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Solidarity at the Margins:  
Literature, Film, and Justice in Neoliberal Argentina, Brazil and Chile

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements of the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Jennie Irene Daniels

Committee in charge:

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2012

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University of California, San Diego

2012

## Dedication

For my family, whose love, patience and constancy guided me along this journey.  
And for my other “families” and our many adventures.

## Epigraph

Por que a cegueira em relação ao próprio sofrimento e ao sofrimento do outro?

Por que consentimos na violência se podemos ser solidários?

[Why such blindness in the face of one's own suffering and the suffering of others?

Why do we consent to violence when we could be like-minded?]

- Jurandir Freire Costa

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Chapter 3, in part, has been submitted for publication of the material as it may appear in *Confluencia: Revista Hispánica*, 2012, Daniels, Jennie Irene, University of Northern Colorado, 2012. The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this paper.

## Vita

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Solidarity at the Margins:  
Literature, Film, and Justice in Neoliberal Argentina, Brazil and Chile

by

Jennie Irene Daniels

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Milos Kokotovic, Co-Chair  
Professor Luis Martín Cabrera, Co-Chair

This dissertation investigates literature and film of post-dictatorship Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Certain political continuities and the implementation of neoliberal economic policies by transitional regimes, as well as the discrediting of leftist projects

with the fall of the Soviet Union, left the opposition to these policies with few political alternatives. Although the severity and posterior influence of each country's dictatorship differed, many novels and films of the 1980s and 1990s reconstruct space in such a way that social "others" experience restricted movement or limited possibilities to act. Writers represent spaces in which marginalized characters operate as a labyrinth, as places physically removed from mainstream society, as racially separate, or as seemingly inescapable. In addition to the role of national politics and economics, international intervention plays a large part in the creation of restricting marginalized spaces.

I argue that even as these works represent constrictive marginalized spaces, they also construct possibilities for social justice through bonds of solidarity that certain socially marginalized characters form with one another. Solidarity takes the form of communication, building relationships, sharing resources and, in its most developed form in the novels and films, political mobilization. I show how solidarity between characters must be intentional, as well as between society's marginalized as opposed to solely collaboration with an intellectual vanguard, in order to have the possibility of successful enactment of social justice. Together, these works call for a raised awareness of political, social and economic oppression even as proponents of the neoliberal model hail the economy as the way to access social incorporation. In a time period when there appeared to be few alternatives, these works suggest that a more equal distribution of wealth, resources and political power is not only possible, but that the potential lies within marginalized sectors in solidarity with each other.

## Introduction

In recent months, protests have erupted worldwide. From the so-called Arab Spring of 2011 to austerity protests in Europe, and from Southern Cone student movements to the Occupy movement here in the United States, these demonstrations address a wide array of political and economic issues. Yet in spite of disparate foci, many of those involved see a common thread between their protest and those that have occurred elsewhere. Participants seek unity in the face of governments or economic policies that seem benefit only a minority of their nation's population or the international elite. Solidarity is a key component of these movements, as actors from many sectors of their respective civil societies working together to call attention to target issues and help to produce a more just society. This dissertation investigates earlier, literary and filmic manifestations of solidarity that imagine socially marginalized characters joining together to improve their lives. Many novels and films of post-dictatorship Argentina, Brazil and Chile portray solidarity as a primary means of resistance to injustice. Through a discussion of the historical context and a variety of novels and films of the late 1980s through the early 2000s, I argue that during this period of relatively little political opposition, certain intellectuals continued to imagine the possibility of social justice and to consider solidarity as the basis for social mobilization.

A Brazilian therapist and theorist, Jurandir Freire Costa, has asked the perennial questions, "Why such blindness in the face of one's own suffering and the suffering of others? Why do we consent to violence when we could be like-minded?"

The second question is even more potent when we consider the connotations of the Portuguese word “*solidários*”: supportive, mutually obligated, like-minded, in solidarity. This question is the epigraph to this dissertation because of its pertinence not only during the dictatorial regimes of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s in the Southern Cone and Brazil, but also because of its continued relevance. Post-dictatorship Argentina, Brazil and Chile produced several authors and filmmakers who represented the increase of marginalization under neoliberalism. An analysis of their work is the heart of this study, which draws on theories of space to discuss representations of landscape, journeys, travel and property, and the role of each in portraying, through allegory or other means, the often severe limitations that political policies create for sectors of society already marginalized due to race, class, gender, or political beliefs. In addition, I consider the ramifications of the end of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall for the Southern Cone and Brazil, using Nancy Fraser’s denomination of the “post-socialist condition” to aid an understanding of the oppositional intellectual response to post-dictatorship, neoliberal or market-oriented society, where there are few perceived alternatives to the recently consolidating order. In contrast to the politically mobilized civil society of these countries prior to and in the early years of the dictatorships, the transition years in the 1980s and 90s produced relatively fewer social movements (Almeida 124) even as living conditions of the lower and middle classes deteriorated due to new economic policy.

The socially marginalized characters have restricted movement and opportunities in many works during this period, yet authors and producers often

portray oppressive spaces as places in which characters may form bonds of solidarity with one another. Solidarities that characters of similar or disparate socio-economic or racial backgrounds form allow them to survive or escape harsh situations, although this survival may be implicitly or explicitly short-term. Despite the limitations of the authors in representing vehicles for a new social order that could effectively replace the contemporary neoliberal model, the disparate visions of possibilities for greater access to political power through solidarity reveal not simply a fragmented Left, but also a praxis for social action that is valid even currently. Using several works from this period in conjunction with intellectual and scholarly work on the subject, each chapter analyzes the types of solidarities valued in this literature and film.

The backdrop of this project that links the Southern Cone and Brazilian dictatorships, post-dictatorship and neoliberalism requires dialogues with scholars such as Nelly Richard, Tomás Moulián, Walter Benjamin, Nancy Fraser and Jodi Dean, among others, to explore three key terms: space, marginalization and solidarity. The representation of solidarity at the margins of neoliberal society defies the legacies of dictatorial regimes whose *modus operandi* fostered strict categories of “us,” the nation, and “them,” the economically or politically excluded. The solidarities characters form with one another in the works under investigation are varied and often incongruent with one another, and resistance in solidarity is the first step toward the resolution of social inequalities and the procurement of distributional justice. This introduction first provides a synopsis of relevant historical background and context. I then address each term in turn and explore work by key theorists to formulate a

lexicon for the dissertation. While overlap between the three concepts is unavoidable given my argument, I endeavor to tease out the particularities of each.

### *Historical Context*

The Southern Cone and Brazil provide a productive comparison given their shared history of late twentieth century dictatorships that marked their societies in the years that followed. Brazil's dictatorship (1964-1985) was the earliest and longest, closely followed in sequence by Uruguay's (1973-1985) and Chile's (1973-1990). Argentina's *golpe de estado* took place in 1976, and began the briefest yet bloodiest military regime of the region, lasting until 1983. Anthony Pereira notes that the Brazilian military provided instruction to Augusto Pinochet's regime, and the Argentine *juntas* learned from their neighbors, leading each state to repress its society more violently than the last (92-3, 120-1). However, recent findings in Chile by the Valech Report reveal that the total number of detained, disappeared, tortured, and/or executed individuals exceeds forty thousand, which is a much higher estimate than the number suggested by other reports and scholars (Délano). This new finding raises questions about whether the extent of Brazil's state-sponsored violence, which many tout as mild in comparison to other dictatorships both in intensity and in the number of individuals directly affected, may have been greater as well, since the region's dictatorships used many of the same techniques. In any case, the comparison between the countries allows for the study of developments in their societies due to similarities in period, repressive techniques and policy implementations. Given the limited scope



of this dissertation, I omit Uruguay as a primary country of study, though I mention it here because I find similar trends in both its history and literary production.

This analysis focuses on what happened after the dictatorships ended, in particular the years 1989 to 2003. I employ the term “post-dictatorship” in this dissertation to assert, in agreement with many scholars on the democratic transition, that not only did transitional governments continue many of the authoritarian regimes’ policies, but that the memory of state violence still shapes these societies. The potential of military disapproval and fears of a subsequent *golpe* hedged what the Argentine and Brazilian transitional presidents would attempt to accomplish, both in policy and in trials for human rights violations. In Chile, prominent military officials held office as senators-for-life, frustrating hopes for a truly civilian government. All three governments issued blanket amnesties for perpetrators of state crimes in the name of reconciliation, yet these amnesties cannot erase the trauma the regimes have caused. As Luis Martín Cabrera notes in his discussion of the term, “the prefix ‘post’ here does not seal the past, but instead keeps it open to understand the multiple ways in which the uncanny past of the dictatorship inhabits the present” (8).<sup>1</sup> The study of the era that followed authoritarian rule involves the residues of that period. The endpoint of the post-dictatorship is more difficult to define, so I have chosen to close this inquiry with turning points in each society, instead of arbitrary dates. The detention of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (1998), the Argentine debt crisis (2001-2002), and Luíz Inácio “Lula” da Silva’s election in Brazil (2003) mark

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<sup>1</sup> I also occasionally use the term “democratic transition” to describe this period, though I do not mean to imply a different meaning than “post-dictatorship.”

important moments in each society. These events, in combination with other trends, induced citizens to question the role of the government in the market and in the promotion of social well-being, as well as to demand, in particular in the Southern Cone, state recognition of and reparation for crimes against human rights. Therefore, though my analysis comprises three countries with slightly different timelines, I define my post-dictatorship study as beginning in 1989, the year of democratic elections in Chile, and ending in 2003, the year of Lula's inauguration.

If the *Angelus Novus*, blown backwards by progress, leaves in its wake the debris of modernity, the post-modern moment that I investigate consists of fragments and residues of events, memories, and projects. Walter Benjamin sees constellations connecting atrocities to one another, not as linear, causal events but rather as pieces of the same whole ("Theses" 257). I understand the dictatorships of the Southern Cone and Brazil to be related in this way not only to each other, but also past authoritarian regimes. Several scholars of memory studies have discussed the ways in which society remembers history and uses memory for specific ends and purposes. Nelly Richard, in *Cultural Residues: Chile in Transition*, argues that the dictatorships leave traces in contemporary culture and society. She analyzes these residues as they manifest in discourse, literature and art, and sees resistance rising from the collection of marginalized fragments. I employ this framework to explain how in post-dictatorship literature, pieces of a violent past may be repressed or officially forgotten, but manifest in literary images or expression. For example, the Ford Falcon in *Una sombra ya pronto serás* (Soriano 43) is the vehicle the police drive, but for readers in

transitional Argentina, the Falcon represents the paramilitary groups that disappeared political dissidents. Soriano employs the Falcon to trigger this memory in the reader and contribute to his critique of the post-dictatorship economy. Similarly, people returning to the Plaza de Mayo like rats when the danger has passed in Uruguayan author Marta Traba's *Conversación al sur* (91-2), recalls anti-Semitic propaganda under Adolf Hitler's regime that associated Jewish people with rats, subtly revealing a Benjaminian constellation of international discourses defining national purity. Residues and the memories they have the potential to recall defy official claims that society has "moved on" from past violence; this social memory disallows a radical separation of past and present and instead registers the influence of the former on the latter.

A checkered historical past haunts these contemporary societies, as literature and film clearly portray through an aesthetics of fragmentation. Yet there is also a real neoliberal society, one in which the middle classes have lost economic power, and the working poor are shunted even further into poverty. The roots of neoliberalism may be found in the military regimes' policies and growing international support for the free market.<sup>2</sup> During the mid-twentieth century, strains of Marxism, Liberation Theology and populism (in Argentina and Brazil) influenced students, workers, some clergy and laypeople to attempt a wide scale redistribution of wealth, resources and political power. Paul Drake explains that the most recent dictatorships in Spain, Portugal, Greece, and many countries in Latin America including those under study "arose out

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<sup>2</sup> See Christian Gundermann's discussion of the democratic transition for further investigation into this period. Gundermann argues that the transition actually begins under the military regimes with the economic practices they implemented, not with the moment of democratic elections.

of the distributive struggle between capital and wages. Their seizure of power usually followed a period of redistribution to wage earners which was intended to expand the domestic market” (3). During the tenure of the dictatorships, the market became a central focus as Chilean policy-makers followed the advice of the Chicago Boys, and Argentina attempted to follow suit. Ultimately, by the time of the dictatorships’ demise, the “Chilean miracle” purportedly created by free market policies did nothing to improve income inequality, in spite of neoliberal claims: a significant number still lived in poverty even though Chileans worked longer hours and an increasing number of households had two wage-earners (Loveman, *Hispanic Capitalism*, 337-43). The Brazilian and Argentine economies, where technocrats had begun to open the market inconsistently and to differing extents, floundered in bouts of hyperinflation and extreme government debt, only to be shocked into submission by neoliberal administrations during the 1990s.

After the authoritarian regimes detained, disappeared, murdered and tortured the opposition into a forced calm, they lost their most effective form of social control: the confidence of the majority in the necessity of an authoritarian regime. As transitional governments sought to address economic crises and international promotion of neoliberal policy increased, especially from the United States, reforms stripped labor of many protections and privatized formerly government-owned operations. The final blow to utopian hopes for distributional justice came with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991. Carlos Waisman says of this period in Argentina, “the fragmentation that characterized the previous

period is vanishing, and the new identity is becoming not only dominant but also inclusive. Opponents of the [neoliberal] frame are ideologically disarmed. The Left attacks ‘Neoliberalism’ and ‘savage capitalism’, and the new poor and the new unemployed begin to mobilize against its consequences, but their resistance is not carried out on the basis of alternative frames” (“Dynamics” 157). Nancy Fraser refers to this as one of the three aspects of what she terms the “post-socialist” condition. In addition to the supposed lack of an alternative political/economic order, she argues that a preoccupation with culture as opposed to redistribution, and economic liberalism, characterize this condition (1-3). Thus, the 1990s were a particularly bleak time for opponents to neoliberalism and free market policies, and large numbers of former leftists converted to the dominant model (Waisman, “Dynamics,” 157). Though the dictatorships did not endure in a formal sense, they seemed to have “won” the ideological war, at least for the time being.

### *Space*

Within this historical context, I consider representations in fiction of space, and how space impacts characters in post-dictatorship works. Borrowing from Michel De Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, I use the concept of space to denote not only the physical, but also the mental and social intersections through and in which people live and interact. De Certeau distinguishes place from space on the grounds that place is fixed, while intersectionality and movement characterize space. He says,

A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements . . . In short,

space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs. (117)

If place is where the individual or group is physically, space is how this person or persons fits into society through the practice of operating in this place. Space, as constructed in literary and filmic representations, does not only delimit physical locations and boundaries, but also movement. The practice of these spaces gives them meaning and distinguishes them from a fixed location.

Lefebvre considers the structure of society in his analysis of space, and expands the concept to not only the physical, but also the mental and the social (Rocha and Montes Garcés xxvii). He argues that capitalism commodifies space, and so space becomes “a cluster of relationships . . . In its productive role, and as a producer, space (well or badly organized) becomes part of the relations of production and the forces of production. Thus the concept cannot be isolated or remain static. It becomes dialectical: product-producer, underpinning economic and social relations” (Lefebvre 208). This structural analysis of space extends to the personal and interpersonal, leading Lefebvre to remark, “The concept of space links the mental and the cultural, the social and the historical” (209). Therefore, one person inhabits multiple spaces at once, even though physically he or she may occupy only one location. Though Lefebvre differs from De Certeau in that the former emphasizes the structural properties of physical, social and mental space in class struggles for redistribution of resources, and the latter analyzes space as an everyday practice, the two scholars

coincide in the description of space not as static but rather a sphere that society produces and manipulates. I employ the term space to indicate this mutable nature of physical, mental and social spaces and the intersections of time, history and social practices that they envelop, especially those related to Lefebvre's dialectic.

Spatial representations in literature reconstruct the practiced places in society by delimiting the boundaries within which one may act, or attaching positive or negative meanings, like fear, to a given space. Additionally, marginalization is at the forefront of literary and filmic representations of space, yet space in these works does not simply function as a mirror of social relations. The military dictatorships, with their emphasis on the nation versus the "Marxist cancer" or "terrorists," marked the national territory as a space in which those who somehow thwarted their project of a capitalist, Catholic nation, threatened its integrity.<sup>3</sup> Space in the works I analyze is more than a reproduction of lived conditions, though this certainly occurs in some representations. Characters with agency may manipulate the space within which they operate in the larger society, and an aesthetics of fragmentation influences writers' spatial representations and imaginings, resulting in spaces that express sentiment or possibility as opposed to mimicry of social institutions. Writing fiction was often an effective tool for expressing dissent under the dictatorships, and has been one method that a dwindling opposition has employed against the effects of neoliberalism. Writers, professors, intellectuals on the left, film directors, and actors and actresses were

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<sup>3</sup> See Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" for a general discussion on the formation of a national identity. In addition, Brian Loveman's *For La Patria* provides an excellent analysis of Latin America's armed forces and their roles in politics and international relations, as well as in constructing the national imaginary of their respective countries.

targets of military repression under the authoritarian regimes, especially in the Southern Cone but also to a lesser extent in Brazil. Spatial representations in works written or filmed during or after the dictatorships often reveal a preoccupation with a lack of control over surroundings and circumstances.

### *Marginalization*

As spatial reconstructions in post-dictatorship literature and film delimit spaces of “otherness,” before I continue exploring the intersections between these two concepts I must make note of relevant definitions of the “other.” In mid-twentieth century Southern Cone and Brazil, each country has a very different history, but there is a general pattern in the region. Juan Domingo Perón’s and Getúlio Vargas’s populism and Salvador Allende’s socialist project had sought to incorporate the economically marginalized into the national “we.” Traditionally marginalized sectors, in particular urban labor, gained participatory status and a visible presence in the political sphere. Labor could not have displaced capital, but capitalists felt threatened and resented any push politically to improve the income of the poor. Several *golpes* followed in Argentina after Perón, ultimately resulting in the horrors of “the Dirty War” or “*El Proceso*.” In Brazil and Chile, it took only one military uprising to install authoritarian rule. In each of these countries, presidents pushing for popular inclusion and greater social welfare were removed from office—Allende was driven to his death. The laboring poor were disenfranchised. After the dictatorships, they remained economically marginalized as “other” to the nation; this has persisted under neoliberalism. Under the military and under the early civilian governments until 2003,



dominant classes directed the media and images of wealth and poverty—the poor, in their portrayal, deserved their state of poverty.

We are now over twenty years past these developments; we live in their aftermaths. In that time, the spatial representations of “otherness” and the margins in post-dictatorship literature and film may no longer seem to consider the “other” to be a homogeneous population (Franco, “Latin American Intellectuals,” 237). In the chapters that follow I expand on whom society marginalizes, as well as how and why, but for the purposes of the introduction I provide here a brief overview of these groups in these nations. In addition to economic marginalization, exclusion is also based on skin color and gender, and ideologies that conflict with hegemonic neoliberal principles. Often, these margins intersect. Throughout the three nations, socio-economic status is strongly correlated to skin-color and ethnicity, fostered by a history that included European colonization, immigration, slavery, and race theories, which the dominant classes of primarily European descent assimilated with certain alterations into national conceptions. The dominant classes in Brazil consider African descent inferior to white European descent, and throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century have attempted to “whiten” the nation, as we clearly see in Chapter Two. Indigenous heritage, although during some periods and in some definitions of the nation considered a noble past for the newly developing nations, is disparaged in contemporary Brazil and the Southern Cone; I expound on this further in Chapters Two and Three. Female domestic workers experience the triple-pronged marginalization of race, class and gender, as I discuss in Chapter Three as well.

And finally, constrictive spaces in literature and film under neoliberalism are not limited to those marginalized due to race, class and/or gender. Intellectuals who oppose neoliberalism also have experienced marginalization, which began under the dictatorships and has continued due to the rise of technocrats. The twentieth century witnessed a divide between the highly educated in Latin America, and perhaps worldwide: there emerged by the 1980s and 1990s a dominant group of scholars and technocrats whose work purportedly encourages material advances but in reality has the effect of consolidating wealth in the hands of the few, and a tattered minority of intellectuals in the wake of the dictatorships who seek equality in political, economic and social power, whose ideas if seen to the end would eventually abolish their very function as a separate class of society. However, the rise of the technocrats during the dictatorships and their consolidation under neoliberalism has devalued and discredited progressive ideas and utopian ideologies to the extent that authors consider their own marginalization under this emerging order. In works such as Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* (1980) and Silviano Santiago's *Em Liberdade* (1981), the authors/intellectuals explore the role of the writer in imagining and reconstructing the past. Their novels serve to critique contemporary repression of writers and intellectuals through the allegory of past intellectuals under authoritarian regimes.

For this reason, the relationship of leftist intellectuals to their status as marginalized in post-dictatorship Argentina, Brazil and Chile is complicated. At the same time that works convey a certain nostalgia or desire for a past when society at large considered the writer an authority, the stance they take is all the more critical

since they are at the margins of an intellectual society dominated by technocrats and those favoring or unopposed to the neoliberal model. Jean Franco states,

Finally, the displacement of the literary intelligentsia from its hegemonic position by the technocrats has marginalized the one group that, in the past, took upon themselves to “imagine” the nation. This marginalization has been intensified by the market forces which have undermined the legitimation narratives which had justified the literary intelligentsia as a disinterested group that, precisely because of their disinterestedness, could claim to represent truth. (Error in original, “Latin American Intellectuals” 231)

Angel Rama, years ago, traced the evolution of the intellectual classes in *La ciudad letrada*, and described how intellectuals mediate between state and masses. Rama demonstrated in this analysis that the intelligentsia is far from neutral, and underwent a cultural change toward interest in widespread economic betterment, fostering revolutionary ideologies during the early and mid-twentieth century from various government or private positions (145-6). Franco laments the devaluation of the intellectual classes that imagined the nation critically from a standpoint that deconstructs the foundation of the dominant classes’ power. Yet shortly thereafter, in *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City*, as Franco explores the ramifications for the intelligentsia of technological explosions and the popular replacement of literary works with other media like television, she asserts that writing from the margins in fact allows writers and intellectuals of the opposition to claim moral leadership since they are independent of the state (6). Therefore, as I define who are the socially marginalized and whom dominant society marginalizes, I include those whose ideologies are in opposition to the hegemonic neoliberal project. I explore how

neoliberal discourse has marginalized other models for social organization in Chapters One and Four.

### *Solidarity*

Fiction from 1990s Southern Cone and Brazil on the whole does not present a coherent alternative vehicle for achieving distributional justice, though individual works may advocate specific means. Still, even though the neoliberal project in post-dictatorship Latin America reinforces the marginality of socially “othered” people and increases economic marginalization by pushing the lower middle class into poverty, some novels and films portray these marginalized spaces as potential sites of resistance to social and economic inequality through solidarity. However, this resistance is nascent at best. The solidarities that characters form in restrictive, marginalized spaces are tenuous bonds in many cases, broken by death or capture, or simply left without accomplishment at the end of the work. Even so, solidarity offers hope to those characters involved with others in similar circumstances, and in the novels and films I analyze, the strength of social bonds correlates directly with hopefulness. Although not forming a political or economic model, the aesthetics of solidarity found in the body of literature to be discussed here provides the foundation for social movements and social change. This foundation is the rebuilding of a social fabric that the dictatorships directly attacked, and that becomes unnecessary to or even threatens neoliberal capitalism.

Communication and the mutual recognition of humanity lead, in the cultural production under study, to an understanding of the realities of marginalization, while

their lack has disastrous effects. In some cases, attempts to form social ties engender profound empathy for the marginalized “other” in a way that induces action in solidarity to challenge the existing order. In others, relationships conduct characters to the recognition of social structures that cause and maintain the current social hierarchy. Jodi Dean coined the term “reflective solidarity” in her work *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism After Identity Politics*, which scholars like Chandra Mohanty, among others, have employed to explore the potential of solidarity in a globalized world. Communication forms the basis for reflective solidarity, which Dean describes as

the mutual expectation of a responsible orientation to relationship. This conception of solidarity relies on the intuition that the risk of disagreement which accompanies diversity must be rationally transformed to provide a basis for our intersubjective ties and commitments . . . Simply put, solidarity can be modeled as an interaction involving at least three persons: I ask you to stand by me over and against a third. But rather than presuming the exclusion and opposition of the third, the ideal of reflective solidarity thematizes the voice of the third to reconstruct solidarity as an inclusionary ideal for contemporary politics and societies. (3)

As Dean later argues, we may understand solidarity as “us” versus “them,” or as “you and I;” her definition embraces the latter. Although to some reflective solidarity may appear weak in the face of social forces of exclusion, Dean’s appeal to solidarity through communication is important because it emphasizes understanding various positions. Although dominant members of society are generally unwilling to release the sources of their power, some works analyzed here suggest that this may be possible when people are forced into meaningful contact with one another.

Solidarity and communication are also key components of several scholars' theories for distributional justice. Paulo Freire, in his *Pedagogia dos Oprimidos*, argued in the 1960s that successfully educating economically marginalized populations depends on a teaching philosophy that treats all involved as equals. The teacher collaborates with the students and asks questions designed to help students critically analyze social issues. As with Dean's reflective solidarity, communication forms the basis for social change. George Trey considers the positions of Jurgen Habermas and Emmanuel Levinas regarding communication, and argues that their theories converge in that an ethical relationship "is situated in domination-free speech" (136). Though Trey notes that they diverge in that Habermas views intersubjectivity without domination as ideal, and Levinas emphasizes that the recognition of the "Other" as different than "I" and how I respond is the "original ethical gesture" (136), Trey's analysis shows that both Habermas and Levinas consider ideal communication as free of power relations (137). The act of communication requires a speaker and a listener, requiring at the very least the recognition of humanity by the speaker and the listener. Freire, Dean, Trey, Habermas and Levinas, implicitly or explicitly, all suggest the necessity of recognizing the humanity of the "other," which one may express through communication. Communication that attempts to dismantle power relations is a useful praxis for the development of solidarity and the reformulation of a social fabric, as well as grassroots social movements. While the majority of the works under discussion display an aesthetics of solidarity that explores possibilities of the former,

*El correo de Bagdad* (1994), *Cien pájaros volando* (1995), and *Buenos Aires viceversa* (1996) all address the latter to varying degrees.

In light of these theories and an evaluation of the dictatorship and post-dictatorship literature of the Southern Cone and Brazil, I conceive of solidarity as the practice of considering the space of the socially marginalized and identifying with him or her to the extent possible, whether one is similarly marginalized or not. By identification I mean primarily three things: recognition of one's position in the social hierarchy; communication with the marginalized "other" as outlined above; and materially acting with, on behalf of, and for the equal inclusion of this "other."<sup>4</sup> Marginalized characters in these novels and films often have the choice to form a relationship with another "other," and they only choose to do so upon really seeing the other individual. Therefore, solidarity with another may necessitate significant time spent in conversation, investigation, and sharing of information between widely different individuals and/or groups, for how can one understand the lived reality of others without recognizing their common humanity and perhaps dissimilar situation?

The practical result of this form of solidarity therefore requires the redistribution of resources to the detriment of the privileged and their social and political power. This aspect of solidarity goes beyond what is present in the majority of the works I analyze, since many of the characters are economically marginalized and only able to share what little they have. Timothy Keller addresses this redistribution of resources by employing the analogy of woven fabric for a just

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<sup>4</sup> Although I suggest the need to act with and for the socially marginalized, I do not advocate the priority of a vanguard or intellectual community to organize this process and speak for them.

society. Speaking in the first person plural to indicate that this is not an individual activity, but rather communal, he says,

In general, to “do justice” means to live in a way that generates a strong community where human beings can flourish . . . How can we do that? The only way to reweave and strengthen the fabric is by weaving *yourself* into it. Human beings are like those threads thrown together onto a table. If we keep our money, time, and power to ourselves, for ourselves, instead of sending them out into our neighbors’ lives, then we may be literally on top of one another, but we are not interwoven socially, relationally, financially, and emotionally. (Emphasis in original, 177)

The consequences of loose threads clearly translate to social inequalities and injustices throughout the world, and for the purposes of this study, neoliberal Southern Cone and Brazil. Keller assumes his readers to be people with a higher degree of money and power than marginalized populations, and insists they must relinquish their material advantages and engage with others as equals to weave a stronger social fabric. All sectors of society may be agents for social justice, especially in coordination with one another. Thus, not only is communication essential for solidarity, but solidarity is crucial for the equal distribution of power and resources: in a word, social and distributional justice.

### *Chapter Outlines*

Contrasting Osvaldo Soriano’s *Una sombra ya pronto serás* (1990) with João Gilberto Noll’s *Hotel Atlântico* (1989), I initiate this investigation into social exclusion at the turn of the first decade of transitional regimes (1989/1990). The journey of each novel’s nameless, abject protagonist displays the devastating consequences of political paternalism, authoritarianism, and economic crisis. These



novels portray the decline of the middle classes in Argentina and Brazil, respectively, as the tightening effects of neoliberal policy push formerly incorporated sectors of society into poverty. Space is oppressive, constrictive and suffocating, representing the social situation of the marginalized, yet the relationships they form with one another help them to survive. However, while Soriano's character ends his journey confident, having solved the mystery of the province's decadence, Noll's dies in the company of his companion, unable to escape the physical decay and death that have enveloped many other characters. A comparison of these novels suggests the pervasive effects of past policies, and raises questions about global differences between Argentine and Brazilian cultural production.

I study reconstructions of defining moments in Brazilian and Chilean history from the perspective of the mid-1990s in my second chapter, "Lessons from the Past: Racial Minorities in Rubem Fonseca and José Miguel Varas." Fonseca's novel, *O Selvagem da Ópera* (1994), critiques contemporary racial relations and the myth of racial democracy through the fictionalized biography of a *mestiço* opera composer who lived during the abolition era. Varas uses a Mapuche artist in *El correo de Bagdad* (1994) to draw comparisons between various countries and revolutionary movements, including Allende's democratic project. These works suggest that solidarity with marginalized populations must be not only intentional, but also that the oppressed individual must recognize his or her own marginalization and not capitulate to emulating the dominant classes. This comparison also provides a contrast between

successful solidarity in Varas's novel, and the long-term social problems that can occur when solidarity breaks down in Fonseca's.

In the third chapter, "Elite in Crisis: The Marginalized as a Site of Resistance in *La ciénaga* and *Coronación*," I analyze the role of two domestic workers in Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga* (2001) and Silvio Caiozzi's *Coronación* (2000; based on the 1958 novel by José Donoso). I investigate how these films portray the opening of fissures in the hegemony of dominant blocs due to economic crisis in Argentina and political crisis in Chile at the turn of the millennium. The space of the traditional elite is in decay in both films, as are the bodies of elite characters. Yet the adolescent female domestic worker in each film, in spite of being triply marginalized due to race, class and gender, is portrayed as untouched by this decadence. Although *Coronación*'s Estela is mistreated by her employer in part because she is brown and *La ciénaga*'s Isabel is socially "othered" as an indigenous person in Argentina, the decay creates an opening for them to seize greater autonomy than they have had heretofore. Through the relationships they form with other similarly marginalized characters, these young women are able to escape the atmosphere of decay; solidarity provides a vehicle for resistance against oppression, if only temporarily.

As this introduction lays out the keywords of this project and sets the stage for more profound discussion, the fourth chapter is the other bookend, since it provides a comparison of the three countries' literature and film. In "From the City to the Countryside: A Comparative Analysis of Solidarities," I consider general similarities and differences between the Southern Cone and Brazil using Alejandro Agresti's

*Buenos Aires viceversa* (1996), Jaime Collyer's *Cien pájaros volando* (1995), and Walter Salles's *Central do Brasil* (1998). Through cultural production from the Southern Cone, writers and directors interrogate the post-dictatorship as a social phenomenon, and critique the regimes' remnants in their societies. Argentine works suggest an expectation of social response to, if not resolution of, the traumas of the dictatorship and post-dictatorship, while Chilean production promotes resistance and social struggle even in the face of seemingly unchangeable conditions. However, Brazilian literature and film rarely address the recent military regime, favoring instead existential questions. I argue that even as neoliberal space receives similar representations across the region, these general differences stem from current and historical factors in each country. In addition, I consider the limited effects that solidarity can have on the past as a critique of the aesthetics of solidarity that we see in these works.

Through the reconstruction of marginalized space as a potential site for the formation of solidarities and organization of resistance, in the afterword of this dissertation I take into consideration the contribution of these artistic works to intellectual criticisms of neoliberal, post-dictatorship society. This project is only an initial exploration of the social potential of solidarity through literature and film. There is a wealth of cultural production during this time period, and this study barely scratches the surface of what I have identified as an aesthetics of solidarity. In agreement with Jurandir Freire Costa, we must reject and denounce violence through acting in solidarity with one another, and continue to explore how solidarity is

foundational for a society that promotes equality in access to wealth, resources and political voice.

Space, Relationships, and the Constriction of the Middle Classes in *Hotel Atlântico*  
and *Una sombra ya pronto serás*

In Argentina and Brazil, the 1980s were a time of political change and severe economic adjustments. The failure of the war with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands, known as *Las Malvinas* in Argentina, weakened the credibility of the dictatorship's *junta* and helped to create an opening for democratic elections in 1983 (Hunter 305). Brazil's dictatorship had already begun its transition by this time, and returned control to democratic governance in 1985 after twenty years of continuous military rule (Faro de Castro and Valladão Carvalho 471). The oil shocks of the early 1970s negatively affected Brazil's economy, and even though Argentina did not import oil at the time (Balassa 119, 121), the crisis and Mexico's debt default in the early 1980s cast economic uncertainty over the entire region (Kingstone and Young 31). Transitional governments therefore had to respond not only to the international debt incurred by the military regimes, but also to an unstable global economy. In compliance with purportedly autonomous regulatory agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and in agreement with trends in the region, both countries began to implement structural adjustments to promote a neoliberal economic model during the 1980s (Jordana and Levi-Faur 106). The two nations also initiated talks of a joint market, which has since developed into the Common Southern Market (*Mercado Común del Sur* in Spanish and *Mercado Comum do Sul* in Portuguese) (Faro de Castro and Valladão Carvalho 478).

In this chapter I discuss how two novels address the subjective situation of large-scale adjustments of the transition and their effects on Argentine and Brazilian society. *Una sombra ya pronto serás* by Osvaldo Soriano (1990) and *Hotel Atlântico* by João Gilberto Noll (1989) speak to the situation of the shrinking middle class, which had been quite sizable in Argentina though relatively small in Brazil, and show how middle class characters deal with their increasing impoverishment. Through an abject protagonist and the allegorical portrayal of the nation through the journey he takes, each novel paints a critique of post-dictatorship society and previous styles of government. They denounce personalist and paternalist forms of government, which have taken different shapes in each country, as well as the constrictive spaces brought about by free market policies; however, both novels also reveal limited possibilities for characters to develop lasting, productive relationships within these spaces.

#### *Transitional Policies*

The two novels were written and published at the turn of the 1989/1990 decade. While Argentina and Brazil have similar macro-histories, they differ upon a closer inspection. Before turning to how the novels represent constrictive spaces and difficulties in establishing relationships, here I briefly describe the historical context within which each author wrote.

Two key aspects to understanding how the novels fit into their national contexts are the type of dictatorship that governed each country, and how the economy developed before, during and after each regime. Argentina had a different trajectory of development than other Latin American countries, and Brazil in particular. Describing

the country in the 1920s-30s, Carlos Waisman asserts that the standard of living was as high or higher than many countries in Europe in terms of “nutrition, health, consumption, and higher education” (*Reversal* 7). Brazil, on the other hand, had yet to develop in these areas. However, in spite of apparent prosperity, the Great Depression a few years later greatly affected Argentina and Brazil, and demonstrated the dependence of their economies on trade (Brown 186; Hilton 758; Schoultz 14-5). In both countries, liberalism had been put to the test during World War I (WWI), and in Argentina, nationalism began to take a firmer hold over economic policy in the 1920s, seen in the creation of state-owned *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales* (YPF) and the rise of the automobile industry and textile plants (Brown 177-86). In Brazil, nationalism rose with the beginning of the Republic in 1889 and garnered strength during the 1920s (Curtis 485-6), but economic nationalism took root only after the Great Depression took the wind out of Brazil’s export-dependent economy. Though many scholars have claimed that industrialization became a priority during Getúlio Vargas’s New State (*Estado Novo*, 1937-1945), Stanley Hilton argues that from the beginning of his first provisional government (1930-1934), during his presidency (1934-1937) and especially after the *golpe* in 1937, Vargas implemented policies that favored nationalist industrialization (576). Consistent with many other Latin American countries around the same period, Argentina and Brazil withdrew economically and increased national industry. Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI) became the dominant economic policy after the depression of the 1930s, meaning the administrations placed higher tariffs on foreign goods and encouraged national

industry. A strong reaction against liberal theory, this was a logical transition, because foreign trade diminished drastically in the wake of World War I and the depression years.

The theme of authoritarianism runs throughout the novels, but this is not rooted in the most recent dictatorships; instead, populist figures Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955, 1973-1974) and Getúlio Vargas (dictator/non-elected president 1930-1945, president 1951-1954) have greatly influenced politics. Generally referring to a movement in the non-property holding sectors, populism has led to a politically conscious working class in both countries. Torcuato Di Tella defines its basic qualities as, “a political movement which enjoys the support of the mass of the urban working class and/or peasantry but which does not result from the autonomous organizational power of either of these two sectors. It is also supported by non-working-class sectors upholding an anti-*status quo* ideology” (qtd. in Schoultz 5). Alberto Ciria adds to this definition that populist movements usually have a charismatic leader who serves as a key organizing agent (48). Perón and Vargas are classic populists. For example, Perón’s position in the Labor Department prior to his presidency aided the formulation of his government’s strong ties to labor unions and to the working class. He granted concessions to labor, such as reinstating the eight-hour work-day, and quite effectively brought unions under the control of the government. In addition, most workers earned higher wages, could take maternity leave, and had health benefits, paid vacation time, and higher job security. YPF became the national petroleum producer, and the state bought electricity, meatpacking and telephone companies, and British-owned railways



(Brown 210-2). The concentration of the working classes in cities, as opposed to in rural settings, set the stage for unions to become important political factors, and for workers to have a powerful political voice. Even though populism is problematic as a form of political representation, as a process it integrated the workers as a political sector while politicizing them. Class conflict in both Argentina and Brazil is responsible in part for a history of alternating between military and civilian regimes during the twentieth century.

Populism has greatly influenced political practices in Argentina and Brazil, and is important to understand because of its perpetuation of corporatism in Brazil, as well as for its role in the development of an acute political consciousness of the working classes, especially Argentina's. This political consciousness, not only among workers, but also progressive clergy, students and professors, led to questions about the distribution of wealth in society. Social turbulence stemming from class conflict became the primary justification for the military dictatorships to assume power and retain it for as long as they did, and the regimes supported conservative sectors of society. Brazil's dictatorship lasted longer than Argentina's and began earlier than the Southern Cone regimes, but was very distinct in quality. Relative calm surrounded two periods of repression, and the repression was on a much smaller scale. Unlike in the Southern Cone, intellectuals were not a primary target of the state, though they did share in it to a certain extent; literature was relatively uncensored, and instead, political opponents more closely in touch with the populace, such as union organizers, as well as journalists, took the brunt of state wrath (Dassin 165; Moreira Alves 192).

The Argentine military, in contrast, feared writers and journalists, whose oppositional ideas could significantly influence public opinion, along with unionizers, the largely middle class militant *Montoneros*, and the People's Revolutionary Army (*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*, ERP) (Graham-Yooll, "Argentina," 586-7).

The methods of state repression, in addition to the targeted populations, differed. Where the Brazilian tactics were fairly standard dictatorial practices, such as incarceration and torture, Argentina's seven year regime employed violence to instill fear in the general population and thus secure passivity. A common practice was to disappear political opponents or people who, though they themselves were not dissidents, worked in low-income settings or had friends, family members, or acquaintances among the opposition (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas 13). State agents often detained such individuals openly and used buildings in high traffic areas as concentration-elimination camps. This reconfiguration of repressive techniques turned disappearance into a surreal form of terror and source of power for the dictatorship state (Calveiro 27-8): repression became a *secreto a voces*, a terror that was visible and either officially denied or blamed on leftist opposition (Feitlowitz 30). In part for this reason, even though Brazilian and Southern Cone cultural production addresses a shared history of authoritarian and populist figures, Southern Cone works often explore the process and aftermath of state violence and

terror in the memory of the populace, while Brazilian ones tend to include the specter of Vargas but eschew mention of the most recent dictatorship.<sup>5</sup>

As the two countries made transitions to democracy in the early 1980s, the military regimes' endeavors to protect their ranks limited new civilian leaders' attempts for redress. Impunity laws granted them freedom from prosecution for human rights violations, but Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) initially tried to overturn this. Wendy Hunter notes that though Chile's military had the greatest autonomy in Latin America during the post-dictatorship, Argentina's arguably had the least (296). Alfonsín took advantage of this weakness to create a civilian-led ministry of defense that would control military expenditures, promotions, assignments, arms production, defense strategy, and separate external and internal defense (306). However, wary of repercussions, he set an end date for new cases against military personnel, and when confronted by revolts by junior officers that strengthened the military's position by suggesting a lack of discipline, the president issued a pardon for those under the rank of colonel (305-6). Brazil's transition began several years before democratic elections, and ensured the position of the elites (Graham-Yooll, "Argentina," 576). José Sarney, the running-mate of Tancredo Neves, was sworn in as president after Neves died in the interim between the election and the inauguration. Even though Sarney maintained high popularity and had strong political ties, he had little *de facto* political power as

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<sup>5</sup> Examples of works concerning authoritarianism and/or populism include Rubem Fonseca's *Agosto* (1990), Siviano Santiago's *Em Liberdade* (1981), Sérgio Sant'Anna's *Simulacros* (1977), Luisa Valenzuela's *Cola de lagartija* (1983), and Manuel Puig's *The Buenos Aires affair* (1973). For examples of works dealing with the memory and trauma of the Southern Cone dictatorships, see Roberto Bolaño's *Estrella distante* (1994) and *Nocturno de Chile* (2000), Tununa Mercado's *En estado de memoria* (1990), Matilde Sánchez's *El Dock* (1993), as well as various writings by Mario Benedetti and Ramón Díaz Eterovic.

president (Robert Kaufman 50). Military officers retained their immunity from prosecution, and there was no official redress for state violence under the dictatorship. Unlike the Southern Cone nations, Brazil's transitional government did not open an inquiry into human rights abuses; instead, *Brasil: Nunca Mais*, which was similar to the truth commissions of Argentina and Chile, was a production of the Archdiocese of São Paulo. This is another factor contributing to global differences between literary and film production of the Southern Cone and Brazil, because while in the former countries a search for truth and justice has been ongoing, in Brazil injustices committed by the regime have only recently begun to be addressed under president Dilma Rousseff (2011-present) ("Human Rights in Brazil: It Isn't Even Past" 40-1).

The 1980s, when the official democratic transitions began, were a turbulent economic period for many countries in Latin America. Civil wars raged in El Salvador and Nicaragua (Morley 7), while the collapse in oil prices and rising interest rates brought Mexico to a severe debt crisis in 1982 (Dornbusch, Vinals, and Portes 243-6). Chile and Colombia managed to have a slightly higher income per capita at the end of the decade than at the beginning (Morley 7), but according to Marcus J. Kurtz, Chile's real minimum wage remained lower in the mid-1980s than in the early 1970s (299). While Chile maintained an inflation rate of approximately twenty percent per year, Argentina and Brazil experienced hyperinflation in the late 1980s, surpassed only by Peru. In Brazil, inflation rates jumped from 230% in 1987 to 682% the following year, and rose to 1,287% in 1989, the year in which Noll published *Hotel Atlântico*. Argentina's inflation rates were even higher: the already high 343% in 1988 soared to

3,079% in 1989, and fell slightly to 2,314% by the time Soriano published *Una sombra ya pronto serás* in late 1990 (Morley 24, see table 1-8). This hyperinflation introduced severe difficulties in meeting daily needs, especially among the middle and lower classes: many Argentine and Brazilian workers were pushed into the informal sector (Morley 91; Ricardo Paes de Barros, Rosane Mendonça, and Sonia Rocha 244). In Brazil, hyperinflation resulted in increasing income inequality between 1986 and 1989, and affected the poor disproportionately (Ricardo Paes de Barros, Rosane Mendonça, and Sonia Rocha 269). Promises of stabilization were a primary factor in Argentine society's acceptance of economic shocks later carried out under Carlos Ménem (Weyland, "Neoliberal Populism," 395).

The recent dictatorships played a large role in shaping the health of transitional economies, which is a significant player in both novels. Scholars with varying views on the economy agree that inflation in Argentina was the result of poor decisions under the latest regime. Luis Beccaria and Ricardo Carciofi explain that while Argentina's military dictatorship attempted to integrate the country's economy into the global market and end ISI, it incurred massive public debt and failed to restructure public finances (190); they blame inflation on policy incoherence. Marcus Faro de Castro and Izabel Maria Valladão de Carvalho note that privatization of state corporations began under the regime, paving the way for the implementation of other neoliberal policies in the post-dictatorship (477). The Brazilian dictatorship did not begin implementation of neoliberal policies other than privatization; rather, presidents Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002)

carried out this process. Still, Brazil's regime did little to change gross social inequalities: Geisa Maria Rocha points out that even as Brazil's touted "economic miracle" (1968-1973) caused booming growth rates for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the Gini coefficient shows high inequalities (134). Economic contraction in the 1980s hurt the poorer classes even further.

*Nameless Wanderers*

*Una sombra ya pronto serás* and *Hotel Atlântico*, written in the midst of austerity measures near the end of the 1980s recession, have many thematic and stylistic similarities that facilitate a comparison between them. Both may be read as allegorical of their contemporary national climate. Each novel also has a nameless protagonist, a male in his forties. These characters narrate in the first person, relating their aimless wanderings through provincial Argentina and from Rio de Janeiro to Rio Grande do Sul, respectively. The reader sees events through their eyes, and in this way understands the subjective realities of formerly middle or upper-middle class characters. In addition, both narrators describe events in the present or near past. *Hotel Atlântico's* protagonist narrates in the present tense, and although *Una sombra ya pronto serás's* uses past tenses, he occasionally slips into the present as if he were telling the story orally about what had just happened to him. By placing the stories firmly in the present, the novels have a sense of immediacy that underscores subjective experiences of the characters. Finally, both protagonists are middle class, but have little or no money by the time the stories begin. They have no family or friends nearby and have difficulty forming lasting relationships with others.

Similarities between the novels provide a basis for comparing the plight of Brazil and Argentina's middle classes during the early post-dictatorship years, and reveal brief alliances that characters form with one another to avoid starvation, homelessness, and abuse at the hands of more powerful people.

The plots of these novels are otherwise quite different. In *Una sombra ya pronto serás*, the story begins with the narrator waiting on a broken-down train. Although this is unfortunate, it has not interrupted any specific travel plans. The journey was already in progress, but lacked a destination; the narrator expresses vaguely that he would have gone to Neuquén. When it becomes evident that no one is coming to fix the train, he begins to wander around the interior of what appears to be Buenos Aires province, although the location is never explicitly stated. Here, the journey shifts from linear to roughly circular: the narrator attempts to leave the region with the various characters he meets, but is unable to escape the endless *pampas* and the few scattered towns. The characters, many of whom are trying to leave Argentina, are representative of several middle-class groups. Lem, a lost banker, wants the protagonist, who has previously worked in informatics, to help him break the bank of a casino (*saltar un casino*) using probability calculations; they stay together in a hotel and travel in Lem's Jaguar. Other characters also offer him a ride. Coluccini, an Argentine circus master who pretends to be Italian, is trying to go to Bolivia, while Nadia the fortune-teller plans eventually to join her children in Brazil. Boris and Rita, a young couple, offer to take the protagonist with them on their way to Ohio, but end up leaving him behind. After many adventures with these characters, the protagonist

discovers that the culprit for the province falling apart is the free market. This knowledge helps him break out of the aimless and circular journey, and he gets back on the train to wait.

Unlike the lost narrator of *Una sombra ya pronto serás*, in *Hotel Atlântico*, the narrator is not confined to an inescapable region. Instead, he is trapped in a deteriorating body. On his journey, the protagonist encounters many dangerous situations, and only has a vague sense of where to go next. Along the way, the reader is introduced to other traveling characters and sees a portion of their journey. However, these journeys from fortunate life to abject death only make sense to the reader once the trajectory of the protagonist is complete. The novel represents not only quality of life but also life itself as deteriorating in the early post-dictatorship as a result of poor social and economic prospects for middle and lower class citizens. The first scene introduces death as a primary motif, with a corpse being removed from a Rio de Janeiro hotel as the protagonist enters. Immediately afterwards, he asks the hotel receptionist to come to his room. This sexual encounter and those that follow initially represent the protagonist as hyper-masculine. Notwithstanding, as his situation becomes more precarious, the narrator has dreams of being a woman. His increasing feminization is a gendered representation of Brazil's marginalized under the transition. The protagonist, once a popular actor in soap operas but in the novel recently unemployed, lives off the sale of his car and, later on, the charity of others as he travels from Rio de Janeiro toward Florianópolis. At different points along the way, he stays with a priest, accepts a ride from men who attempt to murder him, and, after



fainting, wakes up in a hospital with his leg amputated by a doctor who plans to use the operation on this famous ex-actor to boost his popularity in the upcoming mayoral race. The protagonist and his nurse, Sebastião, escape the hospital, and after a brief stop through Porto Alegre, check into a small hotel near the beach, where the protagonist dies.

The two authors whose novels I analyze in this chapter are of the same generation, but experienced dictatorship in their countries differently. Between them, Osvaldo Soriano (1943-1997) and João Gilberto Noll (1946-) have written several novels, news articles and short stories, and garnered several literary prizes. Yet Soriano's work is decidedly more overt in its political and social critique; born in 1943, Soriano wrote for Jacobo Timermán's newspaper *La opinión* before fleeing Argentina in 1976. He lived exiled as a journalist in France, Belgium and Spain, publishing novels such as *No habrá más penas ni olvido* (*Funny Dirty Little War*, 1979; in Argentina 1983) that use past political moments to critique the present. Upon his return to Argentina in 1984, Soriano wrote for the left-of-center periodical *Página 12*, and kept writing novels (Graham-Yooll, "Obituary"; "Osvaldo Soriano"). Noll, in contrast, continued publishing in Brazil during its military regime. Even though his work provides social and political critique, this has not been his goal as a writer. Noll distinguishes himself from other writers of the 1960s generation by claiming literature should go beyond a critique of contemporary issues, and that it will not necessarily change society or politics. Instead, he says that he explores ritual and liturgy in his writing because he believes literature should interrupt the mechanical constraints of

society (“Cronologia”; “Política: João Gilberto Noll”). The novels therefore contain elements of these very different life experiences.

### *Abjection and Journeys*

One of the most salient themes in these novels is abjection. The setting and middle class characters of *Uma sombra ya pronto serás* reveal fissures in a society that gives preference to international market interests in the wake of a brutal dictatorship, while the increasingly marginalized characters of *Hotel Atlântico* are rejected persons who threaten to disturb economic growth. Julia Kristeva defines the abject as:

death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. (4)

The narrator-protagonists are what Kristeva denotes “dejects,” or people through whom the abject exists, because they are precisely what interrupts or contradicts notions of transition and stability. The deject, like these protagonists, “*strays* instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing . . . Instead of sounding himself as to his ‘being,’ he does so concerning his place: ‘*Where* am I?’ instead of ‘*Who* am I?’” (emphasis in original 8). Their journeys in the novels respond more to location than to identity, and emphasize their proximity to the abject, or the object that threatens to engulf them. Even though the protagonists attempt to escape disturbance and disorder, they cannot reject something so wholly part of their being. Noll’s narrator is slowly being consumed by death, because he is the disturbance to

neoliberal order as an increasingly socially marginalized character. However, Soriano's narrator, once able to uncover the source of the abjection with which he and the rest of the country is tainted, appears to begin a process of moving forward.

Each novel provides an allegory of its contemporary national context through the journey of the protagonist-everyman. Similarly to how many in the middle classes suffered through the recession of the 1980s and economic reform, these protagonists are unemployed and no longer fit in their old lives. Each begins a journey with no defined destination. Fredric Jameson posits in his 1986 essay "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" that this literature should be read as allegory. He argues that the divide between the personal and the political in capitalist nations is less prominent in Third World nations, so writers using Western (capitalist) genres like the novel necessarily merge the two (319-20). This theory is problematic in that it ignores the complexity of works from the so-called Third World and posits a different reading of these texts than the Western canon, in spite of the feminist assertion that even in capitalist countries of the Center, "the personal is political." Still, *Una sombra ya pronto serás* and *Hotel Atlántico* are two novels for which his theory of allegory holds true. Soriano and Noll's narratives are, as Jameson states, "*the story of the private individual destiny [as] an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*" (italics in original 320). The anonymity of the protagonist-narrators augments the novels' allegorical portrayal of Argentina and Brazil in the post-dictatorship. Neither man tells the other characters his name, nor does he ever state it. This anonymity serves to detract from the identity of the

narrators, both for the other characters in the novels and for the reader. The basis of their identity is past professional experience (Soriano's protagonist has worked as an informatics engineer, while Noll's has been a well-known soap opera actor), and any present characteristics that may stand out.<sup>6</sup>

The congruence between the economic, political and social situation in Argentina and Brazil as outlined above and the inescapable problems the individuals face in the narratives underscores their journeys as allegorical. The embattled situation that Noll's narrator faces in his declining body, in addition to bad weather, marginalized spaces, and the frequent deaths of acquaintances, takes the reader on a journey through urban and rural areas in Brazil to reveal economic and social marginalization, political corruption, and increasing inequality in a nation that already leads the world in this area. Soriano's narrator's problems are no less related to Argentina's national situation, as he wanders about the decadent province and meets other middle class characters also trapped in circumstances they cannot escape. Although the end of *Una sombra ya pronto serás* shows the protagonist as having identified the cause of the abject situation through his denunciation of neoliberal policies, his hopefulness does not erase the fact that the train is still immobile and the province is sinking into ruin. Read as allegory, this novel provides a warning as clear as Noll's protagonist being swallowed by the abject in his death; the Argentine and

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<sup>6</sup> Noll's protagonist is a famous actor and clearly not the conventional everyman. However, I identify him as such because his present circumstances indicate that he has lost the cultural capital he once possessed. Although in soap operas he was a man to be imitated and a projection of viewers' desires, in the present the protagonist is simply another abject character. In addition, only one person throughout the novel recognizes him upon meeting him, and this leads to the amputation of his leg for the benefit of a politician's campaign.

Brazilian situations at the turn of the decade were perilous, and threatened in very real ways the middle classes and the economically marginalized.

The authors' use of space in both novels is essential to creating a critique of free market policy in Argentina's and Brazil's transitions. In *Una sombra ya pronto serás*, space traps the middle class characters. Their entrapment is represented as both figurative, in the threat of turning into shadows, as well as literal, in that they are stuck in the same places and unable to leave the region. Even though all of the action takes place in this provincial region, the meaning behind being stuck, trapped, and disappearing is not limited to the province, but rather imagines the nation. The protagonist is already in this situation when the train breaks down, and the representation of his aimless wanderings through the province allows for a closer examination of the subjective experience of national space.

The title of the novel presents the threat the characters face. The looming shadow is the loss of identity, where the individual does not disappear entirely, but rather no longer occupies space in society and is confused with masses of similar people. The English translation of the title, *Shadows*, does not capture the full meaning of the Spanish title: *Una sombra ya pronto serás*, a shadow you soon will be.<sup>7</sup> The future that the protagonist used to think possible is, like his very person, gradually fading into a mere remnant of what it once was. After working in informatics in Europe during the dictatorship, the narrator has returned to Argentina, but his children

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<sup>7</sup> Even though the "you" could appear to be the protagonist, the title also seems to generalize the possibility of fading into shadow to the reader. Since the novel is detective fiction, the protagonist does the logical work of putting together the pieces of the crime. However, as allegory, the reader becomes another investigator who may soon become a shadow.

have remained abroad. The narrator, though middle class, has no home and is unemployed, representing a loss of two major sources of identity in bourgeois society (i.e. property and work). Another character, Lem, is the first to point out that the protagonist is a shadow (93), which is ironic because many characters describe Lem as a lost banker with no distinguishing physical characteristics; he also is a shadow. The reader recognizes that each of the middle class characters is only an echo of what he or she once was, but the narrator-protagonist is the only character who realizes this about himself. Near the end of the novel, in the wake of the excitement of having cheated to win an inter-town *truco* match, the narrator says of himself and Coluccini, “I had the sensation that we did not exist anymore for anyone, not even for ourselves . . . What drew our attention was to watch our own fallen shadows, and perhaps we would soon become confused with them” (“[t]uve la sensación de que ya no existíamos para nadie, ni siquiera para nosotros mismos . . . Lo que nos atraía era mirar nuestra propia sombra derrumbada y quizá pronto íbamos a confundirnos con ella”<sup>8</sup>; 226). The threat of living in a precarious and inescapable situation is that these characters will cease to occupy any physical space. Like shadows, they may even lose their identities and be confused with one another in the same way that Coluccini and the protagonist bet their memories in *truco* (149-151, 247), and in how the protagonist wonders whether he is actually the source of other characters’ voices (241).

Aside from the threat of losing their identities, many characters in Soriano’s novel are stuck in this province. Spatial representations portray a desolate and stifling

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<sup>8</sup> All translations are mine.

atmosphere that corresponds to the prospects of wide swaths of the lower middle classes during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Dreams of being trapped in an “asphyxiating labyrinth” (“laberinto asfixiante” 94) and having “equations impossible to solve” (“ecuaciones imposibles de resolver” 176) reveal the level of internalization of the narrator’s immobility and impotence upon his return to Argentina. On his way south to Neuquén, the protagonist’s train breaks down. Other wandering, middle class characters who have cars have been trying to find their way out of the country, and offer to take him to locales such as Bolivia and Ohio. However, the province in decline seems to impose its decay on the visitors. Not only is there frequent mention of not being able to get the cars into fourth gear (see pages 17, 67, 120, 136, 142 and 172), but also for all of their driving, they cannot escape the region. The novel does not focus on the cars being slow. Instead, not being able to get into fourth gear creates a sense of frustration that is amplified by the fact that there is no way to leave the region. The portrayal of space as oppressive and binding limits what the characters can do, but also permits the reader to examine it in detail, re-visiting each of the three towns and the secondary characters that the protagonist cannot leave behind in his journey.

None of these characters can escape the confines of this provincial region, and the national center has begun to ignore it. The middle class characters find themselves endlessly trapped in this microcosm of the nation under market policies that lower their standard of living, limit job opportunities, and reduce them to memories of what they used to be and hoped someday to achieve. This situation is not unusual, according

to the clerk in the auto shop (*Automóvil Club*). He makes it clear that times are difficult and not getting any better. The protagonist is surprised when the clerk states that no one from the main branches of the *Automóvil Club* ever comes by, not even with an emergency vehicle. “What for?” the clerk asks. “Whoever passes through here is already screwed” (“¿Para qué? El que pasa por acá ya viene jugado”; 102). The protagonist and other middle class characters often express this same attitude, or comment that they cannot find their way or are going in circles. Nadia, the fortune-teller, tells the protagonist that he “is not going anywhere” (“Usted no va a ninguna parte”; 59), and while riding in her car he states that “to me, it was as if we were always in the same place” (“para mí era como si siempre estuviéramos en el mismo lugar”; 69). Coluccini laments his broken fourth gear, saying he could have made it to La Paz already if it worked (136). Later, when the protagonist tells Coluccini, “I have the impression that we already went by here. Don’t you remember that gate?” he responds, “They’re all the same, Zárate, like trees. I went fifteen hundred kilometers with the priests and never knew whether I was going north or south” (“tengo la impresión de que por acá ya pasamos. ¿Usted no se acuerda de la tranquera esa? –Son todas iguales, Zárate, como los árboles. Hice mil quinientos kilómetros con los curas y nunca supe si iba para el norte o para el sur”; 178). A general waiting for troops even claims that there is no way out, or else he would have left (242). All of these characters have been used to living with means, unlike the poorer provincials. But since that time they, like the narrator, have entered a neglected realm, a space that is



marginal to the nation. This space in the novel receives representation as a completely different sphere removed from the commercial and political center of the country.

The fact that there are no maps or street signs to indicate where the characters are or where they should (or could) go enhances the sensation of being trapped. Stuck in the confines of this space, the characters have no means of escaping, and the outside world seems to be removing traces of identity from the province even as those on the inside plunder what resources are left. The provincial space of the novel is, like the characters, beginning to disappear or turn into shadows. At the auto shop mentioned above, the narrator says, "I went into the office and glanced at the map. Junta Grande was not on it, and neither was Triunvirato or Colonia Vela. I told the guy and he explained to me that they had sent him the wrong route guide, but that he was already used to seeing it there" ("Entré en la oficina y le eché una mirada al mapa. Junta Grande no figuraba allí ni tampoco Triunvirato ni Colonia Vela. Se lo dije al tipo y me explicó que la habían mandado una hoja de ruta equivocada pero que él ya estaba acostumbrado a verla allí"; 102). The region and towns that trap the characters, slowing their movement within a deteriorating environment, appear to be disappearing in official national registers. An ambiguous "they" have sent the wrong map, while another "they" have removed all of the road signs (104), and still another "they" the signs marking a military zone (235). In addition, during the course of the novel unnamed characters steal the telephone wires, thus gradually cutting off communication to the region.

The provincial locale is also desolate, as represented through when the protagonist-narrator first finds the Shell gas station. Consistent with the critique of the free market throughout the novel, this international chain at the provincial level is outdated and in disrepair; the opening of the market to other providers has resulted in a once-prosperous business falling into decline. He comments, “Seen from afar, the gas station seemed to have been prosperous at one time, but now it had only a diesel pump for the tractors and another for super unleaded in case someone really low on gas was passing through. The oil that the signs advertised had not been manufactured for years. The tire repair shop and cafeteria were closed and beginning to fall apart. The employee was still sleeping” (“Vista de lejos la estación de servicio parecía haber sido próspera alguna vez, pero ahora tenía nada más que un surtidor de gasoil para los tractores y otro de nafta súper por si pasaba alguien en apuros. El aceite que anunciaba la propaganda hacía años que no se fabricaba más. La gomería y el comedor estaban cerrados y empezaban a caerse a pedazos. El empleado todavía estaba durmiendo”; 12-13). This initial introduction to a multinational corporation emphasizes a state of isolation and decadence. The product, gasoline, is available, but only the highest grade because no local people need it and, in a pinch, travelers will pay more for it. Completing the representation of this forgotten space, international markets penetrate the region, but lack the luster they may have in more prosperous locations. Their priority is not the periphery, though their reach extends to the province, but rather the commercial centers of the country.

During the Southern Cone and Brazilian dictatorships, confining spaces often reconstruct the pressure of being unable to escape the reach of state violence; see, for example, characters like Marcelo Maggi Pophan from Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* (1980) and the Eligible Bachelor (*Jovem Promissor*) of Sérgio Sant'Anna's *Simulacros* (1977). Yet in these novels from the turn of the 1989/90 decade, as well as others from the late dictatorships and post-dictatorships such as Mario Levrero's *El lugar* (1982) and Diamela Eltit's *Mano de obra* (2002), the oppressive, constrictive or maze-like spaces suggest that a somewhat more vague power is placing restrictions on the characters. Half a decade after the end of the dictatorships, Soriano's and Noll's protagonists identify the economy as a significant factor in the reconstruction of space as oppressive in the novels.

Space in *Hotel Atlântico* does not play the same confining role that it does in *Una sombra ya pronto serás*, but it does reveal a process of exclusion. Where the narrator in Soriano's novel travels slowly around a province allowing the reader to understand the marginalized periphery as a space of disappearing identity and declining significance, the journey that Noll's narrator takes explores various places in Brazil and the social spaces within them. In particular, property ownership offers an example of contention between people of means in the novel and marginalized characters. Two places where this conflict occurs are the brothel the narrator visits with two men who give him a ride, and the apartment building that used to be Sebastião's grandmother's house. In both cases, the space is subsumed by commercial

interests while the marginalized inhabitants are further disenfranchised. Willem Assies notes that,

The [dictatorship] years 1964-1981 have been characterised as a period of institutional consolidation and massive expansion of a Brazilian welfare state. They saw the effective organisation of federal and state public systems in the areas of basic collective goods and services (education, health, social assistance, social security and housing) and a massive expansion of coverage in the context of rapid urbanization. (214)

However, Brazil has long been known as a country with one of the greatest income inequalities in the world, and these policies did not effectively improve inequality or social mobility; in fact, inequality has increased since 1964 (Assies 214; Soares 283). Under José Sarney's (1985-1990) transitional government, economic crises caused inflation to spiral out of control, in spite of attempts to rein it in with a new currency and an open market agreement with Argentina (Faro de Castro and Valladão Carvalho 478). Spaces such as the brothel and Sebastião's grandmother's former house reconstruct socio-economic exclusion as the removal of marginalized people from dominant areas.

The brothel's prostitutes are marginal characters, and in this sense their status is the same as it has been historically. Yet the narrator's description of this space suggests that the manner in which they experience exclusion has changed. During the years prior to the protagonist's stay there, they have been confined to the brothel, and thus relegated even further to the margins of society for commercial benefit. The brothel is one of the protagonist's many stops on his journey, but it was not one of his own choosing. He asks around in a town, and someone points out Néilson and his

soon-to-be brother-in-law, who are about to leave for the south. The narrator does not know when he accepts the ride that Néelson is involved in criminal activities, but after visiting the brothel, he overhears the two talk of killing him so he escapes in their car. The brothel is not as prosperous as it once was, so Néelson has decided to help it become more integrated with the contemporary market through the drug trade; he and his contacts now use the grounds to cultivate illegal substances. Thus, one form of illegal commerce has substituted another,<sup>9</sup> and this has occurred through changes not to the house but rather to the rest of the property. The land that used to provide protection and privacy to the sex workers from the surrounding society has been converted to use for profit, because in the changing economic order the sex workers no longer earn enough to justify their living in this space. They earn enough to support themselves and their needs, but the novel shows that in this moment there are potentially more capital returns through activities other than prostitution. The sex workers are thrice marginalized subjects in this respect: they are marginalized socially by their profession, regionally through the separation between the brothel and the rest of the population in that area, and physically by the walls between the house where they live and its surrounding property.

A second example of how the novel's spatial representations portray increasing exclusion is later in the novel, when the protagonist and Sebastião, his nurse and friend, escape the hospital where the surgeon amputated the protagonist's leg for political gain. Uncertain of where to go, they decide to visit Sebastião's grandmother

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<sup>9</sup> The act of prostitution is not illegal in Brazil, but running a brothel or otherwise employing prostitutes is.

in Porto Alegre. Sebastião gives his notice at the hospital where he works, and on the day of the journey the protagonist slips out of his hospital room to Sebastião's car. By this time in the novel, the protagonist is almost entirely dependent on Sebastião, both physically and economically. He is unemployed, has no money, and is crippled from the amputation. Although the narrator-protagonist was once well-off as an actor, he has quickly slid into poverty with no chance of escape. Yet Sebastião is also a marginal subject, which the reader learns through the emphasis on his skin color (black) and on his childhood and youth. Born in Porto Alegre and raised by his grandmother, Sebastião has had to seek work in other cities. He is a delocalized character without family ties, because his grandmother was illiterate and therefore could not keep in contact with him. Given his age and social class, Sebastião's situation suggests that as for many urban workers during the dictatorship, falling real wages and conservative modernization have contributed to his exclusion from the overall economic growth of the "Brazilian Miracle" (Wolford 411). The dictatorship may have made social welfare services more available, but novel suggests that opportunity and class mobility remained elusive for the poor and working classes.

The scene in which Sebastião and the narrator attempt to find the grandmother's house clearly presents changes to the city brought about by the neoliberal transformation of urban space. They arrive to the street where she used to live only to find in her house's place a new apartment building four stories tall. Across the street is the same small shop that Sebastião remembers from his childhood. The contrast between the old city and the new shows how the reorganization of urban

space by new commercial interests affects the population that was already living there. In this scene, the reader does not see the inhabitants of the new apartment complex. Instead, the protagonist remains inside the car, and his gaze shows the elderly shop owner and Sebastião. Since the grandmother has passed away, the space that she once occupied has been converted to multiple family dwellings. Sebastião, apparently her only surviving relative, seems to have no recourse to her property because upon her death, it was overrun by commercial interests that he is too poor and marginalized to combat. The elderly man continues to run his small neighborhood business, but the scene implies that his shop soon could share the fate of his friend's house. Rosana Díaz Zambrana explains that the dissolution of the house as a point of reference and return provokes feelings of abandonment. In this journey, the lack of a house contributes to the disintegration of the protagonist's identity (145-6). It excludes him and Sebastião from society since they no longer have anywhere to return to; they are condemned to travel in the margins, perpetually. Since commercial interests began to buy in the poorer inhabitants have been forced out, as often happens in urban neighborhoods. Even though the house should have been Sebastião's, he and the narrator will not have the opportunity to live in the new apartment building given their financial and social situation. The two of them have been dislodged by corruption and economic marginalization, and negated a place in the new urban space.

Soriano and Noll create an effective critique of neoliberalism and its effects on peripheral nations in abject narrator-protagonists on a wandering journey. Through spatial representations of the Argentine province and various locales in Brazil, the

novels call into question increasing social and economic marginalization during the post-dictatorship transition to democracy. Although they do this in very distinct ways, each represents his nation's transition as a time in which the lower and middle classes are losing economic and political power, and the lower classes are becoming increasingly impoverished.

### *Economic Critique*

Hyperinflation at the end of the 1980s, in combination with amnesty for the military for crimes against human rights, limited the possibility for social justice. The re-creation of this space through journey is only a piece of the novels' social commentary. *Hotel Atlântico* and *Una sombra ya pronto serás* both explicitly address the economic situation in their respective countries. Noll's novel alludes to poor economic performance and the displacement of poor and middle class characters, and Soriano's directly critiques the free market. But the authors do so not only through the characters' dialogue; the genres of the novels also contribute to this critique. Soriano manipulates the detective novel to denounce neoliberalism, while Noll's *novella* mimics a film to portray the economic climate.

*Una sombra ya pronto serás* is a detective novel with a non-human criminal: neoliberalism. The story, though it appears to simply be the journey of a lost, abject protagonist, distorts the elements of crime fiction in order to discover this criminal. Ana María Amar Sánchez notes that the key components of the genre (crime, mystery, investigation, detective) articulate "three essential terms...: *crime, truth, justice*" ("tres términos esenciales...: *crimen, verdad, justicia*"; 47). Though upon a first reading



these components may not appear clearly defined, a closer read reveals the novel as a re-working of the hard-boiled variant. Instead of suspense, Soriano weaves a sense of oppression through the seemingly inescapable labyrinth within which they travel. Luis Martín Cabrera argues that Argentina's crime fiction has significant differences in comparison to the genre in other Latin American countries, where it developed later. The figure of the detective in particular becomes fragmented, and even more so in Soriano's work in the early 1990s due to Argentina's political and economic history. Martín Cabrera states, "the detective—a strong rational subject—is an incongruent figure in a society that has been abandoned to the unruly organization of free market politics and corruption" (99-100). I posit that the detective figure is three-pronged in this novel. Lem, a non-descript banker, is a Marlowe-esque version of the North American hard-boiled detective (105), but the narrator also appears to be the investigator, albeit unknowingly as he wanders through the province meeting locals and other middle-class wanderers. Indeed Lem's suicide is what leads the protagonist to realize the root of the crime (Soriano 229). Yet the reader is also an important actor in this novel, since he or she must ultimately put together the clues: often, a clue is simply a mention of a monument or a passing comment, and the reader must allow Argentina's past to inform the reading. Together the reader, Lem and the protagonist discover the truth, but justice is more elusive and left undone in the novel.

But what is the crime under investigation? The reader finds it shrouded in the mystery of how the situation in Argentina came to be so poor, with impoverished provincial towns and middle class citizens trying to flee the country. Why are the

buildings in ruins and the characters roaming in circles? Clues that aid the discovery of the crime include references to leftist political opposition (31, 44, 172-173) and the fallen, corrupt dictatorship (25, 43, 85, 132, 143, 153). Unlike Pinochet's regime in Chile, the Argentine dictatorship did not implement neoliberalism, but it did set in place certain policies that facilitated the shift beginning in the democratic transition and completed by president Carlos Ménem (1989-1999) (Martín Cabrera 100-1). Recent impoverishment (Soriano 9, 12-13, 15, 34, 49) is another clue, and even though it goes unsaid in the novel, this is most likely related to hyperinflation brought about by poor economic policy under the regime. In addition, the novel decries citizens taking advantage of one another, including priests and the police (54, 118, 195). This is not a new phenomenon, but the novel imagines it as very common in this abject setting; as a clue it points more to a moral failing under neoliberalism than to financial desperation. Finally, as Marina Guntsch notes, the year of each car's fabrication, which the narrator generally does not fail to mention, points to national glory years that the narrator interprets as "an uninterrupted line of the failures of the national ideal" (Guntsch 187-8). The crime that he and the reader discover is neoliberalism, the culmination of a destructive process begun in 1976 and completed through Ménem's appropriation and transformation of populist governance.

Neoliberalism implemented by the military regime and continued in the present is the culprit of the novel's state of abjection. This variation on the conventional detective novel is congruent with other trends in the genre, such as the increasing skepticism toward the state and corporations, the legitimacy of the

bourgeois order during the late capitalism of recent years (Mandel 124), and the depiction of crime especially among Latin American writers as embedded in society and social, political and economic institutions (Amar Sánchez 60-1). While both Amar Sánchez (60-1) and Glen Close (18-9) mention the role of the economy in the evolution of the genre, Ricardo Piglia argues that the hard-boiled variety may be read as a symptom of a capitalist society because all aspects of the genre revolve around capital: the detective is paid to solve a crime that usually relates to money (*Crítica y ficción* 61-2). However, because neoliberal capitalism, the cause of abjection in the novel, is intricately tied to the political order, there will be no justice for the violent deaths of two characters. Amar Sánchez states,

The genre in its canonical form not only constructs a tranquilizing response in which order always triumphs, but rather proposes a type of violence and criminality enclosed, able to be dominated and explained. The Latin American story breaks this pact, destroys this harmony between society/justice/ley upon representing the crime as *a product of* the political and social institutions. It not only breaks the pact, but rather there is no legal space or legitimacy to which to turn.

El género en su forma canónica no sólo construye una tranquilizadora respuesta en la que el orden siempre triunfa, sino que propone un tipo de violencia y de criminalidad acotada, dominable y explicable. El relato latinoamericano quiebra este pacto, destruye la armonía entre sociedad/justicia/ley al representar el crimen como *producto de* las instituciones políticas y sociales. No sólo se quiebra el orden, sino que no hay espacio legal ni legitimidad a la que recurrir. (Emphasis in original 60-61)

Justice falls outside the realm of the possible in the novel because in order for there to be a legitimate space in which to seek it, the neoliberal order would have to be abolished. Still, although initially Soriano's detective (whether the protagonist, Lem or the reader), does not know what Amar Sánchez calls rules of the game (65) or even

that there is an investigation to solve, the crux of the economic critique lies in his awakening through these deaths. The brief friendships between the narrator and the characters that die lead to the discovery of neoliberalism as the culprit for abjection, and the potential of some form of resolution, though not justice for the past.

The genre of Soriano's novel plays an important role in the uncovering of a major social problem and its denunciation. In a similar way, the form of Noll's novel aids in the portrayal of a country torn by economic crisis and mismanagement. *Hotel Atlântico* is a fast-paced *novella* with little development of ideas, with weather often serving as a marker of the protagonist's circumstances. Narration jumps from scene to scene with bare descriptions of setting and secondary characters. Virna Vieira Leite claims that the manner of description and transition mimic theater, although perhaps descriptions correspond more closely to a film. Theatrical or filmic elements include in particular the numerous comments about the weather that pervade the narrator's account. He frequently dwells on the unseasonal cold (Noll 12, 19, 23, 25, 26, 34, 40, 45, 73, 103, 105), but he also mentions heat, also often unseasonal (49, 52, 56, 61, 68, 69, 70, 99), as well as ominous rain and wind (34, 73, 87, 88). In very conventional literary form, the trope of weather corresponds to the protagonist's circumstances. The U.S. woman whom he meets on the bus loans him her ex-husband's jacket to fight the freezing cold (26), emphasizing the protagonist's precarious situation as a traveler with no baggage. A torrential downpour adds to the confusion of the night he meets the doctor who later amputates his leg; the protagonist passes out in the rain, only to wake up with his leg gone (76). Yet sunny skies greet the protagonist and his nurse

Sebastião as they flee the hospital (98), indicating the joy of escaping its confinement and beginning a new journey.

Nice weather is rare and brief in this film-like novel. The narrator notes more often very cold weather, unusual for these regions of Brazil. Descriptions and images set the tone for each section of narration, which are divided by spaces instead of chapters, and correspond to the economic critique. The reader does not learn the season until the end of the novel, and only knows that the wind, rain and cold are incongruent with the time of year. This serves to emphasize the precariousness of the narrator's journey, as well as to create an ominous mood throughout the novel. However, at the end of the novel the reader discovers that the unusual weather is related to Brazil's economic situation. Sebastião has never seen the sea, so after visiting his grandmother's old neighborhood in Porto Alegre, the two find a small beach hotel. The owners, a married couple, are very happy to have guests, and it appears that few people have stayed there that season. When Sebastião asks about their lack of business,

The man responded that in other years during the spring the beach hotels already received a good number of guests on the weekends. That year, with the cold sticking around, hotel business was almost at a standstill.

–It's the crisis also– the woman [his wife] reminded him.

O homem respondeu que em outros anos durante a primavera os hotéis do litoral já recebiam bom número de hóspedes nos fins de semana. Aquele ano, com o frio custando a passar, o movimento dos hotéis era quase nenhum.

–É a crise também– lembrou a mulher. (105)

The woman's comment points to the real cause of the lack of guests: the economic crisis. The weather mimics the country's hard times. As in many situations throughout

the novel, weather corresponds to how circumstances affect the narrator, and is often a trope that creates an oppressive mood or ominous tone.

Marcus Faro de Castro and Izabel Maria Valladão de Carvalho explain a variety of factors that contributed to economic turbulence in 1989, the year Noll published the novel. They argue that rocky financial markets in the “lost decade” of the 1980s were the result of global liberalization trends (466). Other external factors included the end of the Cold War and the United States’ calls for multilateral trade policy, as well as the use of “structural adjustment conditionalities” by international aid agencies as a way to address debt incurred by the military regimes. Internally, besides the transition to democracy, the creation of a new constitution in 1988, and growing pluralism in society and the economy, these authors note the “subjecti[on] of ‘economic populism’ to political fragmentation” (476), which occurs as the central government cedes increasing control to local politics after 1983 (471). These factors are never explicitly mentioned in the novel, but instead come into play through the characters’ circumstances: the narrator has lost his job, Sebastião’s grandmother’s house has been replaced by an apartment complex, the property around the brothel has been converted to produce drugs, and tourists no longer frequent the beach hotel. The novel presents economic turmoil as impersonal, and the reader must do the work to link it to the above situations as the primary factors in their creation.

In addition, even though the novel does not dwell on any scene but rather moves the reader quickly through the action, it is clear that this hotel would have received the majority of its business from the middle classes. The fact that hotel

business has been hit hard suggests that they, like the protagonist, have been affected by the economy. Unemployment is not only the protagonist's personal problem, but rather the effect of something happening at a national level, like the weather. Maria Carlota de Alencar Pires suggests that marginalization in *Hotel Atlântico* represents the sectors of society left out of the globalization process that Brazil was undergoing. She says of this novel and the film *Central do Brasil*, "The oppression, the unemployment, the poverty of those living in the margins of this country-giant are the same blades that cut across these two narratives, creating a separation between a very poor Brazil and the Brazil tuned into the new paradigm of globalization" ("A opressão, o desemprego, a pobreza dos que habitam à margem desse país-gigante são as mesmas lâminas que cortam transversalmente essas duas narrativas, operando a separação de um Brasil muito pobre daquele sintonizado com o novo paradigma da globalização"). The couple from the hotel, Sebastião, the narrator and the rest of the characters, who are identified primarily by their social status (Silva Santana 12), have no part in this system that favors those with ties to international capital. Lowering trade tariffs and free market policies made it even easier than in the past for international actors to gain access to Brazilian markets. The critique of the market crowding out local marginalized people as formerly marginal spaces become subsumed into spaces controlled by central actors (national and international) is strengthened by the cinematic representation of weather reconstructing the problems and contradictions in Brazil.

#### *Solidarity and Relationships*

Each of the novels discussed here addresses not only the economic context within which these characters struggle, but also imagines possibilities for forming the type of relationships that will aid them in this struggle for survival. Many acquaintances or friendships fail to develop into anything beneficial, and some are even harmful occasionally. However, each protagonist does manage to form a meaningful friendship or relationship that suggests limited possibilities for bettering his situation. Alliances and solidarity are the key to survival, with a more hopeful outcome in *Una sombra ya pronto serás* than in *Hotel Atlántico*.

The majority of the novels describe failed relationships between the protagonists and those they meet on their journeys. The abject environment frustrates even the development of bonds between people. For example, the young couple who promised Soriano's protagonist a ride to the Panamericana highway leaves without him (Soriano 129), and the protagonist writes his daughter only one letter, in which he says nothing truthful (204). Nadia, the fortune-teller, meets Soriano's protagonist several times, but rarely remembers him. Examples of failed relationships in Noll's novel include the woman from the United States with whom the protagonist has a deep conversation, who then commits suicide while seated next to him (Noll 30-31), and the brothers-in-law who give him a ride, take him to the brothel, and then attempt to kill him (54-55). In addition, sex in the novels is constructed as a solitary activity even when it is between two people. Soriano's protagonist says that when he and Nadia had sex, "it seemed to me that she was somewhere else. I also went to visit some good memories" ("me pareció que estaba en otra parte. También yo fui a visitar algunos



buenos recuerdos”) instead of attending to each other (Soriano 74), and that they returned to their formal relationship as strangers immediately afterwards (75). Noll’s narrator has sex with a hotel concierge (Noll 12, 15) and a maid (68) without a thought of seeing the women again. As Nayara Silva Santana states, “Another point that stands out in the narrative [*Hotel Atlântico*] is the ephemerality of interpersonal relationship, as emotional ties do not exist between the characters. Sex is seen as something instinctual, animal” (“Outro ponto marcante na narrativa é a efemeridade das relações interpessoais visto que não existem vínculos de sentimentos afetivos entre as personagens. O sexo é visto como algo instintivo, animal”; 11). However, sex in Noll’s novel is more than an act of pleasure, being also an indicator of his masculinity. Masculinity in *Hotel Atlântico* is connected to economic power, which I discuss in more detail below. Relationships cut short highlight the abject state of post-dictatorship Argentina and Brazil as they transition to neoliberal economies.

Yet relationships also serve to resist the abject circumstances these have brought about. The deaths of two acquaintances/friends in *Una sombra ya pronto serás* are key to understanding the critique of neoliberalism in the novel. This is possible because of the clues mentioned above, which the reader and narrator have noticed, as well as through the deaths of Barrante and Lem. The only proponent of neoliberalism, Barrante, decries the state for getting in the way of progress (108-109); the narrator notes that everything about him is just wrong (113). When he dies, caught in the literal cross-fire of a lovers’ quarrel, the narrator says, “I gave him a pretty long speech about the inconveniences of the free market economy” (“le hice un discurso

bastante largo sobre los inconvenientes de la economía de libre mercado”; 129). This is the most explicit criticism of this economic model, but neoliberalism as the criminal is still not clear. This only happens upon Lem’s suicide, when he leaves a note for the narrator.

Besides Coluccini, with whom the narrator shares more intimate conversations, the lost banker Lem is one of the most important minor characters. Lem is one of the characters with whom the narrator has the most contact, and there is a certain consistency in running into, as well as leaving and receiving notes for, each other. Lem’s death represents the inability to beat the system; through probabilities, he wants to break the bank of a casino (*saltar un casino*) with the protagonist, but in the end discovers that this is not possible and commits suicide. The narrator says, “it upset me that I had not paid attention to his signals, that I had not noticed in time that the dice were weighted, that whatever bet he has made, it was a lost cause” (“me daba bronca no haber prestado atención a sus señales, no haber advertido a tiempo que los dados estaban cargados, que cualquiera haya sido su apuesta siempre estuvo perdida”; 229). The clues were there, but only through previous contact with Lem could the protagonist really understand why he committed suicide. The brilliance of this discovery is that it is symbolic of the trap in which all of these characters find themselves. The narrator-protagonist never saw any dice; he never even saw a casino. There was no way for him to know they were weighted. In fact, he refers not to literal dice, but rather to Lem’s situation when he realizes that this wealthy (91), non-descript (210), lost (104) world-travelling banker (39) shot himself because from the beginning

his bet was a losing one. Neoliberalism caught some of the wealthy in the same trap as the middle classes and those dwelling in the province, as I will discuss in Chapter Three. Lem's death in particular frees the narrator-detective to discover the culprit of the decadent, "asphyxiating labyrinth" ("laberinto asfixiante"; 94), within which he has been trapped; it also allows him to hope for a way out. The ending of Soriano's novel is more hopeful than that of Noll's, whose narrator dies at the end, because the narrator-protagonist believes that the train will soon take him away from this provincial region.

Likewise, the death of Noll's protagonist and his relationship with Sebastião show the potential that relationships have for dealing with the dire conditions he faces in the novel. Like Soriano's narrator, Noll's also has been trapped, but in his case it is through the deterioration of his body (Vieira Leite). As the weather at the final hotel is linked with the Brazilian economy, so this deterioration closely resembles the narrator's diminishing social and economic capital. Once an actor, he has enjoyed an upper-middle class lifestyle and certain social perks. But the novel begins *in medias res* as he has already embarked on this journey. The last remnant of his success was his car, which he has sold before the novel begins; as money grows tight, the protagonist is increasingly feminized. He claims to be too tired for sex in the brothel (Noll 45), and is essentially castrated by the amputation of his leg, being unable to perform sexually with the surgeon's daughter (90). Without work, home, money and one of his legs, Noll's protagonist develops a homoerotic bond with his nurse, and dies deaf and blind on the beach; holding Sebastião's hand, his last thought is, "Sebastião

is strong” (“Sebastião tem força”; 110), an appeal to Sebastião’s masculine strength on which he relies. This relationship, the culmination of a process of feminization throughout the novel, is the protagonist’s only tie to society. He lacks other friendships, and would otherwise have died alone.

However, there are limitations to the resistance that the solidarity between the two engenders. They are able to escape the grip of the surgeon together, but the grandmother’s house has still been replace by commercial interests, and the narrator’s body sinks into decline. In fact, the feminization and death of economically impotent characters is a recurrent theme throughout the novel, and indicates a connection between wealth and gender in Brazil. The novel opens with a corpse being removed from the hotel where the narrator first stops on his journey, but there is no explanation of how the man has died. Shortly thereafter, a woman from the United States posing as a divorced anthropologist commits suicide on the bus next to the narrator, while he sleeps (31). In the next town the protagonist stays with a womanizer-turned-priest. Mistaken for a priest in borrowed robes, the protagonist performs the last rites of a dying woman (66). This is the beginning of the end of the narrator’s sexual exploits and hyper-masculine portrayal, as well as his money. The brothel where he refuses a prostitute follows, and then the amputation of his leg and subsequent dependence on Sebastião. Many of the characters rely on one another in their resistance to others who take advantage of them, but ultimately solidarity is only a means of resisting, but not avoiding, being overcome by one’s abject circumstances.

Noll's protagonist dies on a beach, brought physically to nothing through a state of complete dependence. Lem's death provides insight to Soriano's narrator, who realizes that neoliberalism is responsible for his bleak surroundings. Case solved and denunciation complete, he climbs back onto the train and waits expectantly for its departure. These endings are not simply indicative of expectations for the middle classes of Brazil and Argentina. If anything, the growth rate of Argentina's GDP was more negative than Brazil's, which began to liberalize in 1987 (Vos, Lance and Paes de Barros 14, see table 1.2); in addition, though both countries experienced hyperinflation, Brazil's was decidedly less (Morley 24, see table 1-8). Yet the action of Soriano's narrator imagines the possibility of resolution, while Noll's accepts death in the company of a friend. What these novels reveal is the subjective experience of how relationships may be affected by economic policies implemented at the national level.

### *Conclusion*

The subjective experiences of these protagonists demonstrate that while forming permanent relationships is unlikely, it is not impossible and can lead to better understanding and/or management of a difficult reality. Even though his body deteriorates as poverty and powerlessness overcome him, Noll's protagonist does not despair; his last thought is to commit himself to the strength he knows that Sebastião possesses. Soriano's protagonist, on the other hand, claims that he has formed more relationships in the few days in the province than during his whole time living in Europe (119). As bleak as the asphyxiating province is, it could be lonelier. This

reality, however, ensnares and debilitates, and both novels take care to denounce the political and economic factors that help to create such degradation and abjection. The authors depict their increasingly neoliberal, globalized societies, combined with corporatist practices in Brazil and neo-populism in Argentina, as spaces that constrict the middle and lower classes, marginalizing them or shutting them out of dominant society.

Both of these novels are also somewhat cyclical, with the protagonists ending up in situations similar to when the novel started. Yet this takes the form of a spiraling history. Soriano's narrator re-boards the train, completing one loop of the spiral, which appears to potentially have a point of exit now that he has discovered what has brought about the deterioration of the province. Noll's protagonist witnesses several loops of the spiral in other characters' deaths, and when his own death arrives, the reader finds Sebastião substituting the narrator, near the beginning of his own journey. As I continue to explore solidarity and marginalization in the chapters that follow, I pay particular attention to two questions that these novels raise. The first is twofold: what is the nature of solidarity and how does it offer the possibility to engage in resistance to the social consequences of neoliberalism and the post-dictatorship transition? The second question is related to the general differences I find between the Argentine and Brazilian example, and whether these differences hold in other Argentine and Brazilian works. In my second chapter, I examine the characteristics of solidarity, as well as global differences between Brazilian and Chilean works.

## Lessons from the Past: Racial Minorities in Rubem Fonseca and José Miguel Varas

In the previous chapter, I compared an Argentine novel with a Brazilian novel to consider how each uses the motif of journey to create a critique of post-dictatorship, early neoliberal society. The novels show that even though the marginalized, previously middle class characters have limited possibilities as represented through oppressive spatial representations and deteriorating bodies, solidarity with others is a means of survival, if only for a time. The present chapter contrasts a Brazilian novel with a Chilean novel to examine the deleterious effects of failing to act in solidarity with one's own social class, as well as the potential benefits of solidarity. To do so, I explore 1994, the year in which Brazil won its fifth FIFA World Cup, China, Russia and the United States signed agreements to redirect Cold War era missiles, and Iraq again deployed troops to its border with Kuwait under the wary eye of the United Nations. In South America during the same year, a bombing rocked an Argentine Jewish center leaving eighty-five people dead. Brazil's population turned out in droves to vote for president, governor, senator, federal deputy and state deputy, a combination of openings that only rarely occurs in the same year; Fernando Henrique Cardoso won the presidency in the first round. Not long before, Chileans also had participated in presidential elections for the second time since Augusto Pinochet's 1973-1990 dictatorship; Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle (1994-2000), the son of former president Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970), followed Patricio Aylwin Azócar (1990-1994) as president.

The year is important in the present chapter because I analyze two novels published in 1994. *El correo de Bagdad* by José Miguel Varas and *O Selvagem da Ópera* by Rubem Fonseca survey radically different places and time periods, but they do so through the gaze of a narrator from the mid-1990s. Each novel explores the relationship between present and past social issues through a present-day narrator who discusses the life of an artist, the protagonist of the story, during a significant past national moment. I argue that both novels depict intentionality as imperative to forming solidarity between agents for social change and justice. Through a discussion of the contemporary gaze, an “othered” protagonist, and the revisiting of turbulent times, I consider how each novel presents its case on solidarity in national struggles. Amid growing inequality in Chile, *El correo de Bagdad* constructs a hopeful scenario in which raising awareness of marginalization leads to alliances that advance social justice, while *O Selvagem da Ópera* reveals a contemporary society plagued by issues that potential change agents did not resolve because they lacked solidarity with the very people for whom they acted.

Vital to this discussion is an understanding of certain moments in history, and not only the histories of Brazil and Chile, but also of Italy, Iraq and Czechoslovakia. This is due to the fact that the authors have chosen periods and sites outside Latin America to highlight processes that corresponded to what has taken place in their respective countries. Though the narrators speak from the perspective of the 1990s, the majority of the plot takes place in the past. Varas coordinates the histories of Chile, Czechoslovakia and Iraq during the 1960s and 1970s, when each country’s socialist



program was in decline, pointing out political similarities between them as well as three minority groups with varying degrees of oppositional potential: Chilean Mapuches, Czechoslovak Jews and Iraqi Kurds. Fonseca situates most of his novel in Brazil and Italy of the late nineteenth century. The reader requires little European history to understand the novel, but it may be helpful to note that even though Italy was less influential than France during this period in Brazil, it still held significant sway in artistic and musical trends. The most important historical moments in *O Selvagem da Ópera* are those taking place within Brazil: the abolition of slavery in 1888, and the political change from empire to republic in 1889. Due to the fact that both novels cover wide swaths of history and time, I address specific historical information in the discussion on each novel.

*Discrimination and the “Other”*

Both novels explore the position of the “other” locally and abroad, and reveal how the Center “others” peripheral nations. Since I am a scholar writing from within the United States, some may consider this discussion of marginalization in other countries as problematic. Nelly Richard, in her article “Postmodern Disalignments and Realignment of the Center/Periphery,” warns that scholarship may perpetuate the Center/Periphery binary, since the voice of the marginalized “other” rarely speaks for itself in academic discourse. She claims that “the ‘other’ faces two risks: either to serve rhetorically as a discursive fetish . . . or to remain confined to the prescribed and supervised territory in the margins, as a zone of non-interference with the institutions of the Center” (58). In the present chapter, as well as throughout the whole of this

dissertation, I attempt to avoid these risks by acknowledging them here; I also argue that researching the margins and the potential that solidarity offers in so-called peripheral nations suggests a way that the socially excluded may impact not only their society, but also the Center. Fully-fledged, solidarity among marginalized populations poses a threat to neoliberal societies by exposing its contradictions and false promises.

In Chile and Brazil, the legacy of European colonization and slavery has perpetuated the stratification of society along race lines. The protagonists of *El correo de Bagdad* and *O Selvagem da Ópera* have learned that regardless of their purchasing power, race and ethnicity often influence how others perceive them both at home and abroad. Aliro Machuca Pailahueque (Huerqueo) is of the Mapuche people, which is an indigenous group in Chile and Argentina. Brazilian Carlos Gomes is a mixture of races. The narrator initially describes Gomes as the son of a *mulato* father and *cafuzo* mother (*Selvagem* 8), or of African, European and indigenous descent; he later notes that to elevate Gomes's social status, his daughter claims that Gomes is the descendant of Portuguese and indigenous Brazilian royalty. The social group of each protagonist is marginalized within their respective society, but to differing extents. The Chilean Mapuche have experienced colonization and many live on reservations, facing social prejudices such as those which Varas represents in his novel. Gomes is born under the Brazilian Empire before the abolition of slavery, when race theory deemed African heritage inherently inferior to European, or even the romanticized indigenous. He therefore downplays any African descent in order to distance himself from the prejudices of these ideas. As I discuss in more detail below, social prejudice in these

societies stems from their colonial heritage, in addition to the subsequent construction of national identity.

Varas's and Fonseca's protagonists, in spite of being accomplished international artists, face discrimination at home from the wealthy, dominant, and primarily white classes,<sup>10</sup> as well as in Europe and the Middle East. The marginalization of Chilean indigenous people is clear even in Varas's more progressive narrator, who admits that while reading the letters he has asked himself, "What the hell was a Mapuche doing in Bagdad?" ("¿qué diablos estaba haciendo un mapuche en Bagdad?"; 64). This suggests first the distinction between Mapuches and himself as Chilean, and second, incredulity at the thought of a tribal member travelling abroad. Aliro, Varas's protagonist, calls himself Huerqueo after errors in transcribing his name both in Chile and in Vienna. His wife's uncle Josef explains that Huerqueo sought to change his name because of its ethnic connotations. In broken Spanish, Josef says, "He obtains the legal abbreviation of his maternal surname to Hueque, but Huerque, through the registration clerk's error. Apocope that does not eliminate hurtful joking, the daughter of racial discrimination in Chile, which he himself says the custom is to deny" ("Obtiene la legal abreviación del materno apellido a Hueque, mas Huerque, por error de escribiente de los registros. Apócope del todo no elimina hirientes bromas, hijas de la racial discriminación que en Chile, mismo él dice, la costumbre es negar"; 29). Aliro appropriates the name Huerqueo purportedly due to

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<sup>10</sup> See the discussion below regarding miscegenation and race theory in Brazil.

this error; yet its relation to Huerquen, the title for Mapuche messengers or speakers, suggests that he also chooses to be a spokesperson through his art.

In Fonseca's novel, the dark-skinned artist also faces discrimination in Brazil and Europe. When Gomes first goes to Rio de Janeiro to ask for Imperial patronage to study music at the conservatory, the narrator notes that the emperor's mistress, the Countess Barral, "Did not expect that the young man recommended by Azarias to be an Indian, or almost black; she has an ambiguous opinion of blacks and Indians: she feels tenderness for them in a romanticized way, but she considers them inferior beings" ("Não esperava que o jovem recomendado de Azarias fosse quase índio, ou quase negro; ela vê negros e índios de maneira ambígua: sente carinho por eles, de uma maneira romântica, mas considera-os seres inferiores"; *Selvagem* 17). In addition, the "savage" of the title refers to how the protagonist composer is an outsider in Italy. Many Italians refer to Gomes as a "savage" because he is from Brazil, suggesting that he is "othered" due to his origins in the periphery of capitalist nations. Thus, while only some people from Europe and the Middle East look down upon Huerqueo, Gomes experiences a generalized dual marginalization as Brazilian abroad and dark-skinned at home. Huerqueo's status in Europe and the Middle East usually is related to his being a foreigner, but in Fonseca's representation, it is the racial markers of the Southern Hemisphere that lead both the Brazilian and European upper classes to look down on Gomes.

Due to the complexity of these two novels, I address them separately, and then return to a more comparative analysis. I show how Varas's novel, *El correo de*

*Bagdad*, suggests that solidarity in the face of marginalization is the necessary path of struggle, while Fonseca's *O Selvagem da Ópera* portrays that attempts to reject social marginalization and identify with the "norm" does not change one's social status. I use this tactic in order to fully explain the specific historic and political significance of each novel; through this organization, I may include relevant details which would otherwise be lost in an integrated discussion. After examining each novel separately, I return to a unified discussion to consider the significance of each argument.

*From Political Indifference to Intentional Solidarity*

*El correo de Bagdad* collapses regions and periods consistent with a Benjaminian conception of history, revealing connections between them and ultimately making an appeal to solidarity in the fight for social justice. This section discusses the complexity of Huerqueo's social status as a Mapuche artist, in order to emphasize the radical shift he makes in joining the Kurdish freedom fighters. I first provide relevant historical context and then delve into the novel itself.

The novel has a complex chronological and narrative structure, alternating between letters, annotations by the letters' recipient, and the narrative voice of a journalist. The narrator writes from the perspective of the present day in 1994, upon his return from exile to Chile. He receives the letters from his editor, however, in 1973, shortly before the end of Allende's Chile with Pinochet's *golpe de estado*. The letters themselves are from ten years prior: the narrator's editor wants him to write a piece on the Mapuche artist, Huerqueo, who has corresponded with his wife's uncle. Uncle Josef lives in Czechoslovakia, while Huerqueo and Eva write primarily from

Bagdad. The letters, Josef's illuminating annotations for the benefit of the periodical, and the narrator's comments regarding his situation pre- and post-*golpe* highlight similarities between socialist and communist governments in full decline: under the microscope are Kassem's Iraq and the contradictions of his Revolution, the more successful and industrialized communist Czechoslovakia as it begins to face economic difficulties, and Pinochet's *golpe de estado* that ended Chile's democratic road to socialism. The plot of the novel alternates between the narrator's experience as an Allende supporter who goes into exile and returns in the 1990s, Josef's personal life and marriage to a young woman, and Huerqueo and Eva's situation in Iraq. Of principal importance is Huerqueo's profession as a painter; the wealthy of Chile, Iraq and Europe commission various expositions, yet he also paints the oppression of the poor and marginalized. Increasing awareness of the oppression of the Kurds culminates in Huerqueo's disappearance and assumed alliance with them in their struggle for greater autonomy.

José Miguel Varas was a political activist and very involved from exile with resistance movements in Chile during Pinochet's regime. His activism influences themes in *El correo de Bagdad*, including the formation of solidarity considered here. Born in 1928 to an army colonel, Varas joined the Chilean Communist Party and served in Prague, where he developed a friendship with Pablo Neruda. Varas worked as a journalist and writer in Chile and abroad; he lived in Moscow during the dictatorship, but returned to Chile after the 1988 plebiscite. Of particular interest with respect to this novel is his role as a radio presenter: like Huerqueo in Iraq, Varas

became a voice of resistance from Moscow, and at different times had also worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation and Allende's administration (Clark).

Huerqueo is "othered" within Chile and sometimes experiences prejudices abroad as well. Most of the novel takes place in Iraq, but his second-class status in his homeland is clearly visible when he makes a trip to Chile for an art exhibit (and possibly to carry out tasks for his Kurdish friends). The protagonist, in spite of his high level of culture, does not fit in with the wealthy Santiaguinos. Isabel Hernández notes in her history of the Mapuches in Chile and Argentina that Chilean stereotypes of the indigenous person have passed through five phases since independence. Most relevant to this discussion are the most recent two phases. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the time when Huerqueo grows up and travels to Europe and Iraq, discourse revolves around the "'poor Indian, the *little Mapuche man*, the *little Mapuche woman*' who must be rescued from his or her misery in order to be integrated into society and the market" ("pobre indio, el *mapuchito*, la *mapuchita*' al que hay que rescatar de su miseria para integrarlo a la sociedad y al mercado"; 264). This attitude toward the Mapuche is consistent with its representation in the novel. Huerqueo takes note of the spectators' attitudes. "They made a surprised face during the introductions (what is this little Mapuche man doing here?) and afterwards, I was completely ignored" ("mohín de sorpresa en las presentaciones (¿qué hace aquí este mapuchito?) y después, el ninguneo total"; Varas 169). Only when, in response to their questions, Huerqueo reveals that his patrons are the Hassan family do the wealthy observers show any interest. Yet for the artist, this two-faced treatment is

unacceptable. “I left quickly, as if I were fleeing. Yes, it really was flight. I felt very distant from those people” (“Partí acelerado, como si huyera. Sí, era realmente una huída. Me sentí a una gran distancia de esa gente”; 169-70). This last trip to Chile emphasizes the extent to which Huerqueo will always be an outsider, even within his home country. In this scene and throughout the novel, Huerqueo demonstrates that he is very conscious of his “otherness” at home and abroad.

In addition, this novel shows the interconnectedness of and similarities between international affairs and processes through the juxtaposition of different times and places where similar events have taken place. Frequent shifts between letters, annotations and narrations written in different areas and periods recall Walter Benjamin’s explanation of history as constellations of related events (“Theses”), and traces connections between various struggles against capitalism and oppression.

Of the three sites, Czechoslovakia, with the backing and involvement of the Soviet Union, had the longest tradition of communism. The country began a program of Stalinist development in 1948, with a focus on rapid industrialization and producer, as opposed to consumer, goods (Stevens 16). Although the system was highly centralized and socially repressive, there was little generalized discontent even as the economy entered the 1962-63 crisis (Myant 2, 89, 97), which is when Varas’s characters are in Czechoslovakia. The country followed a process of de-Stalinization from 1962-68, and broke apart in 1992 shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union (Heitlinger 1, 144). Uncle Josef annotates the letters that Huerqueo has sent him during this crisis. Though the economic fissures began during this era, the



Czechoslovak regime retained relatively high levels of support in society, which questioned government efficiency as opposed to the continuing implementation of the communist program (Myant 89). Josef's annotations make clear that even though he has experienced racism as a Jew both currently and under the Nazis, racism has not excluded him from the generalized social well-being at that time in Czechoslovakia.

Huerqueo's letters describe the Iraqi "Revolution," which, under Abdel Karim Kassem's (i.e. Abd al-Karim Qasim) leadership, aspired to carry out land reform and dialogue with the communist party. However, due to its many economic and social contradictions, Kassem's regime came to an end through overthrow in 1963. Kassem's Revolution was not communist as some claimed, but at first he tried to initiate changes like agrarian reform, housing programs and greater access to higher education (Bagley 289), which would have laid the foundation for a more egalitarian society. Yet international actors and Iraq's history of colonization impeded the implementation of Kassem's reforms; wealthy rural landowners with ties to regional leaders began an assault on peasants, students and communist leaders, while in the cities businessmen collaborated with foreign agents to open the country to international markets. Even though Kassem sought greater economic ties with the Soviet Union and Western industrialized nations, the latter participated in trade deals but in general considered him unpredictable as a political leader (Joyce). Kassem found himself cut off from his political base due to his lack of support for it once in power, but he had also irrevocably broken ties with certain elite sectors which, in spite of his attempt to gain international allies through oil trade, could never be restored. Huerqueo paints the

struggle, though he claims to do so less from political motives and more as a way to purge his mind of what he has seen and experienced (Varas 149): peasants from the rural south sleeping in the streets of Bagdad (79); the body of an opposition leader pulled from the Tigris (172); a poor man beaten by soldiers outside a hospital (142). But ultimately it is the ziggurat that induces the Chilean Mapuche to align himself with Iraq's Kurds in their opposition not only to Kassem's regime, but also to later equally or more oppressive regimes (74-6).

The narrator begins to read the volume of letters in 1973, shortly before Pinochet's September 11 *golpe* that forcibly put an end to Chile's socialist experiment. Aspects of the letters from Iraq correspond to the narrator's experience in Chile. His introduction to each set of letters and Josef's annotations contextualize the narrator's reading, and the following letters explaining happenings in Iraq often have clear political parallels to Allende's and Pinochet's Chiles ten years later. Brian Loveman explains how increased political consciousness coupled with great income disparities in Chile in the late 1960s led to extreme political polarization under Salvador Allende's presidency (1970-1973) (*Chile* 240). As in Iraq, militant activists participated in land occupations, except that where Kassem's regime allowed brutal backlash against peasant occupations, Allende's administration supported them (Loveman, *Chile*, 251; Haslam 88). The round-up and displacement of poor urban dwellers by Kassem's military in the novel (Varas 139-40) recalls similar scenes in films like *Machuca* that portray the early years of Pinochet's dictatorship. Through the interplay of three countries carrying out socialist or communist attempts, *El correo de*

*Bagdad* reconstructs two different times in the past from the perspective of the 1990s. The novel shows how oppression and social struggles were not particular to Chile, and instead the fight for equality and self-determination among the socially marginalized may and in fact should continue in the present.

In this international context on display throughout the novel, Huerqueo's decision to identify and align himself with Kurdish "otherness" in Iraq calls into question the dual space that Huerqueo inhabits as a member of the cultured elite with financial means, simultaneously with his position as the "other" at home and abroad. In spite of his treatment as inferior upon returning to Chile, and his and other characters' comments related to his being an indigenous "other" even outside of Chile, Huerqueo recognizes his status as an international artist and for much of the novel chooses to inhabit this privileged sphere. The change is most prominent in Huerqueo's attitude toward his vocation as a painter. Although the novel represents the artist as inherently drawn to painting scenes of oppression, he does not relate this tendency to a political project, and instead participates in certain forms of oppression. Earlier, in Czechoslovakia, Huerqueo refuses to buy the services of a prostitute due to sentiments to the contrary (Varas 23). And, even though his initial reaction to slavery was disgust, once he gains greater recognition, Huerqueo buys a Berber slave to paint her body. By doing so, he occupies the space of the proprietor, which was inaccessible to him before his success in painting. As a slave, Djamila provides him with a willing sexual partner even as he notices that for some time she does not reciprocate affection (241). Huerqueo justifies his participation in her enslavement by later offering her freedom,

which she refuses because she would have no place in society as a rejected slave when she should have been his second wife (244). Episodes such as this highlight the complexity of the protagonist; he is operating from the space of dominant Iraqi society, though simultaneously he practices the place of the outsider. Huerqueo only ends this occupation of two spaces when he chooses to abandon the one to fully engage with the other.

Huerqueo has, to a certain extent, internalized racial prejudices and biases, since in Chile he has always occupied marginalized spaces even while exercising his role as a culturally elite person. Yet instead of cultural stereotypes being a hindrance, he uses them to his advantage even in Iraq, where he often occupies dominant social spaces due to his prestige as a painter. For example, when the powerful Hassan family invites the artist to dinner to persuade him to paint a well-bred horse,<sup>11</sup> they also offer him a typical rural food, which the interpreter calls *langosta*. Assuming they mean lobster, Huerqueo enthusiastically accepts; when desert locusts are brought out instead, a different meaning of *langosta*, he is not sure he will be able to stomach them. However, he draws strength from the idea that he is akin to the poor desert dwellers, saying “‘Shit!,’ I thought, ‘I’m Chilean. And Mapuche on top of that!’ I remembered Caupolicán and Galvarino [two Mapuche warriors who fought against the Spanish colonizers] and I swallowed the locusts” (“‘¡Qué mierda!’, pensé, ‘soy chileno. Y mapuche encima!’ Pensé en Caupolicán y Galvarino y me trague las

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<sup>11</sup> Kassem’s regime outlawed horse racing, calling it an elitist sport that had no place in the new order (Bagley 289-90). The fact that the Hassans, a family involved in banking and commerce, continued to breed racing horses suggests not only the wealth to be had in business, but also that the old urban elite were able to evade new laws as they turned to new channels of wealth.

langostas”); error in original, Varas 101). Even though mainstream Chilean society treats his poverty as a characteristic of indigenous people needing correction and guidance, Huerqueo utilizes his background as a tool in this social situation where the Hassan want to commission a painting. Despite his brave attempt to keep eating, however, his body rejects the wealthy family’s food. The symbolic significance of his forty-eight hour bout of diarrhea and vomiting is inescapably clear. The Mapuche warriors to whom Huerqueo refers fought against the Spanish colonizers, but his eating with the banking and business family suggests collusion; his body expels its provisions just as he eventually joins the Kurds and gives up the bourgeois career of painting. The Mapuche’s illness following the feast suggests that he cannot remain in both spaces, dominant and marginalized. The subsequent letter describes the beginning of his political shift through a scene with the Hassan family. Huerqueo rides their magnificent horse and remembers how he often rode horses growing up among the Mapuche; reminded of his people’s social exclusion, he then engages in political discussions with Kurdish friends. As I discuss below, his body naturally rejects the food, and later he intentionally follows this course of action, choosing to fully engage with his marginalization.

*El correo de Bagdad* portrays solidarity between Huerqueo and the Kurds as based in their mutual “otherness,” and their occupation of certain spaces makes possible their acquaintance and solidarity in action. Through Huerqueo’s writings, the novel suggests that the Chilean Mapuches are akin to the Iraqi Kurds in that government and society do not grant them full citizenship rights, but neither do they

permit them to be autonomous. Huerqueo, writing about his return to Chile, says that although Chileans refer to Europe as one entity, “the concept ‘Europe’ is for them [Europeans] political, abstract. Well, neither do Chileans feel ‘Latin American’ and all that about Latin Americanism is something that really works better for phrases in speeches. And neither do the Mapuche feel that we are Chilean, except sometimes” (“el concepto ‘Europa’ es para ellos político, abstracto. Bueno, tampoco los chilenos se sienten ‘latinoamericanos’ y lo del latinoamericanismo es algo que sirve más bien para frases de discursos. Y los mapuches tampoco nos sentimos chilenos, más que a veces”; 167). The shift from “they” (Chileans) to “we” (Mapuches) underscores the extent of Huerqueo’s alienation as a Chilean/non-Chilean Mapuche. The Kurds, like the Mapuche people, live crossing international borders in a region known (but not politically recognized) as Kurdistan; Huerqueo’s friends are Iraqi, but as Kurds, not fully incorporated into society. The common space they occupy in their respective societies is what initially leads the Kurdish opposition movement to trust Huerqueo and ask for his participation at a time when he was not politically involved. He, in turn, begins to understand that this common marginalized space is not only personal, but an international phenomenon since political boundaries are based on seats of power and not necessarily social ties.

It is near the end of the novel when Huerqueo begins to critique his role as an artist instead of an activist. His representation as inherently politically active and interested in the marginalized cedes to his choice to fight with the Kurds. This path is apparently “natural” for Huerqueo, since he is and will always be an “other,” even

when he has financial and cultural power. His wife's uncle Josef, in the annotations he makes on the letters, notes that when Huerqueo and Eva come to visit, Huerqueo seems conflicted. In his accent-tinged writing, Josef says,

For him it is very essential compromise with his Mapuche people; he will always feel Mapuche, no matter how great his success may be, including the monetary [success] . . . He asks himself: Am I corrupt? He responds: yes. Culture—understood in universal sense, not ancestral—is corruption. His painting, for example, is it not for a select able minority? For example, feudal Arabs tycoons, elegant Europeans, wealthy white<sup>12</sup> Chileans . . . his paintings are full of “cultural” messages for those already initiated, for colleagues, winks among those in the know.

Para él está muy esencial compromiso con su gente mapuche; siempre se sentirá mapuche, por grande que pudiese ser su éxito, inclusive el monetario . . . Se pregunta: ¿estoy corrupto? Responde: sí. La cultura—entendida en universal sentido, no ancestral—es corrupción. Su pintura, por ejemplo, ¿no es para selecta pudiente minoría? Por ejemplo, magnates feudales árabes, elegantes europeos, ricos huincas chilenos . . . sus cuadros están llenos de mensajes “culturales” para iniciados, para colegas, guiños entre entendidos. (233)

The artist also later asks Josef, in their last visit with one another, “What is all the painting in the world worth in the face of the pain of a lonely child without legs because of a bombing?” (“¿qué toda la pintura del mundo importa ante el dolor de un niño solo sin piernas debido al bombardeo?”; 258). Through his letters, the reader understands that he is becoming increasingly involved with the Kurds, though he avoids saying this explicitly. The naturalness of Huerqueo's shift from artist to freedom fighter deserves attention, because the novel portrays this as a choice that he necessarily makes upon becoming aware of his own “otherness.” Even as his solidarity with other marginalized peoples is an intentional act, it also appears to be the logical

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<sup>12</sup> This term refers to non-Mapuches, akin to invaders or dispossessors of land.

outcome of his *concientización*, or raised political consciousness. The implication is that anyone brought face-to-face with injustice will and should get involved with those attempting to right the situation.

Growing awareness of his own oppression is in part what leads this Mapuche painter to embrace his social status in Chile and the connection it affords him to other oppressed populations like the Kurds. This manner of thinking is incongruous to indigenous action in general in the 1960s, an imposition of later movements on an earlier era. Staffan Berglund notes that “Between 1970 and 1973 [the Allende years] Chile was one of the few developing countries which tried seriously to link economic expansion with social progress . . . The intention was therefore to activate the Mapuche politically in their position as an exploited class, along with other **minifundistas** and peasants” (emphasis in original 15). The Pinochet dictatorship reversed these attempts, leading to the current portrayal of the Mapuche as troublesome, rebellious, or even terrorist, which Isabel Hernández notes is the most recent Chilean discourse regarding the Mapuche (263-4). Huerqueo’s choice to join the Kurds in their armed political opposition is an ideological decision to identify in action with a materially oppressed people. The alignment of a character with a movement slightly ahead of its time suggests the re-valuation of this ideology and action, even when society at large disapproves.

Huerqueo’s choice to reject the privileged space of the internationally recognized artist puts him in favor of embracing a marginalized space and people, which the novel represents as similar under capitalism no matter where or when they



are. The reader finds similar situations in different countries, except for Josef in communist Czechoslovakia. *El correo de Bagdad* portrays both the Mapuche and the Kurds as fairly monolithic groups, glossing over inter-tribal differences and conflicts to show them as separate from the rest of society, and, in the case of the Kurds, unified in opposition to the Revolution. The Mapuche people are an indigenous group whose territory crosses international borders, but who, like the Kurds, lack an autonomous state. During Huerqueo's time, they often suffered from "violent or crafty dispossession of the land" (Faron 61). The Kurds initially supported Kassem's Revolution, but since their territory in Iraq covers swaths of coveted oil fields, they soon came into conflict with his regime (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 80-1; Yildiz 16). In reality, the Mapuche are a heterogeneous group (McFall and Morales 132), and Kerim Yildiz notes that "There are no exact ethnological or linguistic criteria by which the Kurds can be defined. There are a number of Kurdish dialects. There is no single religion that binds them, and they are to be found in numerous countries . . . Kurdish identity, however, is not monolithic" (1). Although Huerqueo does point out different levels of acculturation among the Mapuche, the novel's collapse of multiple identities into one Kurdish group in particular strengthens the argument of Huerqueo's act of joining them in their struggle for autonomy by suggesting that social exclusion always operates the same under capitalism, and marginalized groups share the same experiences of oppression. In fact, this is precisely the tactic many Mapuche groups have used in recent social movements. Sara McFall and Roberto Morales claim, "the contemporary Mapuche exploit their culture in political situations . . . this self-

conscious manipulation is a means of strengthening the social and political integrity of the Mapuche” (139).

This sets the stage for the narrator’s interpelation of the reader at the end of the novel. Nineteen nineties neoliberal Chilean society is another star in the constellation, another moment intricately connected with social struggles in other capitalist countries. Varas appeals to the reader for a response to capitalist oppression. The novel ends with a question to the reader, which echoes the same question Huerqueo has posed to Josef in his letters (Varas 37). Says the narrator,

I kept thinking about those rocky ravines that I have not seen nor will I ever see, about those [Kurdish] villages and forgotten battles and about the sad and remote deserts where the bones of the dead princes lie.

I decided that yes indeed: I would have to try to publish the Volume, anyway.

Or not, would you say?

Me quedé pensando en aquellos desfiladeros rocosos que no he visto ni veré nunca, en aquellos pueblos y combates ignorados y en los tristes y apartados desiertos donde yaces los huesos de los príncipes muertos.

Decidí que sí: habría que tratar de publicar el Mamotreto, de todas maneras.

¿O no, dice usted? (280)

The narrator brings the reader into the debate, which, given the novel/letters as published material, is already resolved; the narrator has already made up his mind. Yet the reader also has to make the choice of how the published work will influence his or her action. This novel of the post-dictatorship clearly appeals to the reader, questioning how the individual will respond to marginalization, capitalist oppression, and national boundaries that exclude groups of people from full citizenship. Huerqueo’s seemingly natural progression from cosmopolitan but “other” to political

militant is a teaching tool to interrogate whether the reader will also choose to engage in the struggle for social justice under neoliberalism.

After Pinochet's military regime replaced Allende's democratic government in 1973, social welfare declined dramatically. Under an economic model of ISI since the 1930s, Chile's universalist welfare system protected domestic consumption, providing broad support to the formally employed working and middle classes. The neoliberal model reversed this in favor of courting international capital and targeting welfare to the very poorest of society (Kurtz 296). Marcus J. Kurtz argues that while the shift was pronounced under the dictatorship, social welfare prior to it and during the post-dictatorship is more similar than some critics of neoliberalism have claimed (297). However, he fails to notice that though the number of social welfare recipients<sup>13</sup> stayed relatively stable from the 1980s to the 1990s, the real minimum wage declined by 1986 to approximately eighty-six percent of its 1970 level, or to less than two thirds what it had been in 1981. Even as late as 1996, the real minimum wage had only just surpassed what it had been in 1977 (299). Thus, though there may be a system in place that redistributes wealth, it has failed to expand on the scale needed under an economic model that has eliminated worker protections and benefits.

The interrogation of the reader at the end of the novel opens the question of how the reader will respond to a raised political consciousness about capitalist oppression, and, on the basis of this, what kind of action he or she will take in the "post-socialist" era. Drawing in the reader to ask whether he should publish the letters,

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<sup>13</sup> Kurtz records the number of recipients of cash transfers, poverty pensions, and family allowances.

the narrator implies that the reader also occupies space not only in the novel, but also in society. The narrator, upon return from voluntary exile, finds that Chile's "economic miracle" touted by politicians and businesspeople is not a reality for most of society, and recognizes his own position as an outsider at home. Josef, however, though a Jew in Czechoslovakia, appears in the novel to have full access to citizenship rights, perhaps a suggestion of how communism makes integration of the marginalized possible through economic incorporation. Since the novel suggests that a raised political consciousness may lead to the destruction of international capitalism through increased resistance, this is also the option that the narrator lays open to the reader.

*The "Savage" Attempts to Whiten*

As in Varas's novel, the protagonist of *O Selvagem da Ópera* is an artist, though in this case he is a composer. Unlike Huerqueo, however, Fonseca's protagonist never engages with the oppressed in his society, though he experiences similar racism at times. The novel is a fictionalized biography of the life of Carlos Gomes, a man from Campinas, São Paulo, who, through the patronage of the emperor Pedro II during the late nineteenth century, studied music and later composed several operas in Italy. In addition to detailed descriptions of Gomes's artistic successes and failures, his many lovers, and the difficulties he encountered as a foreigner in Italy and a cosmopolitan in Brazil, the narrator often pauses to discuss issues such as slavery and the republican movement. In this discussion of Fonseca's novel, I demonstrate that his protagonist, like Varas's Mapuche artist, occupies the space of the "other" at home and abroad. Fonseca uses this character and the narrative technique of claiming

the work is for making the script of a screenplay to critique the way in which elite abolitionists carried out Brazilian manumission, as well as the role it played in the persistence of a contemporary underclass formed along racial lines. I contrast the novel with *El correo de Bagdad* because unlike Huerqueo, Gomes never embraces his status as marginalized, but rather attempts to disregard it as he aspires for the public to love and respect him. I argue that the representation of his dissociation with his identity as both Brazilian and with African heritage suggests that the constrictive space in which he operates is not sufficient to form bonds of solidarity with others of a shared racial heritage. At times he frees slaves, but only to better his reputation. Even André Rebouças, his staunchly abolitionist friend, does not construct solidarity with the enslaved, in spite of also being black; their deaths at the end of the novel emphasize their failure to identify with similarly oppressed people, as well as their many enduring ties to the Empire in decline. Reading this in light of the 1990s, I consider the implications of acting on behalf of the oppressed without affording them agency or valuing their person, and of a national identity that denies the existence of racism in the increasingly globalized Brazilian society.

Rubem Fonseca was born in 1925, and, though he graduated in Law and dedicated himself to writing in the latter part of his life, he began in an entirely different line of work. As a young man, Fonseca worked as a police officer. The exposure to official corruption and criminality appears to have influenced his writing, as many of his works are detective fiction. Through the police force, Fonseca had the opportunity to travel, living for a period in the United States. Yet he was most

interested in art and literature, and cinematography in particular. Although *O Selvagem da Ópera* is a novel only written as if it were a script for a screenplay, in reality Fonseca has published several screenplays (Nogueira Júnior). The play on genres is one of the formal aspects of the novel that allows for Fonseca's critique of contemporary race relations in Brazil.

The novel follows the life of a man who lives during a key moment in Brazilian history, the end of the nineteenth century. His character as a social "other" reveals the dilemma both in the late nineteenth century and the mid-1990s of Brazil's insertion into the global market in the midst of racial prejudices and continuing questions of national identity and unity. Gilberto Hochman, Nísia Trindade Lima, and Marcos Chor Maio note that "The end of slavery in May 1888 and the creation of a republican regime in November 1889 were political landmarks that underscored the dilemmas of the Brazilian Empire" (496). They go on to discuss how the transition to a paid labor force and the desire for national unity raised questions about immigration, race and miscegenation. The nation was of mixed racial heritage, yet European science deemed this inferior to white; Brazilian intellectuals sought to project a white image and whiten the population through European immigration (Skidmore, "Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil," 9, 12). As mentioned previously, Carlos Gomes, the protagonist of *O Selvagem da Ópera*, is multiracial, but the narrator points out that there have been differing accounts of his racial heritage. The cinematic focus of the narration creates an image of a dark-skinned man with curly black hair, whose father was *mulato* (Fonseca 8). Yet throughout the rest of the novel, this fact is pushed aside,

and the emphasis is on how others define or describe him racially. Here, the dual nature of the text provides a visual representation of the composer, but then the omniscient narrator states information that a film would have to present in a different way: the inner reaction of racist Europeans and white Brazilians. With the backdrop of race theories and monumental national transitions, the novel describes how Gomes fits into Brazil's social and racial structure, as well as how he is "othered" abroad as a "savage" from a peripheral nation. Not only does his race mark him as "savage," but the representation of his personality as erratic, vacillating between euphoria and depression or irritation (139), reinforces his "otherness" as an irrational barbarous person.

Slavery in Brazil lasted three centuries (Toplin xv), several decades after the international slave trade was outlawed and over fifteen years after Brazilian law declared children born to slaves free persons (Skidmore, *Black into White*, 16). Gilberto Freyre, in his well-known account *The Masters and the Slaves*, has argued that in Brazil slavery was mild in comparison to the United States and other countries (80), an idea that has held significant sway over many scholars and observers even in contemporary times. Notwithstanding, Robert Brent Toplin asserts that "Brazilian proprietors showed little respect for Negro slaves as human beings; many, in fact, believed the black was innately inferior to the white. The principal interest of the masters was to exploit their servile workers and to reap the profits from their labor . . . They were a powerful, jealous class, protective of their interests in slavery and resistant to any changes that might challenge their hegemony (xv). Although in

general the masters are not present in *O Selvagem da Ópera*, the slave class takes a central role, not through characters with agency, but rather due to the narrative technique of pointing out slaves. A slave musician serves as a human motif of slavery's contradictions in Brazil throughout the novel: first, to show how even though he is the best of the musical group, he may not play at ceremonious events (Fonseca 8), and later in contrast to André Rebouças, a free black man who has significant political power and immediate access to the emperor (78).

The question of slavery was part of a larger discussion on race, and through Gomes's rejection of his own African, and sometimes even Brazilian, heritage in light of these discourses, the novel portrays him as "other" abroad, and, in certain respects, in Brazil as well. Race theories imported from Europe condemned nations with populations of non-white, and in particular African, descent, to inferiority and underdevelopment. One theorist, whom the narrator mentions to point out how Rebouças contradicts theories of inferiority, was Count Arthur Gobineau, the French diplomat to Brazil from 1869-1870. Gobineau argued that miscegenation was the root of what whites and Europeans called degeneracy or backwardness in peripheral nations (Hochman, Trindade Lima, and Chor Maio 496). Brazilian intellectuals and elites struggled with this concept, which if they accepted as true would deem all attempts for progress meaningless, yet which they were unable to fully reject given the cultural weight of European science. Regina Pahim Pinto notes that one tactic to counter these racist theories was to create policies favoring European immigration and so whiten the nation. Still, she points out that even those who were proponents of



miscegenation and thought that natural selection would weed out the African traits in favor of white European characteristics, believed *mestiços* “to be apathetic, lazy and of limited capacity” (194). Among those who believed this is André Rebouças, a historical figure who in the novel is Gomes’s black abolitionist friend (195). The narrator takes note of this sentiment by pointing out that throughout Gomes’s life as a composer, many people considered him lazy and unproductive when he would have periods of little artistic creation (Fonseca 86). Gomes fits in only partially to the cultural elite of opera production; he will always be in some way “other” due to race.

Simultaneous with this discussion about racial superiority and inferiority is the abolition movement, and both revolve around the question of how to maintain elite structures of power. David Baronov argues that manumission set the stage for the current form of capitalism in “peripheral” countries. He says,

There was one overall goal of Brazil’s elite with respect to the abolition of slavery: how to stop being a slaveholder while retaining all the prestige, power, and privilege attached to such a social role. Only the flexibility of capital would make this possible. Abolition yielded three basic outcomes in Brazil (and throughout the Americas): a strict racial hierarchy, extramarket methods of labor coercion and the previous capitalist class’ continued monopoly of land, capital resources and the state. (4)

Gomes, an actual composer in addition to being the protagonist of Fonseca’s fictionalized biography, lives during this transition. He pertains to the free but not elite classes, and though his father has the means to send him and his brother for a visit to São Paulo city from a town in the same state, Gomes must appeal to friends with political connections to be able to study composition in Rio de Janeiro. As Baronov

makes clear, the Brazilian elite have no interest in democratizing society at large, but rather in maintaining the racial and economic hierarchies already in place.

In spite of the general hierarchies, the phrase “money whitens” often describes race relations in Brazil, both in the late nineteenth century and when Fonseca published the novel in 1994 (Pahim Pinto 198). The novel’s constant reference to its role as a screenwriter’s guide for a script places Gomes’s dark skin on display, and emphasizes his efforts to distance himself from the social status of many Brazilians of his coloring. He succeeds in his homeland to a limited extent because he can practice the norms of the elite classes and their dependents, and because his wealth has the social effect of “whitening” him. Initially, he seeks patronage from the Emperor; throughout his life, even after the end of the Empire, the composer lives off a government stipend in a perpetual state of dependence. To many of the Brazilian elite in the novel, Gomes is always be a “parasite” (“parásito”; Fonseca 112), an “other” from the Brazilian underclass who begs for their support, yet who, paradoxically, allows them to project a cultured image of their nation abroad. Even though many Republican elites in the novel denounce him a parasite, indicating he will never be fully accepted into elite circles, Carlos Gomes ascends the social scale dramatically, and before he dies he is offered the position of head of Recife’s music conservatory (Fonseca 235).<sup>14</sup> The novel portrays Gomes as attempting to climb the social hierarchy

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<sup>14</sup> This representation is consistent with Carlos Gomes’s real life as well, since he is a historical figure that the novel pretends to biography. There do not appear to be significant differences between the novel’s account and historical accounts, except for the scene on his deathbed (“Obituary: Carlos Gomes” 482). The novel’s biography employs this figure as an example of how the manumission process catered to the interests of Brazil’s elite classes, and how in the interests of a positive national

making use of the abolition movement and wealthy connections, but due to race he is only successful in part.

Gomes's race declines in focus during his visits to Brazil, though it remains an important marker in the novel's screenplay script throughout his life in Italy. The space he occupies changes in part, therefore, due to location, but it also changes through his "whitening," possible in Brazil because of his financial and cultural advancement. The composer attempts to identify with the Brazilian elite involved in the abolitionist movement, but only because this promises career advancement and recognition in this era of progressive political changes. During one visit to Brazil, for example, Gomes emancipates several slaves between performances of his opera (165); however, on the same visit he tries in vain to secure a slave to nanny his children in Italy (172). Yet no matter how acclaimed he may be in Brazil while he rides the coattails of his abolitionist friends and the nationalist euphoria after the war with Paraguay (80), Gomes is never able to quit an "othered" space in Italy, although he attempts throughout his life to do so. He finds immediately that in spite of his success as a composer, many Italians he meets are wary of him or treat him with little respect because he is from Brazil. As a peripheral nation to the capitalist and cultural center of the western world (read Northern Europe), Italy in the novel is secondary to France and Germany. The novel portrays Italians in general as fairly ignorant, not knowing where Brazil is located and believing its population to be cannibals. This ignorance leads to their treatment of Gomes as a cultural and social inferior, and a religious

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and global identity, Brazilian society has whitewashed its history of race relations (see discussion below of Gomes's death).

“other.” Unlike Huerqueo’s slow conversion to militancy because of his recognition of his own “otherness,” however, Gomes resorts to straightening his hair, building an impressive villa that surpasses even wealthy Italians’ homes, and taking pride in his fluent writing in the Italian language. In Italy, his choice is between two spheres: his understanding of Italianness, exemplified by the culturally elite of the opera world, and the marginalized immigrant. The narrator even suggests that Gomes marries an Italian woman to become more “European” and advance in his career (164). This adds to his representation as a fickle character, flying into fits of rage in Italy but presenting a cosmopolitan front to acquaintances in Brazil.

His fickleness provides a strong critique of abolition and of its failure to provide the basis for racial equality a century later, as well as the deleterious effects of a nation subordinating its interests to dominant global trends. Unwilling to acknowledge his marginalization, Gomes attempts to operate as Italian, yet he is thwarted in this due to prejudice and his attachment to Brazil. The result is nearly constant frustration about why he is not accepted or respected in Italy, anger that in Brazil there are rumors that he has naturalized as Italian, and acts of oppression like beating his wife and attempting to buy a slave. Thus, through patronage Gomes manages to gain access to education and wealth, which afford him access to elite social circles in Brazil and Italy. He is not marginalized economically since he has access to resources, yet he is “othered” somewhat in Brazil and more so in Italy because of his race. Nonetheless, Gomes chooses to attempt to identify with the same classes that treat him as inferior; the novel represents this as not only impossible, but

as a contributing factor to the explosiveness of his character. This corresponds to happenings at the national level as well, though without the anger outbursts. Internalization of racist theories in Brazil led nineteenth and early twentieth century politicians to export the notion of Brazil as a white nation, sending only lighter-skinned diplomats or envoys abroad, and not including photographs of black or brown Brazilians in advertisements for immigration (Skidmore, "Racial Ideas," 12). Following Gilberto Freyre's assertion in the 1930s that instead of condemning Brazilians to perpetual racial inferiority, miscegenation has strengthened Brazil's population physically and culturally (Freyre 281; Skidmore, "Racial Ideas," 21), national discourse has promoted the idea of a racial democracy, which has served to hamper efforts of racial equality by glossing over gross inequalities.<sup>15</sup>

Fonseca creates a discourse between this past and the Brazilian present of 1994 through the narrator, who claims that the biography is not a novel (*romance*), but rather the basis for a film script. Some critics argue that the novel fails to fully engage with the genres from which it draws: film script, historical novel, and sixteenth century picaresque novel (Ana Hernández 384). But the key to understanding the

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<sup>15</sup> Gilberto Freyre is a well-known scholar whose writings have greatly influenced thought about race and culture. In the Introduction to the Paperback Edition, David H. P. Maybury-Lewis notes that the publication of *The Masters and the Shanties* in 1933, the year of Hitler's rise to power, thwarts European race theories that contend that certain races are inherently inferior to others (lxxxiv). Freyre's work, though not without flaws from a contemporary perspective, is ground-breaking in that he challenges these widely held notions, claiming instead that the slavery system, not race, has led to the degradation of both the masters and the slaves (322). He asserts, "It was not the 'inferior race' that was the source of corruption, but the abuse of one race by another, an abuse that demanded a servile conformity on the part of the Negro to the appetites of the all-powerful lords of the land. Those appetites [of the slave-owners] were stimulated . . . by the economic structure of the slave-holding regime itself" (329). Culture and socialization, not race, he argues, are the culprits for what the dominant classes deem inferior habits; since this stems from the economic system they have perpetuated, Freyre also holds the dominant responsible.

social critique is the intersection between novel and film. The novel follows the life of this composer to show how his figure may represent the obscured turmoil of late nineteenth century Brazil. The narrator makes many suggestions about camera angles and cinematographic techniques, which provide a constant reminder that the novel is a recreation of Gomes's life from the perspective of the present. For example, the "film" vividly portrays Gomes's death: "Suffocated, Carlos takes in air with great effort; his body trembles convulsively and a gush of blood, mixed with a whitish bubbly liquid, is expelled . . . People back away, filled with horror. Blood spouts from Carlos's mouth without ceasing" (Sufocado, Carlos absorbe o ar com esforço; seu corpo treme convulsivamente e uma golfada de sangue, misturada com um líquido de bolhas esbranquiçadas, é expelido . . . As pessoas afastam-se cheias de horror. Carlos lança sangue pela boca sem parar"; 243). A shift from screenplay to narrative takes place, and his daughter Itala says, "My father is a ruin of the Empire" ("meu pai é um destroço do Império"; Fonseca 243). But then the screenplay shows how those present make the photographer wait to take pictures of the defunct until they have cleaned the corpse and moved it to a different bed. Like the end of centuries of slavery and the fall of the Empire, the narrator notes, "Of the horrendous agony, which the film shows sadistically, nothing should remain, everything will be hidden, masked, covered up" ("Da horrenda agonia, que o filme mostra sadicamente, nada deverá restar, tudo será ocultado, mascarado, maquiado"; 243). This intertextuality, alternating between a visual (though written) screenplay and the narrative of a novel providing commentary about what the reader "sees," shapes how the reader understands what would be

happening in the film. Through the guise of a narrator writing the basis for a script, Fonseca criticizes the role of the Empire in contemporary race relations, using the composer as a visual example.

The brilliance of suggesting this novel will be a film resides not only in the play between the genres; it also lies in the potential audience of a film in comparison to the limited audience of an opera. Néstor García Canclini discusses how the market influences taste, saying that “In the younger generations, identities are organized less in keeping with historico-territorial symbols—for example, those of national memory—and more in tune with those of Hollywood, Televisa, or Benetton” (31). Consumerism affects how and where the youth spend their time, and how they identify themselves. Where the elite attended operas as part of their class identity such as those Gomes composed during the late nineteenth century, young people during the late twentieth century also mark who they are by the types of entertainment they consume. The use of a narrator who aspires to the wide reach of film reveals the interest in projecting the problems of the late nineteenth century and their consequences in the present before the Brazilian population at large. Relatively few people will read this novel, yet through the script-like narrative structure Fonseca proposes that its critique should reach a wider audience. Contemporary intersections between racial and economic inequality are linked to the foundation of the Brazilian Republic, which the narrative structure proposes to make known through a popular medium.

In addition, the narrator says that André Rebouças would frame the film, even though he is only a secondary character in the novel itself; this suggests that what

appears to be secondary in the novel, such as his role as an abolitionist and the abundant historical context, is actually of primary importance and what the contemporary viewer of the film (i.e. the reader of this novel) should consider. Yet while it appears that Gomes is the protagonist, it appears that Rebouças's death is perhaps the true tragedy of the novel/film. Rebouças's suicide closes the narrative (Fonseca 246). Earlier in the novel, the narrator suggests that Rebouças in exile could serve as the frame of the film, and remarks that he should be the star of his own movie (79). Therefore, although the majority of the novel focuses on Gomes, his personal problems and operas, I posit that Rebouças is an equally important character for the novel's socio-historical critique. His position as a friend of Gomes and an imperialist abolitionist allows for the exploration of Brazilian manumission and the end of the empire. The novel follows Gomes from his early twenties through his death, but these interruptions and references to a screenplay require a reading that takes into account contemporary issues stemming in part from this key moment in Brazilian history.

The critique resides in the lack of resolution to the injustices of slavery under the Empire in contemporary Brazil. Emancipation in Brazil did not result in racial equality nor was this ever the goal of the elite classes. Gomes's death, like much of slavery's history and certain aspects of the Brazilian Empire, was bloody and turbulent. The negative aspects have largely remained masked by excluding race in the census from abolition until 1940 (Adamo 193; Paixão 747), again in the 1970 census under the most recent dictatorship, and often in other official measures (Paixão 744, 747). Official policy has thereby often effaced knowledge of how race and class are



often intertwined, which has augmented the perception of Brazil as a “racial democracy” or “melting pot.” Additionally, the observant narrator says of Gomes’s buying slaves’ liberty,

The maestro will free other slaves, in the theaters, in open scenes, among eloquent songs and speeches of the abolitionists . . . Paying to be liberated is a sordid reality of these days. But really, the emancipated black people, now and later, as will be seen in this film, will not be adequately incorporated into society as citizens, receiving, as they should, reparations (land, for example), aside from other assistance. The dominant class does not want to compensate, they want to be compensated; and indemnity for blacks would be to admit that they robbed them in some way.

O maestro libertará outros escravos, nos teatros, em cena aberta, entre cantos e discursos eloquentes dos abolicionistas . . . Pagar para ser libertado é uma realidade sórdida dos dias que correm. Na verdade, os negros libertados, agora e mais tarde, como se verá neste filme, não serão adequadamente incorporados à sociedade como cidadãos, recebendo, como deviam, uma indenização (terras, por exemplo), além de outras ajudas. A classe dominante não quer indenizar, quer ser indenizada; e indenizar os negros seria admitir que os esbulhou de alguma forma. (Fonseca 168-9)

I posit that this pertains to the present day as well, because race has clear correlations with socio-economic status (Penha-Lopes 155). Rebecca Reichmann calls racial democracy a “myth” in Brazil (7). She argues that because there have never been legal boundaries between races, recent (as of 1999) attempts to better the social situation for black and brown citizens lack a formal political subject who can “counter the illusion of black mobility” (10).<sup>16</sup> By describing the story behind the quiet picture of Gomes on his clean deathbed that circulated after he passed away, the novel challenges the

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the Jim Crow laws in the United States that legally separated black from white people. Social movements in the 1960s formed around black identity, in part due to the stark division. Given the higher incidence of miscegenation throughout Brazilian history, a similar black identity may not coalesce in Brazil.

end of slavery and the Empire as pacific events in Brazilian history, and unmasks their consequences in the 1990s.

*The Artists in Comparison*

*El correo de Bagdad* and *O Selvagem da Ópera* have much more in common than it appears upon a first reading. Widely disparate in location, time period, genre and even thematic content, the novels converge in addressing the issue of solidarity with marginalized populations through characters who occupy spaces of “otherness.” In addition, certain stylistic elements are similar between the novels. They each take one or more moments from the past and examine the importance of these historic events from the perspective of the present. The novels avoid a chronological structure, which allows them to side-step the pitfalls of a single traditional narrator in the narratives. Varas chooses an epistolary format to give voice to multiple characters, though he unites their content through a contemporary (1994) narrator’s brief interjections between letters, which contextualizes the letters in Chilean history, and posits connections between it and international social struggles. Fonseca, on the other hand, employs a single narrator, but this character claims that his biography is the basis for a film. The narrator’s purported use of novel as a “pre-script” suggests that the content and critique of the story is important and should reach national and international audiences. It also explicitly requires the reader to visually imagine particular scenes, and directs the reader’s gaze to those aspects of the story/scene most pertinent to the novel’s social critique. Thus, even though nineteenth century Brazil

and Italy have little in common with Iraq and Czechoslovakia of the early 1960s, and Chile from the 1960s to the 1990s, the novels provide an interesting comparison.

Both novels examine the relationship of the exoticized periphery to the Center, and acknowledge their protagonists to pertain not only to the peripheral sphere, but also to marginalized spheres within the peripheral nations. I contend, like Nelly Richard whom I cited previously in this chapter, that the marginalized subject should not be an academic trend or corralled by scholarly discourse (of the Center), but rather should act as an agent in his or her own right. I have argued that through the novels under discussion, Varas and Fonseca reconstruct past moments from the gaze of the 1990s to critique contemporary social issues. The Brazilian novel calls to account racism and the myth of a racial democracy by pointing out the conditions under which the Brazilian Empire, soon to be a Republic, abolished slavery. The “others” in this case are those of African descent, but also those who, like Gomes, are from the periphery of Europe. The Chilean example highlights a case of where communist governance led, though not without problems, to an increasingly egalitarian society even in times of economic crisis, and suggests that the economically marginalized, once they realize that they all share in capitalist oppression, can and should band together in solidarity to fight against injustice. The novel portrays the Center as the international elite and national oligarchy, and the periphery as a potential sphere of solidarity and action, though also a space of marginalization. The novels converge, therefore, in this critique of post-dictatorship neoliberalism, with a focal point on international ties for elites and the exclusion of lesser-incorporated populations. In

addition, both works critique the international hierarchy of power among the various countries they portray: this structure reinforces the double marginalization of those “othered” by peripheral societies.

Yet the protagonists of *El correo de Bagdad* and *O Selvagem da Ópera* differ in how they respond to this marginalization within their home country and abroad. Varas’s constructs a consciousness-raising chain of events that leads Huerqueo to recognize his mutual “otherness” with the Kurds, and portrays a progression toward solidarity in action that appears natural. Fonseca’s Gomes, on the other hand, continually rejects his African heritage, and even avoids identification with being Brazilian as he attempts to become an internationally admired composer. The novel challenges the role of the artist in promoting social justice, and critiques the cosmopolitan artist who is only superficially involved in local affairs. Gomes, whether living in Brazil or in Italy, allows his operas’ producers to use his person to promote abolition, though he is not invested in the cause. He emancipates certain individuals, but does not consider how he might assist them in setting up a free life, and even seeks to enslave others. His only goal in participating in the abolitionist movement is personal advancement. His death upon return to Brazil, though a real life event, reaches symbolic significance in the novel through its grotesque portrayal, and since he returns to his rejected homeland only to die. The contrast between a hopeful ending in which Huerqueo seems to have joined in the Kurds’ struggle for autonomy in the Middle East, and Gomes’s fictionalized death when he returns to Brazil for a job he

decides is prestigious enough to accept, represent two very different responses to increased marginalization brought about by globalization and neoliberalism.

Though the Kurds, the Mapuches and the majority of darker-skinned Brazilians have always experienced fluctuations in how the dominant of society incorporate their populations into politics and the market, during the apex of neoliberalism in the 1990s, these groups are relegated to even more constrictive spaces. During the 1990s, inequality grew exponentially, and darker skin color is disproportionately represented among the poor in Latin America. The return to earlier times re-works important historical moments, and positions characters to respond to situations similar to those of the authors' present.

Fonseca's critique of Brazil's myth of racial democracy is as much related to the present as to the past moment the novel discusses. The late twentieth and early twentieth century finds gross inequalities between Brazilians of African descent and their white counterparts. Lucila Bandeira Beato compares the two, and discovers that differences in work and social environments lead to poor life prospects for black Brazilians: almost twenty-five percent have less than a year of formal education, though fewer than ten percent of white Brazilians do, and over sixty-seven percent of black workers do not pay into social security,<sup>17</sup> which is almost twenty percent higher than white workers (774-5). In addition, white men tend to hold a greater percentage of higher management positions, and incomes follow a racial and gender hierarchy (776). Marcelo Paixão's analysis agrees, and adds that contrary to the general rule that

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<sup>17</sup> Failure to pay into social security is often the result of working in the informal sector, and has many consequences for the individual's and family's well-being.

women live longer than men, black women in Brazil have a shorter life expectancy than white men (750). However, he argues that these figures, as well as others from the United Nations Human Development Index, should not be surprising. After all, he notes, slavery in Brazil lasted almost four hundred years; Brazil was the last country in the western hemisphere to abolish the practice, and there have not been significant social reforms during the twentieth century. What is surprising to Paixão is that in spite of clear corollaries between race and class, the myth of racial democracy has endured (763). The novel's critique is particularly apt to post-dictatorship Brazil, when those already excluded economically are further marginalized by growing inequality.

Similarly, even under the touted "Chilean miracle" inequalities have increased. Yet Varas does not limit his evaluation to Chile; instead, he encourages resistance to capitalism on a global scale. Kurt Weyland argues that neoliberal implementation in Latin America has had positive and negative effects on democracy, and though he declines to take a position, he critiques the shrinking "space for democratic citizenship and meaningful participation" ("Neoliberalism and Democracy in Latin America: A Mixed Record" 147). On the one hand, he says, it provides the basis for maintaining elite dominance and therefore formal democracy, keeping the military in the barracks. On the other, internal and external forces limit political options, often leading politicians to campaign on one platform and govern from another, and thus watering down democracy for citizens (151). Varas's novel provides an appraisal of this system dominated by international business elites, and claims that marginalized groups should resist. Tomás Moulián speaks directly about the Chilean situation when he critiques

the elite for buying into the idea that the only way to avoid political chaos is to maintain the *status quo* (92). Just as Huerqueo is drawn to the pleasures of elite life as an international artist, Moulián notes that mass consumerism has been promoted through easy access to credit and it seems pleasurable, but in reality consumerism is a tool for the domestication of the popular classes (105). Consumerism leads to conformity and workaholicism, allowing an appearance of access to modernity without representing a change in social status (99, 119-20). Huerqueo's realization that his social status relates more to his appearance as a Mapuche than his level of "culture" or economic power is what drives him to ally with the Kurds. The force of his defection from a consumerist lifestyle strongly critiques 1990s Chile and the neoliberal domestication taking place.

A comparison between *El correo de Bagdad* and *O Selvagem da Ópera* shows that in these two works, as in others from Argentina, Brazil and Chile that this dissertation has analyzed, solidarity between marginalized characters provides a method to combat or an alternative to changing economic, social and political circumstances. Gomes and Rebouças are examples of how a lack of solidarity may lead to failure even when the individual experiences certain advantages due to wealth or social position. Yet Huerqueo's choice and the interpellation of the reader suggest that true solidarity requires intentionality, and not simply mutual relegation to the same space of marginality. In contrast to Gomes, and even the abolitionist Rebouças who does not self-identify as oppressed, once Huerqueo comprehends that he and the Kurds experience similar marginalization, he works with them; to outsiders Huerqueo

becomes indistinguishable from the Kurds. Varas's narrator then chooses to publish the materials and brings the reader into this decision.

As with the two novels I analyze in Chapter One, *Una sombra ya pronto serás* and *Hotel Atlântico*, these closely examine the constrictions that marginalization places on the individual. Yet while the first two employ the motif of journey and displacement to represent the declining position of the middle classes in the economic crises of early post-dictatorship of Argentina and Brazil, these two explore the connections between Latin America as a peripheral region to the world economy, and Europe as a center for cultural development. Still, as in the other novels, these works portray solidarity with other people in similarly oppressive circumstances as crucial to forming resistance to social exclusion. In my third chapter, I take a step away from the genre of the novel to consider two films, and how they portray similar themes in the Southern Cone. Solidarity is again important for marginalized individuals in difficult work environments, but the films bring into focus an added twist: that of a shifting elite sector from the old oligarchies to the neoliberal service model during the late 1990s, when crises changed the political and economic horizons.



Elite in Crisis: The Marginalized as a Site of Resistance in *La ciénaga* and

*Coronación*

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I compare Argentina and Brazil at the turn of the 1989/1990 decade through two novels to show how the middle classes have lost ground under neoliberalism. In the second chapter, I consider literary reconstructions of significant national moments in Brazilian and Chilean history through a novel from each country, to argue that unresolved social inequalities persist and are perhaps aggravated under the neoliberal model. To further my discussion on marginalized spaces as potential sites for solidarity during the post-dictatorship, in this chapter I round out the comparison by considering Argentina and Chile in a moment of crisis, as filmmakers imagine the consequences of past and turn-of-the-millennium political and economic violence.

The turn of the millennium in Argentina and Chile witnessed a sea change in political and economic events. Each country experienced a crisis that arguably brought an end to what is known as the post-dictatorship. In Argentina, economic incongruences set in motion by the dictatorship's policies, as well as President Carlos Menem's (1989-1999) further liberalization of the market, precipitated the great economic crisis of late 2001. President Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001) fled the Casa Rosada amidst angry calls for his resignation, and the following interim presidents likewise ended their terms early. With the economy in shambles and the threat of capital flight, banks shut their doors and people could not access their funds. During the period immediately prior to the debt default and relative economic recovery,

earlier critiques of neoliberalism gained credibility as society at large began to question its feasibility. The crisis made possible in part the election of President Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007),<sup>18</sup> who furthered the discrediting of the military regime by repealing amnesty laws and facilitated the prosecution of those involved in human rights violations.

In Chile the situation was much different, but a political crisis of no less magnitude erupted near the end of the 1990s. A Spanish court issued an international warrant for the arrest of former dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1998 while he was in Great Britain (Márquez Carrasco and Alcaide Fernández 692).<sup>19</sup> Although Home Secretary Jack Straw eventually decided to return him for health reasons to Chile instead of extraditing him for trial per England's House of Lords's decision (Lutz and Reiger 87), this event opened up the possibility for prosecution in cases where complaints had already been filed, as well as new cases (Evans 244). Little progress was made in Pinochet's prosecution, but these events opened a chink in the armor of the military, certain members of which were still politically influential.

After many years of relatively little civil society activity, the late 1990s and the turn of the millennium saw increases in protests across South America, primarily in opposition to neoliberal policies. Paul Almeida charts Argentine and Brazilian demonstrators among the most active, with Chileans lagging behind both in number of events and number of protest campaigns, potentially related to economic crises in

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<sup>18</sup> Néstor Kirchner was a candidate of the *Partido Justicialista* (Justicialist Party), a peronist party.

<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed account of Pinochet's detention, as well as Spanish society's reaction to it given Spain's dictatorial past, see the introduction of Luis Martín Cabrera's *Radical Justice: Spain and the Southern Cone beyond Market and State*.

Argentina and Brazil but not in Chile. However, he points out that though Chile had very few demonstrations over all, security forces there arrested more individuals than in either Argentina or Brazil (134-5). Vestiges of authoritarian control persisted and limited civic participation almost a decade later. Pablo Pozzi claims that the spike in demonstrations in Argentina, and I would add in Chile and Brazil as well, contradicts assumptions that post-dictatorship society is still too fragmented from previous state violence and neoliberal policy to organize, and that a more democratic culture has taken root. Instead, the increase in civic participation and opposition indicate that there is a growing disenfranchisement in the region, and as a result, citizens are returning to the streets in larger numbers (63-4).

Two films of this era represent the immediate pre-crisis in Argentina and the politico-military crisis in Chile. In this chapter I compare Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga* (Argentina 2001) with Silvio Caiozzi's *Coronación* (Chile 2000, based on José Donoso's 1958 novel of the same title), because in spite of their production in countries with very different national histories and cinematic traditions, the two films reveal surprising similarities. The decadence of the elites in both films signals crisis in these societies, despite the former being provincial elites and the latter a wealthy Santiaguina family. However, not only do their depictions of the upper classes coincide, but they also represent certain marginalized characters' rejection of the dominance of the elites even in the face of persistent oppression and racism. In these films, fissures in dominant blocs and elite inability to adapt to contemporary trends open limited space for the contestation of class norms, a site that in reality had

remained relatively quiet in the early 1990s due to the dictatorships' previous repression of the left and the dominance of neoliberal economic theory. Through this analysis, I show that the decadence of the landed elite stands in contrast to the resistance of Isabel and Estela, young, indigenous or dark-skinned domestic workers who reject sexual advances from their employers and ultimately leave with the help of their boyfriends. In spite of the fact that the girls have little hope of bettering their social situations, the films reveal a renewed focus on the working class as a site of resistance and solidarity through their escape from decadent elite spaces. During the course of this chapter, I briefly describe the films, as well as how each fits into Latin American cinema and its respective national context. I then discuss the portrayal of decadence, which is a primary motif throughout *La ciénaga* and *Coronación*, together with the extent to which each film may be read as allegory of its respective society. Finally, I explore how socially "othered" characters use fissures in hegemonic blocs, which the decadence represents, to challenge social norms. I argue that this class-based resistance intersects with the young women's struggle against gender and racial oppression, as they use solidarity with others similarly oppressed to maneuver within the confines of marginalized spaces.

#### *The Films and Their Historical Contexts*

The moments of national crises in these films mark a turning point in each society, which I have defined as the frame of this post-dictatorship study; they are the latest productions of those analyzed here. *La ciénaga* is a well-known film among critics, acclaimed as the height of New Argentine Cinema's expressiveness (Oubiña

1). Scholars have analyzed the film's portrayal of sexuality (François; Rangil 211), the gaze (Forcinito 109-10), religion (Rangil 211) and the decadence of this social class (Wolf 32; Page, "Espacio," 158; Varas and Dash 201), as well as the use of setting (François 8; Page, *Crime*, 183), sound and scene changes (Page, *Crime*, 184-5, 187; Varas and Dash 197). *Coronación*, on the other hand, is a film made with very different techniques in another tradition of directors, and has received little attention from academics apart from short references. José Donoso's novel *Coronación* (1957) is a well-known exposition of mid-century Chile, yet the film places events in the present day (2000) and exposes the decadence of the traditional urban elite through the focus on decay of property, failing relationships and a consumer mentality among all social classes. The present analysis makes use of the previous scholarship on *La ciénaga*, but my focus is different in that it takes into account the role of domestic worker Isabel as the only prominent subaltern character, and compares her to Estela, Isabel's counterpart in the lesser-analyzed *Coronación*.

Silvio Caoizzi has a distinguished history among Chilean filmmakers, television directors and directors of photography, producing works such as *Julio comienza en Julio* (1979) and *La luna en el espejo* (1990) before adapting a second José Donoso novel to film in *Coronación* (2000). His earlier films display elements of Italian Realism, and many explore themes of power and patriarchy through the Chilean elite. During the transition to democracy, Chilean film was less consolidated than Argentina's or Brazil's (Mahieu 103), and Caoizzi remembers that it was difficult to procure funding to revive the Viña del Mar Film Festival. "We had lived locked

away for many long years and we had an infinite necessity to show ourselves to the world . . . We knocked on many doors in the government and no one paid any attention to us, because cinema had been left for dead in Chile” (“Habíamos vivido encerrados durante largos años y teníamos una necesidad infinita de mostrarnos al mundo . . . Golpeamos muchas puertas en el gobierno y nadie nos daba la hora porque el cine se daba por muerto en Chile”; qtd. in Mouesca 186). As the transition continued, film production increased, especially during the second half of the 1990s. Even though *Coronación* has received little scholarly attention, Jacqueline Mouesca claims that critics at the time dubbed it one of the best Chilean films in recent years (189, 193); Spain’s Huelva Film Festival recognized it with several awards the year of its release (Mahieu 103), and even a decade later it still held the most awards of any Chilean film (Forns-Broggi, [Untitled], 177).

Although *Coronación* follows Donoso’s novel closely, it is set at the turn of the millennium and reflects that era. New technology and television commercials mark the plot as contemporary, and not simply a return to pre-Cuban Revolution, pre-dictatorship Santiago de Chile. The story centers on Misiá Elisa, a woman in her nineties whom the film portrays as part of Chile’s waning agricultural oligarchy. Misiá Elisa, though often unable to get out of bed, is cantankerous and unpredictable. While sometimes she is loving and kind, this can change without warning to her accusing her grandson and servants of thievery and promiscuity. Don Andrés, her sexually repressed, middle-aged grandson, becomes interested in the adolescent care-taker he hired for Misiá Elisa. Estela is seventeen and from the provinces; she in turn is wooed

by Mario, a market delivery boy, by whom she becomes pregnant. Their lives grow complicated as Andrés grows increasingly obsessed with Estela, and as Mario's brother René convinces him and Estela to go along with a scheme to burglarize Misiá Elisa's mansion. Using the backdrop of an elite family in decline and the love story between Estela and Mario, the film explores themes of romantic and familial love, lust, and friendship.

Subtle differences between the film and the novel mark the latter as contemporary, yet continuities between the two suggest that even though technocratic and commercial elites were in the process of displacing the traditional urban elite, who had gained their wealth through landholdings, class structures in general remain untouched between the late 1950s and 2000. Donoso wrote the novel immediately prior to the Cuban Revolution, an event of principal importance in Latin America. The novel, however, contains little of leftist revolutionary ideology, even though it critiques the old agricultural oligarchy that made Santiago their place of residence, and their descendants, the subsequent generation of professional elites of which Elisa's lawyer grandson Andrés form a part. Estela eventually leaves her position as a domestic worker, but instead of proletarian revolution, this action marks movement from rural to urban poverty brought about by these declining elite classes. The elements of the film are in many instances identical to the novel, yet they take on new meaning in post-dictatorship Chile. The historical parallel between the democratic but authoritarian regime of Carlos Ibáñez del Campo and Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship half a century later, which I discuss below, prompts the viewer to understand the film

through the lens of post-authoritarian society, including how the past continues to affect society in the present. This is perhaps most evident in the new element of consumerism in the film that is not present in the novel, which marks the film as a contemporary expression of neoliberal economic influences in Chilean society.

For this reason, the timing of the film's production is highly significant. Chile was experiencing an important turning point that marked the end of the post-dictatorship and perhaps even the virtually unquestioned dominance of neoliberal economic theories around the turn of the millennium, though Argentine society as a whole has shown greater opposition to neoliberalism. Augusto Pinochet had returned from London about a month prior to the release of *Coronación*, where he had been living under house arrest for nearly a year and a half (Evans 209, 235). Spanish judges Baltasar Garzón and Manuel García Castellón had confirmed jurisdiction to investigate human rights violations in Argentina and Chile in 1998, and, finding Pinochet in London, issued an international warrant for his arrest and extradition to Spain (Márquez Carrasco and Alcaide Fernández 692). Earlier that year, Pinochet had retired from his role as head of the armed forces (Evans 211), thus relinquishing one of the last vestiges of his personal control over the nation's events. Also in 1998, a member of the Chilean Communist Party filed a complaint against him for forced disappearances (Lutz and Reiger 87). Thus, even though he remained a senator-for-life as under the 1980 constitution created by his dictatorship (Loveman, *Chile*, 356), the year of his arrest clearly marks a decline in his political capital in Chile and abroad.



Perhaps Pinochet himself did not recognize the implications of this at the time, since he chose to go abroad in full knowledge of the Spanish case (Lutz and Reiger 81).

Although many scholars argue that international pressure and Pinochet's detention in a foreign country triggered changes in society's general attitude toward past human rights violations, Rebecca Evans points to Pinochet's arrest as an event that Chilean human rights organizations and the government used to further investigate accountability. She says, "An unpredictable and uncontrollable event like Pinochet's arrest in London would not have had the impact that it did, had political forces in Chile not recognized and worked to utilize Pinochet's arrest as an opportunity" (212). Evans correctly identifies Pinochet's detention as a step away from impunity guaranteed by amnesty laws and notes that his reputation was tarnished through these events. Several Chileans filed legal complaints upon his return, in contrast to the very few before his arrest, marking this lesser degree of immunity from prosecution (Lutz and Reiger 89). Yet I disagree with Evans's optimism, because the former dictator ultimately evaded justice due to claims that he was unfit to stand trial.

In addition, Ariel Dorfman, a political exile during the most repressive years of the regime, describes society at the time of Pinochet's arrest as three different Chiles. The first was composed of the energetic youth who lived celebrating the moment, not concerning themselves with the past. The other two are those who mourned and sought redress, and those who continued to side with Pinochet (63-5). *Coronación* (2000) corresponds to this time and these three Chiles. Through a re-working of Donoso's novel, this film marks a crisis among traditional Chilean elites and society,

although it conspicuously avoids any explicit mention of the two Chiles that address the present as post-dictatorship. It reveals the economic and social decline not only of the agricultural oligarchy but also of professional elites due to their failure to negotiate a changing world. The political realm is absent from the film, with no reference to current events. The characters live in the present, perhaps not as Dorfman's energetic youth, but definitely as people uninterested in events outside of their immediate sphere.

Instead of a critique of contemporary politics *per se*, then, the film highlights the situation of the poor in a consumer-driven society. Injustices of the prior regime persist and society may never be able to enact justice for atrocities the dictatorship committed, enabled and enacted economically. And even as the gap between those with buying power and those without widens, full citizenship becomes increasingly linked to ability to consume. *Coronación* represents this sea change in society toward consumerism, so aptly described by Dorfman, Tomás Moulián and Nelly Richard as one of socially destructive results of Pinochet's neoliberalism. The viewer follows the gaze of the characters, Estela and Andrés in particular, which alternates between views of the groomed streets of the Elisa's neighborhood, dirt roads in the poorer neighborhoods, and the modern downtown of Santiago. The present discussion of this film as a representation of post-dictatorship Chilean society addresses the economic residue of the dictatorship, including consumerism, and its effects on solidarity among the lower classes.

In contrast, Lucrecia Martel's film, *La ciénaga* (2001), focuses on the relationship between the landed elite, the middle class and poorer domestic workers, in particular as it relates to the family life of the elite. This film demonstrates the decadence of the Argentine provincial agricultural oligarchy through the lives of two related families. It takes place near the Bolivian border in the province of Salta, in a city called La Ciénaga (The Swamp) and its surrounding region. Martel, in an interview with Luciano Monteagudo about the film, notes that often in daily life the plot is difficult to make out (75); *La ciénaga's* lack of clear plot progression mimics this aspect of life. Opening with a scene by the pool on La Mandrágora pepper farm, *La ciénaga* introduces family members and the household servants through scenes of their daily lives. Mecha and her family put up with the summer heat on their farm, while Mecha's middle-class distant cousin Tali and her family live in the equally warm city of La Ciénaga. The younger children, armed with rifles, spend each day exploring a nearby mountain, as the teenagers escape the stifling heat by sleeping indoors or by the pool. Mecha, her husband and guests pass the afternoons in a drunken stupor, while the more conventional Tali and her husband conscientiously care for their children in town. Mecha and Tali's plan to buy school supplies in Bolivia lends the film some forward momentum through the sluggishness of the daily routine, and the teenage Momi's dependence on the house servant Isabel reveals the lack of meaningful relationships with her family members. Overall, the film explores the downward spiral of Argentina's provincial oligarchies through the enervated matriarchy at La Mandrágora.

As Lucrecia Martel's first film, *La ciénaga* addresses family life in her home province. Martel was born in Salta in the mid-1960s, coming of age in the early years of the transition to democracy. Her family was middle class, but she attended a Catholic school that courted the wealthiest families in the region because she was interested in learning Greek and Latin. Although Martel often toyed with a video camera as a teenager, she planned to study physics. However, when it came time to pursue a career, she enrolled in programs of social communication and film in Buenos Aires, which were typical in post-dictatorship Argentina but lacked funding, and began making short films (Guest and Penix-Tadsen 31). Sundance provided some funding for *La ciénaga* after reading the script (Forns-Broggi, "La Ciénaga by Lucrecia Martel," 151), and Martel's first full-length film won the Alfred Bauer Award in Berlin, several awards in Havana including the Coral from the Latin American Film Festival, and two from the Toulouse film festival (Brescia 152; Rocha 848). Similar to many Argentine films produced during the transition, the film reached a limited audience, especially domestically; many in its audience were probably those interested in less conventional and commercial films. Box offices reported few more than 100,000 viewers (Rocha 846), yet many film critics consider it a seminal work in New Argentine Cinema (e.g. Guest and Penix-Tadsen 31; Rocha 847).

*La ciénaga*'s neorealist portrayal of Mecha and Tali's families, as well as the way in which it investigates Argentina and its territory, situates it within a generation of films produced around the turn of the millennium known as New Argentine Cinema (*Nuevo Cine Argentino*; NAC). However, its social critique evokes the New Latin

American Cinema movement that began in the late 1960s and spanned three decades (Pick 1). Joanna Page explains NAC as the result of specific socio-political factors:

New Argentine Cinema borrows from neorealism its rawness and newness in order to present contemporary Argentina as a territory in need of charting, dissecting, and recording and to present film as a tool ideally suited to the construction of social knowledge (or perhaps more accurately, as I will go on to suggest, to the representation of a crisis in social knowledge). Taxonomy is a task acquiring some urgency given the economic and political crises of recent years, which have produced a whole host of new social identities, arising from mass unemployment, shifts in migration patterns, and the changing role of the state. (*Crisis* 36)

The film's portrayal of town, city, farm, mountain and dam map out the territory of Argentina as both urban and provincial. While only a few scenes take place in the city of Buenos Aires, they link the province to the economic center. José, Mecha's son, is in charge of pepper distribution in Buenos Aires, which highlights the need for a connection between the farm and its consumers. As Page suggests, *La ciénaga* dissects the new social identity of Mecha's family in light of the Argentine agricultural oligarchy's declining political and economic power.

Yet this film goes beyond taxonomy to provide a means for critiquing the economy and politics immediately prior to the crisis of 2001. Patricia Varas and Roberto C. Dash (191) claim that Martel's film is also part of the New Latin American Cinema. This earlier movement was "politically engaged" (Stock xxvi), committed to avoiding the exoticism of earlier films through the denunciation of society's disenfranchisement (Cabezón Doty 34). In addition, filmmakers proposed cinema as a "staging ground of the battle for political power" (Patricia Aufderheide, qtd. in Pick 15). Though *La ciénaga* may not be overtly political or champion any particular action

and so is not at all a staging ground, it does contain clear political, economic and social critique related to the effects of neoliberal economic policy and the decline of the provincial oligarchy. Quentín agrees with Page that NAC maps the nation, which is similar to how New Latin American Cinema explored previously unfiled sectors of society. Going beyond this mapping, he describes a break between films of the early post-dictatorship and NAC as the absence of overt political references. However, he argues that despite appearances, politics are far from absent from these films.

There are no references to the atrocities of the military dictatorship or to the disappeared. But that was precisely the major cliché of the previous decades and also a perfect excuse for not being concerned with the economic, social and administrative terrors of these years. Without dealing explicitly with those questions, the new filmmakers have set out to look at their consequences. Their films, much closer to questioning than to certainty, belong to an Argentina in a terminal state but also to a country that's different, a virgin territory, seen with an authentic cinematic vision. (114-115)

Instead of examining past injustices, films like *La ciénaga* focus their attention on their results in the present. Politics are once again linked to economic problems, but these films only question as opposed to setting the stage for action. Still, their critique addresses the battle for power and so these scholars correctly identify NAC, and *La ciénaga*, in particular as a contemporary example of the earlier New Latin American Cinema.

#### *Allegory of/and Decadence*

These two films reveal the decadent state of old wealth and a crisis among some elite sectors in the Southern Cone at the turn of the millennium, the height of neoliberalism, and the reactions to this decline among certain members of the lower

classes. The families represented in *Coronación* and *La ciénaga* continue to benefit from their assets, which have their roots in landed wealth. Money is not an issue for the wealthy Chilean lawyer Andrés Ábalos, nor does he appear to work besides overseeing a set of assets that remains ambiguous in the film. And even though Tali and Mecha plan to save money by buying school supplies in Bolivia instead of Argentina (virtually ignoring the additional cost of the trip itself), Mecha's family lies around all summer without working, apparently uninvolved with the labor involved in maintaining the pepper farm. Still, in spite of the Ábalos's and Mecha's family's wealth, there is little to envy about their lives. Daily life is repetitive and dull in the Ábalos mansion and at La Mandrágora farm. Clearly in a state of decadence, the properties are in decay, relationships are strained or broken, and the characters are marked by wounds or physical decline. This decadence weaves an allegory of society and social relations in the Southern Cone during Chile's politico-military crisis and immediately prior to Argentina's economic crisis. Yet, interestingly enough, both films eclipse the role of the new technological elite. In what follows, I analyze the extent to which the viewer may understand each film as allegorical within its respective context. I then examine the various ways in which the films portray decadence, and relate the representation of decadence to how each society perceived its crisis. In the final section, I turn to the intersections between class, gender and race in order to demonstrate how the resistance to oppression that these two films imagine takes the form of quitting elite spaces in solidarity with other marginalized people.

When considering the representations of marginalized characters and spaces, it is necessary to understand the extent of allegory in each film, although neither can be reduced to a simple allegory for the nation. José Donoso's warning holds true for both of these films. "Truly, a novel," he says, "if it is worth anything, has many planes of interpretation" ("Ciertamente, una novela, si tiene categoría, tiene varios planos de interpretación"; qtd. in Promis Ojeda 16). *Coronación* and *La ciénaga* have many interpretations that scholars have analyzed. Without disregarding the importance of these other lenses, symbolic readings aid comprehension of how these films intersect with their historical moments at the end of the Southern Cone post-dictatorships. As Page claims, "Allegory stages the relationship between personal and political, private and public, which is often central to the production of political meaning in art" (*Crisis* 182). Both films take place in the private sphere, with a focus on two families within their respective homes. An analysis of the symbolic elements of the political sphere reveal in *La ciénaga* the void left by the state, and in *Coronación* the failings of economic policy in urban Santiago. Yet the allegories also contain elements of resistance in the domestic workers. The extensive writings on *La ciénaga* address the film's allegorical potential and I draw from them to support my claims, but since *Coronación* has little academic literature, I place more emphasis on how the elements of its allegory portray social, economic and political trends at the turn of the millennium.

In contrast to the novels analyzed in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, the allegory and symbolism of these films suggest that certain elite sectors, and not only



the middle and lower classes, experience neoliberal space as constricting. The decay in *La ciénaga* and *Coronación* reconstructs previously dominant elite spheres as beginning to fall apart at the seams, forcing them out of the traditional space they have occupied. However, neither film proffers compassion to the wealthy, but rather shows that their way of life is unsustainable. Instead, through allegory and symbolic references, they identify a potential means of escape for the working classes.

*Coronación* displays clear corollaries between the plot, characters and developments in Chile around the year 2000. The overall linearity of the plot also lends itself well to an allegorical understanding. The characters very obviously correspond to certain social classes, revealing social stratification and living conditions of the wealthy and the poor. However, Roberto Forns-Broggi suggests that the allegory of the film consists of more than the plot and character analysis. He emphasizes the gaze of the characters, saying that since the viewer sees primarily through their eyes, the allegory is closely related to the scenes of the decaying house and the contrast between urban wealth and poverty in Santiago ([Untitled] 178). Economic, gender and race relations stand out in this allegorical reading of Chilean society, but overt politics never enter the film.

Misiá Elisa is in decline throughout the film and dies at the end. She is the embodiment of a dying landed oligarchy, owning the mansion in Santiago and many other assets. Elisa seems to have managed her rural affairs from the comfortable seat of Santiago, similar to many of her social class from the early nineteenth century onward. Misiá Elisa is at the same time revered, infantilized and mocked. Although

her servants treat her with respect, she is no longer able to care for herself, and in the scene when she dies there is less-than-subtle irony in that her servants have crowned her but she dies alone, not visited by anyone but her grandson. The past of the nation, she is no longer relevant to or powerful in the present. As in the novel, Andrés's parents are dead; and, perhaps similar to the novel, the erasure of this generation is significant because it obscures the political and economic relationship between the absent parents and the recent dictatorship. Carlos Ibáñez del Campo was a democratically elected though authoritarian president of Chile from 1927 to 1931. He later served again as president from 1952 to 1958, the year in which José Donoso published *Coronación*. The film version has haunting historical similarities: it skips the generation of elites with ties to agricultural oligarchies in order to show the decline not only of their parents, like Elisa, but also of their child, Andrés. The novel critiques society during the return of the president, whose regime the landed class supported, as president in a more democratic society approximately thirty years later. Silvio Caiozzi produced the film version almost thirty years after Pinochet's *golpe de estado* as well, and its critique of a decadent wealthy elite is uncannily valid in the Chilean economic and political situation, where Pinochet and his policies held firm even during the democratic transition. Elisa, of the old elite, dies, and her grandson has failed to keep up with recent economic changes; he will die alone without an heir to preserve his wealth.

Andrés is a representation of the urban educated elite that is unable to keep up with economic and technological changes under neoliberalism. He is educated as a

lawyer, but instead of practicing he simply manages the family wealth. In line with this allegorical reading, his friend, Dr. Carlos Gros, is also one of the old urban elite attempting but failing to keep up with new trends. His home is completely modernized with sleek furniture and a remote control for the lights; however, when Gros discovers that the remote was programmed incorrectly, he makes a disparaging comment about how nothing works right in Chile. Imported goods and technology that the opening of the market facilitated, while desired by consumers, do not function correctly in this foreign environment, just as imported neoliberal theory has not brought about the promised prosperity. Andrés's physical decline and obsession with Estela, together with Gros's hidden alcoholism, multiple affairs, and a beautiful home where things do not function correctly represent the fall from power of Andrés's generation, professional, industrial elites that have a smaller role in a Chile managed by technocrats.

The gaze of the characters places Chile's lower classes on display as well, and scenes of poor neighborhoods contrast with the paved streets around Elisa Ábalos's mansion. The touted "economic miracle" of Pinochet's neoliberal policies may be seen in luxury products and television commercials, but the lower classes in the film can only long for this wealth. Although per capita income increased in the 1990s in Chile (Vos, Taylor, and Paes de Barros 170), inequality also greatly increased (Moulián 93-94), meaning the average per capita income was actually skewed in favor of the wealthy. Margot Olavarría argues that social programs targeted the poorest while simultaneously limiting civic participation, thus "marketing" the neoliberal

model to all sectors of society and ensuring its continued acceptance and dominance (15). The lower classes are present in the characters Estela, Mario, Mario's brother and sister-in-law René and Dora, and the house servants. The servants are part of Elisa's time, and like her are fading out. In contrast, the first four young people are, like Gros, consumers, yet they barely scrape by financially. As Mario and Dora watch television while stuffing toys for sale, they recall for the viewer Tomás Moulián's description of consumerism in Chile. Moulián states,

Credit permits the development of strategies for bettering life conditions, for testing out different modalities of the conquest of "comfort." They are not, in the strictest sense, strategies of social mobility, since the effect of their use is not a change in status. It is about something different, but symbolically very important: the access to "modernity" to the goods or objects that before were restricted to the wealthy.

El crédito permite desarrollar estrategias de mejoramiento de las condiciones de vida, ensayar diferentes modalidades de conquista del <<confort>>. No son, en sentido estricto, estrategias de movilidad social, puesto que el efecto de su despliegue no es un cambio de estrato. Se trata de algo distinto, pero simbólicamente importante: de un acceso a la <<modernidad>> de los bienes u objetos que antes estaban restringidos a los ricos. (99)

Although these characters are too poor to even have access to credit, they access these goods and this "modern," i.e. wealthy, lifestyle through television. This allegorical reading of *Coronación* implies changing social and economic circumstances where the upper and lower classes alike seek social inclusion through consumption. Symbolic representation of various social classes, and a gaze that emphasizes tangible differences between them, builds an allegory of contemporary consumerism in Chile.

In contrast, *La ciénaga* presents a more problematic case for an allegorical reading. Monteagudo sums up the difficulty nicely when he says,

There is nothing symbolic in *La ciénaga* (*The Swamp*) since every single thing has an odd and disturbing materiality to it. Moreover, at times, the very physical presence is just overwhelming. Yet, you can't help being aware of the pulse of a reality larger than the film itself. In *La ciénaga* there's a sense of unveiling the profound, buried strain of a whole society through a handful of fully fleshed out characters. (69)

The sounds and heavy heat are almost palpable, and even the wounds on the bodies of the characters are as real as they are symbolic. In addition, just when it appears that the characters may never again get out of bed, they have an impromptu dance party in Mecha's room. Page refers to this apparent lack of symbolism when she claims of *La ciénaga* and *La niña santa* that "The films suggest symbolic readings while refusing to ground potential tropes within a defined frame of reference" (*Crisis* 183). Unlike the social stratification of characters of *Coronación* with their clear connections between Chile's past and present, Martel's film seems to defy categorization as allegory.

Yet both Page and Montegudo correctly recognize that the film does contain a deeper meaning applicable to Argentine society at large. In the present discussion of degradation of property, bodies and relationships, the decay points to something similar taking place in society beyond these two families. François describes *La ciénaga* as a mosaic or a puzzle of a bigger picture, saying that the mosaic provides glimpses, often from the eyes of children, of the monstrosity and suffocating repetition of adult life. Page takes this one step further, using a discussion of Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben to describe how the film does "not simply perform a withdrawal from that which transcends the individual; [it] register[s] a crisis in the very structures of signification that embed the individual and the private within the general and the public" (*Crisis* 191-2). Thus, *La ciénaga* does not withdraw from

the political, as is obvious in the previous discussion about its place in NAC. It is allegorical instead because it represents how the personal gains supreme importance in the context of economic crisis. The economic and political failure of the Argentine state in 2001 comes to life in this film through the retreat into the mundane world of La Mandrágora.

This film is significant because it reveals the state of these elites and their interactions with others immediately prior to the explosion of the economic crisis in December 2001. The state is conspicuously absent from the film, which explores the state's real and perceived failure through interpersonal relationships. As Ménem's policies opened the market, labor relations changed. Though prior to his election Ménem had promised higher wages and social justice, M. Victoria Murillo notes that "After his inauguration . . . he delivered austerity, followed by trade liberalization, privatization, and adjustment of the public sector" (138). Workers lost job security, and government pressure on unions made them less successful in negotiating demands (141). Similar policy had been implemented in Argentina as had been in Chile, and this caused the economy to favor services and technologies instead of the old landed elite. Wages declined steadily in the years leading up to 2001 (Petras and Veltmeyer 35). Then, in a drastic attempt to prevent capital flight, banks froze holdings on December 19, and the *peso* was devalued by almost half. The middle classes took to the streets in protest when they saw their savings vanish. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer note that,

Numerous writers on both sides of the spectrum spoke of a "pre-revolutionary situation," they wrote of "dual power" between the

“*piqueteros*,” neighborhood assemblies, and the “occupied factories” on the one hand, and the existing state apparatus on the other. There is no question that the principal arms of the state apparatus (the judiciary, the police, and the armed forces) as well as the traditional parties, politicians, and Congress, lost their legitimacy in the eye of a majority of Argentines in the events leading up to and immediately after the uprising of December 2001. (28)

President Fernando de la Rúa’s flight itself from the *Casa Rosada* is symbolic in many ways, not least in that it represents the failure of the Argentine state to respond to the crisis it incited through neoliberal economic policy. Citizens throughout the capital and the provinces recognized the state’s responsibility for fiscal collapse, though they did not link it immediately to neoliberalism. Ménem had shocked inflation into submission and rode the coattails of this success through the end of his second term, and even in the turbulence leading up to the December 2001 crisis graffiti reading “Memen, come back” (“Ménem volvé”) decorated the federal capital. However, during the ensuing search for a new president the electorate soundly rejected him. Still, far from indicating approval for a new course of action, only sixty-five percent of the population voted, and Néstor Kirchner of the peronist Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*) entered office with scarcely twenty-one percent of the votes (28).

As Joanna Page suggests (see above), the breakdown of the public fragments the relationship of the personal to the state, and the decline of *La ciénaga*’s entirely private sphere indicates isolation and decay at a deeper level. Therefore, the viewer may read both Martel and Caiozzi’s films at an allegorical level, but where Caiozzi’s functions as a microcosm of social classes in a consumer society, Martel’s reveals the profound failure of the Argentine state. The two films coincide in representing old

elite spaces as in decline through the decay of property, relationships, and the characters' bodies.

Both films demonstrate the decadence of the old elite during a time of social crisis, and when a new technocratic elite has gained significant power. Judith Teichman notes that in the Southern Cone, technocrats drew their authority from personal attributes and a neopatrimonial class, different from traditional institutional bases (25-6). The films focus on these more traditional elite, and represent the decline of their economic power and social influence through the decadence of property. The old elite continue to practice the operations of dominant space, yet the decay of their property suggests that they are being forced out of this sphere.

Where the novel *Coronación* relies on narration to convey elite decline, the film provides striking visual contrasts between past and present by alternating between Elisa's gaze into a lost past, the present gaze of other characters, and Caiozzi's lens. The opening scene begins with the click of a door opening, and then cheerful music on the title screen, which continues while the lens trains on beautiful antique furnishings and pictures in Elisa's room. Elisa's grandson Andrés is speaking to her, but the music drowns him out as Elisa smiles and bobs her head in time to the music. Andrés has entered while Elisa is daydreaming. When he sees that she is staring at a picture of herself as a young woman, he turns the picture around and the music cuts abruptly to silence: Andrés asks Elisa, who is disoriented at the invasion of the present, to sign a check. This opening scene introduces past abundance and present financial decline as a significant theme in the film; the decadence of the mansion is linked to Andrés and



Elisa's financial situation as members of a declining elite sector. Later, Elisa's gaze through a window shows the courtyard when she was a young woman. A group of energetic and well-dressed people descend from a sleek, horse-drawn carriage, and the girl Elisa dances with castanets around an impeccably groomed gentleman. Inside, the lens turns to Estela, the domestic worker, who appears curious about why Elisa is smiling. She stands to look out the window and her gaze shows the dry fountain; instead of the vivid black and red of her imagination, the courtyard is a drab gray. The contrast between their gazes reveals the quality of changes in the past several decades.

*La ciénaga* lacks contrast between the past and the present, but it also shows decline, this time of the space of the provincial landed oligarchy. This also seems to lead to a loss of their ability to practice their dominance, especially as it relates to their relationship with domestic worker Isabel. Like the majority of New Argentine Cinema, the film's narration is entirely contemporary (Wolf 32), focusing on a few days in the lives of the characters who make occasional comments about past or potential future events. Although perhaps the characters' bodies in *La ciénaga* show most clearly decadence in the film, the property is also in decline, and the nature it encloses is dangerous. The camera's slow movement depicts a fetid, green swimming pool in which most characters refuse to swim. Mecha, the matriarch of La Mandrágora, complains that the filter has been broken for years, and domestic worker Isabel warns Momi, Mecha's youngest daughter, that she could catch all kinds of illnesses from the water. Beds groan and creak, as when Momi lays down crying beside her sister Vero, who tells her to leave, and later as Vero struggles to lie beside

their older brother José while he attempts to push her off. The viewer may confuse the almost constant thunder with the sounds of rifles on the mountain, which warns of harm and danger that has already occurred. The younger boys seeking adventure in the mountains find a cow mired in a swamp, a victim of the heavy seasonal rains, and reminiscent of the film's title. The house and property, the source of the family's wealth, is falling apart.

In both films there is a pervasive atmosphere of corrosion: in Martel's, the heat is like a drug that lures characters into a stupor, while Caiozzi's emphasizes decline in the family mansion. The heavy atmosphere of *La ciénaga*, portrayed in part through the sweaty, sleepy adults and discordant sounds that echo on the property and mountain, contributes to the pepper farm's failure to transport peppers in a timely fashion to Buenos Aires. Upset that there is never ice for her wine, Mecha orders mini-refrigerator for her room. This new convenience, instead of facilitating the reproduction of her social position, contributes to her drunkenness and decline. Mecha and the older children spend much of the day in bed, although they rarely are completely asleep. Like Mecha's cheap wine, the unbearable heat appears to corrode the will to act, the house, and the property. With the exception of two scenes with people dancing, the teenagers and adults move sluggishly on the farm (which, Page notes, is appropriately named La Mandrágora in its ability to produce this effect; *Crisis* 183). Vero, a couple of years older than Momi, already spends most of her days sleeping inside or resting by the pool. Momi initially fights this listlessness, constantly trying to wake Isabel and Vero. At the beginning of the film she refuses to succumb to

the heat and lack of activity. However, in the last scene Momi returns from a neighborhood where supposedly a Virgin has appeared; it seems that with the news about the death of Tali's young son, Momi has attempted to seek refuge in religion. Pulling up a chair to the edge of the pool, with its back to Vero, Momi says "I didn't see anything" ("No vi nada"). She simultaneously indicates her failed search for the apparition as well as her acceptance of the alienation that eventually takes place in the women of her family.

Similar to the decay of the grounds of La Mandrágora, *Coronación* frequently portrays corrosion through the state of Misiá Elisa's house. What once was an imposing mansion has fallen into disrepair due to neglect. Elisa's flashback reveals a formerly beautiful courtyard with carefully kept walkways and plants. The drab, monotone neutrals in the contemporary scene of Andrés reading the newspaper in the courtyard contrast with the bright colors and activity of Elisa's memory. A rooster struts up to him and apparently now belongs in the courtyard, another vivid disparity with the groomed garden of Elisa's memory. Near the end of the film, as the two elderly servants prepare the house for guests celebrating Elisa's patron saint day, they wonder aloud how so many moths came to live in the curtains. In its prime, the household had a dozen servants, but these two, in their old age, have been unable to keep up with the dust and insects that eat away at the surfaces. Apathetic about the house's condition, Andrés allows natural corrosion to follow its course instead of hiring more domestic workers. *Coronación* clearly refers to the decadence and death of the old wealthy classes in Santiago as they face the rise of newer actors more open

to technology. Like the music that abruptly stops and ruins Elisa's blissful recollections of a time when she was intimately connected to the wealthy classes, her dress falling apart at the end symbolizes the inability to bring this past into the present. For her patron saint party, Elisa's servants dress her in one of her old dresses; the very dress, perhaps, that she imagines herself wearing in the first scene. But instead of displaying youth and beauty, sequins fall to the floor as Elisa dies, oblivious to the fact that the servants are passed out drunk in her feather boas and that no one has come to celebrate. Similarly to the portrayal of oligarchic elite space in *La ciénaga*, *Coronación* represents the old landed elite property in Santiago as in disrepair and decadence.

In addition to the decay of property, another way the films indicate the decadence of the old elite during the neoliberal era in the Southern Cone is through the bodies of the characters in these films. Again, however, there are differences in the effect of the characters' physical decline because the former reads as an allegory for the whole nation-state, while the latter resists a consistent allegory. In *La ciénaga*, the deterioration of the body is one of many elements denoting degradation on La Mandrágora; *Coronación*'s characters suffer a decline like the traditional urban elite they represent.

Misiá Elisa's worn, aged, dying body stands in contrast to her recollections about her youth. No longer a young woman, she cannot care for herself or her assets. She is tired, prone to sleeping and often unable to get out of bed. Psychological decline accompanies the physical: on her birthday, she imagines herself to be

seventeen, while at other times Elisa strikes out verbally and physically against her grandson and caretakers, accusing them of theft, neglect and love affairs. Likewise, Andrés's body bears signs of aging and fatigue. Overweight and lethargic, he moves slowly and betrays little emotion apart from a somewhat gloomy countenance. The only instances when he shows any other expressions are when discussing Estela with his close friend Dr. Gros, when watching Estela with Mario and later accosting her sexually, and when he angrily demands a new cane. Sexual repression boils over in these scenes, although it is generally suppressed by his apathetic stance toward life. These characters speak to a lack of vitality that stands in contrast with the health and vigor of many characters from the lower classes who move quickly, play soccer in their free time, and exude physical health in general.<sup>20</sup>

The middle-aged characters in Martel's film share similar traits to Andrés, although their aging bodies add to the overall sense of decadence in the film as opposed to providing any direct evidence about the state of Argentine politics. The first scene consists of shots of peppers, scenery, and Mecha and her friends by the pool. Like Andrés, the women and men are overweight, but their unhealthiness is even more striking than his due to the fact that they are wearing bathing suits. The close-ups of their bare, thick waists and loose, wrinkled skin reveal age and decry a lack of self-care before the cameras shift to their faces. The jarring noise of dragging chairs across the concrete deck adds to the discomfort of the scene, emphasizing the apathy that will be a primary theme throughout the film. The return to the pool at the end of the film

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<sup>20</sup> The exception to health in the lower classes is clearly René's wife, who appears tired and worn. She seems to assume in her character all of physical deterioration that poverty can cause.

replaces the bodies of the adults with teenagers, Vero and Momi; they begin another cycle of physical decadence through inactivity and excessive drinking. Momi is the only character of La Mandrágora without physical damage through accident or age. Yet even prior to their taking to the poolside, Vero and Momi's bodies show signs of decadence. Vero has a prominent scar on her chin that no one mentions, and Momi, as mentioned above, is dirty. Momi's hair in particular is stringy and greasy throughout the film, but her choice to join Vero at the pool indicates the acceptance of La Mandrágora's ennui and apathy toward life. Her filthiness indicates growing stagnation in her character, and links her to the decay suffered by other bodies and the property.

The other characters on the farm all display physical wounds (or, in Gregorio's case, the aforementioned signs of aging in addition to his poorly dyed hair), and Tali's child Luchi is subtly linked to the farm through cuts and a tooth on the roof of his mouth. Ana Martín Morán claims that the motif of wounds represents the learning process that these characters pass through (233), but clearly none of the characters learn from their wounds. Instead, they repeatedly engage in the activities that gave them the mark in the first place. Mecha falls while drunk and cuts herself on broken glass; her stitches are the subject of future conversations. Her son, Joaquín, lost an eye in a shooting accident four years prior, but he still has not undergone plastic surgery and continues to go shooting with the other children. José returns to La Mandrágora healthy and whole, but shortly thereafter gets in a drunken brawl over Isabel and ends up with a broken nose. Tali and her family are healthy, guarded against the

deteriorating effects of the farm except for accident-prone Luchi. His inadvertent death is the result of story-telling during a siesta at La Mandrágora, foreshadowed several times and suggested through his many physical wounds. The farm is distinguished from other settings in the film due to the bodies of the characters. Their physical deterioration and wounds in combination with the decadence of the property reveal a profound degradation related to the wealth and person of these provincial elites.

Elisa's empty house and the oppressive atmosphere invading Mecha's property and family life, as well as the wounded and lethargic bodies reveal the physical decline of elite persons and property at the end of a nearly uncontested decade of neoliberalism. Apart from this decay, failing relationships in these films enhance the understanding of the negative effects of this transition on the landed elite of *La ciénaga* and the landed oligarchy in *Coronación*, painting a picture of social isolation among these elites. Even so, this social isolation stands in contrast to the young, female, indigenous or dark-skinned domestic worker and her social network in each film.

The focus on daily life in *La ciénaga* allows the viewer to see the rhythm of life in the city and on the farm, with only La Mandrágora seeming to be a site of failing and socially unacceptable relationships. Tali's life, in contrast, is busy as her daughter comes home with a new friend, her son frequently injures himself, and she struggles with financial concerns. Tali's husband Rafael often voices his disapproval of the farm, claiming that it is dirty and unsafe and telling Tali that she should not take

the children there. On the farm, as if to support Rafael's concerns, Mecha's family barely holds together. During the course of the film, Mecha learns that previously, her husband had an affair with her friend; the viewer discovers through brief scenes of Buenos Aires that her eldest son, José, and his father's ex-lover share an apartment. In spite of his willingness to go to Salta when he finds out his mother has fallen and injured herself, José betrays both his father and mother through his romantic relationship with Mercedes. Similarly, José and his younger sister Verónica display sexual tension as they mud-wrestle and attempt to share the shower and bed. This pseudo-incest demonstrates the breakdown of sexual taboos in this family. It also reveals that the issue exists within the microcosm of the farm, since in contrast Tali's middle class family in La Ciénaga operates by normative sexual boundaries.

Momi's character in *La ciénaga* is very telling with respect to how relationships in Mecha's family are falling apart. As previously discussed with regard to her trying to wake up her sister Vero and house-servant Isabel, throughout the majority of the film Momi does not fit in well at La Mandrágora. She is at an in-between stage, no longer able to hang out with the active children, but unwilling to settle into the stupor of the adults. Momi thus resorts to poking, whispering, and tapping a creaky window with her foot to make the light shine on Isabel's face in attempts to interact with others. She also disregards norms that seem to be established among the adults and the children of the film, such as cleanliness. I discuss the indigenous characters and their role in the films later, but here it is necessary to point out that Momi also fails to follow social norms with the domestic workers. She relies



on Isabel as a mother-figure and as a companion almost to the point of erotic obsession, in contrast to Mecha, Gregorio and Joaquín's overt racism and Vero's apathy toward Isabel. Momi's disconnect with social norms only emphasizes her desire for social interaction, which for adults in her family eventually breaks down to sitting by the pool drunk, living in betrayal and sleeping in depression.

Relational and sexual issues mark the film *Coronación* as well, though in a very different manner, portraying the end of this elite family's lineage. At the beginning of the film, Andrés is far from sexual infidelity of any kind, but he has difficulty establishing healthy relationships. Andrés's inhibitions have prevented him from producing an heir to his wealth, which both practically and symbolically excludes him from interaction with the younger, relatively new elite. Although it appears that initially Andrés is not aware of his attraction to Estela, his grandmother's young care-taker, he often directs his gaze toward her, but glances away uncomfortably when he realizes he is staring. Due to a very strict Catholic upbringing, Andrés has repressed sexual activity, which the film portrays through flashbacks to his sexual awakening as a child. When older boys in his parochial school forced him to look at a photograph of a nude woman, the lens, Andrés's gaze, zooms in on her hand. The scene skips to the boy Andrés in confession where the priest alludes to masturbation, also indicating a fixation on hands. The adult Andrés nourishes an obsession for canes, a phallic symbol that he often holds or caresses. Although Andrés is not able to establish sexual relationships with women or men, the film develops his fetish with hands through these later scenes, which explain an earlier moment in the

film: when he first introduces Estela to his grandmother as her new caretaker, Misiá Elisa asks Estela to hold out her hands, and has an outburst when she mistakes the brown skin for dirt. Andrés explains to his grandmother that Estela's hands are brown because she is dark-skinned, and this forced attention on Estela's hands is at least in part responsible for Andrés's compulsive attraction to her. Yet he is unable to consummate his passion with her and lacks alternatives, and will have no heir to his declining wealth.

*Estela and Isabel: The Margins as a Site of Resistance*

As I have shown above, both films portray the decadence of certain oligarchic elites through the bodies of the characters and the deterioration and neglect of their properties. Additionally, the relationships between characters, in particular between family members, suffer from betrayal, (*La ciénaga*), sexual repression, outbursts of desire (*Coronación*), apathy and outright dislike (both films). The questioning of a weak state due to neoliberal economic changes through the decline in the Argentine provincial oligarchy, as well as the allegory of the industrial oligarchy's decadence in Chile, is clear. Yet the weakening of these wealthy families stands in sharp contrast to other characters in these films. To stop after the analysis of decadence could imply that *Coronación* and *La ciénaga* are apathetic or even sympathetic to the plight of these elites. This is quite obviously not the case, even though a wide review of scholarship on these films reveals that analysis halts after a critique of gender, religion, or economic decline due to neoliberalism. I argue that these works converge in the resistance in which certain characters, poorer and less central, engage. Each plot

includes a non-white domestic worker who endures unfounded accusations and racism, resists sexual advances on the part of the elite and finally leaves their employ. Isabel's (*La ciénaga*) and Estela's (*Coronación*) attempts at resistance end in escape through solidarity with other similarly marginalized characters, though the audience is left without knowing what happens to them.

Given the symbolic framework that I have discussed, the interpretation of each young woman's defection from elite employ is different for each film, yet both point to the women's self-removals from increasingly limiting social spaces. Estela eventually chooses to live as a marginalized person among Chile's working poor, rather than stay with the Ábalos family and its dying way of life. Over two decades of neoliberalism and the former dictators' crisis has forced the old elite out of their traditional space, and with them, their workers. *Coronación* suggests that the lower classes, unlike the isolated, declining former elite, could still be a relatively cohesive group, and could survive together if they so choose. *La ciénaga* also portrays the lower class, in this case indigenous people, as potentially helping each other out of abusive circumstances. Overwhelming economic decline in Argentina does not temper how Mecha perceives herself to be superior to the indigenous domestic workers, nor how she trains her children to follow suit. Still, the film imagines the indigenous worker as refusing to submit any longer to mistreatment or even operate within converging spaces of dominance and servitude. Neither film, however, interprets the solidarities the domestic workers form with other characters as an escape from poverty

and marginalization. Instead, characters have the limited agency to choose with whom to live out their social exclusion, and there is no allusion to their futures.

To analyze these films and domestic workers together requires an understanding of how the Argentine province of Salta is a very different world than the Chilean capital, Santiago. Even though Isabel and Estela have similar skin-tones and physical characteristics, *Salteños* and Argentines more generally will read Isabel's character as indigenous, while Chileans understand Estela as *morena* (brown). This is due to historical as well as current factors in each country. Since *mestizaje* was more common in Chile than in Argentina, and in the latter country's national consolidation the state eliminated much of the indigenous population (Human Rights Documentation Center 1-2), race reads differently in each location. In addition, currently, though both Isabel and Estela are "others" to mainstream society in the films, the indigenous *Salteños*, as a population, have been the focus of paternalism and certain "self-help" strategies (Carrasco 285; Snipes 239), while provincial female migrants to Santiago recently have used migration as an attempt to improve life possibilities (Pappas-DeLuca 99, 107). Salta's indigenous and Santiago's female domestic workers live under paternalism as the state or employers provide minimal care. However, *La ciénaga's* indigenous population is constantly relegated to the margins despite being in close proximity to the middle-class and wealthy whites, while *Coronación's* poor, darker-skinned characters seek integration in a city where they form a permanent underclass.

Official discourse in Argentina has labeled indigenous people like *La ciénaga*'s Isabel and her friends as threatening, aside from "othering" them. Marjorie M. Snipes asserts,

The recent political past for this region [Salta] has been tumultuous. During the military governments (1966-73 and 1976-83), indigenous cultures were officially depicted as a threat to national identity; not only did their underdevelopment hold back national political, social, and technological development, but their marginal status on social and geographical frontiers also threatened national security. (239)

Morita Carrasco describes two phases of official policy toward indigenous people in Salta during the 1970s through the 1990s. She explains that prior to 1992, the state treated indigenous groups as passive beneficiaries, but with the cholera outbreaks these marginalized populations gained national and international attention (270, 285). Especially pertinent to the discussion of *La Mandrágora*, Carrasco notes that "In a crude and harsh translation of events [surrounding the cholera outbreaks], the country recognized the living existence of the indigenous, and the *Salteña* elite took advantage of the situation to resignify understandings that associate the indigenous to misery, incapacity, savageness and brutality" ("En versión cruda y dura, el país advirtió la existencia viva de los indígenas, y la elite salteña se aprovechó de la situación para resignificar sentidos que asocian lo indígena a la miseria, la incapacidad, el salvajismo y la brutalidad" 270). From this point on, the state provided resources to indigenous groups, but required them to participate as agents in their own clientelization. Isabel of *La ciénaga* is conscious of this representation of herself as an indigenous person in the imaginary of the family for which she works. As explained below, her character actively resists this characterization by seeking to make the family reconsider its

misconceptions, and so thwarts the simple binary that Sarmiento laid out long ago of civilization versus barbarism. Her leaving the family's employ also shows the extent to which bonds of solidarity are useful in difficult situations.

While Isabel is a domestic worker in Salta and contests these descriptors of her person as an indigenous woman, Estela in Santiago more often simply reacts to sexual aggression and paternalism. Estela's aunt has taken her from the province to work with her in the Ábalos mansion. This, according to Katina Pappas-DeLuca, is a relatively common situation for provincial females. Pappas-DeLuca argues that lack of employment opportunities alone does not explain the number of female domestic workers in Santiaguino households. Instead, based on several interviews with these workers during the late 1990s, she claims that

many Chilean women, with few other alternatives, have used migration for domestic labour as a mechanism to physically and metaphorically transcend the economic and social constraints on their mobility. Rural-to-urban migration for domestic labour, one of the few paid employment options for women of lower socioeconomic status, provides many women with an opportunity to move out of their parents' homes, remain single, earn their own income and, in some cases, pursue further educational training. (99)

Although Estela does not fit the latter part of Pappas-DeLuca's description, her character does reveal a nascent resistance to gender roles expected and reinforced by Andrés, Misiá Elisa, her boyfriend Mario, and the older domestic workers. In Estela's character the viewer sees the struggle between her reproducing the stereotypical provincial, non-white female, or acting with agency to negotiate her way in the foreign urban space of Santiago as a member of the marginalized classes. Her limited agency suggests possibilities for solidarity with others of this social class.

In *La ciénaga*, Martel avoids moralizing or privileging any scene over and above any other (Page, *Crisis*, 185), so Isabel's acts of resistance are simply part of the everyday routine. *Coronación*'s Estela plays a slightly more rebellious role, using the house keys to give herself an occasional night off and eventually, in the climax of the film, to help her boyfriend and his brother to rob the mansion. In the context of the supposed leveling effect of neoliberalism, these films would appear to support the idea that a free market provides more opportunities for mobility because Isabel and Estela leave the abusive confines of their elite employers to seek their fortunes in the outside world. Estela even appears to have the added advantage of having her migration to the city from the countryside mediated by her former employer, a common occurrence for Chilean domestic workers (Pappas-DeLuca 102). Yet this is clearly not the case given the structure of Argentine and Chilean society at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even as the films portray their escape from abusive situations, Isabel and Estela are non-white workers in societies with hierarchies rooted in racial and economic prejudices. *La ciénaga*'s wealthy characters continue to participate in dialogue about civilization and barbarism, relating barbarism to how indigenous people live. Andrés, in contrast, understands far better than his grandmother that Estela's skin color is not of utmost importance. However, he and the doctor reveal a willingness to take sexual advantage of the poor brown women whom they employ. *Coronación* portrays the differences between social classes in Santiago and opportunities available to the lower classes through this attitude, as well as through setting some of the scenes in Mario's home. Although the films may appear to convey the message that neoliberal economic

policies have freed low income servants like Estela and Isabel to work where they choose, deep-seated racism, sexism and classism as portrayed through the elites and living situations demonstrate that, like their living counterparts, these young women have nowhere to go. Upon leaving the employ of these elites, they will find themselves in similar situations or in the informal economy so prevalent under this economic model.

Both young women are stereotypes to a certain extent, especially in that they both are poor and get pregnant young (this is suggested but not explicit in *La ciénaga*). While Isabel's character has more agency to challenge these stereotypes, Estela's subversion appears more reactionary to her situation. In particular, as Caiozzi's *Coronación* progresses, it portrays Estela as increasingly, yet unconsciously, sexually appealing. Mario, a delivery-boy, is drawn to her. He attempts to look up her dress as she walks upstairs in the mansion, and deflowers her in a secluded area on the Cerro San Cristóbal. Earlier, his married brother, René, sees her on the street and makes sexual propositions to her. Andrés pauses at the door to his grandmother's room, where Estela stands fixing Misiá Elisa's hair. His gaze trains on her legs, as she stands on one foot, using the other to rub her ankle. By showing her as flustered by male attention and sexually inexperienced, the film initially objectifies and stereotypes Estela. She is the poor female, exoticized through her brown skin and defenseless since she has recently moved from rural to urban poverty and knows nothing of city life. Being brown and poor compounds her vulnerability to Andrés. Reminiscent of Spanish Conquistadors raping indigenous women, and later, land-owners taking



advantage of their servants, Andrés wields authority over Estela through his wealth and whiteness. His friend, Dr. Gros, even suggests that he have sex with her, and claims to have done the same with young women in Estela's position. Andrés's obsession with Estela leads him to first attempt to facilitate marriage between her and Mario, and later to force himself upon her. Not only do both actions demonstrate his use of economic power and manipulation over those marginalized through poverty, but they also expose sexual violence over Estela that is intricately tied to her race and class. Yet her poor, mestizo boyfriend also rejects her when she becomes pregnant, revealing that Estela's primary powerlessness results from her sex. The stereotypes that *Coronación* in particular uses limit Estela's agency, and show how gender plays a significant role in social power.

Isabel demonstrates considerable resistance in *La ciénaga*, even rejecting to a certain extent her role as a house servant. Though she cannot escape her marginalized status, Isabel balks at not only the stereotypes surrounding indigenous people, but also the dominant/submissive relationship to her employers. Instead of submissively taking orders, she is one of the most responsible characters, and even on occasion subtly teaches the children. Around the same age as Mecha's oldest children, Isabel is responsible for cooking, cleaning and general care-taking of the family. Isabel's character stands in contrast to the family's sluggishness, and contests elite perceptions of the indigenous person as "ignorant, incapable, backwards" ("ignorante, incapaz, atrasado" Carrasco 257). The dichotomy of civilization and barbarism, so prevalent in Argentine conceptions of race since Sarmiento's *Facundo*, does not hold true in the

film's representation of indigenous characters. Although Sarmiento envisioned a united Argentina with the provinces brought metaphorically into Buenos Aires through the discipline of commerce and education, and later military regimes adhered to this practice (Snipes 239), *La Mandrágora's* setting in Salta and its resistance to incorporation even into the bustle of the city (read: civilization) of La Ciénaga defies the positive side of the binary, yet apart from general laziness, neither does it fall into barbarism. Although Isabel is an "other" among this elite family, she represents civilization in the sense that until she quits the job, she encourages normative and in some instances progressive social behavior. In this way, Isabel resists racial prejudices and subtly assumes a role of instruction for adolescent Joaquín and Momi. For example, Joaquín makes several comments about indigenous people living as savages and eating filth. In response to Joaquín's remarks about a type of fish that only indigenous people eat, Isabel cooks a fish soup that he grudgingly enjoys. This acts less as an attempt to humiliate than a chance to instruct, forcing Joaquín to reevaluate his preconceptions. Joaquín looks quiet and thoughtful before the scene ends, but in line with the rest of the film, the characters do not evaluate or discuss the event.

In addition, Isabel provides a model for Momi to avoid the pattern of the females in her family. Momi's potential to throw off her family history is related to her relationship with Isabel, but this potential is the result of Isabel's resistance to her prescribed role as a servant. Isabel acts as a mother to Momi, and maintains a power over her that Mecha has relinquished through dislike of her daughter. She wields this power adeptly. For example, Mecha constantly complains that the servants do not

answer the phone. In one scene, the phone rings and Momi insists that Isabel must answer it, but Isabel refuses in spite of its being part of her job. In another scene, Isabel needs a chance to leave for a Carnival party, but Momi rarely leaves her alone; Isabel sends Momi to shower, thereby getting her one obstacle out of the way. In both of these scenes, Momi eventually gives in to Isabel, answering the phone and taking a shower. In the process, Momi becomes more like a responsible adult who takes care of her own needs and personal hygiene; recall José's teasing nickname, "Dirty Momi." As with the deterioration of everything else on the farm, however, Momi succumbs to the apathy and drowsiness of the rest of the characters once Isabel leaves. Isabel's constant presence was a path of resistance for Momi as well as Isabel, but Momi could not maintain this on her own.

In *Coronación*, Estela also attempts to pull away from her role as a submissive house servant, but her character does not fit the previous discussion of civilization and barbarism. Her resistance is expressed in her rejection of Andrés through her relationship with Mario, and her assistance with the robbery of the mansion. As mentioned above, one of the many aspects of decadence in the film is that Andrés is unable to form healthy relationships, and develops an obsession with Estela instead. Far from encouraging his advances, Estela cultivates a relationship with the young Mario. Externally Estela plays the part of a devoted servant to Elisa, but in secret and in collaboration with the other servants, she sneaks out day and night to spend time with Mario. The house keys become a symbol of freedom and captivity, as Estela uses them to sneak out and the older maids to invite Mario in, and, upon the discover of

Estela's suitor in the mansion, Andrés appropriates the keys to keep Estela in and sexual competition out. In spite of Andrés's attraction to her, Estela manages to keep him at bay through her secretive relationship with Mario and collaboration with the maids. Estela's behavior is more stereotyped than Isabel's thoughtful resistance to social prejudices. Still, she displays agency by choosing to go through with the scheme to rob the mansion, and again to warn Andrés about the robbery when Mario and René abandon her to Andrés's sexual advances. Vacillation results from an awareness that both Andrés and Mario are using her, but she struggles against domination by male characters. This representation thus begins to leave the realm of the stereotypical to challenge gender biases and the patriarchal structure throughout Chilean society.

Nonetheless, the ultimate act of resistance by Estela and Isabel is leaving the employ of these families. This step is precipitated by the rejection of sexual advances by Andrés, and in *La ciénaga*, Isabel's pushing away Mecha's son José at a party. In addition, Estela is and Isabel appears to be pregnant by their boyfriends, thus proving their sexual resistance to their employers, though this simultaneously seems to stereotype young women of their social classes.<sup>21</sup> The manner in which each quits is consistent with how each film presents the larger social context, yet taken together, the fact that both films portray the national crisis through decadence of the oligarchy and the defection of a domestic worker suggests that the marginalized are using the cracks of post-dictatorship neoliberal hegemony to contest their situation.

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<sup>21</sup> In *Coronación*, Estela's pregnancy eventually becomes known to the other characters. *La ciénaga* only suggests that Isabel may be pregnant, and that this is the reason she leaves Mecha's employ in order to live with her sister. This suggestion takes place through a scene in a bar: from Momi's perspective, the camera shows Isabel seeking out her boyfriend to tell him some urgent piece of news (Gonzalo Moisés Aguilar 135).

Isabel quietly tells Mecha that she needs to go live with her sister; Mecha berates her for leaving, and Momi watches Isabel drive off with her boyfriend on his motorcycle. This indicates the fluidity of employment, especially in the Argentina of the turn of the millennium. Government and the economic system are on the verge of crisis, and *La ciénaga* reveals the retreat into the private sphere. From this personal space, the viewer sees Isabel leave with little notice and Mecha's promise that she will send her the last paycheck later. In the film's monotonous progression of events, this scene is no more or less important or emphasized than any of the others; it is simply another event in day-to-day life. Estela's leaving, in contrast, occurs during the climax of *Coronación*. She has helped Mario and René gain access to the mansion, but when she finds herself at the mercy of Andrés without any aid from them, she reveals to Andrés that they are robbing him. For this, René beats her. Mario, agonized by Andrés and René's treatment of Estela, helps her leave with him. Although in the novel René and Mario want to burglarize the house in order to move north and start a better life, in the film they also appear to be motivated by a desire to have more consumer goods. Ostensibly, in the film they plan to use the stolen goods to start a new life somewhere else, but there are several indications that René in particular and Mario to a lesser extent want to be consumers of the products they see advertised on television and carried by wealthier people around the city. Estela's resistance is more complicated than Isabel's: her choice is between two oppressive situations as opposed to quitting the realm of La Mandrágora. Still, within these limited options Estela rejects the decadent elite, the violent though comfortable mansion. She chooses her own social

class, to live in poverty that aspires to consume just as the successful elites like Dr. Gros live to consume.

These two characters, through the allegory of their respective films, reveal differences between the Chilean and Argentine context, but also important similarities. Chile's consumer-driven society receives full attention *Coronación*, while the other two Chiles, the Chile that sought redress for human rights violations and the Chile that continued to support Pinochet, go unmentioned. Pinochet's detention and trial are absent from *Coronación*, but Chile's landed oligarchy is clearly in decline as well in this film. *La ciénaga* represents a retreat into the personal because the government is no longer effective, which is congruent with the pre-crisis time period in which Martel created it. In Argentina, the pending economic crisis encouraged people to consider the lack of guidance and security the state provides in the neoliberal era, which the film represents through the retreat into the private sphere. Yet the private sphere of *La Mandrágora* cannot escape being crowded out of national happenings, and as José, Momi and Vero pass into adulthood their lethargy and apathy portray their retreat from the outside world.

In addition to their individual strength, these films portray solidarity with similarly marginalized characters as aiding Estela and Isabel in their rejection of dominant spaces. Mario's sister-in-law and her children have a small role, but they have a critical connection to Estela in that she joins them in making items for sale. Isabel often interacts in public spaces with a group of indigenous teenagers, who in one scene give a ride to *La Mandrágora*'s children; later, Isabel's indigenous boyfriend

drives away with her on his motorcycle. Economic solidarity in *Coronación* among the poor, and solidarity in movement in *La ciénaga*, especially as the latter relates to power over or movement away from elites, suggest that the marginalized in this time of crisis may contest their second-class status through the relationships they have with one another. Estela and Isabel can leave the Ábalos mansion and La Mandrágora farm because they have people with whom to leave and live outside of these elite spaces. Most other sites in the films are dominated by elite actors, but Andrés is an uncomfortable outsider when he makes a brief visit to Mario's shantytown, and *La ciénaga* never shows the house of Isabel's sister, to which she will go upon quitting La Mandrágora. Even though Isabel and Estela, as marginalized women, have limited opportunities under Argentina and Chile's patriarchal societies and economic structures, the force of their resistance resides in the support of other similarly marginalized characters and in their rejection of prescribed roles for society's "others" in dominant spaces. By leaving the employ of clearly decadent elites, these films suggest that fissures in elite blocs caused by crisis may create space for marginalized sectors in Argentina and Chile to challenge the confined spaces to which their societies relegate them.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, decadence is a motif throughout both films; it permeates the primary residences of the oligarchic families, strains their relationships with each other and outsiders, and finds representation in the deterioration of and physical wounds on their bodies. This decadence corresponds to a time of crisis in Argentina and Chile. An

ineffective Argentine state and the decrease in credibility of Chile's politicians who had been part of the dictatorship's leadership take center stage in the making of *La ciénaga* and *Coronación*, through both the style and content of the films. Yet each film shows oppression and racism, as well as the decadence of the traditional elite. In the context of national political crisis, this decadence reveals a crisis in the hegemony not only of neoliberalism, but also in the current political structure of each country. Isabel and Estela, by leaving the employ of these elites, portray a nascent re-emergence of class-based politics that had been struggling in the margins of society throughout the 1990s. Reading these films in light of growing numbers of citizens recognizing their economic, and thus social and political, exclusion, the marginalized characters' escape from decaying elite spheres is the first step toward an awareness of their own status and possibilities for change. The final chapter considers Southern Cone and Brazilian cultural production in comparison, exploring solidarity between socially "othered" characters, and in particular the historical and social reasons behind general differences in the literature and film. I then discuss more in detail in the Afterword how solidarity among the marginalized is a key component of movements for social equality.

Chapter 3, in part, has been submitted for publication of the material as it may appear in *Confluencia: Revista Hispánica*, 2012, Daniels, Jennie Irene, University of Northern Colorado, 2012. The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this paper.



## From the City to the Countryside: A Comparative Analysis of Solidarities

In the previous three chapters, I compare neoliberal Argentina, Brazil and Chile by juxtaposing works from each country. In Chapter One, I analyze a Brazilian novel by João Gilberto Noll and an Argentine novel by Osvaldo Soriano to show how spatial representations may portray economic reality during the economic crises at the turn to the 1989/1990 decade. I then turn to a discussion of solidarity in Chapter Two. Fonseca's *O Selvagem da Ópera* and Varas's *El correo de Bagdad* reveal connections between racial and economic prejudices in Brazil and Chile, and also show how these two intellectuals suggest the need to recognize one's own marginalization and partner with others to begin to resolve these disparities. In the midst of political and economic crises in Argentina and Chile, Lucrecia Martel's *La ciénaga* and Silvio Caiozzi's film version of José Donoso's novel *Coronación* take a different turn. I consider how these filmmakers represent neoliberal spaces as corrosive to the old elite, and as pushing the marginalized to form temporary alliances in Chapter Three.

In the present chapter, I provide a conclusion to this discussion through the analysis of a work from each country. Using this comparison, I analyze similarities and differences between literary and film production in neoliberal Southern Cone and Brazil, and consider socio-historic context and antecedents for significant differences I find. Alejandro Agresti's film *Buenos Aires viceversa* (1996), Walter Salles's film *Central do Brasil* (1998), and Jaime Collyer's novel *Cien pájaros volando* (1994) provide the basis for this analysis. These works, like the others I have analyzed in previous chapters, show neoliberal, post-dictatorship space as marginalizing poor,

often brown-skinned or mixed race characters, especially poor children and females. However, as in the other literary and filmic productions of this period considered in this dissertation, these spaces also create the possibility for solidarities that lead to opportunities for resistance and social justice. In particular, these three works provide the basis for a discussion of how and why Argentine, Brazilian and Chilean cultural production converge and diverge in representations of their societies. In general, Brazilian works favor the exploration of existential questions as opposed to the ramifications of the most recent military dictatorship. Although post-dictatorship residue permeates Argentine and Chilean works as these explore the social consequences of mass exclusion and state violence, the reconstructions of neoliberal society are fairly distinct from one another in the works analyzed here. Argentina's productions tend toward a vision of impending social resolution through the characters' growing understanding of the roots of inequality and violence, while Chile's project the need for continued struggles though resistance may appear ineffective.

To maintain consistency throughout this project, I first provide a brief synopsis of these works, and then return to the key terms of my introduction to organize the discussion. However, to the terms Space, Marginalization and Solidarity, I add Justice as a heading, because this dissertation would not be complete without the consideration of how each society has proceeded to deal with the military regimes, neoliberalism, and their consequences for society.

### *Synopses*

The three works that I analyze here, unlike those I study by pairs in the previous chapters, vary widely in style, plot and genre. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this, they provide pertinent examples of literary and filmic, as well as ideological, currents in their respective societies. In this chapter, I intend to not only advance further the overarching thesis that certain intellectuals perceive neoliberal spaces as sites of solidarity and resistance, but also that each country and society has a unique trajectory both in cultural production as well as historical developments. Before I do so, I provide here a brief description of each work.

Alejandro Agresti of Argentina is a prolific director of nearly thirty films with very diverse themes, including *Valentín* (2002) about an inventive Uruguayan child raised by a single mom, and *The Lake House* (2006), a film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Persuasion* with Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves that explores time, love and modern architecture. Agresti's 1996 film *Buenos Aires viceversa* explores themes such as the youths' search for answers in the post-dictatorship, economic decline, and a culture of impunity for violence against the marginalized. The narrative structure is complex, with multiple intersecting plot lines. At the center of the action are Daniela and Mario, who are strangers to one another, around twenty years old, and, the film suggests, children of those disappeared by the military dictatorship of 1976-1983. Daniela, seeking work, answers an ad by an elderly couple to bring them footage of the city of Buenos Aires; she knows of her parents' fate, and learns that the couple's daughter was also disappeared. Mario works at a cheap hourly hotel. When his uncle brings in a blind woman and proceeds to torture and rape her, Mario is confronted

with the probability that his uncle and adoptive father were torturers under the dictatorship, and responsible for disappearing his biological parents. The climax of the film occurs when Mario's uncle, now an armed mall security guard, shoots a street-child whom Daniela has befriended. This event triggers a visceral response in Daniela as she responds to the trauma of the brutal murders of her parents and her young friend at the hands of the state. Mario hears her screams in a public women's restroom, enters and holds her. In the final scenes, the peripheral characters, who have witnessed the child's death, begin to comprehend the persistence of impunity in the post-dictatorship when the police and nightly news misconstrue the events.

While *Buenos Aires viceversa* critiques the media for circulating an official version of events that exculpates the state and its agents of violence against those whom society marginalizes, Jaime Collyer's *Cien pájaros volando* (1995) exposes the multiplicity of histories and memories. Of the Chilean post-dictatorship generation who write what is known as New Chilean Narrative, Collyer studied psychology in college, but became disillusioned with what he saw as the field's authoritarian attempts to "normalize" people. In contrast, he says, "I saw in literature, in contrast to psychology, the possibility and potential of extravagance and delirium as manifestations to reveal the human being and not to adapt him or her" ("Veía en la literatura, a diferencia de la siquiatria, la posibilidad y potencialidad de la extravagancia y del delirio como manifestaciones para revelar al ser humano y no para adaptarlo"; qtd. in García-Corales and Collyer 193). Thus, *Cien pájaros volando* explores the psyche through the memory of the narrator. The story takes place in the

recent past, immediately before and after the fall of the Berlin wall. Hugo Fischer is an anthropology professor in Santiago. Recently separated from his wife, he accepts a research grant to study a rural society in southern Chile, in the town of Estefanía. Fischer observes their customs and shares their lifestyle, but village life becomes more complicated when a small band of *guerrilleros* arrives to instigate revolution. Collyer frames the novel with Fischer's reflections from a jail cell, where he has been incarcerated after allowing the media to label him the mastermind of the *guerrilla*. Yet throughout *Cien pájaros volando*, the professor's story runs parallel to that of an earlier German anthropologist, Heinrich Breughel, long assumed to be eaten by a jungle tribe. Fischer's recollections of Breughel's diary and other sources, in addition to an indigenous member of the *guerrilla* who claims to have helped spread the rumors surrounding his death, validate contradictory versions of "history" and throw into confusion the validity of the professor's story.

Whereas both *Buenos Aires viceversa* and *Cien pájaros volando* attend directly to the post-dictatorship condition and the violence of the military regimes, Walter Salles's film *Central do Brasil* (1998) eclipses any allusion to Brazil's 1964-1985 dictatorship. It does, however, address rural and urban poverty in Brazil as a principal theme of the film. Dora, a retired schoolteacher, adds to her small pension by writing letters for illiterate people in Rio de Janeiro's Central Station. Life takes an unexpected twist when a woman who has asked Dora to write a letter is killed by a bus outside Central Station. Dora unwillingly befriends her son, Josué, and attempts to take him to his father in northeast, whom he has never met. The story follows the pair

through dangerous and poignant episodes, and they finally arrive in Bom Jesus do Norte, where they meet Josué's half-brothers. Even though Josué's father has long left, Dora slips out once she establishes that he will be happy with his brothers. The discreet denunciation of poverty is congruent with the other Brazilian novels I analyze in this dissertation, and shows that there, as in the Southern Cone, economic inequalities shape life circumstances. Yet Walter Salles favors the portrayal of relationships over violence. The journey is more directly related to personal growth, solidarity and nostalgia than an explicit denunciation of either neoliberal policy or a critique of post-dictatorship society. In this respect, Brazilian cultural production in general tends to differ from that of the Southern Cone and its overt demands for resolution of state human rights violations.<sup>22</sup>

### *Space*

The complexity of urban and rural spaces in these three works aids the understanding of both the impact of neoliberalism and the legacy of each country's dictatorship. In this section, I consider how various environments reconstruct these significant places in the national imaginary, in particular the urban spaces of Buenos Aires, Santiago and Rio de Janeiro, and the rural regions of Chile's southern Andes and Brazil's northeast. The formats of the works, novel versus film, greatly influence how each achieves these representations. The gaze provided by the camera lenses fills in gaps left to the imagination in the novel, capturing nuances between social classes

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<sup>22</sup> Though clearly Brazilian cinema does not shy away from these issues, the social commentary they make is generally not explicitly related to a critique of previous dictatorships (see *Cidade de Deus*, 2002). Brazilian novels from the 1990s often avoid politics all together, although again, there are counter-examples (such as Rubem Fonseca's *Agosto*, 1990, and its representation of Getúlio Vargas's regime).

through depictions of neighborhoods, dress and speech, as well as broad vistas of Buenos Aires and the expanse of Brazil's territory. The novel, on the other hand, delves into Hugo's mental processes and allows him to reconsider from the prison cell his memories of Estefanía and the German anthropologist, reconstructing space through his visual perception and memory. Using examples from each work, I analyze how they portray space as a foundation for further discussion about similarities and differences between national cultural productions, in addition to showing how these spaces act as potential sites of solidarity between marginalized characters.

Journey is again a motif in two of these works, as in the first chapter of this dissertation. However, unlike the nameless, wandering protagonists of *Una sombra ya pronto serás* and *Hotel Atlântico*, the travelling characters in *Central do Brasil* and *Cien pájaros volando* have names and specific destinations. This device serves to contrast the urban and rural spaces within which the characters travel. Both works portray the city as an alienating space, a deathly space, where life is like being in prison. They do so by various means, and contrast urban space with rural representations for different purposes. The lens of Walter Salles's film shows the rural expanse of the road north of Rio de Janeiro and later of northeastern Brazil. The openness of these vistas not only reveals a beauty often underestimated in the drought-ridden, poverty-stricken region. They also suggest hopefulness in the backlands that is reinforced by the growing closeness between Dora and Josué, a hopefulness denied to those inhabiting the oppressive urban sphere. *Cien pájaros volando*, on the other hand,

initially represents the mountain village as idyllic, but ultimately drawn into the political fray.

Salles's film and Collyer's novel both open with scenes that suggest urban spaces as incarceration. The opening scene of *Central do Brasil*, following the sounds of the noisy transit station, is a shot of people getting off the train. Yet this image is shot from behind bars, probably a type of fence, recreating this common, day-to-day experience of those living in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as a prison. Similarly, Hugo Fischer of *Cien pájaros volando* begins his narration from a prison cell; the reader later learns that he has a life sentence in the political prisoner ward because the media labeled him the head of the *guerrilla*, and he ended up fighting with them. The prison motif enters regularly in Collyer's novel, but disappears in Salles's film once Dora and Josué leave the city. Representations of urban space decry poverty, atomization, violence and death in these works: Dora's Rio de Janeiro apartment is one of hundreds in a tall concrete building that faces the train and its clatter, and Fischer's taxi driver comments that his apartment is not in a very nice part of Santiago. And death oppresses urban and mental spaces: Dora witnesses an armed security guard shooting a young man point-blank on the train tracks, and rescues Josué from people who sell organs on the black market; Hugo's newspaper reports often on deaths, he imagines his own, and his neighbor and pet canary die in Santiago while he is in Estefanía.

The urban atmosphere that these works imagine finds foundation in part in the reality of city life in the 1990s. During the 1990s, violence was responsible for 21.8%



of deaths in Latin America, triple the homicide rate in North America and more than five times that of Western Europe. Brazilians and Chileans experienced even greater numbers of mortality through violence, at 34.4% and 33.5%, respectively (Soares and Naritomi 31-2). Through Dora's eyes in one of the first scenes, the viewer witnesses a policeman shoot an unarmed, kneeling, repentant youth thief point-blank, which shows that violence emanates from the state as well. In Collyer's novel, Fischer's hypersensitivity to death insinuates that the urban environment threatens mortality, and a taxi driver's hint about his neighborhood now being an unsafe place to live alludes to the worsening conditions of the middle classes and the subsequent increase in crime.

Thus, each work employs spatial representations through a journey from the prison-like urban center toward the rural periphery, but the contrast between the rural spaces realize a different effect in each. *Central do Brasil's* northeast is a romanticized depiction, a visually gentle poverty accompanied by wide shots of beautiful terrain, though the characters refer to the psychological traumas of abandonment and alcohol abuse. Josué's father won property through the lottery, but lost it due to his alcoholism, and his other two sons now live in a government-built tract home. Consistent with Walter Salles's goal to show affection as the primary theme of the film (Anthony Kaufman), this only brushes the surface of poverty in the northeast, where one percent of the population own forty percent of the land, and at least half of the remaining land is owned by another ten percent of the population (Fry 339). But the land of the northeast appears to be open and promising as the journey takes the

viewer from the prison-like scenes of the city, the former capital of Brazil, to the backlands of the north.<sup>23</sup> The lens opens to landscape panoramas, as when Dora and Josué are about to commemorate Josué's deceased mother, when Josué runs toward what he believes to be his father's house, and when the pair arrive in Bom Jesús do Norte and see the tract homes where Josué's brothers now live. The open spaces connote hope and fraternity wholly unconnected with the city. Instead of a lens that focuses on the main characters and leaves the rest blurry like shots in Rio de Janeiro, these scenes open the gaze to the entire region, and show the seemingly endless expanse before the two solitary characters.

This hopefulness is only temporary in *Cien pájaros volando*, and the theme of futility runs through the repeated references to Hugo's prison cell and the figure of walls in urban and rural space. The incarcerated narrator's memories frame the journey from a politically apathetic Santiago overshadowed with death and poverty to a rural village where political activity only leads to repression, and adds to the novel's representation of the unviable revolutionary attempt. The sheep corral and the circular wall that the *guerrilleros* build belie the serene representation of the *Quebrada de Estefanía*, or Estefanías's Gully, a village in Chile's southern Andes. The fall of the Berlin Wall takes place just as Hugo returns to Estefanía for his second stay, and signals the deterioration of leftist politics in the West. Free elections are on the horizon in Chile, but the political left has suffered extreme loss under the dictatorship. Nancy Fraser claims that during this "post-socialist" era, "progressive struggles are no longer

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<sup>23</sup> One stop along the way appears to again ensnare Dora: the religious festivals in Bom Jesús do Norte. This is a turning point in her relationship with Josué, so I discuss the scene below under Solidarity.

anchored in any credible vision of an alternative to the present order” (2). This is particularly apt in the case of the novel, with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall as a turning point for the worse in the already naïve *guerrilla* struggle in rural Estefanía. The representations of the sheep pen and the village corralled by the military suggest an interpretation of the left in the transition to democracy as doomed to fail. Yet the strongest critique *Cien pájaros volando* offers is of the revolutionary attempts in general, which I discuss below with respect to the novel’s epigraph. Thus, while the journey in *Central do Brasil* contrasts an urban center with a romanticized peripheral region, the Chilean novel’s journey suggests that the center’s monopoly of violence extends even to the remotest regions of the national territory.

Walter Benjamin argues in his “Critique of Violence” that the state is threatened by the use of force outside of the law, saying, “Law sees violence in the hands of individuals as a danger undermining the legal system” (280). The Chilean novel represents walls as analogies for the state, limiting the use of force by those on the inside while hemming them in through violence. Read as a critique of the state monopoly of violence, the walls are purportedly a protective space, yet also allow the supposed protectors to become abusive. One such wall is the corral where Salazar, the village leader, keeps his sheep, and another is a defensive wall the *guerrilleros* erect overnight in anticipation of a military attack. Both walls speak to the indefensibility of those within, as well as the falsely idyllic representation of their lives and ideologies. For example, like the inhabitants of Estefanía, the sheep are content in their world. Yet one sheep is singled out by Salazar, Fischer, Robles (a capitalist villager) and several

militants for her “seductive” nature. “Dalila” appears to Fischer an appropriate name for this flirty, promiscuous sheep, though the name is perhaps more appropriate because this sheep is taken advantage of by many of those listed above, a victim of bestiality. Like the villagers who suffer the invasion of an anthropologist and a troop of militants who use them for academic and political ends, men from each group invade the space of the corral to abuse Dalila. The *guerrilla* wall is a similar reproduction of space, and like the Berlin Wall was raised from one day to the next. The inability of the militants to flee the mountains due to the encircling Chilean Armed Forces is replicated in the wall they build for themselves. Like the left in the transition to democracy and post-dictatorship, this space represents a trapped position from which only a semblance of resistance is possible. The repeated image of the fence or wall imagines national space as confined by dominant ideologies and the military power and violence behind them. Alternative ideological projects in this novel, as well as the marginalized peoples and regions of the nation, have limited expression due to these restrictions.

Agresti’s film, unlike Salles’s film and Collyer’s novel, examines minutely urban space. Instead of focusing on the rural margins of society and the long journey to reach them, *Buenos Aires viceversa* takes place exclusively at the center of Argentine commercial, political and cultural life. The film portrays the city from all angles; since the camera follows multiple storylines, the viewer sees city streets and trains, commercial locations, restaurants, houses and apartments of the wealthy and the middle class, as well as the shanty towns of the poor. The cameras, Agresti’s

professional lens and Daniela's handheld recorder, seem determined to uncover every possible urban space, though there are marked differences between the manners in which they do so. The representation of certain physical spaces pairs with the mental space of the character to create the sense of impeding his or her action.

Agresti's lens cuts from one storyline to the next, sometimes in rapid succession, with the effect of providing intimate glimpses of life in Buenos Aires across a variety of locations and social classes. Yet as the viewer sees when the street-child dies, all sectors of society continue to experience the effects of impunity in the post-dictatorship. The spaces that Agresti's camera investigates often reveal private moments of personal anguish or relational issues that stem from economic and past political violence. For example, the main lens recreates ethical dilemmas of the dictatorship through scenes of Mario working in the hourly hotel. His place as concierge is within a small booth, separated from the clients by a glass or clear plastic partition. On a typical night, the young man handles check-ins, and monitors potentially abusive situations using a radio headset whose receiver may be set to the various rooms. He leaves the booth to walk the halls of the hotel, with the camera alternating between scenes of Mario listening and couples in the rooms talking. However, on the night his uncle brings a blind woman to the hotel and explains quietly that she is a prostitute, Mario's suspicions are raised by the secrecy of his manner. The close-up of Mario's upper body, with his hands covering his face, emphasizes inner turmoil as he listens to his uncle torture this woman. Unlike other nights when Mario walks the halls, during the rape he seems trapped in the booth due to his own inability

to act. Instead, the camera cuts back and forth between Mario and the couple. The blind woman begs to leave as the man tortuously teases her, and rape is implied when the camera cuts away. Mario is unable to bring himself to stop his uncle, yet his horror is evident; like a child he holds his head and waits for the time to pass. The enclosed physical space captures his frozen mental attitude as he realizes fully who his uncle is, the violence of which he is capable, and Mario's own complicity through silence.<sup>24</sup> The violent cycle of silence and impunity in Argentina's post-dictatorship society continues as Mario does nothing.

The legacy of state violence in the neoliberal order is also clear in the marginal economic spaces Daniela's video recording uncovers. The key difference between her gaze and that of the primary lens is that while Agresti's camera focuses on the psychological and relational trauma, Daniela sees the economically excluded population within urban space, and records it using the device her wealthy boyfriend bought her before they broke up. Though Argentina's middle and upper classes define the national identity as white (Joseph 335), Daniela's footage includes brown people of indigenous descent throughout the city, and barefoot children in shantytowns. The elderly couple reacts with anger to this footage; they want to see the beautiful *place* of Buenos Aires instead of the marginalized that operate in public *spaces*. Yet the viewer learns quickly that they are actually fearful for Daniela's safety: their own daughter viewed urban space from a similar perspective, and the military regime disappeared her. When they send Daniela out to try again, she attempts to film a large tree, saying,

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<sup>24</sup> It is through this experience, as well as a scene at the dinner table with Mario, his adoptive parents and uncle, that Mario and the viewer piece together how he came to be adopted. The scenes suggest that his adoptive uncle tortured his biological parents and delivered Mario to his adoptive parents.

“This is the beauty of Buenos Aires!” (“¡Ésta es la belleza de Buenos Aires!”). But as she peers through her lens, the street-child Bocha comes into view, demanding five *pesos* to leave. After several attempts to dissuade him, Daniela collapses sobbing; he is certainly not the elderly couple’s idea of Argentine beauty. The streets of Buenos Aires, as perceived by Daniela and experienced in the interconnected lives of the characters, are a suffocating, dangerous, melancholy space. Only when Bocha takes Daniela to the rooftop to film the skyline of the city do they experience the beauty of the city, distanced from it. The couple is pleased with this footage and that of the urban center; this time, Daniela’s lens disallows inclusion of the marginalized in public spaces, and for this she receives payment.

*Buenos Aires viceversa*, *Cien pájaros volando* and *Central do Brasil* converge in their focus on primarily marginalized spaces. Daniela, Mario and the other characters of Agresti’s film frequent the streets, bars and apartments of Buenos Aires, but few participate in dominant public and commercial life in the city. Daniela and Bocha go to the tourist places of the city, but only as visitors. After being raped, the blind woman walks to the Plaza de Mayo, perhaps the most prominent public space of the city, yet she walks in the marginalized space of the Madres and their demonstration. Collyer’s anthropologist leaves his lonely life in Santiago to travel to the margins of Chilean borders and society. The area is so isolated that there is no running water and only one outhouse for the village to share. A winding road connects the town to a bus terminal in the foothills, with a small outpost of soldiers to signify the area is still Chile. Similarly, in Salles’s film, not only do Dora and Josué inhabit

the margins of Rio de Janeiro, they then travel to the northeast, far removed from the commercial and social centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Space as marginalized as well as violent, prison-like, removed from dominant society and poverty-stricken is a visual representation of how the characters in these works are also marginalized due to social class, gender, race and/or ideological stance. Yet the Brazilian example has a different tone than those from the Southern Cone. Spatial representations in *Buenos Aires viceversa* aid the denunciation of economic disparity and psychological trauma in the wake of the dictatorship, and in *Cien pájaros volando* reconstruct the microcosms of the nation to critique the monopoly of state violence. *Central do Brasil* employs the visuals of space to romanticize the poverty of the northeast in contrast to the urban center of Rio de Janeiro to soften the portrayal of violence, and to emphasize Dora and Josué's common humanity and solidarity. These works are representative of a general trend between the cultural productions of their respective nations, with Southern Cone works being of a distinctly more critical posture than Brazilian ones.

#### *Marginalization*

The journeys in *Cien pájaros volando* and *Central do Brasil* provide a clear metaphor of the distance between the center and margins in their societies. Yet even within the city itself in *Buenos Aires viceversa*, the margins are clearly defined between those who wield power and have a voice, and those who do not. Independent of their social commentary, cultural productions in this region are often concerned with these marginalized sectors and their place in the new political and economic order. Mario Margulis, in his discussion on marginalization and migration in



Argentina's history, provides a helpful definition of individuals and groups in the margins of society. Margulis states that in his own work, "When we speak . . . of marginalized groups, we think about groups of individuals situated in such a way in the system, that they see their participation restricted in diverse spheres of economic and social life, compared to other majority groups with whom they are connected. Marginalized groups are usually located in the social and ecological borders of the system" ("Cuando hablamos . . . de grupos marginales, pensamos en conjuntos de individuos situados de tal manera en el sistema, que ven restringida su participación en diversas esferas de la vida económica y social, comparados con otros grupos mayoritarios con los que están vinculados. Los grupos marginales suelen estar localizados en los límites sociales y ecológicos del sistema"; 16). Many characters in these works are at times in the economic and social centers of their societies, yet far removed from reaping any of the benefits associated with economic "growth" under neoliberalism, or even interacting with those who benefit from it except in superficial circumstances. In this section, I discuss who and what the works portray as marginalized by dominant Argentine, Brazilian and Chilean society, first by considering representations of regional margins, as well as the mapping of urban space as overlapping social spheres of central and marginal. I then analyze the convergence of the three works in representing children, and especially poor children, as powerless in a violent society. Finally, I explore how the films and novel imagine the impact of literacy and ideology on the construction of marginalized characters and sectors of society in newly democratic nations.

Unlike travels in Soriano's and Noll's novels analyzed in the first chapter of this dissertation, the journeys that Dora and Josué, and Hugo Fischer take have very specific destinations; they are in fact very similar to the opposite of journeys taken by rural workers to their nations' urban centers. Darlene Sadlier notes that in *Central do Brasil*, Dora and Josué "make a journey that has been made for decades by millions of poor Northeasterners, but in reverse. They flee the violence of Rio for the backlands of the Northeast, where they hope to locate Josué's father, whom he has never seen, and who is his best chance for survival" (132-3). Instead of seeking to reunite with the father who has gone to work in the city and to join him there in the midst of urban violence, the story employs another stereotype: that of the alcoholic, lazy, abusive and absent father. The film reproduces a stereotype of the *sertanejo*, even as it suggests that only in the northeast can Josué be safe and secure from the plight of the poor in urban centers. Collyer's novel, in contrast, breaks with conceptions of the mountain peoples being simple, but the journey is similar to that of Dora and Josué's in that Fischer travels to the nation's interior, a trajectory that many people have made in reverse toward Santiago and other urban areas in search of employment.

The motif of journey, then, shows the distance, and the rift, between urban and rural as physical, cultural and economic. Rural to urban migration is common throughout Latin America as millions of young people seek escape from rural poverty (Cerrutti and Bertoncetto 8). In Chile, the country's population has been predominantly urban since the 1930s, with Santiago as the seat of cultural and economic production. Though rural to urban migration rates had fallen since the

1950s, they began to increase again in the 1990-2000 period (8-9). Like Chile's rural areas, Brazil's northeast is in reality quite removed from urban life and the decisions that move the country on a national and international scale. As I mentioned above, a small percentage of elites own the land. In spite of the touted neoliberal claim that "A rising tide lifts all boats," poverty continues to be extreme even during the 1990s after Brazil's "economic miracle" under the military regime. The average income in the northeast is less than half that of the average in the southeast and approximately half the national average, while literacy rates are a third lower. Living conditions such as these help to explain the millions of *sertanejos* migrating south to urban areas (Fry 341). These two works demonstrate that rural Chile and Brazil are marginalized spaces by their very location, and I posit that the people from them can and may be marginalized as well simply by coming from them, though this is material for a separate analysis.

In a different type of journey, Agresti's characters explore the city of Buenos Aires. The city as reconstructed in *Buenos Aires viceversa* has layers of marginal and dominant spaces, which the other two works tend to separate between rural and urban spaces. Daniela and the street-child Bocha film the federal capital, and this footage within a movie allows the camera lens to focus on the world that these characters, one marginalized through her being orphaned by state violence and the other by his economic status, see and experience. The city is beautiful and of a single layer when they finally discover the rooftop view, but beneath this is the reality of a poverty that mingles daily with wealth and privilege. Poverty, neoliberalism and post-dictatorship

are intimately connected. As Nelly Richard argues in *Cultural Residues*, the artistic representation of residues through fragmentation, or as she says, “poetics of memory,” reveals the continuing culture of violence in the post-dictatorship (50). The marginalized in Argentina’s post-dictatorship, *Buenos Aires viceversa* suggests, are not only the poor. Marginalized people may also be those with physical disabilities (such as the blind woman raped by Mario’s uncle) and those who suffer in the present from past state crimes (such as Daniela as a child of the disappeared). These people threaten the *status quo* by being a living reminder of the dictatorship’s violence that paved the way for free market policies, the poverty that those policies have engendered, and basic human differences that contradict a “normal” situation.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the physical mapping of the marginalization of urban and rural spaces, all three works suggest that children, and especially poor or orphaned children, are particularly voiceless in society. They are marginalized for similar reasons as the adults, but have less capacity to resist. Though this is not a new phenomenon, it is accentuated in neoliberal society. Still, the films use children to different ends. Immediately after the title screen of *Buenos Aires viceversa*, a black screen has written in red text:

In the years of the military dictatorship in Argentina, some 30,000 people disappeared and were assassinated. The majority of them were young, and the children they left are just now of an age to ask society for answers. To them this film is dedicated.

En los años de la dictadura militar en la Argentina desaparecieron y fueron asesinadas unas 30.000 personas. La mayoría de ellos eran

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<sup>25</sup> See Naomi Klein for a discussion of how neoliberalism assumes and attempts to make a society without difference.

jóvenes y los hijos que dejaron recién hoy están en edad para pedir respuesta a la sociedad. A ellos está dedicado este film.

These children, now young adults, have suffered the consequences of the regime's brutal repression in addition to the effects it had on their parents' generation. The film is framed as one in which the dictatorships' consequences are laid bare, and the youth want to know how and why. Yet in addition to these youth, Bocha is portrayed as the newest victim of this repression, a deathly combination of state violence mixed with urban poverty. He has aided Daniela in the cover up of urban ills for the elderly couple as previously discussed, even as he has provided perspective for the viewer. And, when finally rendered completely voiceless, his death serves as a catalyst for many of the film's characters to recover the film's projection of the truth about violence in the post-dictatorship. Bocha as an object of pity is subordinate to the effect his marginalization and death produce in the film's remaining characters. In the same way, the characters that represent the children of Argentina's disappeared political opposition raise awareness for the viewer.

Like the children of *Buenos Aires vice versa*, those of *Central do Brasil* are represented as victims of various types of violence. Yet where Agresti's film used Bocha as an instrument to bring other characters to the recognition of social ills, Salles's lends Josué more agency. This film, with its characteristics of documentary, portrays children in general as poor, orphaned, neglected and preyed upon. Without family or home, they steal to survive; criminalized by society at large, they are then at the mercy of police and criminal rings alike. Cynthia M. Tompkins notes that this creates sympathy on the part of the viewer, though the film avoids lingering overlong

on these images (23). Soon after his mother's death, Josué falls victim to traders in human organs when Dora realizes she can profit by letting an acquaintance in Central Station take him away. However, unlike the other children in Central Station that have no voice, Josué can speak, and so endears himself to Dora that she rescues him at the last minute. This begins a process that, in combination with the journey they undertake together, gives Josué control over his circumstances. Even though he is one of many poor migrant children in Rio de Janeiro, his partnership with Dora and his determination to find his father afford him a voice, which, in agreement with the overarching themes of the film, seems to override his marginal status.

The explicit marginalization of poor youth in the films stands in contrast to Collyer's novel, which has only a handful of young, mostly middle class, characters. Representations of young people in the novel illustrate a political apathy very distinct to that of youth prior to Pinochet's dictatorship. Fischer notes that there are no children or youth in Estefanía (*Cien pájaros volando* 27), and he later discovers that Salazar's son and the other young people have moved to Santiago. Fischer's college students in Santiago clearly operate in a different social sphere than the migrant children of the mountain villagers now living in urban areas of Chile. The college students whom the reader meets are only concerned with sexual relationships, which is Collyer's indication of a non-politicized, educated, middle class youth at the end of the military regime. However, representations of migrant youth from Estefanía show them to be no more politically active. Salazar's son is embarrassed by his father's illiteracy, and has returned only once to visit. The absence of Estefanía's young people in

Santiago suggests their complete exclusion from access to higher education. This bodes ill for their economic prospects, but even more disturbing in this representation of migrants is that they seem to have bought into dominant ideologies that reinforce their marginality.

These three works depict urban areas as violent and often prison-like, with the marginalized poor, and especially poor children, struggling to survive and create a better quality of life. Journeys to rural areas afford a glimpse into the real spatial margins of society, idealizing them as picturesque, yet also re-writing them as safe places far from the alienation of urban life (*Central do Brasil*), or as another location where the struggle for social justice has failed (*Cien pájaros volando*). Beyond spaces that are physical or imagined based on economic and age markers, however, marginalized intellectual spaces also find representation in these works. The disenfranchisement of the illiterate poor in Salles's film critiques the lack of attention to public education in Brazil and the sundry related social issues, while Collyer's novel and Agresti's film point to continued isolation of leftist ideologies after the fall of the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina.

Again, the Brazilian work lacks explicit reference to the military regime, and instead focuses on social problems arising from exclusion of the poor, as well as subjective experiences of solidarity among the marginalized characters. The initial scenes of *Central do Brasil* show close-ups of people dictating letters for Dora to write. The camera cuts from person to person, many of whom were passing through the station at the time of the filming and actually asked for their letters to be sent

(Tavares de Barros 90-1). As they state the address and destination, contrasting accents and various skin tones only accentuate the fact that these characters are migrants excluded from social power, and because of this cannot even maintain contact with relatives and friends without outside help. In addition, naming these home regions implies that these states, like the people who emigrate from them, are on the economic margins of Brazil, contributing primarily to the growth of the centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In quick succession they name the states of Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, Ceará and Bahia, and then, as if to reinforce that these people are not even on the official map of Brazilian society, a woman explains the location of the letter's destination in relation to a town's bakery. Though not uncommon in many areas of the world, this contrast between the illiterate masses and letter-writing Dora, as well as the national postal system and a lack of fixed addresses, indicates the social and political position of these people/characters.

The other two works, though very dissimilar, both address the effect of dictatorship in neoliberal society on intellectual space. Agresti's film often reconstructs problematics of the dictatorship, as I addressed previously in the discussion about Mario's ethical situation as he listens to his uncle rape the blind woman. The argument between Daniela and her boyfriend Damián early in the film shows the dichotomy between conservative and progressive ideologies in a visual manner, in addition to the script. Damián interrupts physical intimacy with Daniela because he is disgusted by the video she has filmed for the elderly couple, which is playing on the television in the background. In the argument that follows, Damián



accuses Daniela of always dismissing his upper-middle class problems, or trumping them with her own pain from being an orphan with disappeared parents. Although he is partially dressed, Daniela stands entirely naked, and covers her breasts and genitals with her hands. Subjected to Damián's censure, her person is exposed, just as her parents' would have been before their torturers. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the argument is what instigated it: Daniela's gaze of the economically marginalized people, who are eating on the video. It is as if Damián cannot stand Daniela's preoccupation with the poor of the city, which is an integral part of her character and heritage as a daughter of the disappeared. Though the plot follows Daniela more closely after they break up, occasional returns to Damián's storyline indicate that the psychological and economic havoc wreaked by the military regimes contribute to alienation among the wealthier youth as well as those immediately affected by it.

Collyer's novel takes a somewhat more unique position on the issue of marginalization of the intellectual opposition during the post-dictatorship. The epigraph to the novel is a quote from a Spanish translation of Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos* (XXXII) that says, "The revolution', said Mr. Adams, 'Took place in the minds of the people'" ("La revolución', dijo Mr. Adams, 'ocurrió en la imaginación del pueblo'"; qtd. in *Cien pájaros volando* 9). This sets the stage for the novel to show how there has not been revolution in Chile aside from the imagination of the people. Pound, who is considered by many as among the great poets of the twentieth century, was anti-Semitic and a known sympathizer of Mussolini (Ferkiss 173). The epigraph, understood in light of this, suggests that there is no out for the masses in modern

society: Chile's (and the world's) dominant are in control. Collyer frames the novel with Hugo Fischer in jail telling how he ended up in the political wing. However, there are many suggestions that his version of how he ended up in jail could be one of many, which leads the reader to question whether he really was the leader of the *guerrilla* like the media claim. By his own assertion, he was simply an anthropology professor looking for adventure who ended up in the *Quebrada de Estefanía*.<sup>26</sup>

Although prior to and during the early years of Pinochet's dictatorship intellectuals and professors were Allende supporters and among the leaders of the resistance to Pinochet's dictatorship, by the end many lived in exile and the regime had stripped the universities of their oppositional character (Austin 31-2). The main question that Fischer's story elicits is whether he really was as apolitical as he presents himself, or whether from the jail cell he has re-written his history in light of the fairly impotent left of the early 1990s. Yet this question is even more important given the epigraph: was there ever a chance for Salvador Allende's democratic road to socialism, or was it doomed from the beginning, just a figment of the people's imagination? This novel's reconstruction of events through a naïve group of *guerrilleros* suggests the marginalized and their intellectual vanguard did not stand a chance against the economic and military might of Chile and international actors. The implications of this in the 1990s are great, as they suggest futility in large-scale social change. Nonetheless, Hugo's joining the *guerrilla* resistance in full knowledge of its

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<sup>26</sup> Of interest is that the name of this fictitious place recalls the Quebrada del Yuro in Bolivia where Ernesto "Che" Guevara was captured. Whether or not this was intentional on the part of Collyer, it links past and present failed revolutions, suggesting that earlier large-scale attempts for social change in Latin America may have been equally ingenuous.

impending defeat defies the helpless attitude that Nancy Fraser outlines as defining the left during this period.

Thus, these works portray characters as marginalized due to their age, socio-economic status and ideological position. Still, the works do this in different ways that are consistent with a general overview of their national cultural production. Brazilian works seem less likely or willing to associate contemporary social problems to the most recent dictatorship's "othering" of certain populations, or even to neoliberal policies implemented in the post-dictatorship. Works tend to focus on subjectivities and existential questions rather than social issues, even though they do not ignore them. Southern Cone production emphasizes the interconnection between present conditions, the dictatorships and neoliberal policies implemented during or after the military regimes. I will continue to explore similarities and differences between these countries later, but first must discuss how characters in marginalized spaces manage to resist restrictions on them through solidarities they form with one another.

### *Solidarity*

In these three works, solidarity between characters, especially those whom society marginalizes, is the means for them to overcome obstacles, whether they are personal histories or residues of a violent national past. Neoliberal policies have fragmented society by changing job stability and protection for workers, and this has impacted other areas of urban and rural life. Those residing in working class neighborhoods, for example, no longer work in similar industries, and so have much less social support and means for organizing against poor working conditions. Many

work in service, or are unemployed or work in the informal sector and so do not have an employer with whom to bargain. Bryan Roberts argues that currently in non-core countries, the lack of job security has actually led unemployed and unprotected workers to depend more on family and community relationships. Still, he acknowledges that “the economic pressures fragment as well as unify. Households work long hours with little time to give to community affairs, and their members have jobs different from those of their neighbors.” Social movements tend to focus on specific issues and then disperse (683-4). The novel and two films I study here imagine the roots of solidarities in relationships characters form when pressured into marginalized spheres. Below, I consider the reconstruction of social fragmentation and interstices between characters’ lives through narrative form and structure, to contribute to an understanding of how solidarities and alliances help them resist and endure hardship.

The fragmentation of society, which the dictatorships first caused by the application of state violence through techniques to inspire terror (Garretón 16) and later post-dictatorship governments augmented by implementing neoliberal reforms (Roberts 683-4), finds representation in these works through the ways in which the characters meet one another. Yet the cultural production of the 1990s often combats despair or feelings of futility because it reconstructs the margins as sites of resistance.<sup>27</sup> I emphasize that the potential for social movements comes from solidarities, even temporary alliances, that people form with one another, and that

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Francine Masiello and her discussion of art under neoliberalism.

*Buenos Aires viceversa*, *Cien pájaros volando* and *Central do Brasil* all contain the seeds of these solidarities. Characters in these works come into contact with one another through chance because they inhabit common, generally marginalized, spaces. Momentarily due to circumstances, or because they belong to a marginalized group within society, these characters are forced into one another's lives. In the former, for example, Daniela has broken up with Damián and has no other means to support herself than asking an old friend for a place to stay and doing piece work (such as filming the city with the camera Damián has bought her). Though she briefly lives the life of another social class with her wealthy boyfriend, Daniela finds herself in a precarious economic situation as a young adult orphan due to the state violence unleashed on her parents. This brings her into contact with Bocha, the street-child, who experiences the indirect violence of his family's economic exclusion. When Daniela and Bocha meet each other at the tree she wants to film, they have a choice: to go their separate ways and continue to scavenge for food and shelter, or to band together against common hardships. The tree cedes the camera's center to Bocha comforting the distraught Daniela, and the shot cuts to her buying him dinner with the little money she has. The aforementioned "beauty of Buenos Aires" is ostensibly the footage Daniela presents to the now-pleased elderly couple, but the film portrays this scene and others of their friendship as even more precious. This friendship is the key to exposing contemporary violence through Bocha's murder, though other characters in the film also develop important relationships.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The most important of these is the support Mario offers Daniela in the wake of Bocha's death. I

Similarly to that film, the other two works show characters meeting one another in a haphazard, unlikely manner. *Central do Brasil*'s main characters meet by chance and grudgingly accept one another's company; their journey together is a story of friendship and mutually helping each other to resolve emotional scars that their fathers have inflicted. Among the thousands of people who pass through Rio de Janeiro's Central Station daily, Dora and Josué were unlikely to cross paths, but she takes pity on the new orphan and he has no one else. Likewise, Fischer travels to Estefanía in the Chilean Andes because the anthropology department has the funds for someone to do research there. His contact with the mountain people is arbitrarily assigned, and then by chance the *guerrilla* sets up camp nearby. Yet the solidarities that these characters form with one another are an escape from various ills: for Dora, from cynicism and self-centeredness; for Josué, from destitution, mistreatment and a violent death on the streets; and for Hugo, from the apathetic and diffident attitude he takes toward life. Ultimately, sharing in a common interest also relieves the loneliness of these characters, bringing them together even as social forces seem to push them toward isolation.

Walter Salles intentionally demonstrates the power of friendship and solidarity between people as a rebuttal to the violent content of contemporary films. In an interview with Anthony Kaufman, he explains,

There's a beautiful statement by Rossellini [of Italian neorealist cinema] in which he says, "What I want to show is that the world is full of friends." Sometimes when I see the violence, this trivialization of violence in cinema today, I have the impression that the sentence could

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discuss this scene in detail below.

[be] “What I want to show is that the world is full of enemies.” There is a strange inversion taking place in contemporary cinema that I don’t wish to be associated with . . . I think we’re living through a period where there’s a certain culture of indifference, of cynicism, that I don’t feel close to, either. This explains to some extent the fact that my film recounts a redemption brought out by the discovery of affection. (Qtd. in Anthony Kaufman 20)

His comments show a common thread between his work and Agresti’s *Buenos Aires viceversa* in that the latter film, while not concealing violence, employs what violent matter there is to a specific end: by imagining solidarities, which results in comprehension of the roots of social ills as a first step toward eliminating them.

Where Salles intentionally explores an aesthetics of affection, I argue that these and the works analyzed in previous chapters display an aesthetics of solidarity through friendship and mutual help. The left, prior to the dictatorships, organized and achieved significant results through labor movements and political organization. Argentina’s *Nunca más*, Brazil’s *Nunca mais* and Chile’s *Informe Rettig* report on human rights violations during the dictatorship and reveal that many types of people struggled for similar goals and were victims of state repression. Marxists, priests, anarchists, labor leaders, intellectuals, students and workers collaborated and endured state wrath. Says Naomi Klein,

In testimony from truth commission reports across the region, prisoners tell of a system designed to force them to betray the principle most integral to their sense of self. For most Latin American leftists, that most cherished principle was what Argentina’s radical historian Osvaldo Bayer called “the only transcendental theology: solidarity.” The torturers understood the importance of solidarity well, and they set out to shock the impulse of social interconnectedness out of their prisoners. (139)

At the societal level, the dictatorships through fear managed to break down solidarity between people as well. In the literature we find resistance to the authoritarian state, and later to the neoliberal state and society, through relationships, because it is precisely these that they threaten, and that present the most threat. I take up the question of relationships in these three works to consider the potential and limitations of an aesthetics of solidarity.

Intertwining storylines form the narrative structure of *Buenos Aires viceversa* (1996). In this way, it is a precursor to films such as *Amores perros* (González Iñárritu 2000) and *Crash* (Paul Haggis 2004), both of which examine urban life from a variety of social spaces and physical locations. These films, which highlight experiences in Mexico City and Los Angeles, respectively, culminate in scenes that expose corruption at all levels of society, as well as alienation and loneliness among all social classes. The exploration of urbanity is far from a new phenomenon in literature and film, but films like these emphasize the explosive nature of colliding social spheres. Car crashes in the latter two and Bocha's death by Mario's uncle the mall cop change the trajectory of the characters' lives, and bring them into contact with realities that until then appear to run parallel to their own. Clearly the seemingly separate nature of alienated individuals within neoliberal societies is only an illusion, though an effective one that elides the interdependency of every social sector upon every other. Neither the viewer nor the characters are aware of their present or future relationships, but events like Bocha's death in full view of the other characters, and its subsequent cover-up by the government and media, serve to lay bare the violence and impunity of



state actors in the past and present, as well as the precarious position of the socially marginalized.

The film portrays the current social and economic circumstances as a direct result of Argentina's unresolved dictatorial past, and nowhere is this clearer than in the last scenes. Bocha's dead body lies next to boxes labeled "Made in China," a shot that, as Martin Sorbille points out, "denounce[s] the predatory economic policies of the 1990s, policies that obliterated the underprivileged people of Argentina" (106). Not only is the child a victim of violence with impunity,<sup>29</sup> but his death takes place in a shopping mall, a popular entertainment venue, as well as a center for economic activity and consumer culture in contemporary Argentina. In addition, the shopping mall itself in the Southern Cone has a peculiar tie to past dictatorial regimes. Some are former detention centers converted to commercial spaces, including the Punta Carretas Shopping Center in Uruguay (Hayman) and the Galerías Pacífico in Argentina (Klein 115). The foundation for economic policy during the 1990s was set under the military regime and enacted under transition governments. (Brennan 54).<sup>30</sup> When Bocha steals the camera in the mall, he participates economically in the only way he can; though certain items may have lower prices under neoliberalism, imported and higher-quality goods and technology lays a foundation for circular reinforcement of those with

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<sup>29</sup> Mario's uncle, a mall security guard, shoots him. Damián's friend, a boxer, tackles Mario's uncle after witnessing the murder. Yet the nightly news reports Bocha's death as an accident in which the gun fired when a psychologically disturbed boxer assaulted a security guard.

<sup>30</sup> According to James P. Brennan, "the 'Proceso' . . . created the rudiments of a new economy based on the financial sector and powerful holding companies (grupos económicos in the Argentine political vernacular). Among the propertied classes, the 1976-1983 military government consolidated the economic power of groups that spurned the old business organizations that had continuously pressured and more than once destabilized national governments" (54).

economic means to purchase them, and exclusion for those without. Bocha's death in this manner and environment is a catalyst for the remaining characters, and through them the viewer, to comprehend persisting violence in the post-dictatorship and seek each other out.

The following scene provides an even more dramatic representation of residues of dictatorial violence, when Daniela stumbles along sobbing outside the mall on a sidewalk and then enters a public restroom. The screen alternates between silent shots of Daniela's back, and frontal shots of a young woman being pursued along the same route, this time full of urban noise, by a man in dark glasses like those worn by secret government agents. Sorbille compares Bocha's death with Daniela's mother's death, saying that since she did not witness either, Bocha's dead body triggers the fantasy of how her mother may have died. Not only this, but this becomes a lived fantasy, since with the sound of heavy blows Daniela moves her head as though the man were clubbing her (115). Mario, unaware of his uncle's renewed violence though distraught believing he may be the child of a disappeared couple, hesitates upon hearing her screams. However, his silence during the blind woman's rape seems to spur him to aid Daniela, and though they have never met, he holds her while she cries and expresses their misery caused by past horrors. Having acted in solidarity with another of the affected youth here, the film portrays Mario as exonerated for his tacit complicity with his uncle. Daniela, by allowing herself to cling to Mario after initially fighting him, appears to begin a process of psychological healing since she has found someone with

whom to communicate her traumatic history.<sup>31</sup> The aesthetics of solidarity in this scene suggest that present actions may atone for past complicity, which I argue is its primary limitation. Solidarity and alliance improve the present and potentially the future, but the consequences of past actions persist and cannot be completely undone.

Chilean novels of this period appear to be more reticent when projecting the possibility of united social action, yet many emphasize the need for solidarity and movements for greater social justice. Like Huerqueo whom Varas freeze-frames poised for armed resistance at the end of *El correo de Bagdad*, Fischer claims to have lied to his mountain hosts about being the leader of the *guerrilla* and then joins it in a futile battle against the Chilean Armed Forces. The narrative structure, however, goes beyond an appeal to solidarity in the struggle for social justice. It reveals a larger question: the need to be wary of claims to truth and the final word when talking about the past, which is especially relevant to the transitional governments of the post-dictatorship. Fischer's solidarity with the *guerrilla* suggests that in spite of contradictory histories and memories, the action itself seems to have been worthwhile.

The author interposes Fischer's story with that of Brueghel: Fischer tells the story of the (fictitious) German anthropologist whom many in the field admired for his work with indigenous groups in Latin America. The official version of his death, widely publicized, is that a tribe with no history of anthropophagy boiled him in a cast-iron pot and ate him. Fischer comments that no one wonders how they had a pot in the middle of the jungle, and welcomes the opportunity to find out the truth when he

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<sup>31</sup> See Davoine and Gaudillière's discussion of trauma and communication in *History beyond Trauma: Whereof One Cannot Speak... Thereof One Cannot Stay Silent*.

discovers the Bolivian Mamani, one of Brueghel's former students, among the *guerrilleros*. Yet there are discrepancies in Mamani's story as well, indications that instead of simply helping a journalist to concoct the story of Brueghel's death, the Bolivian may actually be a member of the tribe that supposedly consumed the anthropologist. Among Fischer's last comments about being in jail, he says that Mamani tells him another version, saying that Brueghel himself made up the story of cannibalism so he could disappear into the jungle. The multiple versions are, as Mamani says, a hundred flying birds out of reach (*Cien pájaros volando* 15-6). The emphasis on multiple versions leads the reader to question not only Mamani's multiple explanations of Brueghel's death, but also Fischer's account of how he ended up in the mountains fighting with a group of revolutionaries. Although there is no indication of his being an unreliable narrator, the reader cannot help but wonder whether he is telling his real life-story or a white-washed version that will be acceptable to the transitional audience for whom he writes.

This narrative structure provides a critique of official transitional efforts of capture the past in a single, unified, coherent narrative, and aligns itself with victims of state abuses and agents for social change who argue that this narrative leads to the forgetting of past atrocities. Perhaps the most prominent contemporary example was President Patricio Aylwin's (1990-1994) order for a truth commission, which would write a report about human rights abuses under the dictatorship to identify what led up to these abuses and how they could be avoided in the future. The *Informe Rettig* cites Aylwin as saying, "only upon this foundation [the truth] . . . would it be possible to

satisfy the elemental demands of justice and create the indispensable conditions for achieving an effective national reconciliation” (“sólo sobre esa base [the truth] . . . sería posible satisfacer las exigencias elementales de la justicia y crear las condiciones indispensables para alcanzar una efectiva reconciliación nacional”; 3). One of the most striking aspects of the *Informe Rettig* is this emphasis on truth for reconciliation. The commission sought civilians and members of the Armed Forces to give testimony, “in order to know the versions that there may be about the deeds, and to consider them when it is time to form convictions about what happened” (“para así conocer las versiones que pudieren tener sobre los hechos y considerarlas a la hora de formarse convicción sobre lo ocurrido”; 8), yet the testimony is filtered through the writers and not in the words of the witnesses themselves. The report’s emphasis on reconciliation suggests the “two demons” theory, which claims there were two opposed groups in society with relatively equal capability. Clearly an invalid theory, Jonathan Haslam points out that the approximately 300 members and few dozen weapons of the Left Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario*), the opposition group often feared and cited, were far from relatively proportionate to the Chilean Armed Forces that carried out the coup (209). The fact that the Chilean commission “understood from the beginning that *the truth that it needed to establish* had a precise and determined end: to aid in the reconciliation of all Chileans” (“entendió desde un comienzo que *la verdad que debía establecer* tenía un fin preciso y determinado: colaborar a la reconciliación de todos los chilenos”; emphasis mine, *Informe Rettig* 13)

exposes that it was creating a narrative to soothe society, which in effect could provide a foundation for blocking future cases against the regime's agents.

Canonizing memory of the dictatorship also establishes its precursors instead of allowing for the multiple versions and perspectives that exist. By intertextualizing various stories about Brueghel's death and calling attention to how many versions of history there may be, Collyer's novel critiques this type of official forgetting done under cover of canonizing a "truth." Perhaps more importantly for this discussion on solidarity is that Fischer allies himself with the *guerrilleros*. Aware that their "revolution" will fail and that the legal consequences will lay heavily with him as their purported leader, Fischer willingly accepts the official story. As Fischer discusses the ways things could have happened from the jail cell, his story makes clear that solidarity in the face of injustice is more important than any single version of history.

While Fischer's solidarity with the *guerrilla* ends in incarceration and the novel suggests the futility of social change in the face of the state monopoly on violence, in *Central do Brasil* solidarity leads to hope. Adam McKeown notes that early twentieth century migration reveals economic trends, saying migrants "embodied the expanding global political economy" (167). The pair retreats from the violence and exclusion of urban life, with Dora leaving Josué with his brothers in a government-manufactured housing complex. Josué and this population live at the margins of the national political economy, since this town has no means of production; the boy metaphorically embodies the process of becoming excluded from international capital when his mother dies and he leaves the city. Yet his solidarity with Dora is more

complex than it initially appears. On the one hand, the journey motif simultaneously represents the physical and spatial traversing from central to peripheral, which Dora facilitates, but on the other, it is a psychological journey from alienation, anger and cynicism to hope through the nostalgic remembering of their solidarity and friendship.<sup>32</sup> Dora and Josué's travels portray a trajectory of emotional healing through companionship, with the absent father as a reminder of state abuse and neglect under the dictatorship and during the contemporary neoliberal state. That there has once been a time during which they were valuable to each other shields them from present or future loneliness. Though it is untenable to remain with one another at the end of the film, solidarity has provided satisfaction and comfort in the loss of their fathers.

The narrative structure is chronological, yet the journey is cyclical: Josué returns to where he was conceived and Dora goes back to Rio de Janeiro. They both must confront the disappearance of their fathers, which they are only able to accomplish through the brief fictitious construction of a mother-child relationship. This takes place after Dora and Josué, completely out of money in a small town in the northeast, have a fight. Josué runs off through a crowd of religious pilgrims and terror registers on Dora's face as she attempts to follow. The exertion and confusion of the multitude is too much for her and she faints in its midst. The following scene is early

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<sup>32</sup> Nostalgia in the sense of the Portuguese term *saudade*, a wistful remembrance of the past, or a homesickness that encompasses totally the physical and emotional senses and sensibilities. Dora and Josué, separated by miles in the final scenes, gaze through toys with a picture of the two of them. Dora feels obligated to leave, in essence ending the immediacy of their close friendship, which has been achieved with so much difficulty. Yet the scenes of them looking at the pictures suggest that they will always remember with longing their relationship, and it will be a source of strength to them in the future.

the next morning, with Josué holding Dora in an inverted Pietà (Sadler 134; Tavares de Barros 88). This is the beginning of true friendship between the two. Yet missing in this “family” is the father; both of their fathers were abusive alcoholics who neglected and later abandoned their families. The film is too devoid of political references to read this as a direct allusion to the Brazilian state, though it, like their fathers, was an authoritarian, repressive semi-welfare state during the first part of the dictatorship (Assies 215; Wolford 411), and during the post-dictatorship could be said to have relatively “orphaned” civil society with Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s (1995-2002) continuation and further implementation of policies that reversed Vargas era economics (Sallum and Palacios 754-5). Still, the absent father is related at least in part to the stress of poverty and the instability of the nuclear family as men migrate in search for work. The motif of the journey as psychological as well as physical enables Josué and Dora to construct solidarity in the face of their fathers’ absence and subsequent social atomization.

### *Justice*

These three works provide examples of how representations of the socially excluded during the 1990s show that marginalized spaces may actually be sites of solidarity that lead to better life conditions. Yet do solidarities like the temporary alliances I discuss result in anything greater reaching beyond the marginalized sectors of society? They appear a far cry from earlier solidarities that envisioned greater political opposition prior to the military regimes, as well as those we see at the turn of the millennium and beyond, which critique neoliberalism explicitly and promote



collectivism such as factory take-overs in Argentina and the Zapatero movement. In fact, the small-scale nature of solidarities in the novels and films that I analyze in this dissertation correspond to a broader trend in the region. Paul D. Almeida relates the declining number of social movements in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s to the democratic transition. He claims that political opposition was directed toward the authoritarian regimes, and the transition brought this opposition back to formal political arenas (124).<sup>33</sup> Yet Almeida argues that by the late 1990s, citizens returned to the streets to protest neoliberal policies as they perceived changes in social and economic rights; this new wave of mobilization was the greatest in Argentina and particularly high in Brazil as well (124, 133).

In the literature and films, there are significant similarities and differences between the three countries. Cultural production from Argentina and Chile often contributes to intellectual dialogue about the role of the past dictatorships in present political, social and economic relations. Brazilian works often avoid explicit critique of the dictatorship in favor of existential questions, though many works engage the ongoing problem of economic hardship and inequality. Production from Brazil as well as the Southern Cone reconstructs solidarities as fairly small-scale, instead of part of a contemporary, wide-spread struggle for greater citizenship rights. Still, in spite of a relative regional decline in social movements and an apparent lack of alternative social models imagined in the literature and films, these solidarities and even fleeting alliances reveal not only the continued need for resistance, but also that the socially

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<sup>33</sup> To read more about the decrease in civic movements in Argentina and Brazil, see Roberta Villalón's "Neoliberalism, Corruption, and Legacies of Contention: Argentina's Social Movements, 1993-2006," and John A. Guidry's "The Struggle to Be Seen: Social Movements and the Public Sphere in Brazil."

excluded under the neoliberal model are perceived as reorganizing. In spite of the divisions that the dictatorships and the neoliberal ascent produced in civil society, relationships that generate better living conditions are the seeds of larger movements. Through characters that form solidarities with others as they are forced into spaces that limit possibilities, writers and filmmakers challenge the hegemony of an ideology that not only leads to greater exclusion, but also threatens to castrate mobilization against the fragmentation it engenders.

The historical context of each country shapes how writers and filmmakers reconstruct and imagine the past, present and future. The relationship between justice and solidarity in the novels and films I have analyzed relies on an understanding of the antecedents, which differ greatly from country to country. Argentina's civil society has a long history of political mobilization (Villalón 141), and Brazil's is among the most active in Latin America, especially during the second half of the twentieth century (Almeida 133). Though Argentina's dictatorship was more brutal than previous national military interventions, by no means was either country's most recent regime their first term in politics. Argentina's 1976-1983 dictatorship and Brazil's 1964-1985 regime were built on repressive techniques practiced by earlier national dictatorships as many members of the Armed Forces had also been part of these regime. In addition, Brazil's regime mentored Chile's officers, and both governments influenced Argentina's repertoire of repressive techniques in the latest dictatorship (Pereira 92-3, 120-1). Pinochet's dictatorship was the first of its kind in Chile, though the authoritarian characteristics of the Ibáñez government may have provided certain

examples of repressive practices (Pereira 49). Yet Chilean society also had experience in political mobilization prior to and during Allende's democratic government, as well as under the dictatorship itself, pressuring military leaders into two plebiscites (though in the first especially, the opposition accused the state of practicing intimidation tactics; Loveman, *Chile*, 288, 299, 302).

In light of the history of militancy and political opposition in the three countries, the main reasons for differences in literary and filmic production among them are relative changes in economic conditions, each regime's treatment of writers and society at large, and (influenced by each of these) the response of democratic governments to the dictatorships' violations of human rights. Before returning to a discussion of the different treatments of solidarity and justice in the cultural production, I find it pertinent to expand briefly on these ideas.

In the first place, relative change in economic circumstances influences expectations for distributional justice among the population, which plays out in the number and focus of social movements. Argentina and Chile had sizeable educated middle classes, which lost considerable economic ground under neoliberal policies (Omar Sanchez 257). Brazil, on the other hand, has a history of large income disparity. Says Frederick Moehn in his discussion of popular music in the Brazilian post-dictatorship, "The idea of 'two Brazils' has been a refrain in interpretations of Brazilian society since Euclides da Cunha . . . Today the expression is used to refer more generally to the different national spaces inhabited by the privileged few and the disadvantaged many" (182-3). Under neoliberalism, income disparity is higher than

previously in Argentina, even greater in Chile, but almost double Argentina's in Brazil (Amann and Baer 953). Economic expectations, then, are one factor that contributes to differences in cultural production.

Yet while a greater number of social movements have taken place in Argentina and Brazil than in Chile during the late 1990s, Chile's literary production on the whole has a greater propensity than Brazil's to critique their respective dictatorships and the aftermath of state crimes. This seems to be due in part to the focus of state repression in each country. Writers in Argentina and Chile, with their extensive, educated middle classes, could reach large sectors of society, and so the dictatorships curtailed their oppositional potential through their detention, exile and censorship. However, in Brazil, the literate middle classes were only just beginning to grow during the late 1960s and 1970s. The military government censored specific works, but directed more energy to promoting what it deemed ideologically compatible within the arts (Pellegrini and Wilson 60). Filmmakers in all three countries encountered state repression. In addition, as the earliest of the most recent dictatorships, Brazil's was by far the least violent of the three (Pereira 21), and the greater number of prominent urban centers spread the violence thinner across geographic regions. A major factor was that the populist opposition within the country was less well organized than working class politics in Argentina and Chile. In Argentina, the working class had become an entrenched part of the political system in the late 1940s and had a clear view of its material objectives. In Chile, the left also had a long history of struggle within an electoral framework. Removing such entrenched elements of the body

politic was harder to do than it was in Brazil. A final factor is that militarism itself became more radical over time as one coup and period of repression followed another and had the full support of the United States government and U.S. business interests. One significant aspect of the Brazilian regime that in conjunction with a lower degree of violent state repression appears to contribute to its relative eclipse of critique during the post-dictatorship compared to Argentina and Chile is that it achieved a closer affinity to a welfare state during the regime than before or after (Assies 214). Greater society and writers in Brazil were less affected by state repression than their counterparts in the Southern Cone, which seems to have lessened the urgency for redress in this country.

Finally, in combination with the previous two elements, the level of demands for redress of past state crimes in the post-dictatorship is significantly different between the three countries. And, even as social movements in each criticize neoliberal economic policy, these policies began in full force in Chile during the dictatorship and Argentina's *juntas* implemented certain market-oriented policies, while neoliberalism began with the democratic presidency of Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992) in Brazil and therefore cannot be associated with the dictatorship except for initial privatizations, and in that political opposition was significantly weaker in the 1990s due to previous repression. In fact, it was late in the military regime that a formidable labor movement began and produced Brazil's most successful populist president, Luis Ignácio Lula de Silva, or Lula (2003-2010). In Brazil, neoliberal policies have co-opted segments of the left, while being the

hegemonic ideology of many of the lower classes as well (Boito and Resende 128-9). But as president, Lula ameliorated Brazilian poverty with social programs, even passing the nation's first civil rights law in 2004. Even as workers and the landless mobilize against the economic exclusion they face, this is a "traditional social problem" (Amann and Baer 951), not closely related to the dictatorship as it is in the Southern Cone. One of Pinochet's primary projects, however, was the implementation of neoliberalism with the help of the Chicago Boys, and his regime's influence persisted well into the democratic transition. The transitional governments of the Concertación party continued to dismantle workers' rights and implement more securely market-oriented policies, while preserving the military's amnesty (Bresnahan 6-7) and depoliticizing community participation (Greaves). In Argentina, the *juntas* set in place certain changes that facilitated the opening of the economy under Ménem, and openly repressed those seeking a more egalitarian society (CONADEP).

Truth commissions in the Southern Cone address violence under the military dictatorships, but intellectuals, writers and many other members of society perceive them as falling far short of redress or any legitimate form of justice. During the period under study, as far as I can ascertain, Brazil did not address state violence under the 1964-1985 dictatorship. Argentina's CONADEP avoids making any kind of judgment, favoring instead to leave this to the courts, which Ménem's government blocked from pursuing criminal proceedings by restoring amnesty to perpetrators of state crime (Grandin 49, 54). Only after the works I analyze do criminal trials take place, when Néstor Kirchner allowed the re-opening of these cases. The Informe Rettig presents

the coup as a necessary evil that kept Chile from collapse (49), and military presence in transitional governments disallowed criminal trials largely until after Pinochet's detention in London (see Chapter 3). One of the greatest frustrations with the truth commissions in the Southern Cone is that, "by presenting an interpretation of history as parable rather than as politics, [they] largely denied the conditions that brought [the truth commissions] into being" (Grandin 48).

During the majority of the period under study, very little has been achieved in the justice arena, either forward-looking in economic redistribution, or retrospectively in legal redress. In the Southern Cone for the reasons I have already discussed, cultural production engages questions of past, present and future justice. However, international oversight by the United Nations, the Inter-American system, and nongovernmental organizations during the 1990s may have temporarily pacified needs to address past violence in Brazil (Macaulay 28). Given the dissociation between neoliberalism and the Brazilian dictatorship, as well as the lack of attention to influences of the dictatorship in the transitional period, only at the time of writing has there been a meaningful and successful push for redress under President Dilma Rousseff (2011-present). This will take the form of a truth commission, though it will have no legal power ("Human Rights in Brazil: It Isn't Even Past" 40-1). The reach and perceived need for redress of state violations of human rights influence the themes and social commentaries in cultural production, which affects how writers and filmmakers imagine and reconstruct society in their work.

In particular, it affects the similarities and differences I find between the corpus of work from each country, and helps to explain why Southern Cone cultural production often engages themes of neoliberalism, memory and post-dictatorship, and Brazilian works acknowledge economic problems but focus on more existential questions, even as all three countries' production suggest that marginalized space can be a site of resistance and solidarity. Yet even between the Argentine and Chilean works that tend to be explicitly critical of politics and the economy, there are general differences. As works I have analyzed in this dissertation suggest, some Argentine works earlier in the 1990s point to hope for a social awakening and change, while their Chilean counterparts indicate a need for continued struggle even in the face of defeat. The protagonist of *Una sombra ya pronto serás* solves the crime and boards the train, and Bocha's death in *Buenos Aires viceversa* triggers greater awareness of the past and present for the other characters. In *El correo de Bagdad*, however, Huerqueo is poised for battle in the 1960s and the present-day narrator asks the reader to join the struggle for justice; Hugo Fischer of Collyer's *Cien pájaros volando* allies himself at the last possible moment with the guerrilla movement, and because of this ends up wounded and in prison. I believe these differences may be attributed to the strength of calls for post-dictatorship justice and redress in each society, as well as the power still wielded by the military. In Argentina, the military failure in the Malvinas/Falklands War eroded its strength, so even though there were still significant limitations on the transitional governments, society's demands for justice and economic events leading up to the crisis of 2001-2002 created a more open environment for critique. In Chile,



the military continued to directly influence political and judicial processes, and it was not until after Pinochet's detention that society finds the possibility for change.

### *Conclusions*

Returning to the question at the beginning of the previous section, what did the solidarities that the characters form achieve? The films and novels are not presenting a vehicle for an alternative social model. In fact, the relationships between Daniela and Bocha, and Dora and Josué are broken at the end of the films. Hugo manages to maintain a friendship with the indigenous member of the *guerrilla*, but only through the bars of their prison cells. Still, profound changes take place because of these solidarities.

In the Argentine example, all of the storylines connect in Bocha's death, when the characters realize that society as a whole suffers from violence with impunity. This realization leads Mario to comfort Daniela in the public restroom. In effect, the rupture of one relationship prompts people to care for each other, thus mobilizing the acknowledgement of the persistence of state violence against certain sectors of society in particular. *Buenos Aires viceversa* imagines society as coming to this realization through relationships. The explanation of social ills that the film offers to Argentine youth ends with this message. Similarly, the ending of *Central do Brasil* shows Dora on a bus back to Rio de Janeiro, and Josué staring at the picture they took together. Implied is that they will never again meet. Yet the voice-over of Dora reading a letter she has left for Josué reveals that in spite of her anguish that she cannot relive the past, Dora has been changed through their travels together. She is no longer cynical and

self-centered; as Salles's intends, the film's focus is on renewal instead of on violence. A popular film, *Central do Brasil* projects what could happen if people would allow themselves to be more vulnerable with others. Unlike the other two works, this movie explores the subjectivity of alienation without critiquing its roots; yet as in many Southern Cone and Brazilian novels and films of this period, it portrays solidarity as enabling characters to overcome obstacles in their paths. Finally, in *Cien pájaros volando*, Hugo Fischer tells how he ended up in prison, all the time claiming he was not a part of the *guerrilla* movement. Although a primary theme of the novel is that there are always several versions of history, Hugo appears throughout as a reliable narrator. He mentions that everyone has come to Estefanía to be happy, even if only for a short while (*Cien pájaros volando* 218), and it seems as if he finds fulfillment in joining the doomed revolution. Mobilization with others, even when he knows they are hemmed in on all sides, offers an escape from his isolated city life. The novel reconstructs the months surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall as an inevitable failure of its leftist project, yet insists that it is worthwhile to go down fighting in solidarity with people who envision a more equitable social structure.

The works converge in that solidarity and even temporary alliances bring changes in attitude and action within individual characters. Although the dictatorships and then neoliberalism have fragmented civil society, these authors and filmmakers reconstruct worlds in which people working together and/or trusting one another can break out of repetitive cycles of violence, deprivation and self-centeredness, even if

only temporarily. Though they are a far cry from a new social model, these solidarities may be the building blocks for future social movements.

## Afterword

Literature from the Southern Cone and Brazil during the 1990s reworks the consequences of neoliberalism and free market policy in the post-dictatorship as spaces that increasingly exclude already marginalized populations. Yet many works analyzed in this dissertation also represent an aesthetics of solidarity in which relationships between characters allow some resistance to international forces beyond their control. In the introduction, I laid the foundations for a conception of solidarity that builds on the work of Jodi Dean and Timothy Keller, among other scholars. The process of identification with the socially marginalized, regardless of one's position in the hierarchy, must be a conscious decision, as the comparison between *El correo de Bagdad* and *O Selvagem da Ópera* suggests. The recognition of humanity in those whom society "others" becomes the basis for a more equitable redistribution of resources, which at present is generally rejected by society as well as economic policy.

Repeatedly in these works, a character comes face-to-face with another and must make the choice to see the other in the totality of his or her person, including similarities and needs: the transformation in Dora and Josué's relationship in *Central do Brasil*, or the growing understanding between Soriano's narrator and the circus master Coluccini, correspond at an individual level to Huerqueo's appeal to the reader(s) raised political consciousness. The possibility for rejection also exists, which happens when the mall security guard shoots the street child and tortures the blind woman in *Buenos Aires viceversa*, and Gomes straightens his hair to avoid identification with the African-descent Brazilian population in Fonseca's novel.

However, the possible outcomes of self-identification with another consistently lead to at worst the temporary alleviation of social ills, and at best, a greater scale of resistance to social oppression.

There are certain limitations to theories of solidarity, including the aesthetics of solidarity that I identify here. As I have mentioned previously, an aesthetics of solidarity runs the risk of suggesting that acting in solidarity makes reparations for the past. Mario's embracing a screaming Daniela in *Buenos Aires viceversa* does not set right his silence as his uncle raped the blind woman, nor does Mario's aiding Estela's escape from Don Andrés's house in *Coronación* make up for abandoning her to Andrés's sexual advances. Solidarity cannot rectify past abuses; however, it may be used to alleviate or remedy the consequences of these abuses in the present or for the future. In addition, occasionally solidarity seems to have little effect on the outcome of events, such as the narrator's death in *Hotel Atlántico* and Fischer's imprisonment in *Cien pájaros volando*. Forces beyond the characters' control appear to shape their destiny in these very different novels. Still, the resistance through solidarity of Noll's narrator preserved him from dying in the hospital at the hands of a corrupt surgeon, and Collyer's novel employs Fischer's solidarity with the *guerrilla* to challenge the concept of truth and memory in contemporary Chile. However, perhaps the greatest objection to solidarity as a tool for social resistance is whether those who control the majority of the wealth and resources will respond to such an appeal. What could possibly inspire the privileged to act to the detriment of the source of their power, status, and overall level of comfort? Is there anything apart from force that could

accomplish this redistribution, even if the use of force were truly an option given that military might is in the hands of those with economic interests to defend?

Therefore, as I conclude this discussion, I believe it is important to revisit the concept of solidarity, its literary and filmic reconstructions beginning in late 1980s Southern Cone and Brazil, and certain caveats to consider in further research in this area. This Afterword serves not only as a conclusion to the previous discussion on space and marginalization in cultural productions of Argentina, Brazil and Chile, but also opens avenues for further comments and study in the area of solidarity, resistance and social justice. The greatest question is whether the solidarity that I describe can actually be a catalyst for social justice. I argue that it can because of the potential that lies in the transformation of one's worldview, which occurs through communication and experience.

Worldwide social movements over the past few years, discussed in the introduction, are linked by the intricate relationship between a globalized economy and an understanding of citizenship rights. This raised political consciousness is not a new phenomenon: there will always be people who challenge the *status quo*. What sets these movements apart is that, similarly to leftist and labor militancy in Latin America during the mid-twentieth century, the diffusion of information and counter-hegemonic ideologies has led to greater solidarity between the actors than the relatively quieter time I analyze in the late 1980s and early 1990s; in fact, though it receives less attention, I posit that solidarity itself is an indispensable element of the ideologies of these movements and the promotion of social justice on the whole.

However, even though fewer participants carried out fewer social movements in the early post-dictatorship period, writers and filmmakers have far from abandoned the representation of solidarity as the foundation of social justice movements. For this reason, the focus of this research has been on the reconstruction of relationships during a period of readjustment between military oppression and economic repression of citizenship rights.

The essential outcome of solidarity and the change in perspective that may occur through discussion is action: the redistribution of resources through the diffusion of and action upon an ideology of equality. In subsequent research projects, I intend to continue to investigate the most beneficial and expedient practices of *concientización*, to borrow a term from Paulo Freire, and relationship building.

The dissemination of ideas challenges widely held notions at all levels of society, and while social movements often have one or more figure-heads, the works I have analyzed in this dissertation belie their necessity. Instead, at most the literature and films have portrayed speakers or messengers that influence people and encourage resistance, while more recent documentaries make visible more developed forms of solidarity and resistance through the person-to-person spread of ideas. The Brazilian documentary *Saudade do Futuro*, for example, illustrates the power of the spoken word and the social critique pronounced by some of the most marginalized people in Brazil's southeast: illiterate migrants from the northeast and *sertão*. The players in this verbal sparring draw crowds in public plazas and streets as they critique everything from neoliberal economic policy to what their opponent is wearing. The witty

exchange entertains while simultaneously informing those who watch from the sidelines, sometime challenging and sometimes upholding established social and gender norms. In a different vein, Naomi Klein's and Avi Lewis's documentary *The Take* explores worker appropriations of factories in Argentina, where people have transformed social critique and *concientización* into collective action. In Argentina, if an abandoned factory can be shown to be profitable under new management, the owners may be legally dispossessed of their holdings. The documentary follows the take-over of closed factories and the ensuing legal proceedings that decide whether they may continue to collectively operate the facility. *Concientización* is one of the primary instigators of these take-overs, because as workers and their families begin to understand the big picture of how their factory is a piece of the national and international economy, as well as legal methods of intervention they may employ, they are more willing to engage in civil disobedience.

To promote a raised political consciousness, meaningful communication is essential: it is one of the most important aspects of solidarity. The Zapatista movement in Mexico has an organizational structure that encourages communication and *concientización*. In the documentary *Zapatista*, spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos and other leaders elected by communities discuss how they initially attempted to take their concerns to the Mexican government, but discovered instead that they were in confrontation with international corporations and a globalized neoliberal economic system. After one brief armed uprising, the Zapatistas have turned to raising the political and economic consciousness of indigenous communities in Mexico's



southeastern states (Stahler-Sholk 53-4; *Zapatista*). Communication at the base level in these communities has not only led to the formation of alternative autonomous local governments. The movement also has sought to disseminate information about its struggle internationally, and to integrate its resistance into the global struggle against neoliberalism. The movement addresses concrete issues within indigenous Mexican communities, but Zapatista discourse aims higher: to promote similar resistance around the globe, making use of grassroots technologies such as documentaries, the internet, and social networking sites. As the Zapatistas have found, technology has influenced speed and reach in the diffusion of ideas. Rubem Fonseca's novel *O Selvagem da Ópera* proposes a film to extend the scope of the audience for the novel's critique, and José Miguel Varas's *El correo de Bagdad* seeks to elicit a response from the newly *concientizado* reader. The imprisoned narrator of Jaime Collyer's *Cien pájaros volando* suggests that solidarity and struggle is worth the effort even in the face of almost-certain defeat, while Walter Salles's film *Central do Brasil* emphasizes an aesthetics of solidarity over violence.

As recently as March 2012, the KONY 2012 movement, associated with the organization Invisible Children that opposes the use of child soldiers in Uganda and surrounding African countries, has circulated an internet video that has gone viral. This movement provides a counter-example to those above, since the supposed solidarity it has built through social networking sites is only a shell; there is little, if any, communicative solidarity with the community the organization proposes to assist. Its thirty minute video denounces the United States and other governments for

ignoring human rights atrocities because they do not affect national security or economic interests, and calls for viewers to act in solidarity by circulating the video, writing and phoning politicians, and hanging posters on April 20, 2012. However, the video seeks to raise awareness in order to pressure the United States and other governments into military intervention in the region. Thus, in the case of success, this solidarity will only be a fleeting youth movement in benefit of neo-imperial interests. In spite of the extensive reach of these appeals, this example reveals a limitation of the sole use of a medium such as internet, film, or literature instead of face-to-face contact with a long-term plan to build solidarity as I have defined it in this dissertation between various sectors of a global society. Nonetheless, the movement provides an interesting case study of the use of technology to foment solidarity through impersonal communication.

Thus, while neoliberal globalization has greatly changed the relationships between citizen and nation, local social movements with international movements, and the situation of those whom society marginalizes, people have creatively re-worked or developed resistance movements in response. Literature and film of the Southern Cone and Brazil during the post-dictatorship suggest that in spite of political and economic policies that fragment, solidarity continues to form the foundation for this resistance.

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