the militant groups and the state” (Gandhi 1)<sup>41</sup>.

The violence and bloodbath the country experienced—at the hands of the national armed forces and the guerrilla movement—left its citizens in shock and in search of answers. Unfortunately much of the literature depicts Sendero Luminoso as a mythical or enigmatic phenomenon, instead of exploring the social dynamics that led to the savage internal war of the 1980s and early 1990s. Only recently literature has traced the political and social events that led to the movement’s rise to power, as well as its development and subsequent failure.

In his book *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, Steve J. Stern analyzes the zeitgeist of 20th century Peru—concentrating on the emergence and development of political groups that opposed the established order. His aim is to locate Sendero Luminoso within other Peruvian oppositional political movements, to elucidate how the Maoist guerrilla movement rose to power in the 1980s. From the 1910s to the 1930s Peru experienced a strong cycle of political mobilization and organization—against the aristocratic government—from miners, sugar plantation workers, university students, intellectuals, trade union members, and Andean peasants. The discontent against the

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<sup>41</sup> It’s not possible to have a final number but the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación final report estimates the number of deaths to be between 61,007 and 77, 552. See United States Institute of Peace, Truth Commission: Peru 01.

oligarchy was the catalysts to the emergence of new political parties such as the APRA<sup>42</sup> and the Communist Party:

The pressures for social inclusion generated an ambience for the emergence of dissident intelligentsias and opportunities for populist political leaders to promote a “new” style of politics. Several presidencies, those of Augusto Leguía and Luis Sánchez Cerro during the 1920s and early 1930s and of Luis Bustamante y Rivero and especially Manuel Odría during the 1940s and 1950s, would include important populist phases and styles of rule. In short, the new social forces encouraged a certain massification of politics and an environment of critique that placed traditional aristocratic politics on the defensive by the 1920s and 1930s (Stern 14).

Unfortunately, the progress of leftist socio-political movements was constantly derailed by military regimes—who took great efforts to squash their belief that Peru could become an egalitarian society. Under such repressive circumstances the leftist political parties—retracted their previous progressive and inclusionary stances—changing their political interests to solely advocate for Coastal laborers, and abandoning the cause of the Andean peasants. According to Steve J. Stern, the more socially progressive parties became part of the “reconstructed old regime” once they accepted defeat out of fear. As a result of the

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<sup>42</sup> APRA: Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana. “Reformist political party in Peru, also called the *Partido Aprista*. Founded (1924) by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre while in exile, the party’s activities in Perú were led by José Carlos Mariátegui until 1927, when he left to found the Socialist party. Haya de la Torre returned to Peru in 1931 and continued his work with the Apristas. The party advocated social reform, the emancipation of indigenous peoples, improvement of agrarian conditions, and the socialization of some industries. Originally committed to revolutionary change, the party gradually became less radical” *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. 2012, Columbia University Press.

strong repression, from the 1940s to the late 1950s the indigenous communities were forgotten with no one to represent their interests.

Not surprisingly, by the 1960s Peru saw large peasant mobilizations in Junín and Cuzco, as well as extensive protests from the growing middle-class. Their discontent showed the failure of the reconstructed new regime:

The land invasions contributed to a sense that land reform and the break-up of servile rural relations in the highlands were issues that could no longer be sidelined or postponed in national politics. Second, the reconstructed Old Regime delivered neither steady economic growth that might satisfy the interest group needs of an expanding middle sector and urban poor population, nor a political system that effectively incorporated dissident parties and intelligentsias. Third, the political and cultural impact of the Cuban Revolution made obstacles to social change and inclusion much more difficult to tolerate (Stern 15).

All of these reasons ignited a change in the political landscape; starting with Fernando Belaúnde<sup>43</sup> Terry's who sought to appeal to the highland population through the proposal of land reform. Another event—symptomatic of the political change—was the formation of radicalized guerrilla group by young men who had left the APRA and the Communist Party. Soon after, a left-leaning military government under the direction of Velasco Alvarado took over the Presidency of Belaúnde Terry:

Velasco Alvarado adoptó una propuesta política de orientación nacionalista y “antioligárquica”, autodefinida como “ni capitalista ni comunista” .... Este

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<sup>43</sup> Fernando Belaúnde Terry: President of Peru for two non-consecutive periods, (1963-1968) (1980-1985).

gobierno modificó significativamente el rol político y económico tradicionales del Estado, a la par que emprendió distintas reformas sociales. Así, se realizó la reforma agraria, expropiando los grandes complejos agro-industriales de la costa y latifundios de la sierra, a la par de imponer serios límites a la mediana y pequeña propiedad privada rural. Se nacionalizaron las principales actividades económicas de exportación, como la gran minería, el petróleo y la pesca; servicios públicos como la electricidad, la telefonía, etc. (García Belaúnde 372).

The discourse of Velasco —a rhetoric that condemned imperialism and promoted land reform— created a political milieu that promoted worker and labor mobilization. The revolutionary tone of Velasco’s regime promoted a left-leaning attitude in popular culture; which in turn opened legal spaces for a wide array of Leftist groups<sup>44</sup>.

Due to President Alvarado’s legacy, Sendero Luminoso faced very little opposition— at least at the beginning. Up to 1982 Sendero Luminoso was not considered dangerous, “As yet, there were few victims, and a certain consensus persisted that as long as the Shining Path’s fury remained transoceanic (that is, killing dogs, and hurling insults at Deng Xiaoping and Enver Hoxha), the group’s presence in Peru would be basically innocuous” (Gorriti *The Quota* 316). Furthermore the leader of Sendero Luminoso was not a destitute indigenous peasant but a light-skinned philosophy professor at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga—where he founded the revolutionary party of Sendero Luminoso in 1970. In January of 1979, the military government of Francisco Morales

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<sup>44</sup> For more in depth explanation of the Velasco legacy see “On Poor Relations and the Nouveau Riche: Shining Path and the Radical Peruvian Left” by Ivan Hinojosa

Bermúdez<sup>45</sup> deployed military forces and suspended certain civil rights to hamper the Peruvian General Confederation of Workers general strike. At this juncture most of the military did not consider Sendero Luminoso a threat; however a small group of detectives took advantage of their expansion of power to arrest Abimael Guzmán:

Wearing a white *guayabera*, courteous and cooperative, Guzmán agreed to accompany his captors. At half past nine, the police and their captive set out for State Security headquarters. The investigative police major who directed the search came from a different unit and only barely understood the importance of the capture. Although a junior officer suggested that they seize the papers Guzmán had been working on and make a thorough house search, the major decided that it was unnecessary to further inconvenience such a well-mannered family (Gorriti *A History* 3).

As soon as Abimael Guzmán was taken to State Security headquarters, his family and members of the party set out to obtain his release. They hired a well-connected and respected lawyer Horacio Alvarado who persuaded a navy admiral—who incidentally was his family member—to intercede for the release of Abimael Guzmán. In addition three other generals—who had been contacted either by the family or by the political group—pressured for the release of Guzmán. Abimael was released from jail thanks to his social position, and his connections that pulled all the right strings (Gorriti 5).

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<sup>45</sup> Francisco Morales Bermúdez: “In February 1975 he was named prime minister and minister of war by President Juan Velasco Alvarado, whom Morales overthrew in a bloodless coup on August 29. His aim, he said, was to “consolidate” the radical reforms of sectors of the economy and a sweeping land reform program. But within a year, Morales had begun to reverse the nationalization of industry and had excluded from his cabinet most of the early protagonists of the 1968 revolution. In 1977 Morales presented the four-year “Túpac Amaru Plan,” designed to return the country to civilian rule, reduce state control of the economy, and encourage foreign investment” (Encyclopedia Britannica)

In his article “Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History”, Orin Starn scrutinizes Sendero Luminoso’s political ideology:

A close examination of the party betrays a conspicuous indifference to Peruvian culture and traditions. The distinctiveness of this largest and most diverse of the Andean nations disappears in the orthodoxy of a universal Marxism, in this respect placing the Shining Path within a long legacy of the imperial inscription of Latin American history into the preconceived categories and linear narratives of Western philosophy and science (399).

Sendero Luminoso has been erroneously depicted by certain scholars as an indigenous uprising; that its members were following the steps of Tupac Amaru II. Also there has been a tendency to portray them as ferocious and cruel; for a facile explanation of the internecine war critics incorrectly portrayed the Andean region as an intrinsically violent culture<sup>46</sup>. On the contrary, it must be emphasized that Sendero Luminoso’s ideology omitted a connection to indigenous history; furthermore the party’s organization, “replicated the colonial stratification of regional society: a privileged elite of white professionals commanded a mass of brown-skinned youth of humble origin” (Starn 405). In effect Abimael Guzman traced his lineage through Marx, Lenin, and Mao; claiming that he was the fourth pillar:

*El presidente Gonzalo era la cuarta espada del marxismo, al lado de los otros tres grandes Marx, Lenin y Mao. Los senderistas escriben siempre los cuatro pilares ideológicos con signos de puntuación que son importantes:*

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<sup>46</sup> Kimberly Theidon challenges the myth that the Andean region is naturally violent in “Terror’s Talk: Fieldwork and War”.

"marxismo-leninismo-maoísmo, pensamiento Gonzalo". El *pensamiento Gonzalo*, según el propio Guzmán, "no es sino la aplicación del marxismo-leninismo-maoísmo a nuestra realidad concreta" (El País, Buenos Aires 14 Sep. 1992).

Abimael Guzman contended that in every era —one chosen group of men leads the masses to a revolution— by following Marxist true principles. Naturally, he anointed himself as the true interpreter of Marxism that would show the way to the malleable indigenous peasantry.

Through centuries the Andean population in Peru has suffered ignominious abuse from their landowners; when Sendero Luminoso started to mobilize many sectors of the indigenous population were living in fourth-world conditions. Even though Quechua and Aymara are considered official languages of the nation, the people who speak them are seen as second class citizens:

The Peruvian social pyramid is such that the Spanish-speaking European descendants are at the top, followed in turn by the *mestizos* (who mostly speak only Spanish) and the *cholos* (roughly, Spanish-speaking indigenous people, and a negative term not used in the presence of the person to whom it is applied (see Bourricaud 1976)), while the monolingual indigenous language speakers are found at the bottom (Macissac 165).

According to the report "*Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America: An Empirical Analysis*", 79% of indigenous population is poor and more than half is extremely poor. Indigenous population has restricted access to public water and sanitation facilities: 31% uses wells and 15% uses rivers as a source of water. As a consequence of the poor hygienic



conditions, a higher percentage of indigenous people suffer from diseases (in comparison to the mestizo and criollo population) but have limited access to healthcare. In conjunction with bleak living conditions, the indigenous populations earns less than half than Spanish-speakers.

Not surprisingly, Sendero Luminoso's promise of a more just and fair system was appealing to the indigenous population, particularly at the beginning of its campaign:

In the first years, however, the Shining Path was unquestionably successful in winning a measure of village sympathy in the war zone. Many peasants were happy to see the departure of inefficient and corrupt authorities, and the punishment by the cadre of adulterers and thieves seemed to validate the promise of a new, more just order (Starn 405).

Sendero Luminoso started to recruit high school and university students from Ayacucho's poor slums, who had experienced oppression and racism. The new recruits—rural youths with secondary education and sometimes with only elementary education—were the key link between the party and the rural peasantry, "Shining Path clearly needed this sector. Where it did not exist, Shining Path encountered difficulties in establishing solid links with the peasantry" (Degregori 128). The radical organization seduced the youth with the promise of social mobility, that up to that moment had seemed impossible to the poor indigenous youth, "these were the youth, finally, who had little hope of achieving such progress by way of the market, migration or education" (Degregori 130). The indigenous youth joined the ranks of Sendero Luminoso during the first years when violence had not reached unimaginable levels, and a sense of hope and adventure permeate the organization. Sendero Luminoso took advantage of kinship ties to influence the older

generations, the newly-recruited youth were sent to convince their parents to provide their support to the radical party. In turn, the parents listened to their children because they respected their education:

Many adults believed that if educated youth said something, it had to have some truth to it. The young people were the “ones with eyes” (*nawiyooq*), who “saw” things that their “ignorant” parents had perhaps not noticed. Even when, internally, they disagreed with the youth’s discourse, the reaction of the adults was ambiguous because of the familial and cultural ties that bound the generations together (Degregori 131).

Sendero Luminoso’s success over other leftist groups can be traced to their manipulation of kinship ties in the indigenous communities; plus their promises for social mobilization and a better class system after the revolution.

Sendero Luminoso was just one of the many leftist organizations present in the political milieu, and in university campuses during the 1970s<sup>47</sup>. Despite the rivalry between the organizations, they all shared a penchant for Maoism and a critical opinion of Velasco’s military government, “A powerful current in the radical Left was Maoism, or more specifically for some, “Mao Zedong thought.” In general, such groups develop a vision of Peruvian society as “semifeudal,” and of Velasco’s military government as “fascist” or “of fascist tendencies” (*fascistizante*)” (Hinojosa 64). Each of these leftist groups vied to be *the* Communist Party of Peru, as such they entered into the electoral process (1978-1979) with

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<sup>47</sup> Other leftist groups were Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru MRTA, Partido Unificado Mariateguista PUM, Partido Comunista del Perú-Patria Roja PCP-PR.

the exception of Sendero Luminoso. The election process demonstrated the fragmented state of the Left:

The elections would reveal, moreover, that while the Left had more than enough candidates, it lacked undisputed leaders who might occupy, for example, the space left by Mariátegui. Very few leaders could project themselves outside of their local or partisan ambits, and almost none offered an authority born from unquestionable political and intellectual qualities (such as those that Isaac Deutscher attributed to Lenin) that could have brought other leaders together behind one person (Hinojosa 67).

The lack of a strong leader would benefit Sendero Luminoso—since Peruvian history evinces a tendency to follow caudillos—the charismatic character of Abimael Guzman<sup>48</sup> would set his party aside from the other leftist groups. Furthermore, the parties that had joined the democratic electoral process had problems trying to reconcile their need to gain electoral power while continuing their work in mass politics, “the parties did not formally renounce armed struggle, thus inaugurating a stage of ideological schizophrenia that oscillated between a puritanical defense of the constitution and subversive-like agitation among popular sectors” (Hinojosa 73). In contrast, Sendero Luminoso continue to solely emphasize the necessity for revolutionary struggle, and show disdain for the electoral process.

The second presidency of Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1980 to 1985) would cement the people’s disillusion with the electoral process—they no longer believed that the

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<sup>48</sup> “At a boarding house on Pukacruz Street, later known to local pundits as *El Kremlin*, Guzman delivered long talks on dialectical materialism and scientific socialism, and earned the nickname of Dr. Shampú for his ability to ‘brainwash’ listeners” (Orin Starn 404)

democratic process would lead to social change. During his administration, Belaúnde Terry decided to renegotiate the country's international debt by implementing austerity measures that hurt the poor sectors the most. In 1981, the Belaúnde administration submitted to the International Monetary Fund demands:

Once again, the IMF was called in because of what the cabinet described as "unmanageable external disequilibrium". In a vain attempt to head off a barrage of criticism that an approach to the IMF (and acceptance of an austerity programme) would cause, central bank President, Richard Webb, argued, "it is important that the stabilization programme is seen as *ours* not *theirs*! (Nickson, 1983:83) (Weber 359).

The government tried to convince the country of the necessity of their austerity pact with the IMF; arguing that it was of the utmost importance that Perú maintained its international credit. The Belaúnde administration seemed to have forgotten that having a good relationship with the IMF had never helped Peru, "the foreign debt is nothing but the modern form in which our relationship to the industrialized and wealthy world is expressed and through which it obtains the wealth that supports its domination at the expense of the misery and poverty of its peoples (1985b:43)" (Weber 362). The austerity measures imposed by the first democratic government (after twelve years of military rule) changed the nation's attitude towards democracy. The more radical sectors started to look outside of the democratic parameters. Since Sendero Luminoso had stayed in the sidelines of the electoral process, the radical party easily gained the support of the poor working classes:

It is important to explain the paradoxical support that Shining Path gained among popular sectors —support that Shining Path obtained despite dogmatism and its violent terrorist methods—within a perspective that takes into account the regional diversity of the country and the distinct moments of its people’s war. Shining Path was able to maintain itself outside of the democratic experience of the legal Left, growing within extra-legal spaces vacated by the Left and taking advantage of the overall deterioration of the country (Hinojosa 77).

Sendero Luminoso gained widespread support at a moment when the country was facing economic hardships; yet the reason for Sendero Luminoso’s success over other leftist parties was in part due to its abstention in the electoral process.

Although at the beginning Sendero Luminoso counted with the support of the indigenous population of Ayacucho and surrounding areas, eventually they started to break away from the party. Some of the factors that contributed to their rupture with the party were: the disdain Sendero Luminoso had for indigenous culture, the extreme violence perpetrated by the organization, and Sendero’s inability or refusal to provide physical security to the population. The party’s mode of organization clashed with the Andean traditional hierarchy:

Coronel (1994) describes what occurred in the Iquichano communities that were still governed by the *vara* system, a hierarchical and ritualized structure of authority at the pinnacle of which sat the *varayoc* or *alcalde vara* (“keeper of the staff”) who personified the community and who assumed that post at an advanced age, having ascended via a community ladder of civic-

religious posts or cargos (see Vergara et al. 1985). The replacement of these authorities by young senderistas cadres was an affront not only to communal organization, but to the community's whole cosmovision (Degregori 134).

Sendero encountered higher degrees of resentment and rejection in the poorest communities, which tended to be most traditional. The party did not see the difference between the various indigenous communities—ignorantly they only classified them by their wealth—even though the indigenous communities had rich and complex social structures. Even though the rural youth was able to convince their elders to join the organization; when Sendero placed them in positions of power in their own communities, it created a negative backlash.

In addition to disrespecting the Andean traditional hierarchy, the party's strategic plan of war disrupted the peasantry's fairs and markets. Sendero strategy was to prevent that agricultural products from the Sierra reached the Coastal cities—they believed if the cities were besieged eventually they would capitulate to them. When Sendero forbade the indigenous from holding their fairs and markets, they did not take into account that the peasants themselves needed the fairs to buy manufactured products that came from the coastal cities (Degregori 133). As the conflict continued for years, the indigenous population started to lose hope and despair; in direct contrast to Sendero Luminoso who followed the Maoist principles that the path to liberation was through a protracted war:

For Shining Path, this interim represented the normal development of the strategy of protracted war (*guerra prolongada*): “ '83 and '84 are the years of struggle around reestablishment versus counter-reestablishment, that is, the counterrevolutionary war to squash the new Power and reestablish the Old

and the popular war to defend, develop, and construct the recently emerged Popular Power . . . from '85 until today [we fight for] the continuation of the defense, development, and construction that maintains the support bases [bases de apoyo] and [for] the expansion of the people's war to the whole ambit of our mountains from North to South" (PCP-SL 1986:200)" (Degregori 145).

The peasantry concept of time was based on the cycles of life; such as the agricultural cycles of sowing and harvesting, or the life cycle of animals. When Sendero Luminoso showed up in the Andes promising a new order that would more just and inclusive; the indigenous thought that their luck had finally changed and they were going to have a better life. When the conflict continued to rage for years, Sendero Luminoso's explanations of the Maoist tenets of a protracted war—defense, equilibrium, and offense— only meant that they had to suffer for prolonged periods under a new leadership who also did not respect their customs.

The ideology of Sendero Luminoso espoused extreme violence—in May 1981 Abimael Guzman propose the "blood quota"<sup>49</sup>— members of the party were harangued to prepare for the inevitable blood bath necessary to win the revolution. Whereas Sendero Luminoso saw violence as an absolute necessity, under "peasant law" the death penalty was only used in extreme circumstances:

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<sup>49</sup> "For Guzmán, the loss of life was part of the armed struggle. Thus, he expected Sendero militants to sacrifice their lives for the revolution. As Gorriti explains: "the willingness, indeed expectation, of offering one's life when the party asked for it" is known as "the quota." Guzman emphasized that: [...] Blood makes us stronger and if it's this bath that the armed forces have made for us, the blood is flowing, it's not harming us but making us stronger" (Post 143).

In juridical terms, the punishments that Shining Path imposed were increasingly out of proportion with the magnitude of the supposed crimes, which, of course, Shining Path categorized according to a totally alien notion of law, distant from everyday common law and national jurisprudence. According to Galvez (1987), in what he called (for descriptive purposes only) “peasant law,” punishments often included physical exactions but very rarely included death (Degregori 139).

Andean common law aims to persuade not to punish, keeping in mind that the most important goal is the unity of the community. The death penalty was only an option if the crime committed endangered the whole community. Since the death penalty leaves orphans or widows—which places an extra burden on the community who has to support them—killing criminals was not considered beneficial for the community as a whole. When electing justices of the peace, the indigenous communities would take into consideration the reputation of the nominees, whether they were considered fair and just by the rest of the community, in conjunction with their knowledge of traditions and customs. Once Abimael Guzman implemented the “quota” as a requisite to join the organization, the degree of violence escalated very quickly. Sendero Luminoso wanted to demonstrate to the national government that they were willing to go as far as it was necessary to win.

The party’s military strategies aligned with the Maoist guerrilla warfare principles—which advised that when the enemy advances—the forces should retreat and protect its own members. The Andean peasants were used to the traditional *patrón* that protected his own servants; because as his workforce they were his livelihood. When



Sendero Luminoso retreated and hid from the national forces, they left many towns completely unprotected and vulnerable to the wrath of the national army:

The following account relates what occurred in a hamlet in the valley of Huanta. Similar accounts, with minor variations, were repeated in other testimonials. “They told us: it is necessary to be ready for the war, to defeat the enemy. We had believed them. But once they attacked Huanta after attacking and killing two guardias they escaped through here and they screwed us; they turned us over; they practically sold us out. Well, this is not manly [eso no es de hombres, pues] (Walter, peasant) (Degregori 141).

The Andean population felt betrayed by the movement—coming to the realization that when it came down to war—Sendero was not going to protect them. Sendero Luminoso failed to understand and communicate with the indigenous peasantry, they ignored their traditions, their kinship and communal ties, and abandoned them at the height of danger. After the first years, much of the indigenous population left the party— at first their rejection of the insurgency was to avoid interacting with Sendero Luminoso—but as the conflict continued peasant communities started to openly confront the radical organization.

The Peruvian government responded to the insurgency with violence, “resulting in widespread massacres, forced disappearances and the massive use of sexual violence and torture. The result was spiraling violence, fear and insecurity” (Burt 386). During the governments of Fernando Belaúnde (1980-1985) and Alan García (1985-1990) the strength of Sendero Luminoso continued to grow; it was not until the dictatorship of Fujimori that the movement would retreat and ceased to be a threat. In 1990 Alberto

Fujimori was elected to office; winning the presidential campaign against the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa. Fujimori's populist tendencies earned him the vote from the indigenous and mestizo population; these sectors identified with him since he was a descendent of Japanese immigrants, and considered an outsider by the political elite:

Fujimori's time in office serves as the prototypical case of neopopulism. He ruled in a top-down, personalistic manner that, at best, blurred the boundaries between democracy and authoritarianism, he made direct appeals to Peru's poor, particularly the unorganized masses; he made heavy use of an 'anti-system' or 'anti-political' rhetoric that lambasted the political class for causing the nation's problems; he manipulated the institutions of government to concentrate power in the executive office, thereby facilitating his use of state resources for personal political gain; he 'saved' the country from the acute crises of hyper-inflation and terrorism; and he transformed the structure of the economy, implementing a neoliberal model of development and appealing to international financial interests (Barr 1162).

During his administration Alberto Fujimori manipulated Peruvians fear of Sendero Luminoso to his own advantage; civil liberties were severely weakened giving the government more power. The nation gave up their constitutional rights, under the erroneous belief that a *mano dura*<sup>50</sup> was necessary to exterminate Sendero Luminoso.

Through tactics of fear and intimidation Fujimori enjoyed the support of the population as his high approval rates evince. Even in 1992 when Fujimori with the help of

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<sup>50</sup> Mano dura literally means strong or firm hand, but it should be translated as "tough on crime".

his military allies enacted a self-coup— he closed congress, suspended the constitution, and dissolved the judiciary—his approval rates were as high as seventy percent. In her book *Violencia y autoritarismo en el Perú: bajo la sombra de Sendero y la dictadura de Fujimori*, Jo-Marie Burt emphasizes that during the internal war the violence in Peru was not only at the hands of Sendero Luminoso. In comparison to the military dictatorships of Chile and Argentina—in which the state had a monopoly on the violence—Peru’s revolutionary movement was highly armed and organized:

En contraste, en el caso peruano, la violencia política tuvo múltiples fuentes y fue ejercida a escala masiva tanto por el Estado como por los grupos insurgentes. . . El Estado y sus agentes fueron responsables por cerca del 40 por ciento de las matanzas. . . Estas cifras no atribuyen responsabilidad y tampoco cuantifican otras formas de violencia empleadas durante el conflicto, tales como la tortura—incluidos actos de violencia sexual—que no terminaron en asesinatos, el desplazamiento forzado de personas y comunidades, y la detención arbitraria, los cuales pasaron a ser un rasgo característico de las operaciones contrainsurgentes, particularmente después del golpe de 1992 (Burt 26).

Nonetheless, the Peruvian State was also highly responsible for the political violence—especially after the self-coup of 1992—when it started to engage in illegal surveillance methods, arbitrary arrests, and forced disappearances.

The Fujimori regime used state power to maintain its position; by controlling most of the media<sup>51</sup>, and using the military forces to undermine any opposition to his dictatorship. His administration created specialized military units that engaged in targeted disappearances and assassinations. For instance the Colina Group—one of the specialized military troops—was formed in 1991 with the objective of eliminating any suspected subversives:

The Colina Group was responsible for a number of killings between 1991 and 1992, including the Barrios Altos massacre, in which several heavily armed men stormed a tenement in the Barrios Altos neighborhood of Lima in November 1991 and killed 15 people, including an eight-year-old child, and gravely wounded four others, as well as the disappearance and killing of nine students and a professor from the Cantuta University in July 1992 (Burt 387 “Guilty as Charged”).

Due to his authoritarian tactics Fujimori was reelected for a third term in 2000 even though the 1993 constitution—written by him and his allies in Congress— clearly stated that a president could only serve for two consecutive terms. To bypass the two-term

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<sup>51</sup> “Montesinos has testified that Fujimori authorized enormous payments to ensure the government’s control over the media, and Fujimori has been charged accordingly. According to Montesino’s bookkeeper at the SIN, by 2002 the SIN handled a monthly budget of close to US\$ 9 million. In the run-up to the 2000 presidential elections much of his money went toward controlling the country’s television stations. Presidential advisor Montesinos gave millions of dollars to the owners of Channel 4 / America, Channel 5/ Panamericana, and Canal 9/ Andina, in exchange for editorial control over their broadcasts.... Particularly notorious was the case of Channel 2/ Frecuencia Latina, whose majority owner, Israeli-born Baruch Ivcher, was stripped of his Peruvian citizenship in July 1997, which violated his rights under the constitution and barred from owning a television station. Minority shareholders beholden to the government took over the station and its editorial lane changed accordingly. A criminal investigation was also initiated against Ivcher and his family; Ivcher was acquitted after the Fujimori government’s collapse. Montesinos also handed over money regularly to the owners of yellow press tabloids in exchange for front page headlines ridiculing and insulting opposition politicians and journalists” *Peru/Chile: Probable Cause: Evidence implicating Fujimori*, Human Rights Watch Organization, Dec. 2005.

constitutional limitation, Congress under his advisement passed the “Law of Authentic interpretation of the Constitution”. The law stated that in this individual instance the president could seek another term; because the legislation allowed the president to interpret the constitution to his advantage. Since the two-term rule was instituted in 1993, after Fujimori had already started his first term, they argued that the limitation could not apply to him. When the Lima Bar Association contested the legality of the Law of Authentic Interpretation, the Fujimori administration issued a mandate, “requiring an extraordinary majority of six out of seven votes in order to declare a law unconstitutional” ( Cameron 20). Two members of the Tribunal—who were in cahoots with the Fujimori administration—voted to uphold the law whereas the other five members decided that the law was unconstitutional. As a repayment for their unfavorable vote, Congress fired the members who had opposed the Law of Authentic Interpretation, dismantling the Constitutional Tribunal.

Fujimori’s campaign for his third term faced massive street protests; as well as pressure from the international community and the Organization of American States (OAS). The military ensured his victory in the elections against his competitor Alejandro Toledo; who decided to withdraw from the second round due to its irregularities:

Observadores electorales internacionales y locales declararon que el proceso electoral mostraba fallas significativas. Para la segunda ronda electoral del 28 de mayo, el contendor de Fujimori —Alejandro Toledo— y observadores electorales internacionales, incluyendo la OEA, se retiraron del proceso, arguyendo su incapacidad para asegurar un conteo limpio de votos (Youngers and Peacock 23).

Once his rival Toledo withdrew from the electoral process, Fujimori ran as the only candidate in the second round of elections<sup>52</sup>. When the Fujimori regime published the results of the fraudulent elections—it was clear that the nation strongly opposed his illegitimate third term— more than half of the population either did not vote, cancelled their vote, or voted for Toledo even though he no longer was a candidate. Despite international criticism and domestic opposition Fujimori was illegally inaugurated to his third term; mainly because he had the support of the armed forces and powerful allies in congress.

In December of 2000 Fujimori was forced to resign the presidency due to strong evidence exposing the extreme corruption of his administration. Fujimori sought asylum in Japan from whence he faxed his resignation to the Peruvian presidency. In September the first “Vladi-video” was leaked to the press, which showed Fujimori’s head of the Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional (SIN)—Vladimiro Montesinos—bribing a congressman of the opposition (Barr 1163). An extensive collection of “Vladi-videos” demonstrated the extent of the corruption in the Fujimori administration; in light of the scandal Fujimori fled the country to avoid facing criminal charges. Congress elected Valentín Paniagua as the interim president until July 2001; after then Alejandro Toledo took office after receiving a plurality of votes in democratic elections. Notwithstanding Toledo’s victory in the 2001 electoral process, Alan García representing the APRA party proved to be a strong second rival. Alan García’s campaign helped the APRA party win 23% of the seats in congress, thanks to his

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<sup>52</sup> In Peru the presidential elections are based on the two-round system. In this system each voter casts a single vote for his candidate in the open first-round election; which usually takes place in April 9 or 10. However if no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote, then the two top candidates compete in a second round in May or June.

return from exile the APRA party gained popularity once again, “Many observers had concluded that Peru’s party system had effectively collapsed during the course of Fujimori’s tenure, with the established parties almost entirely eclipsed by new, independent electoral movements like Toledo’s Perú Posible” (Barr 1163). The strong presence of the APRA in the 2001 electoral process showed that the Fujimori regime was not completely successful in eliminating the traditional Peruvian party system.

Under the Fujimori dictatorship the nation’s democratic institutions were severely weakened—congress and the judicial system were in shams after ten years of authoritarian rule—and the armed forces enjoyed unlimited power. Fujimori’s escape to Japan left the interim president Paniagua facing large-scale citizen dissatisfaction with the government; human rights groups demanded the creation of a truth commission committee, and the scrutiny of the international community. The Paniagua government made certain efforts to address these problems:

Efforts were made to purge the judiciary and other institutions of corrupt officials. Judges and military officers who had been sacked during the Fujimori regime were restored to their positions or were provided indemnity. Congressional inquiries were launched into the crimes of Fujimori-Montesinos mafia and efforts were made to recover stolen governments funds. Paniagua also created a special prosecutorial unit, the *Procuraduría Pública Ad Hoc*, tasked with working with the Public Ministry and the judiciary to prosecute corruption (but not human rights) cases (Burt “Guilty as Charged” 388).

In addition to these changes in the domestic front, the Paniagua administration made steps to change the reputation of the Peruvian State in the international community. Before his fall from grace Fujimori had withdrawn Peru from the Inter-American Court; he reacted angrily at their ruling on a human rights case. The Paniagua administration considered the return of Peru to the Inter-American Court as an important step to win back the support of the international community. To regain its admittance, the Peruvian state decided to assume responsibility for the violations of human rights during the Fujimori dictatorship, “and accepted amicable solutions or agreed to abide by the Court’s rulings in some 150 cases. This decision was hailed by the human rights community as a major step forward in restoring international confidence in Peru’s democratic institutions” (Burt “Guilty as Charged” 389).

In 1995, while Fujimori was serving his second term, Congress had passed the General Amnesty Law during a clandestine midnight session. The law conceded impunity to military personnel or civilians—who were implicated in human rights violations—during the conflict with Sendero Luminoso:

Presentada la noche del 13 de junio de 1995 sin haber sido anunciada, y aprobada la madrugada siguiente, la propuesta fue inmediatamente promulgada por el Presidente y convertida en ley. No hubo debate público ni oportunidad de réplica a la medida. La impunidad para quienes violaron los derechos humanos se convirtió en ley, aunque las encuestas demostraban que cerca del 75 por ciento de la población se oponía a la ley de amnistía (Youngers 24).



The coalition for human rights known as the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú (CONADEH), set in motion a number of campaigns to challenge the Law of General Amnesty. Their first campaign, which set out to collect enough signatures to hold a referendum on the legality of the amnesty law, failed because most Peruvians were too afraid to be identified by their signature. Taking into account the citizen's fear the Coordinadora changed its strategy—by concentrating on other forms of protest that did not leave a paper trail—such as street performances, concerts, public theater and vigils. The Coordinadora also worked in conjunction with human rights lawyers to present their case to the Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH), trying to gain international support for their campaigns.

Fortunately their second campaign “En Nombre de los Inocentes”—which aimed to free citizens that were incarcerated under accusations of terrorism charges—was more successful. The coalition made sure to use language that made a clear distinction between innocent people and terrorists, “Durante la campaña, la Coordinadora se concentró en la distinción entre las personas inocentes y aquellos culpables de terrorismo, argumentando que no habría costo para la sociedad en liberar a personas inocentes” (Youngers 23). Their strategy was similar to the one used in Argentina—namely how CONADEP strategically employed apolitical language in their report *Nunca Más*— which aimed to portray individuals as innocent without any political ideology. The Coordinadora avoided cases of people that had been involved to any degree with Sendero; even though many of them had never received a fair trial. Even the Fujimori administration gave some validity to the claims of the Inocentes campaign, “en parte como estrategia calculada para mejorar su imagen, Fujimori empezó a reconocer públicamente que se habían cometido algunos

errores, implicando que podría estar abierto a algunos casos de peruanos inocentes encarcelados bajo acusación de terrorismo” (Youngers 25). By concentrating on the innocence argument, the Coordinadora was able to gain the freedom of thousands of people; unfortunately this strategy did not help the thousands of others that were implicated in some level with Sendero Luminoso. Furthermore, it avoided the necessary discussion that the Peruvian nation needed to have—addressing their past—to understand the underlying causes of the violence they had lived in the last two decades.

## **Biopolitics and Neoliberalism in Peru**

The Fujimori regime functioned under the same political rationality as the Pinochet dictatorship and the Argentine Junta Militar; in order to gain power and implement a neoliberal society. As we saw in chapter one, in Chile the transition to a neoliberal system was accomplished for the main part during Pinochet's dictatorship; and the subsequent democratic governments of La Concertación made sure to keep in place the economic model of the dictatorship. In chapter two I outlined how in Argentina the transformation of the economic system took longer due to the nation's historically strong unions and labor movement. However the military junta that governed from 1976 to 1983 made the transition possible by eliminating the opposition— the regime killed, tortured, and disappeared any political dissident— preparing the path for the post-dictatorship democratic governments to finish the transition. In Peru, the post-Fujimori democratic governments did not tamper with the unfair pro-market policies adopted during the Fujimori regime. All three countries manipulated the nation's fear to gain unlimited power; by instituting a state of exemption under which rights were severely weakened. Once the authoritarian regimes gained control of the population, they implemented a neoliberal system that remained in place even after democratic governments ousted the dictatorships.

The paradox of biopolitics is that two models of power coexist, one that promotes the health of the population and the other that eliminates any threat to the population. In *Society must be Defended* Michel Foucault was the first to explore the relationship between modern governments and biological life:

It seems to me that one of the basic phenomena of the nineteenth century was what might be called power's hold over life. What I mean is the

acquisition of power over man insofar as man is a living being, that the biological came under State control, that there was at least a certain tendency that leads to what might be termed State control of the biological (*Society must be Defended* 240).

Following the Foucauldian theory of biopower, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben expanded on this topic by introducing the concept of bare life. In *Homo Sacer* Agamben concludes that western politics do not make the classical distinction between *zoe*—natural life—and *bios*—a particular form of life, “the importance of this distinction in Aristotle is that it allows for the relegation of natural life to the domain of the household (*oikos*), while also allowing for the specificity of the good life characteristic of participation in the polis—*bios politikos*” (Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Conversely, Western politics integrates both types of life into the political realm, creating an area of exclusion by inclusion. To elucidate, Agamben draws from ancient Roman law the concept of the bare life—the homo sacer who cannot be sacrificed to the gods—yet at the same time whoever kills him will not be condemned of homicide:

For Agamben, bare life constitutes the original but “concealed nucleus” of Western biopolitics in so far as its exclusion founds the political realm. Bare life is always already captured by the political in a double way: first, in the form of the exclusion from the *polis*—it is included in the political in the form of exclusion—and, second, in the form of the unlimited exposure to violation, which does not count as a crime (*Plonowska*).

Thus, in western politics there is an area of indistinction—a political space where the excluded exist—in this zone they are stripped of their legal rights but still are under the jurisdiction of political power.

Foucault proposes that the new mode of power expands on the previous modality of power, which constituted the sovereign's right to kill or let live:

And I think that one of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century was precisely that, I wouldn't say exactly that sovereignty's old right—to take life or let live—was replaced, but it came to be complemented by a new right which does not erase the old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it" (*Society Must be Defended* 241).

Foucault argues that the new modality of biopower finds a way to eliminate the opposition under the justification that they constitute a danger to the population, "and the reason this mechanism can come into play is that the enemies who have to be done away with are not adversaries in the political sense of the term; they are threats, either external or internal, to the population and for the population" (256). Thus in modern societies, governments incite or take advantage of the population's fear to gain their support for the extermination of the dissidents. Those that oppose the system are the excluded—the homo sacer—that are included only to be eliminated. This happened during the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina, when the government killed and disappeared many political activists, under the banner of protecting the nation:

En el caso del Cono Sur, esta tentativa de exterminar los cuerpos de individuos, cuya presencia física y política no es tolerada por el Estado militar, expresado con el exterminio y persecución de izquierdistas y

disidentes a los regímenes fascistas se quedó en nuestra era re-democratizada y así indicaré que el fascismo de las dictaduras militares es donde cambia el manejo de los cuerpos de vidas desnudas, a través de la erradicación radical (Choi 9).

The Fujimori regime was constituted under the same premises of biopolitics as the dictatorships of Chile and Argentina; with the exception that in Peru the ongoing violence of the insurgency movement facilitated Fujimori's state of exception.

The Fujimori period was characterized by the egregious disregard of the legislative and judicial processes; the Peruvian Truth Commission noted that in the rural areas the military forces engaged, "in classic counterinsurgency operations—draining the "sea" to catch the "fish," which resulted in massacres, extrajudicial executions, and "disappearances." In the city, individuals suspected of terrorism were detained and sometimes disappeared" (Burt 39 Quién habla). To be able to implement this type of counterinsurgency tactic, Fujimori appealed to the nation claiming that the Legislative and Judicial branches were interfering with the security of the country. In 1992 the Fujimori administration joined by the military forces staged an autogolpe, their intentions were to call a state of emergency:

Anunció una serie de medidas extremas, entre ellas la disolución del Congreso de la República, la intervención del Poder Judicial, del Consejo Nacional de la Magistratura, del Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales y del Ministerio Público, así como la reestructuración de la Contraloría General de la República. Instituyó el Gobierno de Emergencia y Reconstrucción Nacional sobre la base de diez objetivos, resaltó la modificación de la Constitución

Política, la pacificación del país dentro de un marco jurídico que sancione en forma drástica a los terroristas y narcotraficantes, y la promoción de la economía de mercado (Benavente 4).

Once Fujimori established a state of exception in Peru, he assumed unlimited power over any citizen that opposed his regime. Any opposition movement or group was categorized as a “terrorista”, under the state of emergency terrorists had no legal rights, they could be killed without a trial, and their murderers did not face any charges.

Giorgio Agamben had a more pessimistic outlook of contemporary life, according to him western societies are the same as the concentration camps of the Holocaust, and we all are homo sacers. Agamben argues that if a system can suspend the rights of certain individuals under a state of emergency, then everyone is at the mercy of the sovereign:

The camp as a paradigm of the modern political condition does not refer merely to a place that is preserved as a memory or archive, but rather, it is an event that repeats itself on a daily basis. Thus, whenever we see boats filled with refugees, when we see immigrants being contained in soccer stadiums, we have an instance of the camp materializing a state of exception where the individual is constituted as bare life and the logic of juridical procedurals reaches its limits (Panagia).

When the Peruvian nation allowed Fujimori to suspend the legal rights of Sendero Luminoso, they also made themselves vulnerable. If Fujimori administration could exterminate without due process any member Sendero Luminoso, the regime could also eliminate any Peruvian citizen. In fact the State forces did not make an effort to distinguish between members of Sendero Luminoso and civilians:

Como consecuencia de la incapacidad o renuencia del Estado para distinguir entre los militantes de Sendero Luminoso y quienes participaban en formas legítimas de protesta social y actividad política, muchas de las víctimas a manos de las fuerzas de seguridad del Estado resultaron ser miembros de organizaciones de la sociedad civil que erróneamente fueron catalogados como sospechosos de participar en actividades terroristas (Burt, “Quien habla es terrorista” 325).

Not surprisingly, once the state of exception was in place in Peru, members of Sendero Luminoso as well as political activists became homo sacers.

To this end the State created specialized military troops—such as the Grupo Colina—that were assigned targeted killing missions, kidnappings, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions:

El gobierno dispuso la creación de escuadrones de la muerte, como el Destacamento Colina, para que se movilicen, por lo menos, en todo el territorio peruano, identificando y eliminando a toda aquella persona considerada terrorista. Así durante la década de los noventas, los miembros de este Destacamento no eran considerados homicidas, y si quedase alguna duda, el Congreso, con mayoría fujimorista, dictó leyes para amnistiarlos (Benavente Chorres 23).

For instance on November 3, 1991 a group of neighbors of Barrios Altos organized a fundraiser (*pollada*); trying to raise funds to fix the water and sewer system of the neighborhood. The Colina group leaders with the approval of Alberto Fujimori decided to attack the *pollada*; and kill anyone they believed was involved or connected with terrorism.



Around 10pm that night, members of the Colina group invaded the pollada under the command of Captain Martin Rivas:

El mismo, que luego de recibir telefónicamente la ratificación de la respectiva orden –denominada luz verde—tildando de terroristas y lanzando improperios a los asistentes ordenó dispararles, no sin antes colocarlos en el patio y hacer una selección de los mismos bajo la indicación del agente Arteaga Pascual Abadía [...] la orden de disparar se dictó inmediatamente y los agentes dispararon contra el grupo de víctimas sin miramiento alguno (Benavente Chorres 14).

In this operation fifteen people were killed among them an eight year old child; even though there was no evidence linking any of the victims to terrorist activities. This incident was just one of many<sup>53</sup> in which the Colina Group killed Peruvian citizens with the approval of the government. This incident exemplifies how the Peruvian nation lived in a state of exception during the Fujimori regime; where legal rights were suspended in the name of national security.

In comparison to the experience of Chile and Argentina, the Peruvian insurgency movement was indeed violent, causing many deaths throughout the Andean region. However, years later the Fujimori regime was exposed for having exaggerated the danger Sendero Luminoso posed to the nation. In 1991 Abimael Guzmán had claimed that the

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<sup>53</sup> Other incidents include: the massacre of students and a professor at the University of La Cantuta on July 18, 1992, the kidnapping of the journalists Gustavo Gorriti on April 6, 1992, forced disappearance and extrajudicial execution of six people in Pativilca on January 28, 1992, forced disappearance and extrajudicial execution of nine individuals in El Santa, Chimbote on May 2, 1992, forced disappearance and the extrajudicial execution of the journalist Pedro Herminio Yauri Bustamante, forced disappearance and extrajudicial execution of the Ventocilla family on June 24, 1992, etc. (Benavente Chorres).

“guerrilla movement” from the 1980s had passed to a “strategic equilibrium”—the second stage of Maoist protracted war—and that by 1992 it would reach the “final offensive”<sup>54</sup>. In the second stage Guzmán ordered the guerrilla units to operate as battalions, to portray that Sendero had the same strength as the national army. Even so it was obvious that Sendero was not sweeping across Peru and taking over cities:

No matter how hard the local commanders tried to dress up their reports, they still reported many casualties and few decisive victories. Even Guzmán could see that all the cities of Peru were still in the hands of the government [. . .] Sudden collapses of regimes have occurred infrequently throughout history, but Peru was not one of these rare cases. Guzmán was grasping at straws, because he realized that Shining Path needed a spectacular success to just survive (Pedraja 172).

Sendero Luminoso tried to isolate Lima from the countryside—impeding the flow of produce into the city—to starve them until they surrendered. Their efforts were unsuccessful and by the time Abimael Guzman was captured, the movement hardly could be considered of equal strength as the military forces. The Fujimori regime manipulated the nation, lying to the Peruvian population that Sendero Luminoso had reached strategic equilibrium, “ahora bien, lo que hizo el entorno de Fujimori fue el usar la presión mediática a su favor; es decir, vender a la población que Sendero Luminoso había obtenido el

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<sup>54</sup> “In theories on wars of national liberation, Mao Tse-Tung’s (1893-1976) theory on revolutionary warfare occupies a special position. The three stages in Mao’s theory of revolutionary warfare—strategic defensive, strategic equilibrium, and strategic offensive—reflected the different conditions of the revolutionary uprising that was based on variations of time, legitimacy, relationship of forces, and terrain conditions. Mao claimed that guerrilla warfare was an addition to, and a necessary step towards, the conventional force that was necessary to finally defeat the stronger party [...] What have been traditionally been termed as guerrilla warfare tactics were thus, according to Mao, only a means, and not most important” (Angstrom 122).

denominado “equilibrio estratégico”; es decir, la suficiente capacidad operativa para lograr su objetivo final: la toma del poder y la instauración de un régimen de corte maoísta” (Benavente Chorres 7). During the trial of Fujimori, it was established that the Peruvian government did not believe that Sendero Luminoso was an opponent of equitable force. Fujimori and his base incited the fear of the population to eliminate their opposition and consolidate their power.

In a similar fashion to Pinochet’s neoliberal experiment, the Fujimori dictatorship instituted the transition to an unfair deregulated economy. The 1993 constitution written by the Fujimori regime has a strong authoritarian and neoliberal stance; and is the current constitution of Peru. Under chapter VII of the 1993 constitution, the state is allowed to suspend guaranteed rights during a state of exception (Cameron 19). The same document gave ample powers to private business, and decreased the government’s regulation of the economy:

The neoliberal cast of the 1993 Constitution has been widely noted by observers (Rubio 2012; Teivainen 2002). Domingo García Belaúnde agrees, saying “the state practically disappears from the economic sphere taking on a modest subsidiary role” 1996: 36). Whereas the 1979 Constitution described the state in interventionist terms, the Constitution of 1993 sought to minimize state involvement in the economy and give space to private enterprise (Cameron 18).

What’s more, the 1993 constitution offered foreign corporations the same treatment that domestic industries enjoyed. In this constitution the right to strike was severely limited for

the sake of the private companies, enabling them to lower their wages without the fear of losing their workforce.

It is important to make a distinction between classical liberalism, “a state that regulates competition and ensures people freely express their natural inclination to save and invest” and the neoliberal state which, “actively establishes competitive economic rationality through demobilization, deregulation, depoliticization, privatization, surveillance, targeting, and a culture of entrepreneurship and consumerism” (Cameron 24). Proponents of neoliberalism like to pretend that neoliberalism is the equivalent of a free market economy—where the market stabilizes itself—claiming that a neoliberal state is fair and that the market treats everyone the same. On the contrary, in a neoliberal economy a select group of corporate powers influence the government policies to benefit their economic interests, “it also comes in the form of direct (but almost always invisible) interventions in politics in which major corporations exercise their veto over almost any area of public policy that affects their interests” (23). To extrapolate to the Peruvian case, the Fujimori neoliberal regime reduced union activity by limiting strike activity; in fact it enforced the opposite through the Ministry of Labor:

The Ministry of Labor ceased to facilitate collective bargaining or uphold workers’ rights, and began to do just the opposite—it worked to promote a flexible workforce and a labor market with minimal regulations and safeguards. Private Service contracts proliferated at the expense of stable work. In the rural areas, efforts were made to continue to promote the parcelization of land, and the breakup of peasant cooperatives (25).

When the teacher's union continued to protest, the regime blamed them for the poor education system. As we can see, Fujimori's neoliberal state regulated the market to benefit the corporate powers by intervening when the workforce demanded better conditions, through the limitation of their bargaining tools. At the same time when the private enterprises set unfair conditions, the state would claim that they could not tamper with the freedom of the market.

Tantamount to Chile's post-Pinochet governments—who did not remove the neoliberal economic model of the dictatorship—the post-Fujimori administrations of (Paniagua, Toledo, García, and Humala) strongly advocated leaving in place the pro-market economic plan.

### Literature and Film: *La hora azul* and *La teta asustada*

In the previous chapters I address the juxtaposition of authoritarianism with patriarchy in literature and film; with the goal of untangling the relationship between sexuality and biopolitics. In this chapter, I consider forms of patriarchy that developed within the Fujimori dictatorship during the internecine war with Sendero Luminoso, in the novel *La hora azul* by Alonso Cueto and the film *La teta asustada* by the director Claudia Llosa. Both fictions depict rape perpetrated at the hands of the military forces or Sendero Luminoso; and the effects of trauma on children who were born during this violent period. Cueto's novel as well as Llosa's film engage the Andean culture, highlighting the wide chasm that separates the indigenous population from the elite limeña. Death and suicide are showcased in both the novel and the film, as forms of resistance to Fujimori's dictatorship and the more contemporary neoliberal state.

The violent conflict between Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian State fomented a veritable literary renaissance; Peruvian writers like Santiago Roncaglió (winner of the Alfaguara prize for *Abril Rojo*) and Alonso Cueto (recipient of the Herralde award for *La hora azul*)<sup>55</sup> rose to international attention. As the newspaper *The Guardian* published in an article<sup>56</sup> of January 2007, "protagonists from Peru's conflict years are returning as characters in novels. Montesinos, the notorious spy chief, features in Cueto's previous novel, *Grandes Miradas*, about a schoolteacher seeking vengeance for her murdered

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<sup>55</sup> "Winner of the prestigious Herralde award, his novel was also named the best Spanish-language novel published between 2004 and 2005 by China's National Publishing House, and to date has been translated into 13 languages, including English as *The Blue Hour* (2012)" (The Contemporary Spanish-American Novel: Bolano and After).

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/05/books.booksnews>

boyfriend. Roncaglio is working on a book about Guzmán.” Alonso Cueto<sup>57</sup> is considered one of Peru’s most respected writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; his neorealist novels tend to center on the upper middle-class, “Cueto emerges as more of a neorealist, searching for signs of banal humanity within the humdrum of daily life” (International Festival of Literature Berlin). His novel *La hora azul* was inspired by the real story of an indigenous girl held as a sexual prisoner by a member of the armed forces; who ended up falling in love with her. She was able to escape from military headquarters Los Cabitos de Ayacucho, by flirting and pretending to drink with her two wardens; when they became inebriated she ran away into the night<sup>58</sup>.

In *La hora azul* the successful lawyer Adrián Ormanche has a perfect life; he lives with his socialite wife and their two beautiful daughters in the wealthy neighborhood of San Isidro:

No puedes tener a una esposa mejor, me decía mi suegra. Tenía razón. Con sus trajes y sus modales, Claudia daba siempre una buena impresión a amigos y conocidos. Organizaba largas y exquisitas cenas en la casa, con mesas pobladas de fuentes de carne, ensaladas y postres. Los abogados importantes--los Muñoz, los del Prado, los Rodrigo—se quedaban hasta tarde en mi casa y siempre se despedían de nosotros con abrazos. Lo mismo

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<sup>57</sup> Alonso Cueto was born in Lima in 1954. He attended the Universidad Católica del Perú, and received a Ph.D from the University of Texas, Austin. His doctoral thesis centered on the work of the Uruguayan novelist Juan Carlos Onetti. His novels include *La batalla del pasado* (1983), *El tigre blanco* (1985, Premio Wiracocha del Grupo Editorial Planeta), *Amores de invierno* (1994), *El vuelo de la ceniza* (1995), *Demonio del mediodía* (1999) and *Grandes Miradas* (2003).

<sup>58</sup> “La anécdota fue extraída de una conversación con el también escritor Ricardo Uceda, mientras éste le confesaba aquellos sucesos de la Guerra Sucia contra el terrorismo que habían provocado la realización de *Muerte en el Pentagonito* (2004)” (Paradas 564).

ocurría con algunos políticos: Ferrero, Lourdes Flores, el mismo Belaunde alguna vez. Todos eran buenos amigos (Cueto 15).

Adrián and his wife Claudia often appear in the social section of magazines, they take lavish vacations in the Caribbean, and live in a 5000 square meter house with two maids, a cook, and a chauffeur. After his mother's death Adrián learns that his father—who was a navy commander during the armed conflict—had kept a sexual slave, a young beautiful Ayacuchana that was able to escape. Even though his father was deeply involved in the internal war, Adrián had never been interested in asking his father about it, preferring to lead a self-absorbed existence solely focusing on his success and comfort. After his mother's death he embarks on a road of self-discovery; obsessed in finding his father's concubine Miriam with whom he ends up having an extramarital affair.

On the previous chapters, I referenced Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, to note how sexuality became a method of control and regulation in modern societies. For instance, in Chile the military regime controlled the sexual behavior of men and women by promoting a regressive division of gender roles. The dictatorships of Pinochet and Videla resorted to sexual violence to eliminate the opposition. By raping the political detainees, the authoritarian governments intended to gather information about the movements of the political opposition; torture and sexual abuse was an iron-clad way to destroy a person to their inner core. The military regimes of Chile and Argentina used sexuality to gain greater control of the population; similarly, the Fujimori regime condoned the armed forces practice of raping indigenous women during the conflict with Sendero:

During this war, the sexual-cultural encounter also happened to be militarized and genocidal. According to the report released by the Comisión



de la Verdad y Reconciliación (2004) more than 69,000 individuals were killed or disappeared, while torture and the rape of women were common practices. Three out of every four were Quechua-speaking peasants (2004: 433-34, 442)” (Rivera 856).

The anthropologist Kimberly Theidon conducted extensive research on wartime rape and sexual exploitation in Peru during the 1980s and 1990s. She reported that wartime rape was more commonly reported as a third-person account, women denounced sexual exploitation as a collective testimony.

In December of 1982 the regions of Apurímac, Huancavelica, and Ayacucho were declared under a state of emergency. At this time the military forces were given free rein to rape, or sexually abuse the indigenous population:

Evidence suggests that the armed forces and police systematically used rape and other forms of sexual violence, such as forced nudity, sexual torture, forced prostitution, abortion, and sexual slavery, to subjugate the population. Shining Path also perpetrated sexual violence against the population, although in a comparatively less systematic manner. Women were both peace activists and Shining Path militants (Boesten & Fisher 2).

Gender, race, and class played a vital role in wartime rape. For example soldiers would claim that the indigenous women had “asked for it”; within Peru’s racial hierarchy lighter-skinned men assume that indigenous women desire them because of their racial superiority. According to the testimony of a soldier two women were captured in 1993; one was an indigenous *ambulante* (street vendor without permit) and the other one a white educated dentist. The poor vendor was raped by 40 men of various ranks, according to the

unspoken rules she could be raped by soldiers of any rank; conversely the dentist could only be raped by the captain or higher ranking officers (Boesten 92-93). As one can see throughout the internal war, rape as a war weapon was based on pre-existing hierarchies of class and gender.

The novel *La hora azul* portrays two sexual encounters—the first between the Commandant Ormanche and Miriam, and the second one between Adrián and Miriam—as metaphors for the national strife between the indigenous and the western culture. In his article “Writing the Sexual-Cultural Encounter in the Andes: *La hora azul* by Alonso Cueto” Fernando Rivera traces in literature the emblematic sexual encounter between both cultures throughout Peru’s history:

Concerning the historical situation of the conquest, of particular interest is the moment before the Inca Garcilaso’s birth: the scene of the sexual or erotic encounter between the Spanish captain and the Incan ñusta, which constitutes the emblematic moment of encounter between two cultures. It is fair to say that this scene travels the whole of Peru’s historical and literary imaginary and can be defined in textual terms. Its narrative structure is actualized in a panoply of forms: as a love-adventure story, and as an account of marriage, rape or sexual exploitation. As this encounter is typically represented from the perspective of the dominant culture, a self/other dichotomy becomes the foundation of the encounter’s structure (854).

The recurrent scene underlines the imbalance of power between the dominant Western culture towards the indigenous culture, or between a forceful male and a victimized female. Starting with Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Peruvian literature is populated by depictions of

sexual-cultural encounters which include Clorinda Matto de Turner's novel *Aves sin Nido*<sup>59</sup>, *Amor indígena*<sup>60</sup> by Ventura García Calderón, and *Matalaché*<sup>61</sup> by Enrique López Albújar. Following this literary tradition *La hora azul* depicts the rape of Miriam by the Commandant Ormanche, and the sexual relationship between her and the lawyer Adrián Ormanche.

When Adrián starts to enquire into his father's past, he learns that his father and his officials Guayo and Chacho raped and killed indigenous women when they were posted in the Andean region:

Y bueno lo que pasó fue que una vez le llevamos a tu papá una indiecita de un pueblo que encontramos y nos la dio a la tropa y nos la tiramos y después la eliminamos. Y después hicimos lo mismo con otras, pues. A ellas les decíamos que si aceptaban acostarse entonces las íbamos a soltar. Así les decíamos. O sea que consentían nomás en hacerlo con los oficiales. Dos o tres veces hicimos. Por lo menos a ésas las matábamos con un tiro en la cabeza (Cueto 76).

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<sup>59</sup> *Aves sin nido* (1889) is a critique of the abusive clergy who forced indigenous women to satisfy their sexual appetites.

<sup>60</sup> *Amor Indígena*, "grotesquely reenacts the classic American drama of conquest as rape. Three Spanish (i.e., non-indigenous) Peruvians—a landowner, a businessman, and an anonymous but educated narrator—are traveling together...they spot a beautiful young Indian woman in the procession and playfully flip a coin to decide "whose she will be." The narrator wins the toss [...] Deciding it is a "matter of duty" that they fulfill their intentions toward the young Indian woman, Don Rosendo with his horsewhip disperses the crowd of relatives around her and brings her by force to the narrator. The pair are left alone in the *tambo*. "Aquello fue salvaje," reports the narrator, "como en las historias de la Conquista" (Pratt 59).

<sup>61</sup> *Matalaché* (1928) tells the love story of María Luz, Don Juan Francisco's daughter, and the mulatto slave and breeder Matalaché. Don Juan Francisco owns La Tina, a soap factory and plantation, he uses Matalaché to breed strong slaves. When his daughter arrives from the capital she falls in love with Matalaché and dressed and secretly has sexual relations with him. When her father finds out that Matalaché has impregnated his daughter he throws him into one of the containers of burning lie.

The commandant Ormanche and his officials treated indigenous women as superfluous beings, they raped and killed them with impunity. Under the banner of fighting terrorism, they categorized indigenous women as homo sacers, as expendable bare life. With no evidence as to their involvement in terrorist activities, they kidnapped indigenous women, gang-raped them, and finally executed them. On account of these practices is that Miriam ends up as Commander Ormache's sexual slave; his officials see a beautiful young woman who they know has no connections with Sendero, and forcefully take her to their commander as a sexual gift. They hope he will eventually share her with them, but he "falls in love" with Miriam and prevents them from raping or killing her:

Tu papá no quería que la tuviéramos. Salió y la dejó a ella dentro del cuarto. (. . .) La vimos salir a la ventana pero la abrió nomás un ratito, la chica estaba muerta de miedo. Estaba con los ojos llorosos y bien peinadita y después se cerró la ventana. A tu viejo le encantó esa chica y no quiso que la agarrara la tropa. No quiso que la ejecutaran y todos los soldados hablaban mal de él pero nosotros les hicimos que se callaran. Y allí nomás no sé cómo se reblandeció tu papá, se puso contento esos días, nos pedía que le trajeran paltas para su desayuno, con ella. Estaba loquito por ella tu papá (77).

The sexual encounters between Miriam and Commander Ormanche, as well as the ones between the army officials and the indigenous women, exemplify the relationship of power between the dominant western males and the indigenous females. Sexuality works as a medium of control that goes both ways, in the quote the indigenous women tried to use sexuality to gain their freedom or save their lives. Even if the women failed to escape, it is clear that sex was their bartering tool. In Miriam's case she is able to use her sexuality to

earn the protection from Commander Ormanche; and later she will escape by flirting with his officials.

Alonso Cueto's novel offers the relationship of Adrián and Miriam as a redeeming counterpart to Miriam's rape by his father. Adrián reacts with disgust and horror when he uncovers his father's extracurricular activities in the army. He searches for Miriam trying to expiate his sense of guilt, "Quiero que ella me diga si mi papá fue tan desgraciado como dicen. Pero no es eso tampoco. No sé, la verdad. Quiero encontrarla. No quiero que difunda el asunto. A lo mejor la noticia puede trascender y eso no me conviene. También me siento mal, la verdad" (149). In a way Adrián puts at risk his family's comfort for Miriam, he refuses to go on a lavish vacation with his family so that he can continue his search. His wife Claudia, who is only interested in her social position and reputation, unsuccessfully tries to dissuade him:

Por fin en una discusión en la cocina de la casa Claudia me hizo una serie de predicciones: Vas a perder el tiempo, te vas a meter en problemas, tú siempre con tus fantasías, con tus pajaritos en la cabeza, nosotras te necesitamos aquí, tú no le debes nada a una india cualquiera que conoció a tu papá, pues, oye. ¿Qué te ha dado por ponerte a buscarla? ¿Y cómo se te ha ocurrido? Lo que pasa es que quieres un pretexto para apartarte de la familia, oye, ése es el asunto, claro, ¿tú crees que no me doy cuenta? (133).

Claudia's attitude reflects the racist upper-class view, who see the indigenous population as lesser beings not worthy of compassion. Even though Claudia is supposedly a wonderful, caring wife and dutiful mother, she shows no mercy for Miriam. In comparison to his father and wife, Adrián seems compassionate; he searches for Miriam at the cost of his social

position and familial harmony. Furthermore, after Miriam dies, Adrián decides to take care of her son, his half-brother Miguel. Adrián's relationship with Miriam seems to indicate that everything has been forgiven—racism and oppression have been overcome—love has conquered all.

On the contrary, their relationship is merely a soft-core reenactment of Miriam's rape by his father. When Adrián finally locates Miriam he harasses her at her work—inquiring into her past, her current economic situation, and her son Miguel—until she finally tells him to leave and never come back, “No vuelva nunca, por favor” (212). Adrián does not pay heed to her request and continues to stalk her—he wants to satisfy his curiosity and clear his conscience—without taking into consideration how difficult it must be for Miriam to reminisce about her traumatic experience:

Frené delante de su local. Me bajé envuelto en una pequeña nube de polvo. La encontré sentada en el asiento de los clientes. Estaba leyendo una revista. Se quedó mirándome.

-¿Podemos hablar un ratito? -dije. No me contestó. Bajó la cabeza hacia la revista otra vez. Me senté cerca. Se había puesto un mandil.

-Ya se habrá dado cuenta que no voy a hablar de lo que pasó con nadie, ni con los periodistas ni con nadie..., así que no se preocupe de eso, doctor Ormanche.

Se paró. Me miraba de frente.

-Lo que quiero es ayudarte -dije-. Nada más. Pero la verdad también es que lo hago por mí, o sea para sentirme mejor yo (216).

Finally Miriam acquiesces to talk with Adrián; eventually engaging in a romantic relationship that lasts a few months. Although Adrián does not force himself on Miriam—his entitlement, disrespect of her wishes, disregard for her trauma—are a testament to their unequal relationship. As a wealthy man he can stalk her without consequences; in a way Miriam consents to the affair because she does not have many options:

-Tuve un novio una vez -me dijo-. Un hombre bueno. Pero me dejó cuando supo.

- ¿Cuándo supo?

- Cuando supo todo lo que había pasado.

- ¿Cómo se enteró?

-Yo misma le conté

- ¿Y luego? ¿No tuviste otro novio?

- No, ya no, hubo algunos, se acercaban, pero yo nada, yo no quería saber nada. Ya no pienso nunca en eso, en un hombre. Sería tan raro (242).

Miriam has not been able to maintain an intimate romantic relationship; in machista society a woman that has been raped might be seen as impure. An affair with Adrian is the only way Miriam can enjoy a romantic relationship; furthermore, Miriam sees it as an opportunity to secure her son's future.

The love triangle between the protagonist, his father, and Miriam is constituted as an oedipal plot; Adrián Ormanche becomes obsessed with his father's lover, and will not cease until he possess her sexually:

This story, which is fundamental to the configuration of the novel's plot, manifests itself as Adrián's desire to possess his father's new partner. This

desire is made explicit and reiterated throughout the novel and at times amounts to this woman taking the place of the mother [...] There is also the instance in which Adrián contemplates a photograph of Miriam and his father: 'El pela le caía a un costado, como un chorro de humo. Yo había recortado el cuerpo de mi padre, pero aún se podían ver los círculos de sus dedos en un hombro'. The desired woman appears as a *possession* of the father (Rivera 858).

The narrator Adrián tries to portray himself as a caring individual, contrite, and deeply ashamed of his father's sins. He claims that thanks to Miriam he has gained a political consciousness; however his own actions betray him. In reality, he desperately wants to have a relationship with Miriam because he desires to possess his father's lover:

Eran tres fotos, cada una mostrando diferentes posturas, la cara de mi padre mucho más cerca que la de ella, un dragón devorando a un venado en la oscuridad. Puse la tijera sobre la cartulina sucia y recorté todo el borde de la cara de ella en las tres. Tenía de pronto en mis manos, con el tamaño de una foto carnet, tres rostros borrosos de Miriam. Con la tijera hice un picadillo del resto, especialmente del cuerpo de mi padre (Cueto 127).

This scene is a metaphor for Adrián's oedipal desires, by cutting out and destroying his father's body from the pictures, he is able to possess her image. Adrián wants to kill his father because he is guilty of perpetrating horrible atrocities during the internal war, he wants to distance himself from his father's sins.

Throughout the novel Adrián emphasizes the differences between his family members, on one side he places his father and his brother Rubén, and the other side his



mother and himself. His father and brother are both uncouth, loud, and crass, “Rubén había heredado la voz tosca, las manos canallas y la nariz tubercular de nuestro padre. Era en cierto modo su reencarnación. Se le parecía cada vez más; un gnomo que se va asimilando al ogro que lo ha engendrado” (22). On the other hand he describes his mom as a classy lady of society with refined manners; he and his mother are similar in their elegance, tact, and moderation. Adrián sees his father as a social climber that deceived his mother, once he reaches adulthood he stops having any contact with him. In a similar way he repudiates Rubén, even when his brother comes from the United States for their mother’s funeral, he refuses to let him see his daughters or stay in his house. Adrián exiles his father and brother from the family as a form of exculpation:

By such expurgations, the familial body and, by extension, the social body, is purified of subjects associated with material ambition, social anachronism, violence, crime and vulgarity. These efforts mean to assert that Adrián’s family and his social class are not responsible as a group for the torture, rape and discrimination that occurred during the Internal War; instead, this would be the responsibility of a few *bad guys* who were not *really* part of his family nor his social class (Rivera 864).

Adrián represents the Peruvian upper social class that pretends the internal war happened in a vacuum, denying the violence of Sendero and the national army is directly related to their current economic situation. The root of the conflict was the social and economic disparities between the light-skinned upper classes and the indigenous, poor peasants of the Andean region. The Fujimori dictatorship forcefully imposed policies that benefited the owners of capital, and punished the lower classes even further. When Adrián learns how

the others live, the death, suffering, and poverty they endure, he feels sad but never considers that his wealth has been gained at the expense of others.

The diegesis of *La teta asustada*<sup>62</sup> centers on Fausta, an indigenous young woman who grows up during the internal conflict between the Peruvian army and Sendero Luminoso. The film focuses on the aftermath to show the ravaging damage left by the conflict, and to highlight the stark social disparities of the current neoliberal state. The audience learns that Fausta's father was murdered by the same men that raped her mother when she was pregnant with Fausta. Due to this trauma, Fausta is born with the disease "la teta asustada" which turns her into a timid girl, makes her feel alienated from her peers, and deeply afraid of men. Fausta grows up being aware of the danger of rape, as a precaution she inserts a potato in her vagina which eventually starts to putrefy. Fausta and her family live in a shantytown in the outskirts of Lima, just as many other indigenous families who immigrated to the capital during the internal war. When her mother dies, Fausta finds employment as a housemaid in order to afford her mother's burial. Fausta's employer, a successful musician who is facing a creative drought, offers to pay Fausta for her Quechua songs with pearls. When the musician's new repertoire receives a standing ovation, she refuses to pay Fausta for her songs and abandons her in the city. By the end of the film Fausta has changed from a quiet, timid girl into a strong woman; she runs to the employer's house and takes the pearls that were promised to her as payment.

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<sup>62</sup> "Tener la 'teta asustada', significa 'tener la leche maternal con rabia, sufrimiento, tristeza'. En quechua es Mancharisqa Nuñu. Y nuñu puede ser 'leche' y 'teta'. La antropóloga médica Kimberly Theidon tradujo el término como 'la teta asustada', en un libro que inspiró a la directora de cine Claudia Llosa a escribir el guión de ese extraordinario y bello filme, que ganó el Oso de Oro en el festival de Cine de Berlín el año pasado y que fue candidato al Oscar" (Largaespada, *Periodismohumano*).

The director Claudia Llosa depicts the traumatic rape of Fausta's mother through the written word instead of using graphic scenes. The absence of the visual component is a form of resistance against traditional Hollywood films; which constantly punish the female body on the screen. In her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey criticizes how traditional films reinforce patriarchy; to assuage the fear of castration in film, the female character is either hurt or killed, or a fetishized object replaces the lack of her penis:

The male unconscious has two venues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (demystifying her mystery, investigating the woman) counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concern of the film *noir*; or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (840).

The film *La teta asustada* challenges this phallogentric tradition by eliminating visual images of Perpetua's rape. Instead the gruesome scene is revealed to the audience through words in Quechua that appear first on a black screen, then the narrative continues with the indigenous female voices. Mulvey argues that the darkness of the movie theater gives the audience a voyeuristic position in relation to the woman presented in the film. Claudia Llosa's places the darkness is the film itself; consequently the viewer only sees a dark background when Perpetua describes her rape, cancelling the voyeuristic pleasure.

In her article “Matricidio y obscenidad en la estética de Claudia Llosa”, Irma Veléz analyzes the representation of the obscene in the film *La Teta Asustada*. Veléz proposes that the term obscene holds various meanings:

Lo obsceno es por lo tanto aquello que atenta al pudor y por ello se vuelve la definición del concepto tan escurridiza. Existe otra lectura de la obscenidad, que nos propone y que se define como “una herida abierta por la mirada”. De ahí que en la obra de Llosa, la obscenidad sea el cuerpo mismo del delito: el lugar fuera de escena y puesto en escena, *ob-sceno*, del delito. De esa forma, Llosa metaforiza el tema de la violencia política y su consecuente matricidio colectivo partiendo de la obscenidad, o mejor dicho de la evocación de la obscenidad del delito al que jamás nos expone visualmente (35).

The obscene can be defined as the repulsive acts that offend the senses, such as Perpetua’s rape and Josefo’s castration and murder. The pain and trauma inflicted by these violent acts also are obscene thus they cannot be shown in the film. In the last decades the representation of traumatic events—symptomatic of authoritarian regimes—has influenced the ethics and aesthetics of films. Claudia Llosa places the rape and castration off-scene; their absence testifies to their obscenity, and the impossibility to apprehend them through a visual image. This filmic strategy functions as a form of resistance by avoiding the reenactment of the trauma, thus ending the cycle of fear and pain. Fausta suffers from “la teta asustada” because she witnesses her mother’s rape; this traumatic experience affects her emotional and sexual development. The rape is not visually represented in the film as a testament to the incommensurable pain of the victims.

The first scene juxtaposes Perpetua's rape with Josefo's castration; both traumatic events affect Fausta's emotional development. In the opening scene the mother tells the story using Quechua songs:

Esa noche agarraron, me violaron con su pene y con su mano

no les dio pena que mi hija les viera desde dentro.

Y no contentos con eso me han hecho tragar

el pene muerto de mi marido Josefo.

Su pobre pene muerto sazonado con pólvora.

Fausta's fear even makes her hurt herself by inserting a potato in her vagina; the infected area causes Fausta to end up in the emergency room. Feminist film criticism, which relies heavily on psychoanalysis, might describe the potato as a fetishized object. According to Mulvey, films use fetishism and voyeurism as strategies to appease the male castration anxiety, "fetishism outside of film involves the denial of the female's lack of a penis by, so to speak, fastening on some substitute object, like a woman's foot or shoe that can stand for the missing penis" (Carroll 352). In contrast Claudia Llosa's film cancels the fetishism of the potato by juxtaposing the castration of the father with the mother's rape. Josefo has already been castrated—his castration is described in detail—his genitals are treated like a piece of meat marinated with gunpowder. The potato cannot help appease men's anxiety because even with the potato present the male castration takes place.

The potato in the film symbolizes the violation of the female body by the state power. The connection between rape and the state has been a common trope in literature

and film; from the rape of Lucretia<sup>63</sup> in ancient Rome to the rape depicted in the Argentine film *El secreto en sus ojos*.<sup>64</sup> Similarly *La teta asustada* denounces the rapes committed against the indigenous women, and the metaphorical rape of the nation through the symbol of the potato.

La papa es el nudo central de la película, el emblema nacional, el alimento que sacó de la hambruna a Europa pero que tendrá que salir del cuerpo de la protagonista para que pueda sobrevivir a las atrocidades de la memoria materna. Por lo tanto, la fertilidad de la mujer amenazada por el lugar que ocupa un alimento que también es emblema nacional, o sea por la relación que mantiene la historia de la patria con las mujeres, anunciándonos de entrada el vínculo entre la historia política del país y sus efectos en el cuerpo de las mujeres (31).

The national symbol inside the body of Fausta shows how the political forces harmed the indigenous women instead of protecting them. Fausta expects the potato to shield her from rape but the potato in the end gives her an uterine infection. At the end Fausta decides to have the tuber removed because she overcomes her fear of men; she begins a romantic relationship with the gardener Noé. In the last scene of the film, the potato reemerges but this time as a beautiful flower that Noé gifts her. Fausta smiles when she finds his present, one of the few times we see her happy in the film.

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<sup>63</sup> "Collatinus, Lucretia's husband, does not want to rape Tarquin women, nor does Brutus seem bent on murder. Rather, what it means to avenge Lucretia's rape is not simply to drive the tyrants from Rome but to establish a Republic" (Matthes 27).

<sup>64</sup> "El mismo año que salió *La teta asustada*, el director argentino Juan José Campanella representa en *El secreto de sus ojos* una violación que aunque no sea delito de guerra, es una metáfora de la violencia e injusticia a la que fue sometida la Argentina" (Vélez 33)

As a beautiful young woman Fausta has many admirers but she only reciprocates Noé's advances mostly because he speaks Quechua. Fausta speaks Quechua with her mother and wishes to bury her mother in the sierra; which shows her strong connection to the indigenous culture. Fausta seems uneasy in the capital, she looks terrified when she interacts with her mistress, but Noé gives her comfort because he reminds her of her culture. The relationship between Mrs. Aida and Fausta is yet another instance in the long history of indigenous exploitation. Mrs. Aida treats Fausta as a second-class citizen, and appropriates the Quechua songs for her own career advancement. The film reminds us of the unfair inequality that continues to permeate Peru; it is key to notice that Mrs. Aida mistreatment of Fausta takes place after the internal war. The internal war between Sendero Luminoso and the national forces did not take place in a political or historical vacuum; social inequality and the exploitation of the indigenous population played a key element. The end of the armed conflict did not mean the end of social inequality nor the exploitation of the indigenous. At the same time, Sendero Luminoso failed as a movement because it disregarded the indigenous culture.

*La teta asustada* and *La hora azul* address the racial and social differences in Peru; the film and the novel criticize the exclusion of the indigenous population from the national project. Claudia Llosa and Alonso Cueto integrate customs from the indigenous culture into their fictions, rescuing a valuable sector of the Peruvian landscape. Through the inclusion of the Andean culture the authors intend to create pockets of resistance for the indigenous; a metaphoric space within modern Peru that respects their traditions. In *La hora azul* the protagonist learns of the social and racial disparities present in his country; as he searches for his father's victim he travels to Ayacucho where he finally sees the other. Even though

Adrián and Miriam lived during the internal conflict their lives were drastically different; she experience rape and the death of her whole family, while Adrián led a comfortable life proper to the upper class. The film exposes the nation's socio-economic disparities through the juxtaposition of the households; Fausta and her extended family live in a makeshift house in a shantytown in the outskirts of Lima; her mistress's house is a sprawling mansion of many rooms decorated with art. Mrs. Aída becomes a successful musician due to her wealthy background, in contrast Fausta's only career opportunities are to work as a maid.

Returning to Alonso Cueto's novel, the narrator notices the social inequality, and the different cultural attitudes that coexist in Peruvian society. Adrián visits his employee Quique at the public Hospital Almenara—who suffers a heart attack from working too hard—there he sees a multitude of dirty, sad, sick people waiting to see a doctor. As he traverses through the hospital he sees rooms shared by multiple patients for whom death is a shared experience:

Un corredor de losetas. Una serie de camas de fierros, una mesa de madera con un médico escribiendo algo. En las camas hombres demacrados, con las mejillas absorbidas, el resto del cuerpo apenas sobresaliendo bajo las sábanas. La agonía estaba simplificando las facciones, disminuyendo los troncos y piernas, disciplinando el gesto de las manos. Uno de ellos tenía la boca descolgada, era como un gesto petrificado de asombro. Pensé que había una sencilla obscenidad en la muerte. El color que toman los ojos de una persona que está agonizando es el único que no tiene nombre (Cueto 98).

After this visit Adrián goes to the Clínica Americana to pick up some medical records; there he sees a rich little girl screaming in pain, even though she only has a sprained ankle,



surrounded by her doctors and parents. Adrián remarks on the irony of a small rich girl making more noise than a whole room of indigent dying men. The patients of the public hospital do not protest against death because they have learned to see it as part of their reality.

Death appears in *La hora azul* and *La teta asustada* in different modalities; both fictions emphasize how death became a common occurrence during the internal conflict. Cueto's novel describes how the indigenous have a different perception of death; they have learned to live with the specter of death. As Guiomar explains the relationship that the Ayacuchanos have with death:

-La gente de aquí no es como la de otras partes—dijo lentamente-. Nadie aquí cree que estar vivo es lo normal. Aquí han observado siempre la vida con asombro. Un amigo me lo dijo así una vez. La muerte es una buena maestra (Cueto 182).

She invites him to come watch the Scissor Dancers so he can understand their perspective of death. The scissor dancers inflict pain on themselves—by pricking their lips with needles or cutting their skin—they dance beyond pain and endurance. They believe that they have to donate their pain to life, to resist death they must suffer. In a sense life is not a guarantee, to live one must suffer.

Adrián and Fausta journey to the world of the “other” trying to bury their mothers. Adrian cannot put his mother's memory to rest until he finds Miriam likewise Fausta goes to work for wealthy woman to afford her mother's burial. The film juxtaposes the severity of death with everyday pragmatism; humor shines through various scenes in which death is incongruent with the reality of poverty. For instance, Fausta and her cousin shop for a

casket at a shop that offers theme coffins, some are decorated with paintings of the beach, one has the logo of the soccer team Universitario, and others have patriotic teams. Her cousin is impressed with the casket painted with the image of a nude woman with the sign “Arde papi” and flames of fire on the side, “Éste está buenazo como para cuando yo me muera.” The coffin plus the transportation package costs 800 soles and the cousin jokes, “ni que fuera que vamos a pasear en limosina oiga.” The salesman tells him that it costs that much because it’s a first class service, “además yo soy el dueño de la funeraria, esta es mi tarjeta, no te la doy porque es la única que me queda.” The owner of the store zealously oversells his product—and his position by claiming to be the owner—but then he can’t even afford to give out his card. During the negotiation process Fausta stares at the body of a child on the floor lying next to a small baby blue coffin; her consternation turns into relief when the boy moves and continues to play with his cars in the floor. The characters are unassailed by the idea of death, the little boy plays next to a child’s coffin, the cousin mocks the whole funeral process, the owner of the store tries to sell the coffins at any cost, to the extent of offering caskets with pornographic innuendos.

In her efforts to bury her mother, Fausta finds herself in one ludicrous situation after another. Poverty and desperation make her pay heed to ill-conceived advice from one of the vendors. She tries to transport her mother’s body by checking her as a bag on a bus trip; unfortunately the salesperson realizes her intentions and refuses to sell her a ticket. The same vendor offers to rent her a grave for a few days; she proposes they bury the mother and then when she has the money to disinter the corpse. All of these situations underline the relationship that the poor indigenous people have with death. They have seen death too often—premature and unjust deaths—to survive they must resort to

practical solutions in the face of adversity. The neoliberal system instituted during the Fujimori dictatorship increased the inequality gap between the social classes; as a consequence the poor do not possess the means to treat their dead with dignity.

As a response to these injustices both fictions present the Andean concept of death as an alternative to the western worldview. According to the indigenous people death coexists with life; in their worldview death is necessary for the existence of life:

Y este tributo se produce porque al hablar de los herederos del mundo andino debemos mencionar a la Muerte, pero no en el sentido occidental del viejo fantasma con guadaña, sino como correlato a la vida: 'la Muerte no llama a la destrucción, sino a la regeneración' (Millones 1997: 48-49). (. . .) Este ciclo de fecundidad recuerda otros mitos originarios de las zonas de Apurímac o Huancavelica, como el legendario mito del Inkarrí, héroe cultural que creó y ordenó el mundo en un ciclo de nacimiento y destrucción (Paradas González 567).

In the novel the indigenous tradition of the scissor dancers demonstrates how the community as a whole fights death together; the scissor dancers donate their body and their pain to regenerate life for others:

-Porque cuando el danzante baila, deja de ser quien ha sido –susurró-, deja atrás su nombre, sus recuerdos, sus esperanzas. El danzante es la danza. No es un hombre el que baila. La naturaleza respira en él. Gracias al danzante, la vida de un árbol, de una montaña, de un arroyo, se preserva y nos pertenece. Por eso, cuando el mundo se termina, nuestro deber es volverlo a crear. El

baile lo crea. La música lo crea. El cuerpo es cada uno de nosotros. (...) El danzante es el dios. El baile es el dios. Nosotros somos el dios (Cueto 187).

The Ayacuchanos believe that everyone is connected in nature; plants, rivers, people and god are all one. A dancer represents everybody, he dances to provide life for everybody and everything. The indigenous traditions are a form of resistance against the injustices of the internal war and neoliberalism.

Similarly in *La teta asustada* Fausta rejects the consumerist society fomented by neoliberalism, by giving Perpetua a natural and communal burial. Once Fausta exhausts all the consumerist options of internment; her family and friends intervene to help embalm Perpetua's corpse. The women congregate around Perpetua to anoint her body with a special balsam which will keep it from putrefaction. The act is communal and free; various women of the community help without charging Fausta. One of the women comments that this practice was common during the years of the internal war; they helped conserve the corpses so that their families could use show them as evidence that they had been killed, "Cómo íbamos a demostrar su existencia a las autoridades si no foto teníamos, menos DNI teníamos, no había prueba que habíamos nacido menos que nos habían matado." The indigenous were seen as bare lives; without any papers to prove their citizenship, they were systematically killed. Fausta buries her mother at the ocean's shore; she lays her mother's body on the beach and looks out to the sea. Fausta returns her mother to the Pachamama—the mother earth—a natural burial for which she does not have to pay or haggle.

The Andean worldview of death created pockets of resistance during the dictatorship and post-dictatorship through their traditions which emphasized the idea of

community. The indigenous culture fomented communal interests in direct opposition to neoliberalism, “a technique of governance based on the use of rules and incentives to promote self-interested utility maximizing in all spheres of life (. . .). These measures also serve to discourage collective action and collective identification” (Cameron 22). The female heroines Fausta and Miriam chose different paths; Miriam commits suicide and Fausta decides to live and love. The novel extends a pessimistic outlook of the post-Fujimori period; nonetheless even if Miriam dies it’s her choice. Before she dies Miriam had already attempted suicide; when she learns that her whole family has been decimated she slices her veins. Her uncle takes her to the hospital where she’s informed of her pregnancy:

Nació Miguel, así le puse por el arcángel, Miguel. Mi tío Vittorino llegó a Lima también y me ayudaba, y felizmente conocía a una señora que conocía a otra, la señora Paloma, y fui a su casa, me aceptó. Y así pues. Así pasó el tiempo. Así pasaron los años. Así creció Miguel. Pero yo siempre, todos los días, hablaba con mi mamá y con mi papá, y con Jorge. Hablaba con ellos. Siempre hablo con ellos. Hasta hoy (238).

Miriam forces herself to live for her son’s sake however the painful memories of her family never fade away. She engages in a sexual relationship with Adrián to secure Miguel’s future; who will take care of him when she dies. Her suicide is an avenue of escape and a form of revenge:

Ahora su cuerpo aparecía como en una alucinación. Durante esas semanas, Miriam había respirado cerca de mí, había hablado conmigo, sus manos habían rozado las mías. La había deseado, la había abrazado, le había hecho el amor. Había pensado en ella con un deseo y una tristeza inexplicables. Su

voz me roía el corazón. Podía sentir su piel tibia y el golpe tierno de su pelo y sus uñas en la espalda. El cuerpo se reconstruía con una delicada perfección en la oscuridad. Sus ojos estaban mirándome desde dentro de mí (270).

Miriam's suicide hurts Adrian, who represents his father and the elite who continue to look down on the indigenous, as his wife refers to Miriam, "una india cualquiera".

Conversely Fausta decides to live—she overcomes her fear of men—she is capable of having a healthy romantic relationship with Noé. Even though the heroines chose different paths each one demonstrates agency, by engaging in acts of resistance. Fausta chooses life because with Noé she rescues her indigenous roots and culture. In contrast, Miriam's lover represents an oppressive elite; Adrián never changes his attitude towards social inequalities:

Ellos no buscaron llegar a una realidad tan dividida, tan llena de cercos edificados, no buscaron nacer al otro lado. La línea que nos separa a nosotros de ellos está marcada con el filo de una navaja. Es obvio que yo no voy a hacer nada por remediar esa injusticia an enhebrada en la realidad, no puedo hacer nada, no voy a ayudarlos, a lo mejor poco me interesa (Cueto 274).

Miriam's relationship with Adrián only reinforces her opinion of the other; in her case suicide is the only weapon of revenge. In comparison to Fausta—whose uncle tries to suffocate her to show her that down deep she wishes to live—she chooses to live in direct resistance to those that try to silence her.

## Conclusion

Throughout the dissertation, I advance different forms of resistance within the limitations of biopolitics and neoliberalism. Chapter one portrays abnormal behaviors, fragmented language, and psychosis as modalities of resistance against oppressive societies. Chapter two proposes sexuality as an instrument or conduit of power; sexuality can subvert the power dynamics of unequal relationships; and the third chapter offers indigenous communal traditions and death as sites of resistance. In the first chapter, Damiela Eltit's characters find themselves at the margins of society by trespassing the boundaries of normal behavior. In *Los vigilantes* the mother and her child stop speaking coherently; in *El cuarto mundo* the twins engage in incest, and in *Mano de obra* the workers become drug addicts. However there is a degree of resistance in their final situations because they reject the control and demands of the systems of power. The mother and child from *Los vigilantes* no longer endure the father's oppression; the twins from *El cuarto mundo* find a certain solace and companionship in their incestuous relationship; and the workers from *Los vigilantes* cease to be indentured servants of the rentiers. Rather than live in oppressive societies, they prefer to be homeless, sexual deviants, or drug addicts. The characters embark in a journey that challenges normativity—by disobeying prescribed norms they challenge the mechanism of power.

In the second chapter, the film *Garage Olimpo*, as well as the short-stories "Cambio de armas" and "Cuarta versión" depict heroines involved in abusive sexual dalliances. Even though they are forced to play the role of girlfriends, they employ their sexuality to carve for themselves a certain degree of autonomy. As Foucault advanced in *The History of Sexuality* that in modern societies sexuality became a conduit of power; in these works of

fictions the female characters gain power through their sexuality. The power of the male characters is subverted by their own sexual desires that betray them; they are vulnerable to the manipulation of the female prisoners due to their sexual obsessions and depravities.

In the last chapter, the Andean concept of death functions as an alternative to the western worldview. The indigenous people believe that death coexists with life; hence death is necessary for the existence of life. In the novel *La hora azul* and in the film *La teta asustada* death is an act of resistance; the characters are free when they decide they rather die than accept a horrible existence. As the campesinos described their situation, “eso ya no era vida” (Theidon, “Terror’s Talk” 21). Alonso Cueto and Claudia Llosa rescue Andean traditions that promote a sense of community vis-à-vis the tenets of liberalism that promote self-sufficiency and competition. The authors intend to create a metaphoric space for the indigenous communities in modern Peru.



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