Title
Arrested History: War and the Social Pact in Contemporary Latin American Culture

Author
Lopez Malagamba, Flor Ivett

Publication Date
2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Arrested History: War and the Social Pact in Contemporary Latin American Culture

By

Flor Ivett Lopez Malagamba

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Hispanic Languages and Literatures

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Natalia Brizuela, Chair
Professor Estelle Tarica
Professor Ivonne del Valle
Professor Linda Williams

Summer 2017

Abstract

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by

Flor Ivett Lopez Malagamba

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This dissertation examines visual and literary representations of war in Latin American culture. It analyzes aesthetic practices that bring war into visibility by emphasizing an absence of violence. More than illustrating the actual conflict, I argue that Paz Encina's film *Hamaca paraguaya*, Juan Travnik's photographic exhibition and essay *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra*, Evelio Rosero's novel *Los ejércitos*, William Vega's film *La sirga*, and Juan Manuel Echavarría's documentary *Requiem NN* underscore what remains after. In these cultural objects, a disjointed, non-linear, or interrupted time makes visible the echoes of war as a presence that haunts the quotidian experience. Emphasizing the invisibility of war and its aftermath, literature, film, and photography allows an exploration of the experience of the subject who suffers the war. Insisting on the impact of war in the day-to-day uneventful experience, I propose that these works expose the act of war's temporal interruption; they direct our view to the interruption of life, manifested as death and suffering, and History manifested in the arrest in linear time.

Chapter 1 introduces the critical framework through which I bring these works together. This dissertation contributes first and foremost to the study of war and cultural production within the Latin American context. The chapter addresses the challenges of representation when confronted with the subject of war. Regarding this subject, representability is no longer confined to telling the who, when, and why of war. Rather, these visual and literary representations show the exclusion and marginalization of specific subjects from the social and political contract that war, as an instrument of politics, establishes and guarantees. Analyzing these contemporary returns to war is less about the history of the conflict and more about the urgency of indirect representation, as non-spectacularizing aesthetics, to expose the senselessness inherent in armed conflict.

Chapter 2 focuses on Paz Encina's *Hamaca paraguaya* (2006) a film dealing with the Chaco War (1932-1935) between Paraguay and Bolivia. Composed mainly of long-duration shots, filmed in real time from a motionless camera, and asynchronous sound,

Encina's experimental film points to a historical layering that challenges the teleology associated with monumentalized depictions of war. Trapped in a time of waiting, the protagonists inhabit a war that remains out of the frame. An asynchronous aural and visual montage creates an ambiguity critical for the film's social and political commentary, where the story of two parents becomes a representation of a national History that repeats itself over and over.

Chapter 3 analyzes Juan Travnik's *Malvinas: paisajes y retratos de guerra* (2008), a photographical essay featuring ex-combatants of the Malvinas War (April 2-June 14, 1982) and the landscapes of the Malvinas Islands. Travnik's photographs contain no direct references to the conflict. The portraits focus on ex-combatants as civilians in their postwar lives. The chapter explores the contradictions of *la causa justa*, the narrative justifying the war and argues that Travnik's austere photographs undo the invisibility that ex-combatants experienced in the postwar era. The photographs extract them from the infantilized stereotype to which they were confined. The landscapes complement this critique. Rather than the history of the nation—Malvinas as an Argentine territory—, Travnik's islands convey the ruins of a truncated national project.

Chapter 4 looks at film and literary representations of *el conflicto armado interno* in Colombia. The conflict started as a struggle between liberal and conservative factions and, over the last decades, evolved into a war where not only political ideologies were contested, but also at stake was the control of a lucrative illegal drug economy. Juan Manuel Echavarría's *Requiem NN* (2013), William Vega's *La sirga* (2012), and Evelio Rosero's *Los ejércitos* (2006) represent the war as a struggle between official and unofficial armies. All three feature protagonists directly affected by a war that permeates the quotidian experience. The chapter complicates the idea of representability in the context of Colombia. Echavarría, Vega, and Rosero, I argue, opt for an aesthetics that brings into crisis notions of visibility, ultimately underscoring the perpetuity of war in everyday life.

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Acknowledgments

Completing this dissertation has been possible thanks to many individuals I have encountered over the years. It owes a great deal to Professor Natalia Brizuela, whose academic guidance was essential during the writing process. Her mentorship, generosity, and friendship throughout my doctoral studies were an important source of encouragement and inspiration. I would like to express profound thanks to Professors Ivonne del Valle and Estelle Tarica, whose dedication and professionalism I truly admire. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Linda Williams, for her attentive reading and insightful comments, which strengthened my project. Taking her film theory seminar was an important step in my doctoral studies.

As a graduate student, I was fortunate to make intellectually brilliant friends, who are, above all, beautiful human beings. I could not thank them enough for their generosity and the memorable moments we shared. Manuel, Camilo, Ricardo, Krista, Rob, Juanse, Jax, Iulia, Ashley, thank you.

I could never reciprocate the love and encouragement I constantly receive from friends, who inspire me to be better. Lina, Arturo, Verónica, Laura, Clau, Sareth, Rosie, Miguel, and María, I am lucky to have you. Thank you for the smiles, for the memories.

When I think about Verónica López, I think about her dedication to her work and to the people around her, particularly graduate students. I am forever thankful for her smiles, her hugs, and words of encouragement. Thanks as well to the administrative staff and the professors at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, who have enriched my intellectual and professional development in ways I could not finish listing here.

If I had to trace the origins of this dissertation, I would have to go back to a small Mexican town where, more than twenty years ago, my parents dreamed of providing a better life for their children. Fulfilling that dream did not come easy, but they did it. I am eternally greatful to them, the most honorable, courageous, and hard-working people I know, to my siblings, my role models and biggest source of inspiration, and to my nieces and nephews, whose laughter fills my life with joy.

Introduction

Can War Be Represented?

In his review of the 2006 art exhibition "Henry Moore: War and Utility" at London's Imperial War Museum, art critic Jonathan Jones lauded Moore's ability to convey the horrors of war through an artistic style that resisted voyeuristic consumption. This achievement was not particular to the British artist, but according to Jones, was characteristic of the European avant-garde. Moore's paintings reflected the attitude shared by a generation of artists in the 1930s for whom art could not avoid being political, especially when it came to depicting war. This shared sentiment placed Moore alongside recognized contemporaries such as Pablo Picasso, Marx Ernst, and Joan Miró. Focusing on his drawings of London's underground tunnels turned shelters during WWII, Jones praises Moore's representations of the war without glorifying it, something that, he claims, film and photography of the time could not do. Moving beyond glorifications, modernist art emphasized instead the destruction of war by capturing the experience and suffering of the victims.

Jones, on the one hand, recognizes in Moore the potential of anti-spectacular war representations which in the face of conflict serve as powerful mediums for critique and protest without eliciting voyeuristic pleasure. His review, on the other hand, is a lamentation for what he recognizes as an impossibility for such art to exist in the twenty-first century, a period plagued by armed conflict. "We have been at war for most of this century," he claims. This sentence stands just as true as it did in 2006. The "we" refers to Great Britain and the US, two countries engulfed in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Coincidentally, the US also entered the 20th century having won its first imperial war, the Spanish-American War (1898), and fighting a second one, the Philippine-American War (1899-1902). Yet, Jones asks about the existence of images of 21st-century conflict, only to conclude that in the twenty-first century war remains invisible to art.

His hypothesis is that in the 21st century producing true and effective political art, as exemplified by modernist and avant-garde painting of the 1930s and 40s, is not possible because of the contemporary pervasiveness of the photographic image. The fact that the photographic image and data exist and circulate primarily in digital formats makes the political implications of war even more critical and dangerous. War not only takes place on the ground. War is fought over resources and it is also about information, its control and (mis)handling. The omnipresence of photography reflects the predominance of a "cult of the visual," an argument Jones supports by pointing to the appearance in 2004 of the Abu Ghraib prison photographs taken by US guards and their subsequent reception. While they have become iconic images for anti-war positions, for Jones, the problem arises with their uncontrollable dissemination facilitated by digital circulation; these images have been turned, and the war as a result, into commodities of spectacle, even pornographic voyeurism:

> This is why art has stepped aside. What more to show? How can you make war art now without being sucked into the pornographic madness of [the Abu Ghraib] images? You can't reject war by accurately depicting war. Art can marshal itself to defy the warmongers only if it finds a vocabulary that quotes, yet, remakes, and outdoes, photography. (Jones n.p.)

From this point of view, the contemporary artwork fails to "undo" photography's spectacularizing and voyeuristic effect. Confined to painting, in Jones's view, the "artwork" excludes other forms of visual representations such as photography and film. As far as these are concerned, photographic and cinematic renditions of war, his review claims, contribute to the unwanted "voyeuristic immediacy" (Jones n.p.).

While this limited apprehension of the artwork certainly raises objections, Jones's reflections on the representation of armed conflict inspires thought-provoking questions that are in dialogue with the themes and problems addressed in this project: why represent war? Once it is decided that war is indeed representable, how does one represent it? What is the intention of the aesthetics once it assumes such task? In this dissertation, I take this debate and these questions to Latin America.

Modern history has exposed an intrinsic relationship between warfare and technology, particularly with technologies of vision. This association is evident when considering the history of Latin America as well. Already in 1864, photographers had been deployed to the battlefields of the Triple Alliance War fought between Paraguay against an alliance created by Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. The Triple Alliance War (1864-1870), the most consequential conflict between nation-states in the history of South America, was the first armed conflict captured by photographic cameras (Díaz-Duhalde 58). Mechanically reproduced images, such as cinema and photography, were also decisive for the circulation and perception of consequent wars. The Spanish-American War, a conflict that positioned the US as the new imperial power in the region thereby transforming the continental and global geopolitical panorama, was captured by photography and moving images. It was through these visual depictions that the war became familiar and accessible to distant populations. Writing specifically about the Spanish-American War, film scholar Kristen Whissel asserts that the imperial traffic brought about by it "produced new optical experiences" as it was through moving pictures that audiences had "visual access to war" (n.p.). A similar history occurred in Mexico years later when actualities became the medium through which news and developments of the 1910 revolution reached audiences far away from the fields of battle.

Like Jones's critique, this project seeks to expose an urgency on the part of artistic expressions to intervene in debates concerning armed conflict and its representation. Even though he is speaking about specific 21st-century conflicts framed by a global war on terror, not addressed here, his questions about representations of horror and violence capable of "undoing" the "madness" of sensationalizing depictions are preoccupations that inform the analysis proposed in the following chapters. Reversing his hypothesis, however, my question deals not with the absence of images of 21st-century conflict, but rather with the absence of conflict in specific 21st-century Latin America representations of war, more specifically aesthetic objects that emerge from a refraction of war.

Released, exhibited, or published within the last two decades, the representations of war examined in this project refuse to provide a history of the conflict and, most importantly, they are not stories of war, neither visual or narrative accounts of it. In avoiding direct representation, they refuse to approach the event and its violence as spectacle. If war is not and will not be spectacle, then what do these works propose? The refusal of spectacle veers the attention to the interrupting and disrupting force of war on everyday life.

Paz Encina's film, *Hamaca paraguaya* (2006), deals with the Chaco War, a devastating conflict fought between Paraguay and Bolivia during the 1930s. Set during the war, the film tells the story of two parents whose lives are forever changed by it. The Chaco War confronted South America's poorest and the only two land-locked nations. For three years, both countries engaged in a bloody struggle over the Chaco region believed to hold underground oil reserves. At the end of the war, thirty thousand of the estimated one-hundred thousand casualties were Paraguayan. No oil was found. The war is commemorated as a heroic deed that put to test patriotic character. Tactically and technologically, it had consequences beyond its geographical and historical context. Within the history of warfare, it has been recognized as a rehearsal for the warfare technology and methods employed both in the Spanish Civil War and WWII, especially the implementation of aerial warfare.[1] Paraguay did gain land and is considered the winner. Despite this fact, the film points to an signficiant irony. Encina's film is about the victors, yet it is a film about complete loss.

Hamaca paraguaya emphasizes the aftershocks of war illustrated by the despair faced by two parents as they learn about the death of their son at the front. The film captures their inability to move forward and the ways in which their loss—the war, really—forces them to live in a perpetual state of waiting. For these parents, the fact that the war may or may not be over is irrelevant, because it already has taken its toll on them; their son will not return. As for the depiction of the conflict, it is not directly represented because, as I argue, that is not the film's intention. Rejecting any spectacularization, Encina focuses on the suffering the war inflicts on those living beyond the front and the sense of desolation it thrusts them into.

Like Encina's film, the literary and visual works examined in this dissertation represent wars that significantly impacted their respective countries' histories. The second chapter analyzes the 2008 photographic exhibition and essay *Malvinas: paisajes y retratos de guerra,* by the Argentinian photographer Juan Travnik. It features ex-combatants of the 1982 Malvinas War, also known as Falklands War, in their postwar life. The essay also includes landscapes of the Malvinas Islands showing different locations of battles and other war-related events. The Malvinas War took Argentinian and British populations by surprise after the military Junta in power in Argentina at the time decided to take back the islands, which had been, and continue to be, under British rule since 1833. On April 2, 1982 Argentinians woke up to the news of the troops disembarking on Malvinas. Officially deemed by the Junta in power at the time as the "recuperation" of an unlawfully British occupied territory, the war, the only external conflict fought by Argentina in the twentieth century, brought together different sections

[1] Scholars Esther Breithoff and Matthew Hughes examine this relationship in their respective essays "Fortín Boquerón: A Conflict Landscape Past and Present" and "Logistics and the Chaco War: Bolivia versus Paraguay, 1932-1935."

of the population, including members of the Junta's political opposition. The war ended when the Argentine Armed Forces surrendered to their British counterpart on June 14, seventy-two days later. Although titled portraits and landscapes "of war," Travnik's photographs contain no direct references to it. Rather than a story of the war, the images depict individuals away from the battlefield.

The third and last chapter looks at contemporary literary and film representations of the more recent Colombian armed conflict. The fifty-year-old Colombian war started in the mid-twentieth century as a struggle between liberal and conservative factions, the country's oldest political ideologies. The assassination of the liberal leader in 1948 unleashed a bloody confrontation between both groups, until a pact was signed allowing them to share power. In the 60s and 70s, their antagonism accelerated with the appearance of left-wing guerrilla groups, and in the 80s and 90s, when drug cartels entered the economic and political scene and used violence to exert and increase their power and influence. During the 90s right-wing paramilitary groups gained prominence as they became a powerful force working in collaboration with the state, to combat guerrilla groups. Over decades, the war in Colombia transformed itself into a struggle where, in addition to political objectives, the control of a much lucrative drug economy was at stake. The bloody battle between official and unofficial armies has devastated the country for decades. Juan Manuel Echavarría's documentary *Requiem NN* (2013), Evelio Rosero's novel *Los ejércitos* (2006), and William Vega's fiction film *La sirga* (2012) feature protagonists directly affected by the violence. Rejecting a hypervisibility of violence, these three works direct our view to the quotidian experience in rural Colombia. They depict the horrors of an invisible war fought by multiple armies, a war that forces citizens to inhabit the world in a state of complete vulnerability.

I argue that these cultural works propose an aesthetics of invisibility to represent war and its violence. The analysis focuses on the formal techniques that authors and directors employ to depict armed conflict. I propose that they bring the war into visibility through experimental strategies that emphasize the absence of the actual violence. The experimentation calls attention to questions of representation, visibility, consumption, use, and value of war depictions. As exposed in the following chapters, these works offer new ways of framing violence—ways that distance themselves from more conventional representational practices. Instead of illustrating the conflict, they underscore that which remains after. Thus, a second characteristic that brings this corpus together is an interest in time and its representation. In these works, a disjointed, non-linear, or interrupted time makes visible the echoes of war as the presence that haunts the quotidian experience. In this invisibility lie the stakes of the aesthetics. Focusing on the invisibility of war and its aftermath, the literature, film, and photography addressed in this project are interested in the subject who suffers the war. Insisting on the aftermath of war in the day-to-day uneventful experience, these works expose war as an act of temporal interruption. In being about the everyday, they emphasize an interruption of life, manifested as death and suffering, and History manifested in an arrest of linear time. The chronology of History and the linear time of progress is stalled and emptied out under the name of that which is supposed to guarantee progress.

Consequently, representability is no longer confined to telling the who, when, and why of war. Instead of an intention to show the actual war, these works reveal the exclusion and marginalization of specific subjects from the social and political contract

that war, as an instrument of politics, establishes and guarantees. In the specific instances of war studied, war is understood and justified as the event that secures, or seeks to secure, the social contract between the state and its citizens, so that the former procures the welfare of the latter. I contend, however, that works analyzed reveal its exclusionary nature. Revealing the counter face of war, they no longer point to the constitution of a social contract, but to social and political precariousness as the conditions that define the experience of the subject who lives through it. So, on the one hand, there is an effect on a social level. Living in a perpetual state of war, the subject who experiences war directly or indirectly lives in a state of invisibility, fear, and vulnerability, constantly confronted with suffering, and even death. There is an urgent commentary to be made about the psychic and emotional precariousness produced by war. On the other hand, the political involves the ways in which war transforms—disrupts—the social contract of governance and living in common. As cultural production makes clear, individuals and groups are either marginalized from the social body and/or must reconfigure the conditions of living in common. As these cultural objects illustrate, war no longer sustains a social contract of governance. War doesn't procure the welfare of citizens, quite the contrary, it turns the experience of living in common into a difficult and often an impossible task.

Turning now to the impulse behind the presence of war in contemporary cultural production, this dissertation is preoccupied primarily with the recurrence and insistence in literature, film, and art to reflect on war. An analysis of these returns to war prompts critical questions: is it the return of trauma, defined by scholar Cathy Caruth as the "inherent latency" of the traumatic experience?[2] If the presence of war in contemporary cultural production concerns the unhealable nature of trauma, is culture enacting a process of working through? Or is it that the aesthetic is trying to take over the work of History or even journalism by providing new and alternative interpretations of armed conflict? Or is it that we live in an era just overwhelmingly needy of regarding the pain of others, as Susan Sontag would have said?[3] The decision not to represent the actual conflict assumes a role in a healing working-through process. This is true particularly in projects which feature the real-life individuals who fought the war or have been directly affected by it. Travnik's photographs and Echavarría's documentary, for example,

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[2] For Caruth, a traumatic event can only be "inhabited" in latency, and thus, its impact lies in the belatedness of the act of experiencing it: "The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience: since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (7-8).

[3] "[I]t seems a good in itself to acknowledge, to have enlarged, one's sense of how much suffering caused by human wickedness there is in the world we share with others. Someone who is perennially surprised that depravity exists, who continues *to* feel disillusioned (even incredulous) when confronted with evidence of what humans are capable of inflicting in the way of gruesome, hands-on cruelties upon other humans, has not reached a moral or psychological adulthood.

No one after a certain age has the right to this kind of innocence, of superficiality, to this degree of ignorance, or amnesia.

There now exists a vast repository of images that make it harder to maintain this kind of moral defectiveness. Let the atrocious images haunt us. Even if they are only tokens, and cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer, they still perform a vital function. The images say: This is what human beings are capable of doing…" (114-115).

become instrumental venues for self-expression. They function as spaces where the memories of ex-combatants and the citizens of Colombia, respectively, can be articulated. Directing the view away from the journalistic and historical record, these works put forward accounts of war that reject totalizing visions and narratives that smooth out the complexities of each conflict. Turning to the everyday, they offer views into the effects of war on those who are left behind, on those who survive, on the lives that continue despite the barbarity. All these considerations inform my analysis. I examine the effects of war on personal and social bonds—on life as it remains after war has passed and ultimately, on the ways in which this world, turned unhinged by war, continues.

As I explain in each chapter, each of the wars studied has produced an extensive cannon of literary, visual, and artistic representations. In the case of the Malvinas War, for example, there is a vast body of literature exploring the history and nature of the conflict. Within the cultural realm, (re)presenting the war became the task of literature mainly. That is in the case of Malvinas, it was within the literary field where critical reflections first emerged. By the mid-1990s, literary scholars had identified an ample cannon of Malvinas War literature. This presence was not as recurrent in visual culture. While it became a commercial success, *Los chicos de la guerra*, the most well-known film about the war, was condemned for its uncritical approach. In most instances, however, and contrary to the works analyzed in this dissertation, cultural approaches to war are explicit in their depiction.

I am interested in an aesthetics engaged in indirect representation as a reaction to a contemporary prevalent hypervisibility of violence in cultural production. We live in the age where *novelas de sicarios*, *literatura del narco, narconovelas*, and *narcoseries* have become a popular product for entertainment consumption. This culture of war/violence consumption exceeds the Latin American context. It has become, rather, a characteristic of the contemporary era facilitated by the access to vision and recording technologies and their easy distribution and circulation. War consumption on a global scale has become routine. The graphic effects of war reach spectators not only through films in the cinema (and now on multiple digital streaming venues) but also via viral images on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Not only do we have access to images captured from the perspectives of police, soldiers, and killers, but also the omnipresence of cellphone cameras has exponentially increased the points of view from which war is seen. Analyzing what I call "contemporary returns to war" is less about the history of the conflict and more about the urgency of representation to expose the senselessness and contradiction inherent in armed conflict. Therefore, this dissertation puts forward two conclusions.

First, I argue that totalizing accounts of war, understood here as narratives that focus on the who, how, and why of war do not get closer to understand its complexities and history. On the contrary, many times, spectacularized depictions are simplified into stories of villains and victims, which offer comforting resolutions. It seems that spectacular depictions of war operate through conventional ways of structuring a narrative in which war makes sense for the purpose of storytelling. Veering the attention to the aftermath and devastation of war, the corpus gathered in this project gestures to the impossibility of making sense of war. "Making sense" in this case does not refer to the economic or political interests at stake in war, which are always clear in the rhetoric and debates that articulate its justification. As a "politics through other means," war is

justified as the unwanted violent strategy to a specific means: The Chaco War was fought over the Chaco region, the Malvinas War over the sovereignty of the islands, and the war in Colombia over conservative versus liberal ideologies, at least its origins.

As a political instrument, war does make sense. However, the objects I look at are interested in a senselessness related to the pain and loss of human life brought about by armed conflict. How, for example, does one comprehend the fact that the war in Colombia has produced almost five million forced internal displacements?[4] How does one make sense of the fact that the number of suicides committed by Malvinas ex-combatants is larger than the number of casualties during the war? (Vitullo) These works confront us with an impossibility to do so. More than anything, they suggest that nothing ever justifies human loss and/or suffering.

Second, I propose that the following visual and literary depictions function as vehicles to understand the contradiction of the discourses under which these specific wars were, and continue to be, justified. Posing the pressing question of what it means to suffer war, they underscore invisibility and social and political precariousness as the conditions that determine this experience. Neither their appearance in the 21st century nor ther rejection of direct representation is coincidental. As much as they are about proposing new ways to see armed conflict, and as much as they are comments on specific wars, I believe that the literature, film, and photography analyzed are also meditations on a contemporary experience.

Regarding the appearance of cultural production interested in addressing the subject of war, it is important to point out the function of avant-garde gestures. This function is implicated in a type of uselessness towards the task of "making sense." If within aesthetic historiography, the avant-garde has assumed an art-for-art's sake purpose, and in doing so it has renounced any social and political commitment, we can propose a similar operation taking place in the works studied here. This is especially relevant in the case of visual production. Cultural production has been overtaken by a demand to "make sense" of war. In order to explain conflict, culture takes on a journalistic, sociological, and spectacular role. As such, it becomes useful to the rhetoric and debates concerning the political aims and justifications of war. It makes sense of it. The works I examine signal not an "art for art's sake" function, since they are not devoid of a social responsibility, but a renunciation to explain or give a history of war. In this sense, they no longer seek to make sense or illustrate the who, when, and why of such events.

Upon opening the newspaper, turning on the TV, browsing the internet and social media one gets inundated with never-ending stories about political, social, and economic unrest taking place everywhere. Particularly in Latin America, whether dealing with illegitimate state or drug-related violence in Mexico and Colombia, violence against women in Mexico and Argentina, political mobilization in Venezuela and Paraguay, or the continued impoverishment of populations across the continent, to name a few, there is a sense that populations across the region, and the world, are being subjected to processes

[4] Information published by *Semana* in June 2015: http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/colombia-es-el-segundo-pais-con-mas-desplazados/426628-3

resulting in the *precarization* of life.[5] I believe that as returns to war, the corpus I study also elucidate questions about a contemporary experience marked by social, political, and economic precariousness. The works examined prompt questions and explorations of what it means to be a citizen in Latin America today. Ultimately, they underscore the invisibility, disposability, and precarity of individuals living through perpetual states of violence.

War and/in Latin American Cultural Production

The history of Latin America has been determined by a history of violence and war. War is, after all, the event that sets in motion the beginning of the region's modern history, foundational in the establishment of the social and political order in the independent republics. As theorized by Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, war is the constitutive process within the organization of the young republics in the early nineteenth century.[6] The specificity of war, however, poses an obstacle to theorizations of the phenomenon, particularly in Latin America where countless internal and external wars have shaped its history and continue to do so.[7] Within the Latin American context, the study of war has been, for the most part, the task of historiography and the social sciences. Regardless of the academic discipline, however, critical approaches usually center on a specific war to give account of its history, its political, economic, and social implications, or its representation in cultural production.

Within the last decade, literary and visual culture scholarship has witnessed an increased interest in the exploration of war, not only to scrutinize its presence within cultural production, but also to elucidate its meaning for national or regional histories.[8]

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[5] In recent theory, Judith Butler's explorations of concepts such as "precarity" and "precarious life" have become influencial to understand their recurrence and suitability to define contemporary experience. Butler defines precarity as a shared voulnerability that is possible only when human beings recognize in each other an injurability of life. The recognition that all human beings are capable of being injured enacts the possibility for an ethical respose toward those upon whom injustice or suffering is inflicted. Butler suggests that in a post 9/11 era an ethical relationship is more difficult, and even impossible, precisely because there is no longer a recognition of a shared injurability. Political division and antagonism has created a social organization in which specific groups of citizens are perceived as "the other" whose injurability is no longer recognized. Turned precarious, their lives become ungrievable. See her texts *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* and *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*

[6] In a somewhat hyperbolic and debatable statement, Villalobos-Ruminott affirms, "[la guerra] es aquello que constituye el eje histórico transcendental en el que se inscribe la serie de procesos históricos del continente. Es decir, lejos de ser una situación de límite y excepcional, ésta constituye la *forma de ser* de la historia latinoamericana" (Guerra 2-3).

[7] The region has experienced infinite manifestations ranging from the indigenous wars and uprisings during the colonial period, the wars of independence in the early nineteenth century, the wars and campaigns of pacification of peripheral territories in the late nineteenth century, anti-imperial wars (the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, and the Malvinas War, etc.), the revolutions of the twentieth century, territorial disputes between nation-states (the Triple Alliance War, the Chaco War, the War of the Pacific, etc.), the dirty wars and state repression of the late twentieth century, and the current drug wars being waged in Mexico and Colombia.

[8] The following non-exhaustive list includes works, published within the last two decades, that explore the relationship between war (and violence) and cultural production: Felipe Martínez-Pinzón and Javier Uriarte, *Entre el humo y la niebla. Guerra y cultura en América Latina* (2017), Javier Auyero, *Routine Politics and Violence in Argentina: The Gray Zone of State Power* (2007); Martín Kohan, *El país de la*

This project contributes to this corpus as it seeks to understand the ways in which cultural production articulates war and, at the same time, the ways in which war operates within culture. Consequently, this examination is informed by and in dialogue with two critical approaches regarding war discourses in Latin American history and culture. The first one is Villalobos-Ruminott's reflection on war. Although he is not looking at cultural production, in his lecture "Guerra y violencia mítica: el secreto de la soberanía," he defines the role of war in the region as a manifestation of a type of violence that constitutes sovereign authority. Possessing a monopoly of violence, the state employs war whenever the social order is compromised. War arises as a necessary measure for the defense of the social body. The justification of war to guarantee the social welfare legitimizes sovereign power: "el verdadero contrato social se define, entonces, en … los campos de batalla" (Guerra 2). For Villalobos-Ruminott, war is the condition that originates and sets up the social. More than the guarantee of the social pact, as "la materialización y escenificación de la violencia," war becomes its "performative act" (Guerra 2).

The second scholarly study which, like this project, concerns the presence of war in Latin American culture is literary critics Felipe Martínez-Pinzón and Javier Uriarte's recently edited volume *Entre el humo y la niebla: guerra y cultura en América Latina*. Their project, however, excludes the study of cinema. The first of its kind, their collaboration aims for a more comprehensive examination of war discourses in cultural production. The collection compiles a heterogeneous corpus of essays that, from a chronological organization and through the analysis of its representation in literary and visual culture, expose the centrality of war in the political processes and development of the nation-states in Latin America. More specifically, their inquiry delves into the ways in which cultural production "tells" war ("¿cómo *decir* la guerra?"), while being conscious of war's transformative effect on the language(s) that attempt to narrate it ("la guerra *le hace algo* al lenguaje"). Whether dealing with novelistic representations of the caste wars in Yucatán (1847), photographic depictions of the Triple Alliance War (1864-1870), or testimonies of soldiers fighting in the inhospitable Amazon jungle during Colombia-Peru War (also known as the Leticia Incident, 1932-1933), the essays bring to the surface the "spatializing" potentiality of war as a "military and discursive" practice. For the editors, fog and smoke become crucial metaphors for the functioning of the spatializing operation as they illustrate the before and after of war. War is the act through which space is (re)configured and (re)signified. As a spatializing force, war represents starting points—"rearticula relaciones entre Estado, sujeto y territorio"—where subjects,

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guerra (2005); Julieta Vitullo, *Islas imaginadas. La guerra de Malvinas en la literatura y el cine argentinos* (2012); Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, *Soberanías en suspenso. Imaginación y violencia en América Latina* (2013); Sebastián Díaz-Duhalde, *La última guerra. Cultura visual* (2015); Andrea Fanta Castro, *Residuos Culturales de la violencia colombiana, 1990-2010* (2015), Javier Uriarte's forthcoming book, *Travel Writing, War, and the State in Latin America: The Desertmakers*; Jose Luis Ayala, *Mariátegui y la guerra del Chaco* (2014); María Helen Rueda and Gabriela Polit Dueñas's, *Meanings of Violence in Contemporary Latin America* (2011); Gabriela Polit Dueñas's, *Narrating Narcos: Culiacán and Medellín* (2013); Rafael Lemus, "Balas de salva" (2005), Andrea Fanta Castro and Alejandro Herroro-Olaizola's *Territories of Conflict: Traversing Colombia Through Cultural Studies* (2017); Rielle Navitski's *Public Spectacles of Violence: Sensational Cinema and Journalism in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico and Brazil* (2017).

identities, territories, and histories are made visible or invisible both in the battlefield and in the field of representation (Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte 8).

Two aspects proposed by Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte resonate in my approach to the question of war and its representation. The first one relates to war as a military and discursive practice associated with the state and its institutions. The literary and visual texts included in this dissertation address wars that occurred in different historical periods. Therefore, paying attention to each conflict's historical specificity reveals important transformations in the history and development of armed conflict. The nature of war in the 1930s is not the same as it is in the 21st century. War does not have the same reach because warfare technology has impacted the nature of combat. In addition, technological advances have also changed social perceptions of war due precisely to the changing nature of the (digital) images through which war circulates and the accelerated transformation of the technologies that reproduce these images and the circuits for their dissemination, the internet for example. Lastly, as a hegemonic instrument of the state, war no longer has the legitimizing authority it did in the past. In other words, war is no longer solely the means of the state. As the armed conflict in Colombia makes manifest, contemporary war resembles more a civil war than the more classical conception of war between different nations. Thus, the state no loger holds a monopoly of violence.

While the historical and political specificity of each conflict is acknowledged, more than the "accuracy" of its representation, my aim is to look at the presence of war in contemporary cultural production to study its implications in the social sphere. A second and equally important interest is to reflect on how war takes effect within the cultural field. If war does *something* to language, as Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte claim in *Entre el humo y la niebla*, I also explore what happens to literature, film, and photography when addressing war. In this regard, I propose a reversed logic in the way in which war is codified. If discourses and justifications of war belong to a semantic and rhetorical logic that establishes a familiarity towards it—war as the necessary instrument of the state and necessary for its functioning—, the works examined in the next chapters defamiliarize such logic. If war emerges as a last recourse employed to protect the social body, cultural production "[desnaturaliza los discursos] con el fin de mostrar su factura política, literaria, discursiva, visual" (Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte 12). As illustrated by this dissertation, war "does something" to each medium, and the result is the denunciation of war as a machine that creates and intensifies conditions of precariousness and disposability. Emptied of direct references to the wars they address, photography, literature, and film, as explored in this dissertation, turn to estrangement and to a defamiliarizing temporality as modes of critique.

The Transformation of Armed Conflict

The case of Paraguay best illustrates the perceptions of warfare in its more traditional definitions. Karl von Clausewitz, who remains the most influential war theorist, articulated what has become the most quoted description: war as "the continuation of policy through other means." For Clausewitz, war involves a confrontation between modern states that seek two aims: "to render [an enemy] politically helpless or military impotent" or "*merely to occupy some of his frontier-*

districts [to] annex them or use them for bargaining" (n.p.). Military force becomes the means to rendering the enemy powerless. Interpreting Clausewitz, cultural critic Nick Mansfield proposes that the values and principles held by civil society continue in war. War is not the opposite of civil society, but its continuation: "it becomes the expression of a certain political order" (29). Mansfield identifies the social order with the political: "war is an animation of society, in part and then as a whole, as policy and then as passion, as strategy, then as energy, ultimately as both working together to make modern war possible" (30). As such, modern war is "an affair of the whole Nation" (Clausewitz n.p.). Mansfield's argues that Clausewitz's theory implicates the social because war requires the participation, via animation, of civil society. The Chaco War manifested the animation of a Paraguayan social body that six decades earlier had faced the devastation of another truly destructive war, the Triple Alliance War. The defeat by the alliance, from which the country had not fully recuperated, confronted Paraguay with an unprecedented destruction illustrated by the loss of four-fifths of its population. Faced with another war, now against a more leveled opponent, Paraguayans could not afford another defeat. In the 1930s, in addition to the Chaco region, Paraguayans were fighting for self-determination and survival. The Chaco War truly became a national affair.

Taking place fifty-years after the Chaco War, in 1982, the Malvinas War exposes us to a very different war even though it was also justified as a fight for self-determination by the military Junta. Seen as the ultimate struggle against British imperialism, the recuperation of the Malvinas Islands animated Argentine civil population. As a political means, the war was perceived as the reflection and manifestation of society's values and interests. Very soon, however, the intentions behind this rhetoric were dismantled; the opposition to the conflict pointed to the economic interests masked by political discourses. For many opposing voices, the war was the Junta's strategy to continue the implementation of a neoliberal economic program. On the British side, similar condemnations of the war were also critical of the government headed by Margaret Thatcher (Hobsbawm). If the Chaco War cemented the legitimacy of a Paraguayan state, the Malvinas War revealed a crisis in this operation. The war witnessed the imposition of a new historical temporality, one related to the end of the nation and the crisis of the state. Indeed, war questioned its legitimacy.

Finally, the internal armed conflict in Colombia no longer falls under classical war categorizations. *La guerra colombiana* is not waged by the state against an external enemy. On the contrary, the enemies, as there are more than one, are internal and their aims are not always perceived as political. As war scholar Hew Strachan points out, the fact that contemporary war is less referred to as "war" and more as "armed conflict" is very telling and reflects the complexities of contemporary conflict. The war in Colombia, which is still in the process of being ended officially, was fought over five decades on multiple fronts between multiple armed groups. Writer Carlos Fazio and scholar Joshua Lund suggest that the participation of paramilitarism is what differentiates contemporary war from its predecessors. Paramilitarism has transformed armed conflict into civil war. Another defining factor of contemporary war in the Latin American context is the fact that they are not declared against a physical enemy but against objects (drugs) or concepts (terror). These characteristics have defined the two significant wars taking place in recent decades in Colombia and Mexico, the latter officially declared a "war on drugs"

by President Felipe Calderón in 2006. In the twenty-first century, terms such as "war on terror" and "war on drugs" have acquired currency.

More than ever before, the drug-related violence affecting Latin America expose the economic interests superseding the ideological. Above all, these wars are being fought over illicit economic markets where the control of a profitable circulation of people, drugs, money, and/or guns is at stake. Fighting enemies like "drugs" or "terror" has entailed the annihilation, disappearance, and displacement of civilians and the debilitation of a state that doesn't guarantee social welfare. Clausewitz's description of war as the "realm of uncertainty" perfectly describes the unpredictability of contemporary war and its devastating toll on society. The increased recent scholarly interest in war, then, is not surprising as the examination between war and precariousness seems more pressing than ever before. In its 21st-century manifestation, war reveals itself as an economic machine operating within neoliberal networks that seek, more than anything, economic profit. Superseding the state, as a capitalist venture, war is also a precariousness-producing machine turning populations disposable and foreclosing possibilities to live life in dignity.

On the Invisibility of War

Writing about the capacity of war photography to convey atrocities, pain, and suffering, in *Regarding the Pain of Others,* Susan Sontag argued that photographs lacked the ability to provide a narrative about the subject represented. Photographic representations of suffering needed to be accompanied by captions to be interpreted, otherwise their impact on the viewer could be diminished: "narrative can make us understand, photographs do something else: they haunt us" (89). Sontag ends her book with a cautionary sentence regarding the limits of photography. Instead of facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the horrors of war, photographs provided spectators ("we") a superficial sense of comfort fueled by an illusory attitude towards them:

> 'we'—this 'we' is everyone who has never experienced anything like what they went through—don't understand. We don't get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like. We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is; and how normal it becomes. Can't understand, can't imagine. That's what every soldier, and every journalist and aid worker and independent observer who has put in time under fire, and had the luck to elude the death that struck down others nearby, stubbornly feels. And they are right. (125-126)

Sontag's elaborations assume a temporal implication that limits what the photograph can and can't do, and, more specifically, what it can or can't communicate. Photography's haunting effect produces shock and creates a momentary impression, while other mediums, like narrative, achieve a more lasting and in-depth apprehension. Critiques like Sontag's demand from photography to do more than inflict shock. According to gender theorist and philosopher Judith Butler, who interprets Sontag, this is because shock is not sufficient to appeal to a viewer's "moral obligation." Shock cannot "provoke a moral

response" (Butler Photography 824). Blutler's analysis of photography, on the other hand, implicates the authors and the conditions in which the images are produced. These factors are central to the potential of the medium to communicate. Sontag alludes to the Malvinas War (1982) as the conflict that marked a turning point in the autonomy of war journalism and reporting. During the war, British and Argentinian governments restricted press access to the islands. Thus, to the world beyond Malvinas, the war was seen through the images and narratives sanctioned by military commands. It is no coincidence that Argentinian critic Graciela Speranza describes the Malvinas War as a "war without images" (n.p.).

In relation to these reflections, it is necessary to highlight the role that war journalism and the propagation of images via television during the Vietnam War had in inciting anti-war sentiment by confronting the world with the images of its horrors and the terror it inflicted on civil populations. The journalistic images of the Vietnam War familiarized the atrocity of war, and, in doing so, provoked unprecedented anti-war sentiment and demonstrations.[9] The images showing the death, pain, and suffering caused by war became a threat that no state at war could afford. By the 1990s, during the Gulf War, the advance of both visual and warfare technology transformed social perception of war precisely because it allowed the US military to promote a visual narrative of the war that aimed to demonstrate American superiority on the one hand, and conceal the mass murder capacity made possible by new technology on the other.[10] Given this history, the calculated decision on the part of the British and Argentine militaries to restrict the entrance of war photographers and journalists to Malvinas is not surprising. What happens then when images of war are produced under conditions of censorship? What happens when war photography loses its autonomy only to become another military instrument to promote official narratives? The potential that images have in promoting interpretations of conflict, and the possibilities for these to become hegemonic, became an urgent concern for critics of (American) war in the 21st-century, Susan Sontag being perhaps the most influential.

In her compelling response to Sontag, Judith Butler vindicates the political intervention of photography by making a case for its autonomy and capacity to offer profound interpretations of war and suffering. Butler argues that even images produced by embedded reporters, who often work under controlled environments and censorship, are powerful because they also have the capacity to "actively structure the cognitive apprehension of war. And though restricting how any of us may see is not exactly the same as dictating a story line, it is a way of interpreting in advance what will and will not be included in the field of perception" (Photography 823). Contrary to Jones's comments on the Abu Ghraib photographs, Butler recognizes an important political commentary in their composition because, despite their origin, they still possess an autonomy capable of

[9] See Michael Anderegg's *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television*.

[10] The images of the Gulf War in 1991 "were images of the techno war: the sky above the dying, filled with light-traces of missiles and shells— images that illustrated America's absolute military superiority over its enemy. American television viewers weren't allowed to see footage acquired by NBC (which the network then declined to run) of what that superiority could wreak: the fate of thousands of Iraqi conscripts who, having fled Kuwait City at the end of the war, on February 27, were carpet bombed with explosives, napalm, radioactive DU (depleted uranium) rounds, and cluster bombs, as they headed north…" (Sontag 66).

appealing to a sense of moral obligation and an active response.[11] Underscoring the language of photography and photography as a medium of representation with its own mechanisms, Butler counters Sontag's claims. The photograph does not need a caption because it has its own grammar capable of communicating and enabling multiple interpretations: "[T]he photograph, in framing reality, is already interpreting what will count within the frame; this act of delimitation is surely interpretive, as are the effects of angle, focus, and light" (Photography 823). Photography does not passively await to be interpreted or, as Sontag proposes, is not in need of captions to express a narrative of suffering. For Butler, framing is photography's mode of critique: "the frame takes part in the interpretation of the war … it is not just a visual image awaiting its interpretation; it is itself interpreting, actively, even forcibly…[E]ven the most transparent of documentary images is framed, and framed for a purpose, carrying that purpose within its frame and implementing that purpose through the frame" (Photography 823, 824).

While Sontag and Butler are debating the operation of the photographic medium, and particularly, the political and ethical function of war photography, their concerns are useful to contextualize my analysis in two respects. First, the argument of an aesthetics that turns away from spectacularizing apprehensions also demands considerations regarding its political and ethical role. I argue that the works presented in this project are engaged with cultural production assuming a political and ethical role towards representing the experience of war as precariousness and disposability. Second, another critical intervention by these works relates to the emphasis against providing a history or a story of the war. As mentioned, making sense of a war in their case no longer demands a narrative or explanation. This is most relevant in visual works such as *La sirga* and *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra* where photographs and moving images do not contain any caption or narrative to contextualize the war. Like Butler's defense, my analysis underscores the effectiveness of the language of each medium, whether as mechanically reproduced images or in literature, to convey meaning.

To the question, *where are the images of 21st-century conflict?* we must add the complementary, *can 21st-century art (as literature, as photography, as painting, as moving images*) *represent it and for what purpose?* When it comes to representations of genocide and suffering, the ethical limitations of art do not escape scrutiny. Adorno's condemnation of poetry as a barbaric endeavor after Auschwitz asked art to be suspicious of itself, to find new forms of telling.[12] This debate does not elude representations of war. Literary critic Kate McLoughlin claims that writing about war has always entailed self-doubt and anxiety as authors are often confronted with the difficulty, and impossibility even, to accurately depict it. Despite this anxiety, war is the subject that initiates literature. Even Homer, McLoughin writes, expressed hesitation regarding how to best tell the Trojan War: "Hard would it be for me, as though I were a god, to tell the tale of all these things" (qtd in McLoughlin 136). Although perhaps a self-congratulatory hint to his literary abilities, Homer's expression acknowledges the difficult task of depicting

[11] In a similar vein, Ariella Azoulay argues that photography enacts a "civil contract" because it prompts relations of solidarity between photographed subject, photographer, and spectator, ultimately creating possibilities for political and ethical intervention. The contemporary omnipresence of the photographic camera creates infininte possibilities for individuals to establish a "civil contract" through photography. Any individual who possess a camera is capable of taking photograph as a response to an ethical call and as a manifestation of solidarity. For more see Azoulay's *The Civil Contract of Photography.*

[12] Adorno qualified this statement in his 1962 essay "Commitment."

war: Homer becomes god to tell the war. In *Authoring War*, McLoughlin presents a formalistic analysis of war literature and proposes that war, while demanding representation, resists it[13] because it forces those who experience it to inhabit an unfamiliar territory. War presents a challenge for the writer, who must find rhetorical devices to communicate the "extremity" of the war experience. Similarly, literary critics like Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte suggest that war brings any language that attempts to tell it into tension.[14] Telling/Authoring/Representing war then requires an "extreme" language. War takes language to its limits.

While its object of analysis is literature, McLoughlin's *Authoring War* evidences the huge impact of war on culture. War is, in fact, a recurrent subject around which not only literature but entire cultural fields are organized. The cinema is elucidating in this case. A technologically driven enterprise, the cinema, its history and development, has often been studied through a comparative lens with warfare. The extensive bibliography of historiographical and theoretical studies on war and film is illustrative of this relationship.[15] The insistent presence of war as a recurrent subject in cinema gestures as well to McLoughlin's assertion that war "demands" representation perhaps because as critics have noted, "when a war is ended it is as if there have been a million wars" (O'Brian qted in McLouglin 10). Culture becomes a generative space in which those "million wars" can be articulated. In this regard, it only takes a few seconds to conjure a film, a poem, a novel, a photograph, or a painting about war, any war. We associate war with specific works, languages, and mediums. As McLoughlin suggests, an impression exists

> that each war has its own poesis, its 'natural' way (or ways) of being represented. Sometimes, this is a question of genre: in ancient Rome, warfare was such an entrenched part of epic that *bella* ('wars') became a shorthand for the genre, while it now seems evident that the First World War's natural form was the lyric poem, that the Second World War's was the epic novel, that the Vietnam War's was the movie, that the Iraq War's may well turn out to be the blog. (10)

In the Latin American context, as a recurrent literary motif particularly in the 19th century, war deeply influenced intellectual and political figures whose writings expressed

[13] "The reasons that make war's representation imperative are as multitudinous as those which make it impossible: to impose discursive order on the chaos of conflict and so to render it more comprehensible; to keep the record for the self and others (those who were there and can no longer speak for themselves and those who were not there and need to be told); to give some meaning to mass death; to memorialise; to inform civilians of the nature of battle so as to facilitate the reintegration of veterans into peacetime society; to provide cathartic relief; to warn; and even, through the warning, to promote peace" (McLoughlin 7).
[14] "El lenguaje que quiere hablar de la guerra se presenta en tensión; es un lenguaje extremo, llevado a sus propios límites; es en sí mismo una forma de la violencia que lo origina. El lenguaje que se acerca a la guerra necesita casi deshumanizarse para hacerlo" (7).
[15] Some titles include: Kristen Whissel, *Picturing American Modernity: Traffic, Technology, and Silent Cinema*; Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*; Anton Kaes, *Shellshock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*; Robert Eberwein, *The War Film*; J. David Slocum, *Hollywood and War. The Film Reader*; James Chapman, *War and Film (Locations)*.

visions for the geopolitical organization of the region. [16] The socioeconomic and political configuration of the continent was precipitated by internal and external conflicts affecting the territories. The twentieth century, in contrast, was marked by revolutions, Mexico's (1910-1917) and Cuba's (1959) being the most studied. Much has been written about the cultural machineries that these two revolutions set into motion. Except for the dirty wars in South America, the civil wars in Central America in the second half of the century, and the armed conflict in Colombia, war in the twentieth century is a subject that remains to be studied.[17] Examining the ways in which cultural production articulates war and brings its violence into visibility, this project contributes to scholarly discourses on war and the cultural objects it produces.

War's Arresting Gesture

"A tiger's leap into the past" is the image proposed by Benjamin to articulate what he defined as the redemptive character of historical thought. His theses on the philosophy of history insisted on the urgency to reflect on the course of history because not doing it posed the risk of taking for granted the notion of progress as the normative instance of history. Benjamin was preoccupied with historicism, the kind of historiographical thought he blamed for establishing causal connections between past and present events, which ultimately normalized the concept of progress as the normative force of history. Historicism, he claimed, dangerously understood the past as an eternal image and the present as a transitory moment towards a future progress. Liberating thought from historicism was necessary to prevent the normalization of historical narratives giving account of "universal history" (Benjamin Theses 262). Scholar David Ferris interprets Benjamin's thesis as a plea to transform the present into a revolutionary force capable of interrupting the lineal and causal flow of history (Ferris 131).

Benjamin conceives the present moment as a "messianic time" which endows the past with meaning: "[historical materialism] stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead [the historian] grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Consequently, he establishes a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" (Theses 263). Thinking about history implies considering it not as a lineal and homogeneous accumulation of events. Rather, the past can only be captured as a fleeting image that appears in the "presence of the now." The present interrupts the past to reveal a liberating meaning in the sense that it is in this moment when the past acquires new meaning and redeems the present. The redemptive historical thinking proposed by Benjamin involves a temporal operation no longer subjected to a lineal flow. Thinking, he claims, "involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well" (Theses 262).

[16] Simón Bolívar, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Andrés Bello, José Martí, Esteban Echeverría, Juan Bautista Alberdi, to name a few.

[17] The non-exaustive list of Latin American wars in the twenty-first century include: Guerra de los mil días (1899-1902), Guerra del Acre (1899-1903), Guerra de Mena (1912), Guerra de Coto (1921), Guerra colombo-peruana (1932-1933), Guerra del 41 (1941-1942), Guerra civil paraguaya (1947), Guerra civil dominicana (1965), Guerra del Fútbol (1969), and Guerra del Cenepa (1995).

The word "arrest" is indicative of this operation. It is by arresting the temporal flow that new recognitions of the past are made possible.

I argue that a similar function is taking place in the works analyzed in the following chapters. An act of arrest is present on various levels. First, all employ or suggest non-linear temporality to represent and reflect on the aftermath of war. All of them emphasize the quotidian aspect of war; war is now part of the everyday experience. Individuals must live with its violence even after the conflict is officially over. As a result, all these works gesture towards a resistance (as a circularity, as a stillness, or as a time in waiting) as a challenge to a teleological and linear temporal flow. Second, as "returns to war," their historical implications are not inconsequential. Turning to the past, they provoke new (liberating) understandings not only of the actual conflicts, but of history, the nation, and national identity. These artistic expressions are commentaries on national/local histories. As such, through the act of arresting, in them the present moment forms new constellations with the past. Finally, through this arrest, the present moment reveals an urgency to explore the condition of inhabiting the world through war. War no longer guarantees the social-welfare, but rather, as mentioned, it promotes the precariousness in which the world is experienced and inhabited.

Wars and Works Examined

The first chapter focuses on Paz Encina's film *Hamaca paraguaya* (2006). Composed mainly of long-duration shots, filmed in real time from a motionless camera, and asynchronous sound, this "slow" and experimental film points to a historical layering that challenges the linearity and teleology associated with Paraguay's monumentalized history of war. Trapped in an eternal time of waiting, the two protagonists inhabit a never-ending war that remains invisible, out of the frame. Through the employment of asynchronous sound, the film addresses the war without visually representing it. The asynchronous aural and visual montage creates an ambiguity critical for the film's social and political commentary. Parallel to country's history, the story of these parents becomes a representation of one day, a history, that repeats itself over and over. The film, I contend, provides a more critical approach to war and its role within national history by rejecting a triumphalist approach and alluding instead to the specters that continue to haunt the quotidian experience.

The second chapter looks at the contradictions of *la causa justa*, the narrative justifying the 1982 Malvinas War. I examine Juan Travnik's photographic project, *Malvinas: retratos y pasiajes the guerra*, as a critique to the symbolic role that the Malvinas's ex-combatans were confined to in the postwar era. Travnik photographed the men in their postwar lives during a fifteen-year period. When the photographs were exhibited in 2008, they showed men of different ages, most of them dressed as civilians; the portraits did not contain direct allusions to the war. I argue that these "portraits of war" undo the invisibility the ex-combatants experienced after the surrender. Travnik's exhibition, later published as a photographic essay, includes landscapes of the islands. Like the portraits, the landscapes are austere and black and white. These qualities underscore the bleakness and inhospitable nature of the islands. I propose that rather than pointing to the history of the nation, the islands as an Argentine territory, the photographs

direct the view to the ruins of a truncated national project. The discussion also highlights the role of Travnik in filling the visual void that has characterized the war.

The third and final chapter examines Evelio Rosero's novel *Los ejércitos*, William Vega's fiction film *La sirga*, and Juan Manuel Echavarría's documentary *Requiem NN*. Rosero's novel tells the story of a retired teacher enjoying his last years, along with his wife, in the tranquility of a small rural town. His life, and the tranquility of San José, is forever disrupted when multiple unknown armies siege the town and wage a cruel war against each other. Vega's *La sirga* features Alicia, the young protagonist who must escape her town after unknown armies attack it, killing her parents. She takes refuge in La sirga, a hostal owned by a distant uncle. In her new home, however, the war catches up with her again. Finally, in *Requiem NN*, Echavarría documents a ritual taking place in Puerto Berrío, a Colombian town where residents symbolically adopt the NNs, the unidentified bodies of the victims of the war. Rescued from the Magdalena River, the river into which they have been thrown, the NN's are named by Puerto Berrío's residents and put into personalized tombs. Rejecting spectacularizating the conflict, these works center on the ways in which the armed conflict has permeated the quotidian experience. My analysis complicates the idea of representability in the context of Colombia's war. These works opt for an aesthetic that rejects spectacularization and bring into crisis notions of visibility. In addition, they emphasize a circular or arrested temporality to underscore the perpetuity of war.

Rather than showing the actual conflict, the literary and visual objects examined direct the attention to the ways in which the violence of war structures and impacts life. Why, then, in a moment when a hypervisibility of violence dominates, do these works turn to war and to invisibility as an aesthetic? These literary and visual narratives of war, I argue, question the ways in which subjects in precarious political positions survive and make sense of the war and its aftermath. They allow for new ways of "seeing" and, thus, understanding war. Through an aesthetic of invisibility that compromises the act of seeing, they are making visible social and political marginalization, and, despite this, new reconfigurations of living in common.

Chapter 1

Hamaca paraguaya and the Stillness of History

Locating Paraguay on the Map: *paraguayidad,* Cinema, and War

It was the year 2006. *Hamaca paraguaya*, a small independent Paraguayan co-production, and the first Paraguayan film selected for competition at Cannes, won the festival's prestigious prize, *Un Certain Regard*. This unprecedented achievement catapulted director Paz Encina to international recognition. Critics hailed the film's formalism and austere style, accolades that placed it as the emblem of national cinema.[18] Encina's oeuvre is part of an acclaimed "new independent" Latin American filmmaking practice interested in formal experimentation, distanced from more conventional and commercial traditions. Argentine critic David Oubiña describes these films as "restless and passionate… less ambitious projects which [are], at the same time, innovative and risk taking audiovisual explorations" (36, 42).[19] Regarding the existence of a national cinema, Paz Encina has pointed out that instead of a "Paraguayan cinema," there are "Paraguayan films."[20] Her opinion evidences the absence of a solidified film industry, the precariousness of film technologies, and the little visibility that national films have enjoyed outside Paraguay.[21]

The objective of this chapter is to explore an issue at stake for contemporary Paraguayan filmmaking. When speaking of the current state of cinema in Paraguay and its precariousness, especially its historical absence, filmmakers are not advocating for the creation of a (state sponsored) national industry. On the contrary, most films are part of, and are possible thanks to, transnational cultural and economic networks; the directors and their works circulate within prestigious international festivals. Filmmakers appeal, rather, to the need to recognize the cinema as a critical tool capable of scrutinizing the historical process and the ways it has shaped national identity. In the Paraguayan context,

[18] Film critic Horacio Bernades described it as the film that "colocó a su país de un solo golpe en el mapa cinematográfico" (Página 1/2). For the New York Times critic, the film demonstrated that Paraguayan cinema was among the "the most vital" cinemas in the world (Lee).

[19] Other filmmakers include Lisandro Alonso, Carlos Reygadas, Nicolás Pereda, Óscar Ruíz Navia, Albertina Carri, and William Vega.

[20] Referring to the expectations and pressure placed on her work as the representative of national film, Encina commented: "It is necessary for Paraguay to become a country where films are made.… It doesn't matter if making films is difficult; what matters is that it not be impossible…. I am convinced that *Hamaca paraguaya* is going to change my life and it could transform into an important point of reference, no just for me, but for many others" (Encina Escribe my translation).

[21] Encina's ambitions for more (public or private) funding opportunities and overall support for cinematographic projects respond to the fact that, just as it has been the case for most of the recent film productions emerging from Paraguay, the making of *Hamaca paraguaya* and her subsecuent work, including her lastest feature, *Ejercicios de memoria* (2016), was possible thanks financial support of foreign institutions. *Hamaca paraguaya* was a co-production between France, Germany, the Netherlands, Argentina, Spain and Paraguay. Consequently, more than being the expression of a consolidated cinematographic industry, the recognition and (critical or commercial) success enjoyed by local film productions such as *108 Cuchillo de palo, Tren Paraguay, Hamaca paraguaya* and, even the unprecedented commercially successful *7 Cajas*, is the manifestation of triumphant individual films.

more than any other moment in history, contemporary filmmaking is the artistic expression that can best illuminate understandings regarding sociopolitical, cultural, and economic specificities associated with Paraguayan identity.

Particularly after the 1954 military coup led by Alfredo Stroessner, who remained in power for thirty-five years, national film production was nonexistent. Due to the economic policies as well as the political repression enforced by authoritarian regimes in power in the region, film industries across South America faced similar situations throughout the 60s, 70s, and 80s.[22] During the 1990s, after the return of democratic governments, the creation of film schools and institutions along with the formation of film critics contributed to the resurgence and consolidation of film industries (Oubiña 39). For aspiring Paraguayan filmmakers, especially after Stroessner's dictatorship, foreign schools presented real training and creative opportunities lacking in Asunción. This group includes Paz Encina (*Ejercicios de memoria,* 2016; *Hamaca paraguaya,* 2006*; Viento sur,* 2011), Marcelo Martinessi (*Karai Norte*, 2009), Mauricio Rial Banti (*Tren Paraguay,* 2011), Pablo Lamar (*Oigo tu grito,* 2008; *Noche adentro,* 2010), and Renate Costa (*108 Cuchillo de palo,* 2010). They were trained in Argentina, Cuba, Spain and London; their films were internationally funded productions.

But what was it about *Hamaca paraguaya* that marked a before and after in the Paraguayan cinematic landscape? On the one hand, the film's visual and aural experimentation made it worthy of art-film categorizations. On the other, the film brought to the big screen a topic all too resonant for Paraguayans: the country's history of war. For the first time, Paraguayans—their historical isolation and survival—were being recognized and seen by the world outside. For a country, whose cinematic tradition had remained invisible as well, the film's production and consequent success were considered an oddity. *Hamaca paraguaya* was the first first film shot in 35 mm since 1978.[23] Even if they entered the theatres out of curiosity,[24] Encina's film attracted the Paraguayan public

[22] Glauber Rocha, Raúl Ruiz, Patricio Guzmán, and Jorge Sanjinés, some of the most wellknown Latin American filmmakers of the period, had to go into exile due to their political views and stances toward the regimes in power at the time. A film theorist and intellectual, Glauber Rocha advocated for the revolutionary potential of cinema as an agent for social transformation. *Terra em transe* (1967), one of his most celebrated films, illustrates the disenchantment produced by a society dominated by corrupted politics. Rocha went into exile in 1971, only to return to Brazil ten years later, shortly before his untimely death. Patricio Guzmán's three-part documentary *La batalla de Chile* chronicled the political unrest experienced in Chile between 1972 and 1973, especially the events that culminated in the coup d'état against socialist President Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973. After being detained and held prisoner, Guzmán went into exile to Havana where he finished the documentary. *La batalla de Chile* was censored during the Pinochet dictatorship and Guzmán did not return to Chile until 1986.

[23] Guillermo Vera's *Cerro Corá*, the last film produced prior to *Hamaca paraguaya*, was also about war, the Triple Alliance War (1864-1870). Despite its strong *stronista* political vision, the film, financed by the regime, was re-released in theaters and distributed in DVD in 2011 as part of the commemorations celebrating Paraguay's two hundred years of independence. Vera's film chronicles the heroic role of the Paraguayan president Francisco Solano López during the war. *Cerro Corá*'s historical value lies not in its uncritical approach to history, but rather on its place within national film historiography.

[24] Up until the release of Juan Carlos Maneglia and Tina Schémbori's *7 Cajas* in 2012, no other film production, national or international, had enjoyed a similar box office success. On October 1, 2012, two months after the film's release, it was reported that Maneglia and Schémbori's thriller had become the most commercially successful film in the country's history. *7 Cajas,* according to the national newspaper *Última Hora,* had raised more than one million dollars and had been seen by 220,000 viewers, breaking the record set by *Titanic* in 1997. These numbers illustrate the context in which *Hamaca paraguaya* surged in the

because it dealt with the Chaco War. The film showed a universal story of loss that alluded, at the same time, to an experience very specific to Paraguayan history. It mirrored historical traumas related to the country's history of war. It showed a story to which most spectators in Paraguay could relate. Paraguayans, for example, pride in having a personal connection to war. Almost all have a story about war, a grandfather or an elderly relative who fought in a war or died fighting one.

As devastating as they have been, wars have played a crucial role in defining national identity—*paraguayidad*.[25] As historians Peter Lambert and Andrew Nickson have written, "Paraguay has long been seen as one of the forgotten corners of the globe, a land falling off our conscious map of the world … a country defined not so much by association as by isolation" (Introduction 1). The history of political turmoil and violence, wars (internal and external), in particular, have contributed to the country's isolation and invisibility. Since its independence, the two wars fought against foreign powers alone left the country facing unprecedented and traumatic losses. The Triple Alliance War (1864-1870)[26] reduced the population from 450,000 to 153,000; in the aftermath, women, children, and older people made up almost the entire postwar population (Lambert and Nickson Experiment 54). Sixty-five years later, of the total 100,000 casualties left by the Chaco War, an approximate 30,000 were Paraguayan.

The history of war, particularly the events and devastation of the Triple Alliance War, expresses itself as an act of survival, not only of individuals but also of the nation. Thus, a narrative of resilience constitutes national identity; Paraguayans have survived internal and external wars and dictatorships. This narrative was particularly embraced by the *novecentistas*, the members of Paraguay's *Generación del 900*, a prolific group of intellectuals who at the end of the nineteenth century were invested in creating a revisionist historiography to explain the defeat in the Triple Alliance War. According to this historical discourse, which was adopted by subsequent generations, Paraguayan history is marked by devastation, isolation, violence, but above all, survival. Undoubtedly, then, the story of two older and poor Paraguayan *campesinos*[27] facing the

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national scene six years earlier. Encina's film was the first Paraguayan production to have a theatrical release in thirty years. Its release in theatres, thus, must not be underestimated, particularly given its style, more apt for art-house audiences. *Hamaca paraguaya* opened in three movie theaters in Asunción on August 30, 2006 and was later screened for free in smaller rural cities where portable film projectors had to be transported. *ABC* reported that many viewers went to see the movie "out of curiosity." In twenty-five days, 3000 people had seen the film. This number may seem small, however, rather than determining its commercial performance, it elucidates the conditions of the cinematic industry in Paraguay.

[25] The history of war continues to impact aspects of national identity. Illustrative of this fact, military imagery constitutes an important symbolic foundation of the nation's history. Military war heroes are perceived as having answered valiantly to the call to defend the Fatherland. In addition, Paraguayans perceive their country as a nation on which war continues to be waged. Two instances for such apprehensions are the dominance of Brazilian interests in the agro-economic sector and the belief that Argentina and Brazil, the two most powerful members of MERCOSUR (South America's commercial bloc), decide the economic destiny of Paraguay and its place in the region. The power dynamics of MERCOSUR, in particular, are often described as a continuation of the Triple Alliance War. Paraguayans may no longer fight an actual war, but there is a belief that a war is being waged by neighboring countries on the economic and political fronts.

[26] Although the alliance between Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay was formalized on May 1865, Paraguay had been at war with Brazil since 1864.

[27] The *campesino* has been an important political figure, especially in more recent Paraguayan economic and political debates. Paraguayan scholar Eva Romero explains it as an ambiguous symbol seen either as a

death of a son in the war is a story with which most Paraguayans can identify, even if at a symbolic level. Yet, *Hamaca paraguaya* is not a war film. In fact, it is not a film about the Chaco War. While it is informed by the conflict, the film neither explains nor shows it. Spectators only witness a day in the life of Cándida and Ramón, the two protagonists removed from the war front. The film follows them as they go about their daily routine heavily impacted by the absence of their son Máximo and their suffering because of it.

This chapter explores the way in which the film's experimental language engages in less conventional forms of representation and argues that *Hamaca paraguaya*'s non-representational forms allows a more analytical approach to the notions and processes that have shaped the historical process, namely the country's history of war. This achievement is particularly relevant in the Paraguayan context, because Encina rejects more traditional and commercial cinematic techniques. In this regard the film's temporality, specifically, questions the structures that have established foundational narratives and discourses that have defined the experience (and history) of war. Visual cultural production has represented war as a foundational event in the constitution of the nation and national identity. Relevant for the sake of this argument, then, is the film's rejection of direct representation. Any information revealed about the Chaco War comes aurally: the date in which the film takes place and the revelation that Máximo, the protatonists' son, is fighting in the Chaco. Beyond those facts, nothing else about the conflict is shown or announced. Visually, the narrative focuses on the couple's day to day. The camera never travels beyond their domestic space.

Taking the film's formalistic approach to the representation war as a point of departure, the aim of this chapter is to examine the discursive and political functions of war in the Paraguayan historical process. The chapter delves into the symbolic role of war as a foundational political and discursive trope. The struggle and overcoming of the devastation brought on by war have been perceived as crucial elements in building the heroic character of the nation. Suffering Paraguayans, both civil and military, and their willingness to sacrifice their lives to defend the nation have been recurrent motifs in war narratives and representations. War is often represented as an epic struggle where heroic military figures stand as forgers of the nation and protectors of the Paraguayan people. In the case of Paraguay, the experience of war is a major event that gives visibility to the nation. It seems to be the case that time and again war has had a cohesive function giving form to a social and political body.

As theorized by Clausewitz, war is the extension of politics through other means and thus cannot be conceived separately from political life. (n.p.). The state stands as the ultimate guarantor of the communal interests. When these are threatened, war becomes the means to their defense. As a manifestation of "policy," war must subscribe to a greater "whole;" otherwise, if treated as something autonomous, it becomes "pointless and devoid of sense":

> It can be taken as agreed that the aim of policy is to unify and reconcile all aspects of internal administration as well as of spiritual values… Policy, of course, is nothing in itself; it is simply the trustee for all these interests

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dispossessed and marginalized citizen or as an obstacle for the nation's economic development. Romero examines the figure of the *campesino* and Guaraní language as icons of national identity in recent cinema in her essay "*Frankfurt* (2008): Documentary and the *Campesino* Icon in Paraguay."

> against other states….[H]ere we can only treat policy as representative of all interests of the community. (Clausewitz n.p.)

In the Paraguayan context, whether one refers to the Triple Alliance War or the Chaco War, at stake precisely was the threat and survival of the state itself, the ultimate administrator of the community. Both wars were justified as the defense of the nation's sovereignty. War safeguards collective (national) interests. I situate Encina's film in relation to (revisionist) historiography and the cultural production that have turned the war into an epic that monumentalizes the history of war.

More than emphasizing the role of war as the event that establishes a social pact by demanding the sacrifice of citizens, *Hamaca paraguaya* reveals the caducity of such pact. The film turns Clausewitz's concept of war on its head. In the film, the war appears as an autonomous and senseless experience. Instead of ensuring the interests of a community—the war as policy—, the conflict only results in the social marginalization and alienation of subjects. Above all, *Hamaca paraguaya* emphasizes the profound ways in which, beyond the battlefield, armed conflicts generate types of violence that structure the quotidian experience—war becomes part of the everyday experience.

Film as Archive of (Paraguayan) Experience

The power of *Hamaca paraguaya* lies in its formal experimentation. In contrast to more commercial filmmaking, both in Paraguay and abroad,[28] the film can be ascribed to a "slow cinema" tradition, which has influenced the new independent Latin American film movement. The films by Lisandro Alonso are the most evocative examples. Paz Encina employs long takes for storytelling. The film is contemplative and minimalist in terms of visual content and narrative structure. It is shot in real time and in natural locations, where the characters remain throughout the whole film. As is the case of many "slow" films, no conventionally interesting event happens. Encina is less interested in the eventful or linear plot. Instead, the long duration sequences give the impression that nothing happens.[29] The film is most radical in terms of narrative structure. It consists of

[28] In the context of recent productions in Paraguay, *Hamaca paraguaya* stands in stark contrast to films such as Juan Carlos Maneglia and Tana Schémbori's thriller *7 Cajas* or Ramiro Gómez's *Frankfurt.* While there are plenty of other films to use as examples, these two offer two contrasting trends. *7 Cajas*'s plot revolves around a young boy working in Asunción's famous market, Mercado 4, who dreams of becoming a famous star. In order to buy a phone to record a video of himself that will make him famous, he accepts to transport seven boxes from one end of the market to the other. Accepting this seemingly innocent and easy task gets him caught up in the circles of organized crime and corruption plaguing the market. The film follows his heroic journey as he manages to escape the men who are after the mysterious product inside the boxes. *Frankfurt*, on the other hand, is a documentary situated in rural Paraguay during the 2006 soccer World Cup hosted by Germany. The documentary shows a group of young men as they religiously follow the national team's participation in the competition. Although they belong to different genres—fiction and documentary—both films follow linear storytelling practices and appeal to eventful, action derived, narratives. *7 Cajas* was marketed as the first "Paraguayan cop thriller." It is not hard to imagine the popular appeal of these films, the former taking place in the country's most well-known market and the latter about the most popular sport.

[29] "Nothing happens" is the phrase film scholar Ivone Margulies employs to describe Chantal Akerman's films. Her analysis of Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* focuses on the

only 21 sequences with the first, middle, and last lasting 16, 12, and 26 minutes respectively. No interesting event happens visually. The camera remains always fixed and distant keeping the characters far away and their faces almost hidden from the spectators. The *mise-en-scène* evokes a theatrical setting. The natural location resembles a static theatre stage on which the characters act as if performing for a theater audience.[30] Like a theater spectator, the viewer of *Hamaca paraguaya* needs to be more active to read the actions taking place on the stage-like screen. The non-diegetic voices exacerbate the effect of estrangement resulting from the distanced camera keeping character and spectator distant. Yet while confronted with this feeling of estrangement, what remains is the continued presence of the performing body. Even with the limited visibility to facial features and the uncertain origin of the repetitive dialogues, the characters' bodies become the central feature producing an effect of theatricality. The body becomes the performing medium through which the sense of "nothing happens" and slowness is achieved.[31] As the actors perform the act of waiting, the spectator must also bear a similar temporal experience as a result of the long duration. As the characters sit and wait, the spectator must wait with them. The teatrical achieves a temporal experience produced by an almost unbearable "slowness."

Paz Encina's film depicts no epic battles, no images of soldiers, and no self-sacrificing heroes. Its rejection of direct representations of the war experience, and especially of the front, results in a narrative where telling or understanding the logics of the conflict is not an objective. Encina opts for an ambiguous film language, using the tragedy of the Chaco War, to explore the traumas of war. A commitment to this kind of exploration is a driving force in most of her work. Her more recent projects address the human rights abuses and repression crimes committed during Stroessner's dictatorship. Her short film *Viento sur* (2011) continues the formal experimentation characteristic of *Hamaca paraguaya.* It takes place in an unspecified period during the dictatorship and tells the story of two brothers contemplating escaping the country for fear of persecution. Their voices are the only features spectators have access to. The narrative is revealed aurally. Visually, the camera focuses on the rural landscapes where one assumes the story takes place. *Ejercicios de memoria,* her latest feature released in 2016, explores the life and disappearance in 1977 of Agustín Goiburú, an important political leader and Stroessner's most visible opponent. Film has allowed Encina to experiment with temporality and its representation. This fact is crucial given that in much of her work temporality fuctions to provoke reflections of the nation's historical process. The preference for the cinematic medium and the work of contemporary Paraguayan filmmakers provides an opportunity to consider the role of film as a medium for critique and reflection.

Since its inception, the photographic image was set apart from other artistic representations due to its indexical nature. The relationship between photography and the photographed object, created by the mechanical reproduction, attributed a ghostly

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female protagonist's daily experience as a gesture of the minimal-hyperrealist aesthetic, which she claims, defines Akerman's work. See Ivone Margulies's *Nothing Happens: Chantal Ackerman's Hyperrealist Everyday*.

[30] Ramón del Río and Georgina Genes, the actors playing the main roles, are well-known stage actors in Paraguay.

[31] For more on the role and significance of the body within performance see Josette Féral's essay, "Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified," translated by Terese Lyons.

temporal dimension to the image. According to film theorist Mary Ann Doane, the index, theorized by Charles Sanders Pierce in his taxonomy of signs,

> signifies by virtue of an existential bond between the sign and its object. … Unlike icons, indices have no resemblance to their objects, which nevertheless, directly cause them. … Anything which startles us is an index, in so far as it marks the junction between portions of experience… Unlike icons and symbols, which rely upon association by resemblance or intellectual operations, the work of the index depends on association by contiguity (the foot touches the ground and leaves a trace… the light rays reflected from the object "touch" the film). (92)

The index "is haunted by its object" (Doane 45). It is modified by it. Due to their filmic materiality, cinema and photography emerged as two technologies of vision containing indexical and iconic elements. They both have an existential bond and a resemblance relationship to their object. In them, as indexical signs, their object (no longer present) is made present. In their functioning, as indexical technologies, more than documenting an experience (being the trace of an object), the indexical sign becomes a pointer, a marker of presence. Closer to a performative act, the index calls attention to a "here," as if making one aware of a "something," a "this" that was "here." This relationship between film and the indexical is most present and effective in *Hamaca paraguaya* in the sense that the film points to a presence but no longer of an object, but the presence of experience, a temporal (historical) experience. In the Paraguayan context, this fact is particularly relevant for contemporary filmmaking practices.

The cinema and photography acquire a ghostly temporal dimension precisely because they make a past experience present. Doane argues that both technologies became part of the new archival technologies that marked the nineteenth century's anxiety to archive time: "For what is archivable loses its presence, becomes immediately the past. Hence, what is archived is not so much a material object as an experience—an experience of the present.… The cinema participates in this [archive] compulsion" (82). Film becomes an archive where the experience of the once present is contained or where, as André Bazin described referring to the function of photography, time is "embalmed." The ghostly quality results from its indexical quality: the presence of a past experience is conjured in the photographic and cinematic images.

The idea of an archival compulsion is helpful to explain the recent surge in Paraguayan cinema. Unlike most countries in Latin America, Paraguay's cinematic industry never solidified. The cinema was a practice from which the country remained almost excluded during the twentieth century. There is a sense that Paraguay's history of film is still yet to be known (or discovered). When one ponders about the country's cinematic referents (the films, the directors, and the actors that comprise this history), they belong to a period that seems to have started only in the 21st century. Perhaps, more than any other moment in history, the cinema has opened spaces where the historical process is examined and questioned. Film is a tool through which contemporary filmmakers are exploring the historical archive, an acessible medium capable of generating reflections on culture and identity. Mauricio Rial Banti's documentary *Tren Paraguay* meditates on the country's history by looking at the history and disappearance

of the railway system, the nation's most visible symbol of progress in the nineteenth century; in *La tierra sin mal,* director Anna Recalde Miranda investigates the efforts by human rights activist, Martín Almada, to denounce the abuses committed during Stroessner's regime; *Tierra roja*, a documentary by Ramiro Gómez, shows the lives of four families living in rural Paraguay and brings to the screen the marginality and oblivion suffered by indigenous and *campesino* communities in the historically neglected interior; in *108 Cuchillo de palo*, Renate Costa, revisits the life of her dead uncle to expose the repression suffered by the homosexual community during the dictatorship; finally, in *Detrás de Curuguaty*, Daniela Candia, the director, scrutinizes the land disputes between the government and the local community of Curuguaty, which culminated in the massacre of eleven *campesinos* in June, 2012. The film touches upon historical land distribution policies and points to them as a principal cause for the enormous economic inequality in Paraguay.

As mentioned, the proliferation of film production is the result not only of more accessible technologies, but also of the increased education and funding opportunities available.[32] There is another element, however, that perhaps explains the preference for the cinematic medium and the interest to place Paraguay and Paraguayans on the cinematic screen. I believe this is due to the role that orality and language have played in defining a sense of uniqueness characterizing Paraguayan history and identity. While Spanish is the official language—the "language of power"—Guaraní is the indigenous language of expression spoken by the majority, especially in rural areas where eighty-three percent of the population speaks it (Lambert History 391). This percentage illustrates the dominance of spoken Guaraní and the subordination of Spanish, even of written Spanish as a form of expression. In Paraguay, literature has had a limited national audience.[33] Unlike other Latin American nations, Paraguay did not witness the crucial role that literature had in scrutinizing the historical archive and elucidating on significant historical junctures. In consequence, and having to do with the historically high levels of illiteracy, literature did not produce an effective critique of the Paraguayan experience. Written in Spanish, literature has been overshadowed almost exclusively by Augusto Roa Bastos's linguistically complex oeuvre, which remains unknown and inaccessible to most Paraguayans. This is particularly the case of Roa Basto's most celebrated novel in Latin America and beyond, *Yo el Supremo* (1974).

Considering contemporary film practices within this context, many of the preoccupations informing the new generation of filmmakers concern the role of culture in a country that never prioritized cultural practices. Filmmakers are engaging in a similar task that literature and film assumed in other Latin American nations: they are examining the historical archive. It is not coincidental that most these films, many of them are documentaries, comment on larger political and social questions. Mauricio Rial Banti, for example, documents the testimonies given by Paraguayan citizens about their memories of the railroad system, now in ruins. Paz Encina has studied the *Archivo del terror*, the archive kept by Stroessner's government, where the regime's tactics for repression and violence were documented. Encina has worked with the documents, photographs, and

[32] For a detailed and comprehensive study of Paraguayan audiovisual production, its conditions and contradictions, see Eva Karene Romero's recently published book *Film and Democracy in Paraguay.*
[33] Mar Langa Pizarro provides a panoramic overview of Paraguayan literature in her essay "Historia de la literatura" included in *Historia del Paraguay* edited by historian Ignacio Telesca.

voice recordings taken from the archive in her art installation pieces and recent short films. For the first time, thanks to her work, Paraguayans have had access to the systems employed by the regime to surveil and persecute its citizens. In her visual work, the regime's repression and crimes are laid bare. Not only then film as practice is inspired by an archive compulsion, but filmmakers are also invested in the creation of an actual archive. Film is doing more than just tracing a past experience or making it present. Film is, above all, pointing to a presence, one in which orality, as a defining element of Paraguayan experience, plays a significant role.

It could be argued that due to its indexical nature, film—a medium that remained almost completely inaccessible until recently within the cultural field—has emerged as an effective tool to (re)present and explore the Paraguayan experience. Most of the recent films are spoken in Guaraní, including *Hamaca paraguaya.* Encina wrote the script in Spanish and then, along with other collaborators, translated it into Guaraní. The gesture, however, does more than emulate the quotidian experience, especially in the interior where Guaraní prevails over Spanish.[34] In the film, in addition to the day-to-day experience represented by the dialogues, sounds (diegetic and nondiegetic) and silences constitute a meticulous montage, so that the aural elements as a whole achieve a specific objective: "I thought, then, of the script for *Hamaca paraguaya* as though it were a score… I wanted the sound to be my guide even on the 'physical' level of time…I thought only of how long a word could last, how long it would be quiet after hearing this or that word… Each sound in the movie was chosen according to its proper and just measure" (Encina Riding 281). Consequently, every word—in Guaraní—, every sound and every silence is mapped out to create a rhythm different than the one created by the visual, an experience of time in tension with the one suggested by the visual.

Hamaca paraguaya's ambiguous nature results from the dual temporality created by a tension between the visual and the aural. On the one hand, the visual indicates a linear temporality—the slow passing of a day in the Paraguayan interior. The film begins shortly after the characters wake up and ends when they go to sleep. The sounds, on the other hand, in their monotony and repetition evoke a circular nature—two characters stuck at in a time that never changes, as if trapped in a temporal stillness. The aural elements introduce the absences that structure the film—Máximo, his dead body, and the battlefield experience—, while the visual images suggest only presence, that of two parents who can only wait, arrested in time. The absence in the film, represented by Máximo and his death, and the contrasting temporalities can be analyzed through the figure of the specter.[35] This proves productive to understand the ambiguous temporality

[34] Regarding her preference for Guaraní, Encina explains: "[it] is quotidian for us. I never thought of [using it] as reaffirming or saving a language, nothing of the sort. I wanted Ramón and Cándida to be two people that lived in the farthest corner of Paraguay, far, far from the rest, two people that, if living at the end of the earth, could only speak Guaraní. In the same way, … it is our official language and it is not at all strange" (Carátula my translation). Guaraní is a familiar language spoken and heard, perhaps more than Spanish on the streets in the capital, Asunción. Its influence on Spanish is easily recognized by the distinctive cadence and rhythm of spoken Paraguayan Spanish. Even if Paraguayans, like Encina, do not speak it fluently, they are familiar with with words and phrases that are spoken daily.

[35] Specter and spectrality are the terms that began to circulate in 1990s cultural criticism. According to scholars María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, these concepts "evoke an etymological link to visibility and vision, to that which is both *looked at* (as fascinating spectacle) and *looking* (in the sense of examining)" (n.p.). Blanco and Peeren trace the origins and development of the "spectral turn"—the study

achieved in the film; the specter defined as a presence "always already before us, confronting us with what precedes and exceeds our sense of autonomy, *seeing us without being seen*, and demanding a certain responsibility and answerability" (Blanco and Peeren 33). The absence in the film gestures to an inability for time to move forward. Maximo's absence interrupts and disrupts daily life. It is an absence that both Cándida and Ramón must unexpectedly confront, a specter that makes the progress of time impossible.

Although "seeing us without being seen" suggests visibility, I propose to broaden the concept of 'specter' into other sensorial realms, or rather, appeal to a broader epistemological signification. In *Hamaca paraguaya,* Máximo and the war are never seen. However, their absence is continually made present. It is an absence that continually haunts Cándida and Ramón's existence. While the war and the actual warfront experience are not visually represented, their violence, the film language suggests, is always seen, heard, and felt by the main characters. In the film, the spectral, as an absence made present, results from a temporal ambiguity created through sound. In other words, it does matter that spectators do not see the actual warfare, the death and devastation that it produces. It matters because it is the role of sound to bring it all into presence. Sound, however, accomplishes more. Through asynchronous and repetitive voice-over dialogue, Encina installs a new sense of time, one set against the certainty of the day's passing. The voice-over dialogue establishes a temporal ambiguity because even though we are, visually witnessing a specific day in the lives of these two parents, we are also, at the same time, seeing them, as they suffer, every other day of their lives. The spectral element achieved by the ambiguous aural temporality brings into presence the violence that structures the day-to-day experience. Consequently, I contend that the aim of the film is not to anchor its problematic on the specificity of the the Chaco War. Rather, by alluding to the war through indirect representation, the film ultimately underscores the devastating nature of the phenomenon of war and, in the case of Paraguay, its impact on the historical process.

The concept of spectrality and the operation illustrated by the specter illuminates a narrative mode through which *Hamaca paraguaya* challenges glorifications of war in the Paraguayan context. Necessary to understand these glorifications is the role, on the one hand, of revisionist historiography which at crucial historical junctures constructed a national history by employing teleological and triumphalist narratives of war as a central foundation. Narrating war as an epic became the imperative of the historiographic task. On the other hand, visual culture, particularly neorealist cinema of the 50s and 60s propagated heroic narratives of war, contributing to its monumentalized dimension. What results from these discourses and apprehensions of war is a conception of war resonant with Clausewitz's notion: an instrument that the state must use in order to implement policy. As a by-product, these epic narratives and discourses of war, which gave visibility to the nation, set in motion progressive historical narratives. They dictated the direction and sense of purpose toward which the nation was to advance. Within these discourses, war becomes an obstacle turned heroic struggle that must be overcome to move forward towards the progress that the war interrupted. War, in this case, is nothing but the necessary step for the constitution of Paraguayan sovereignty. Although an undesirable

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of the specter and spectrality within scholarship—in *The Spectralities Reader*, which they edited and published in 2013.

event, when it presents itself, war becomes part of a "greater whole." Recalling Clausewitz words, war is conceived not as autonomous event, divorced from the interests of the community. On the contrary, it is an instrument of the state that involves the social precisely because the welfare of the greater whole must be safeguarded. War is a national affair. When I speak of a monumentalized narrative, I argue that war, in historiography and cultural production, is incorporated as the event dictating the nation's progress: it is forced upon Paraguayans by external forces which hinder that very progress. Paraguayan citizens, thus, must respond (and have valiantly responded) to the call to defend it.

In *Hamaca paraguaya,* spectrality stands against glorifications of war and undoes notions of progress associated with it (war as policy). Represented as a senseless event, the film brings into visibility a historical trauma brought about by the violence and devastation of war. Out of the specters of war—out of a "spectral conscience"—emerges a critique of "progressive" history. Derrida's and Wendy Brown's reflections regarding spectrality and history, a history divorced from progressive narratives, can illuminate how the spectral operation suggests a more critical historical conscience. Rather than the establishment of a social pact, that the justification of war would confirm, in the film war empties this pact of meaning. War cannot be legitimized as an instrument securing social welfare when its direct consequence is the constitution of politically precarious subjects, isolated, and invisible. Therefore, it is crucial that the film doesn't show the war. As its most provocative gesture, the film's avoidance of representation of the conflict becomes a poignant critique of the nature of war.

Understanding this gesture requires pondering on the appearance in 2006 of a film that addresses a war that occurred in 1932 without directly showing it and interested, instead, in experimenting with cinematographic language. Although the recent work of contemporary filmmakers, which explores new possibilities within the cinematographic medium, answers part of this question, I believe that Encina's depiction of war deeply concerns the political stakes of cultural production as well. I propose that a film such as *Hamaca paraguaya* is a manifestation of what political theorist Wendy Brown describes as a "spectral conscience." That is, it is "taking responsibility" for what has been "inherited" in order to open up a space for (political) intervention. Through the notion of the specter and its temporal logic, *Hamaca paraguaya* points to a temporal (historical) stillness—an arrested temporal notion—where ultimately loss and absence become effective concepts to critique the historical process.

Spectrality and its Haunting of History

The publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993[36] is credited for giving rise to a renewed interest in explorations and theorizations of the figures of the ghost and haunting as concepts producing knowledge (Blanco and Peeren n.p.). The text originated in a series of lectures prepared by Derrida for a conference held at UC Riverside in 1993 titled "Whither Marxism? Global Crises in International Perspective." The conference sought to respond to the transformations taking place at the end of the century, announced by the establishment of a new global order. Prompted by the anxieties provoked by a post 1989 future, the conference concerned the ways in which

[36] Peggy Kamuf's translation, *Specters of Marx,* was published in 1994.

the Marxist tradition and intellectuals could respond to a historical juncture perceived as the "death of Marxism, and of Marx" (Magnus and Cullenberg viii). In *Specters of Marx,* Derrida delves into eschatological theories about Marxism and the Marxist legacy prevalent in a post 1989 world. He addresses the role of the ghosts, especially in Marx's work, as figures elucidating historical social and political critique.[37] In his articulation of a Marxist legacy, Derrida proposes the concept of *hauntology* to illustrate the (temporal) logic of Marx's own specters—the existence of his "spirits" in late twentieth century—and the possibilities they open. For Derrida, "inheritance" becomes an appropriate concept to come to terms with Marxism in 1993. We are all, he claims, although in different ways, "inheritors" of a communist/Marxist influence.[38] In a period post 1989—faced with the collapse of communism—the world was inheriting the responsibility of learning to inhabit the world along with the Marxist ghosts.

The temporal logic involved in the spectral operation, the specter's haunting, is most appealing in Derrida's proposal as it involves reconsiderations of historical thinking. More specifically, it demands a disruption of the linear narratives at the service of historical thought. Coming to terms with the specter requires an act of responsibility towards the past that is being "inherited." As theorist Pierre Macherey points out, to inherit means taking an active role in "appropriating" the past, challenging, and proposing new interpretations of it: "One inherits from that which, in the past, remains yet to come, by taking part in a present which is not only present in the fleeting sense of actuality, but which undertakes to reestablish a dynamic connection between past and future" (19). For Derrida, *hauntology,* living with the specters, is necessary to fully understand the sense of being in the present.[39] Coming to terms with the specter entails an ethical exercise since, first and foremost, Derrida's objective is a type of justice, not of the legal realm, but one that allows a redemptive appropriation of the past.[40] He conjures the specter, as a meaning-producing concept,[41] by summoning Hamlet.[42] Both Hamlet and his father's ghost—the dead and the living—must "set right" the out-of-jointness of time. The figure of the ghost exposes a temporal disconnection perceived as a historical

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[37] As explained by Marxist theorist Pierre Macherey, ghosts and specters were common references in Marx's thought: "the preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, with its most famous appeal to the 'ghost of communism; the passage from the *Eighteenth Brumaire* on the resurrection of the dead and history as repetition; the discussion with Stirner in *The German Ideology* on the phantasmagoric character of the human essence, and finally, in the opening of *Capital*, the reflection the latter devotes to the enigma of the commodity and in particular the fetishism of political economy that makes relations among men 'return' fantastically in the form of relations among things" (Marcherey 18).

[38] "We all live in a world, some would say a culture, that still bears, at an incalculable depth, the mark of this inheritance, whether in a directly visible fashion or not…One never inherits without coming to terms with some specter" (Derrida *SM* 11, 15, *24*).

[39] Theorist Tom Lewis claims that the specter "represents the inherent instability of reality…[I]t serves as the sign of an 'always-already' unrealized and unrealizable ontology… [It] represents the ghostly embodiment of a fear and panic provoked by intimations of an impossible state of being" (140). Similarly, for Derrida, hauntology reveals an incompleteness of being.

[40] This redemptive apprehension of the past evokes a Benjaminian conception of history that does not side with the "victors," but with the defeated whose history has been forgotten.

[41] "The specter's secret is a productive opening of meaning rather than a determinate content to be uncovered…[T]he ghost's secret is not a puzzle to be solved; it is the structure openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future" (Davis 56, 58).

[42] "The time is out of ioynt: Oh cursed spight, / That ever I was borne to set it right" (*SM* 1).

incoherence by those living in the present: "a disjointed or disadjusted now" (Derrida 1). The ghost of the father, manifesting itself before the son, illustrates the imposing force of the 'specter' on history and, for Derrida, it points to its discursive potency.

Spectrality imposes itself on historical thinking by insisting on the past's bearing on the present condition, and in this way, it reveals a sense of historical disconnection with one's own "out-of-joint" time. Spectrality demands an awareness of the risks of moving forward without taking responsibility of the calling of the past—the act of actively "appropriating" and "inheriting" the past. History, thus, is haunted, fragmented, and never just linear and moving forward. It is defined by the act of "waiting for" the specter, a revenant that demands that an action be taken in the name of the "disjointness" of time. The potential of the specter lies in his undoing of temporal linearity: "a specter is always a *revenant.* One cannot control its coming and goings because it *begins by coming back*" (Derrida 11). Defined by an uncontrollable "come back," the spectral operation results in the past's constant disruption of the presentness of the present. History then must always be thought as the return of the specter. To think historically is to think of history as spectral. For Derrida, the period post 1989 and the institution of capitalist ideologies still bore the presence of communism. A future without a Marxist legacy was not possible: "There will be no future without this… without the memory and inheritance of Marx" (Derrida 11, 15). The end of the twentieth century, also turned "out of joint," was now haunted and waiting for the return of the specters of communism and Marx.

The temporal logic of hauntology provides insight into understandings of history divorced from progressive narratives, histories that champion the residual, the fragments, and lack of coherence erased by chronological and progressive grand narratives. History is haunted by a spectral element: a *revenant* that is there, "seeing us without being seen":

> [a] 'thing' that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other … one does not know [the specter] not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge…this thing that looks at us, that concerns us. (Derrida 5)

The specter represents alterity comprehended under a non-linear (non-totalizing and non-teleological) logic. The past becomes heavily invested in the present. No longer subject to chronological temporality, history is the result of the apparition of a past inheritance in the present. For Derrida, an "out-of-joint" condition demands that we "learn to live" with the specters.[43] The spectral temporal disruption carries a potential to challenge foundational and teleological modes of thinking. In *Hamaca paraguaya,* spectrality becomes the narrative mode through which the linear temporality suggested by the visual is disrupted. Temporal ambiguity achieves a time of waiting or a temporal stillness that lays bare the alienation produced by the war. The film emphasizes a (historical) time that refuses to move forward. There is no progress associated with war. There is no glorification. War does not justify the suffering endured. No longer a narrative of

[43] Derrida's reading of Marx is also a way to disjoint Marx from Hegel and the Hegelian notion of History understood as a type of progress, something that will come to some but no to others. This progress establishes the movement and force of teleology, hence, its linearity.

(national) progress, the film presents the story of two parents trapped by a war that thrusts them into a time that repeats itself time and again.

Hamaca paraguaya and the Time of Waiting

A minute and forty-three seconds pass before the first words are spoken in *Hamaca Paraguaya*. It is early morning. It is still dark. The setting: outdoors, somewhere in the woods, where the sounds of birds, a barking dog, crickets, and thunder complement the darkness of the screen. Very slowly, it begins to get light. Just as slowly, two characters appear, a man and a woman, barely distinguishable. As they begin to hang their hammock on the trees, she complains about the dog's cries. He suggests for her to move farther away from the animal. She refuses and replies that this area is the most comfortable. Once seated on the hammock, she busies herself with her cassava peeling. He drinks *tereré*,[44] while constantly standing up to look up to the sky trying to see the birds announcing the rain. Their names, Cándida and Ramón, and their son's, Máximo, are revealed in the conversation. Máximo, they announce, is away fighting the war in the Chaco. The story then, we know now, is not taking place in present day Paraguay, but sometime between 1932-1935. For the next fourteen minutes,[45] Ramón and Cándida talk about the heat, the dog, the hammock, the war, and the drought in the Chaco, a place which seems to be far away, almost a different world from the one they inhabit. Their back and forth conversation is filled with disagreements: she complains about the dog and he suggests they move; he fears Máximo is suffering the heat of the Chaco and she argues that he must be too cold; he is convinced that it will rain soon, but she believes it won't. He talks about Máximo's return. She no longer hopes for it. At the end of the sequence, they get up and go their own way; she goes to wash clothes; he heads to the sugarcane plantation. It is daylight now.

This first sixteen-minute sequence establishes the film's prominent formal features: long-duration takes filmed in real time, fixed camera angles, wide long-distance shots, on-location shooting, and voice-over, asynchronous sound. Encina's avant-garde film language and austere style results in a film where no conventionally interesting event happens, at least visually, a film that moves too slowly with images that look almost the same throughout. All these aspects create a sense of temporal stillness and a time in waiting that ultimately defines the characters and the narrative. Cándida and Ramón's seemingly uneventful day, June 14, 1935, is haunted by the war and the figure of their son's absence. They may be removed from the battlefield, but the slow day, marked by their repetitive habits and conversations, accentuates the profound way in which loss and suffering have impregnated every moment of their lives.

Hamaca paraguaya breaks with traditional narrative styles and, in particular, with previous cinematic representations of war. Inspired by the Triple Alliance War and the Chaco War respectively, *La sangre y la semilla* (1959) and *Hijo de hombre* (1961) are two of the most well-known fiction war films told from the Paraguayan perspective.[46]

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[44] *Tereré* is a typical Paraguayan yerba mate tea consumed especially in the hot summer.

[45] The entire first sequence lasts over sixteen minutes.

[46] In addition to *Cerro Corá,* mentioned earlier, *Hijo de hombre* and *La sangre y la semilla* are the only two fiction films about Paraguayan wars that I have had access to and the only ones shot in 35 mm. There is,

Directed by Argentinian director Lucas Demare, both were Argentinian-Spanish productions and had foreign actors portraying Paraguayan citizens. *La sangre y la semilla* is the story of a poor widowed woman whose husband, a courageous and patriotic colonel, dies while defending their town from Brazilian occupation. While the husband, representing the Paraguayan bloodshed, dies fighting for the nation, she struggles to save her life and give birth to his child, the seed symbolizing the nation's future. *Hijo de hombre*, on the other hand, is inspired by the famous water carriers during the Chaco War. Cristóbal Jara, the male protagonist who is in love with a nurse working at the military hospital, is assigned the crucial task of transporting water to the Chaco desert where the troops are dying of thirst. Upon realizing that their love is not possible, Saluí, the former prostitute turned nurse, for whom Cristobal has fallen, decides to join him and help him achieve the mission. Although the task is accomplished, both lovers die. Their lives and love are sacrificed. Influenced by Italian neorealism, Demare's films depict the suffering and destruction produced by war. Shot in black and white and filmed in natural locations, they show the events of war as they happened. Both films take on pedagogic aims. The Paraguayan people, and even some enemies, are portrayed as helpless victims of the cruelty inflicted by the allied armies during the Triple Alliance War or victims of a brutal desert during Chaco War. Demare's films extol the role of the armed forces, which, just like *el pueblo*, are willing to die in the name of the Fatherland.

In Demare's films the military man becomes the ultimate hero. The woman realizes and accepts her sacrificing role in order to support her lover, whose first duty is to defend the nation. The films depict a harmonious relationship between citizen and state. The state forms patriotic citizens, who in the time of war, accept their task without hesitation. War becomes the crucial moment where allegiance to the Fatherland is proven. Like the soldiers, women are willing to die when faced with war. Framed within melodramatic tones, the narratives center on impossible love stories. In the time of war, love must be sacrificed. Through the figures of self-sacrificing Paraguayans, Demare creates epics centering on individual journeys of suffering and sacrifice. His characters become allegories of national heroism. In terms of style and formal language, both films follow traditional linear narratives that monumentalize the country's history and glorify the history of war. There is no discussion regarding the justification of war, because the sacrifice itself justifies it. These noble characters are born to defend the nation when it calls on them.[47]

Hamaca paraguaya emerged in a completely different political, economic, and social context. As a cinematic project responding and appealing to different conditions than those surrounding Demare's films, and of 1950s and 1960s films in general, the film does not illustrate or explains the war. Spectators will finish watching the movie knowing

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however, a 1932 documentary, *En el infierno del Chaco* by Argentinian doctor Roque Fuentes, composed of footage of the Paraguayan troops in the Chaco. These images were shot by Fuentes during his service with the Paraguayan side during the war. In 1994, Carlos Tarabal directed the TV series *Sombras de la noche* featuring an episode titled "Choferes del Chaco." It tells the story of surviving veterans of the war through reenactments of the veterans' memories. Finally, in 2001 Galia Giménez directed *Requiem para un soldado*, a film about a war veteran who returns to the Chaco. I have not been able to see Giménez's film.

[47] As mentioned, the films were foreign co-productions. Thus, Argentinian and Spanish actors play the main roles. This is no small detail. The fact that the main actors speak with foreign accents and Guaraní appears only as an ornament is a telling example of the historic precarious condition of Paraguay's cinematic industry.

almost as much as they knew about the conflict as when they started. Encina's experimentation produces a film where the war itself, as a territorial conflict and nation-building event, is not the central preoccupation. Instead of being presented as an epic, in *Hamaca paraguaya*, history is constructed from the most minute details of daily life—the almost forgotten lives of two *campesinos* in the middle of nowhere in rural Paraguay. Yet, spectators will not get to know these two individuals, at least from a visual perspective. The stationary and distant camera keeps them far away as if indifferent to the spectator. During the hammock sequences, the onscreen moments when both caracters interact, the fixed wide shots prevent any familiarity by refusing close-ups. Their facial features and gestures, which could incite recognition and empathy, remain indistinguishable. (Figure 1) The unconventionally long duration takes and the repetitive dialogues and sounds intensify a sense of estrangement. As for her intention behind the sequence duration choice, Encina explains:

> Throughout the writing process, I thought constantly about how cinema was showing less and less of what really happens to people. This really bothered me. I wanted to try to do just that, so when I wrote the script I decided before hand that each image would last as long as was necessary in order to be expressed, and not as long as it took someone to see it. (Riding 283)

Figure 1. *Hamaca paraguaya*, Cándida and Ramón shown in the film's first sixteen-minute sequence. Paz Encina, *Hamaca paraguaya*

The image assumes an unconventional autonomy because it dictates its own temporal duration. Encina employs minimal work with montage and uses no shot-reverse-shots. As such, the characters remain stuck in the same places and conversation topics. The plot moves forward at an extremely low pace. Even when both characters have learned about their son's death, their refusal to admit it to each other pulls the narrative back into a temporal stillness. Through an arrested rhythm, causing time to

move slow, the film acquires an effect of "sameness,"[48] because very little changes in terms of colors, sounds, and perspective. All these features intensify Cándida and Ramón's time of waiting. The film's language breaks with conventional film traditions associated with more mainstream, commercial filmmaking practices that appeal to character identification and action-derived plots. Encina does away with cinematic clichés. Reading Bergson, Deleuze defined the cliché as "a sensory-motor image… [As viewers] we do not perceive the thing or the image in its entirety, we always perceive less of it, we perceive only what we are interested in perceiving, or rather what it is in our interests to perceive, by virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands" (20). Deleuze argued for a restoration of the non-cliché image, whether by making the image visible in its entirety or by exposing its emptiness:

> Sometimes it is necessary to restore the lost parts, to rediscover everything that cannot be seen in the image, everything that has been removed to make it 'interesting'. But sometimes, on the contrary, it is necessary to make holes, to introduce voids and white spaces, to rarify the image, by suppressing many things that have been added to make us believe that we are seeing everything. (21)

Encina's minimal montage and shot-reverse-shots do not allow for the viewer to be sutured into the mise-en-scène. The result is twofold. First, the long duration exposes the "ellipsis" used in conventional cinema to "hide" a temporal totality (Margulies 22). Second, the necessity to "read"[49] the film, instead of providing a reading of it, makes the characters' time of waiting more evident, and this in turn, produces a feeling of prolonged viewing time. As for Cándida and Ramón, even when they no longer wait for Maximo's return, they remain there as if motionless. Sounds (of nature, voices, and silences) are just as significant because the aural elements function to suggest absence. Therefore, the spectral quality is created aurally. If the visual features succeed in transmitting a sense of temporal stillness, the aural also, and significantly, contributes to undoing the linear temporality. Emphasizing the absence of Máximo, his death, and his absent dead body, the aural specters continually conjure a haunting effect on the lives of Ramón and Cándida, making their mourning more evident and always present.

Cándida and Ramón begin the day at the hammock. After they leave, through minimal cross-cutting Encina shows them going about their daily tasks. He's harvesting the sugarcane; she does laundry by a creek. For a moment, they are shown among other people in what seems to be their break from the day's labors. Ramón sits next to three men whose voices can barely be heard, while Cándida rests quietly, joined by other women and children. These are poignant moments. The disturbingly prolonged calmness portrayed by the motionless characters in these theatre-like sequences sharply contrasts with the unseen (but always present) suggested war taking place in the Chaco. For a

[48] Ivone Margulies refers of "sameness" to describe the "materiality" and "presence accumulation" resulting from sequence duration and lack of shot-reverse-shots in *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. The repetitive daily activities of Jean Dielman, Akerman's protagonist, constitute different registers of sameness: the reappearance of (material) objects that are part of her day-to-day ritual (69).
[49] Encina wanted viewers to assume "the task of deducing [the characters'] intentions and emotions [and] feel obligated to 'read' the film'" (Encina Riding 285).

second time, Cándida and Ramón return to the hammock, only to leave again. Inmeditately, for the second time, cross-cutting is employed. Ramón takes Máximo's dog to the veterinarian; Cándida sits by the oven. At the end of the day, they return to the hammock for a third time and remain there until dusk. The film ends when they go home to sleep.

All certainties regarding what is taking place in the narrative, that is the events in the lives of Cándida and Ramón on June 14, 1935, are communicated visually. The sound, however, introduces a different temporality, asynchronous from the visual. Although there is diegetic sound—the sounds of nature and even that of the characters' actions occurring visually—, the voices are non-diegetic. The conversations between (on and off-screen) characters appear as voice-over. The use of voice-over establishes the ambiguity so fundamental for the film. Once the first minute and forty-three seconds go by and Ramón and Cándida start talking, it is still dark and their faces are not visible. However, as the day clears and throughout their constant returns to the hammock, they remain so distant that it is impossible to identify any facial expressions, including any movements of their mouths. Given the distanced camera position, it is not clear if the voices originate from the images the viewer is seeing. Film sound theorist Michel Chion marks a distinction between non-diegetic sound and what he terms *acousmatic* (offscreen) sound. While the former is a sound "situated in another time and another place than the events directly represented," the latter, the *acousmêtre*, is "sound that is relative to what is shown in the shot, sound whose source is invisible" (Chion 72, 217). The voices in *Hamaca paraguaya* can be considered both, since the source is not visible. Although some conversations take place in a different place and time from that of the image, in the hammock sequences this is not clear.

The film suggests a temporal ambiguity precisely by refusing to show the origin of the voices. In the sequences at the hammock, the conversations could be taking place in the present—Ramón and Cándida speaking to each other in real time—,but they could just as well be memories of their past or even imagined conversations. If the conversations are memories, their waiting and uncertaintly about the war and Maximo's fate are even more torturous. The ambiguity suggests that Máximo's absence and its specters are always present, always haunting them. This is relevant especially in the hammock scenes when the conversation returns to the same topics over and over. In addition, the repetitious diegetic sounds also contribute to the sense of temporal stillness: the dog's barking, the animals in the woods, and the menacing thunder. Their continuous presence foregrounds Máximo's absence and the dreadful weather he faces in the Chaco. Incessant reminders of this absence, particularly once both characters know that Máximo probably died, these sounds reveal the persistence of the past on the present in Cándida's and Ramón's lives. Máximo's absence impedes them from moving forward. They refuse to move forward.

The spectral element in the film intensifies when voices belonging to off-screen characters enter the narrative. These voices appear on four occasions: 1) when Máximo says goodbye to Cándida and then to Ramón; 2) when the mailman informs Cándida about Máximo's death; 3) when the veterinarian tells Ramón about the end of the war, at which moment the latter realizes that Máximo is not coming back. As the revenant that begins by coming back, these voice-over conversations unexpectedly return to interrupt Cándida and Ramón's day. This day is, after all, two days after the end of a war that

lasted three years. Yet these voices, as apparently uncontrollable memories, impose a temporal disruption on their lives suggesting that these characters have remained in a time of waiting since the day their son left. Representing a spectral return, these conversations directly counter the linearity imposed by the day's passing. The scenes with Ramón in the sugar cane plantation and Cándidad by the oven are illustrative. They last over 5 and 7 minutes respectively.

In the first scene, Ramón is alone. His back turned to the audience, he cuts down the sugar canes. For the first time in the film, the minimal use of close-ups reveal part of his face from a closer distance. Yet, his features remain unrecognizable. Seen in profile, the face remains in the dark. (Figures 2 and 3). The image is accompanied by the diegetic sounds of birds and Ramon's machete striking the canes. Suddenly, the voice-over conversation between him and Máximo begins. It is Máximo's farewell:

Ramón: Vení mi hijo, vamos a tomar tereré.
Máximo: Tengo miedo papá…
Ramón: El que tiene miedo se muere pronto. Tenés que ser rápido para no dejarte agarrar. Seguro que vas a volver mi hijo.
Máximo: Es una guerra papá…
Ramón: Eso no te es extraño. Nosotros los pobres siempre estamos en guerra. No puede durar mucho la guerra…
Máximo: ¿Y si me muero? Yo me quiero cambiar de nombre papá.
Ramón: Pero mi hijo, ¿qué lo que decís?
Máximo: Eso es lo que voy a hacer.
Ramón: ¿Qué lo que decís?
Máximo: Así si me muero, mamá no va a saber…
Ramón: No te cambies de nombre. Tu nombre es mi nombre también. Vos vas a volver.
Máximo: Parece que va a llover papá. Estamos hace rato esperando esta lluvia.
Ramón: A lo mejor vas a estar para la cosecha y haremos todo juntos, como siempre.
Máximo: Mamá no quiere que me vaya.
Ramón: Tu mamá es mujer mi hijo… no entiende de estas cosas pero tenés que ir a defender tu patria, vos sos un hombre. Vas a estar bien mi hijo… pronto va a llover y esta lluvia va a llegar al Chaco y por lo
menos, van a tener agua…
Máximo: Cuídale mucho a mamá…
Ramón: No hables así mi hijo.
Máximo: Papá, yo ya me quiero despedir de vos…
Ramón: No le llames a la muerte, vos vas a volver mi hijo.
Máximo: Yo ya me voy papá.
Ramón: No te vas a morir mi hijo… andá confiado…

Figures 2 and 3. *Hamaca paraguaya*: Ramón harvesting the sugar canes while Maximo's good-bye to him is heard. Paz Encina, *Hamaca paraguaya*

The fact that, as the film suggests, Ramón remembers the last time he saw and spoke to his son precisely when he performs his daily labor is a significant gesture. This is the place where Ramón spends the majority of his time, where he and Máximo would be harvesting together if it were not for the war. At this moment, Ramón does not know that the war ended. He learns about the Paraguayan victory later when he speaks to the veterinarian. The appearance of Máximo's voice through the memory of his farewell reveals two important facts: Máximo's fear of going to fight and the fact that Ramón's insistent comments about the imminent rain are, in reality, the manifestation of his preoccupation for the lack of water in the Chaco. Historically, the lack of acess to water caused the greatest number of casualties on both sides during the war. The appearance of Maximo's last words emphasizes Ramón's never-ending wait. If Máximo left when the war began in 1932, then Ramón and Cándida have been waiting and suffering for three long years. "*Andá confiado*" (have faith), he says. Faith has kept Ramón going, just as he hoped it would for Máximo.

Ramón's attitude in this conversation suggests that war is not a strange phenomenon: "*nosotros los pobres siempre estamos en guerra.*" The phrase is especially evocative of Paraguay's history of war and revolutions. The story takes place in 1935; therefore, it can be assumed that Ramón has witnessed a significant part of this history: the Triple Alliance War and the successive revolutions that followed. Defending one's country (*tenés que ir a defender tu patria*) is what the men before him had to do. As an affair of the nation and a man's personal obligation, war is what men do. Nothing can be done against facing the duty of fighting. War becomes an inherited, uncontestable obligation for Paraguayans. There is, however, one thing they have control over. They can have faith and hope for the best. They can hope for the rain, a short war, and Máximo's return. In having faith, there is also an implied denial of death. Refusing to "tempt death" means that Máximo could and would return. In the denial of death, the ghost (Maximo's ghost) returns. The return manifests the inability to move forward.

The second scene, showing Cándida's conversation with the unknown mailman is just as powerful and effective. Sitting by the oven, outdoors, a pensive Cándida fans her face and attends to the burning coals. Loud thunders sound in the background, always reminding about the rain that never seems to come. In this scene, for the third and last time, Encina resorts to close-ups. (Figure 4) Nothing in Cándida's expression gives away the tragedy she is going through. Unexpectedly, the voice-over dialogue begins:

Cartero: ¿Me puede decir qué pueblo es éste?
Cándida: ¿Acaso no sabés dónde te vas?
Cartero: Estoy caminando hace mucho. Es muy lejos, cuesta saber donde uno está.
Cándida: ¿Y por qué no preguntás en otro lado? Como si uno tuviera que saber todo. ¿Y qué es lo que querés saber?
Cartero: Dónde está la casa de la familia Caballero. ¿Conoce a algún familia
del soldado Máximo Caballero?
Cándida: ¿Y vos quién sos? ¿Para qué querés saber eso?
Cartero: Soy un cartero señora. Se me ocupa para eso.
Cándida: Mi hijo era Máximo Ramón Caballero.
Cartero: ¿Usted es familiar del soldado Máximo Caballero?
Cándida: Máximo Ramón Caballero.
Cartero: El soldado Máximo Caballero murió…en el frente.
Cándida: Pero mi hijo se llama Máximo Ramón Caballero.
Cartero: ¿Era su hijo patrona?
Cándida: ¿Y cómo se murió?
Cartero: En el corazón, le agarró una bala…
Cándida: ¿En qué parte?
Cartero: En el corazón, un poco hacia la izquierda…
Cándida: Y qué voy a saber yo donde es la izquierda. ¿Dónde es la izquierda?
Cartero: ¿Es su hijo patrona?
Cándida: Mi hijo tenía el corazón en el medio del pecho. Yo le tocaba a la noche cuando era chico. ¿Vos viste su camisa?

Cartero: Aquí le traje patrona, me dieron por si quería…tiene agujero…casi en el medio… ¿Es su hijo mi patrona?

Cándida: Todos los hombres que viven en este lugar se llaman igual. No es ese mi hijo… Llevá ese papel de acá. ¡Y esa camisa de porquería tirá por ahí…quién va a querer la camisa de su hijo!

Figure 4. *Hamaca paraguaya*: Cándida sitting by the oven as her conversation with the mailman is heard. Paz Encina, *Hamaca paraguaya*

This scene conjures a crucial temporal ambiguity. This is the moment when Cándida learns about Máximo's death,[50] yet she remains in denial by refusing to accept the proof, Máximo's shirt. Despite her rejection of the mailman's version, she slips and speaks about Máximo in the past tense. Cándida continues to deny what she knows about the war, even when Ramón asks her about it. In the last sequence, she expresses her lack of hope, perhaps as a result of learning about Máximo's death prior to that moment. All this, however, is speculative, because there is no certainty regarding when her conversation with the mailman takes place. He could have arrived that very same day, on June 14, two days after the end of the war, or he could have come before. The uncertainty regarding how long Cándida has known about Máximo's death, once again, reinforces a spectral repetition.

In the final hammock sequence, after both have learned that Máximo will not return, the haunting, which before was produced by his absence and longed for return, is now the result of an absent dead body. Máximo is dead, but there is no body to grieve. "I want my son to come back," says Cándida. Ramón asks: "what if we're mistaken?" What

[50] Encina keeps the use of cross editing to a minimum, three times during the whole film. It is implied that when the characters are by themselves, the actions are occurring at the same time: Ramón is at the plantation, while Cándida washes dishes; later, while Cándida sits by the oven, Ramón is at the veterinarian's house.

exactly do they refer to? Do they want Máximo's dead body? Are they mistaken about his death or about insisting on denying to each other what they know? Or, do they still have faith in the he will come back? Perhaps none of this matters. The violence that the war has inflicted cannot be undone. Their loss cannot be repaired.

The spectral logic, the haunting of the revenant "thing" that will come back, has inscribed onto itself a past and future temporality. As Derrida points out, "repetition *and* first time" is what gives meaning to spectrality (10). As a non-present presence and as absence that "is there," Máximo returns as Ramón and Cándida as they go about their day. Especially if they have been waiting for three years, it is implied that the same moment, Máximo's departure, returns to haunt them in their most mundane every day activities. In the same way that memories come up to disrupt their everyday, every thunder, every barking, and every silence brings Máximo's absence into presence. The spectral 'repetition and first time' produces the temporal stillness in which the characters are trapped. As a spectral revenant, Máximo's absence appears always there, expected. Yet it is also unexpected. It emerges for the first time, every time that the sounds and silences continually, uncontrollably and unexpectedly, conjure it. The aural emphasizes the past's irruption in the present.

Film as Critique

What outcome can come from the spectral operation and the temporal stillness suggested by the film? How can one move beyond a state of "living with the specters," beyond a pure melancholic condition? Encina's film points to a more critical approach towards specific historical processes, and in this case, towards progressive historical narratives and temporalities that war sets in motion. The spectral operation concept is helpful to think through historical narratives. In order to achieve this, as the use of unconventional techniques make manifest, more than a system of representation, cinematic language becomes an instrument of critique.

In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Mary Anne Doane explores transformations in the perception of time in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about by modernity and the effects of industrialization. This period was marked by the rationalization of time. As exemplified by the development of railroads, the telegraph, and the division of time into 24 world zones, time became standardized and homogeneous. According to Doane, modernity produced an obsession with efficiency, strict management, and the elimination of waste (5). Rationalizing time "d[id] not allow for the vicissitudes of the affective, for the subjective play of desire, anxiety, pleasure, trauma, apprehension" and, in the case of *Hamaca paraguaya*, I would add waiting (11).

Doane examines the ways in which the cinema engaged in this rationalization by looking at the actuality genre and the transformations in the representation of the contingent in film: "In an actuality, the time that is excluded or elided is constituted as 'dead time'—time which, by definition, is outside the event… '[D]ead time'—time in which nothing happens, time which is in some sense 'wasted,'—expended without product—is the condition of a conceptualization of the 'event'" (159- 160). Opposed to a "rationalized" time, contingency "offer[ed] a vast reservoir of freedom and free play, irreducible to the systematic structuring of 'leisure time'" (11). Contingency posed a

form of resistance to rationalization impulses that sought to contain and structure time. The appearance of technologies of representation such as film and photography took part in this structuring process. Precisely due to its "indexical" quality, film "promised the rematerialization of time—the restoration of a continuum of space in photography, of time in the cinema" (10). For Doane the transition from the actuality genre, prevalent in early film, to the development of narrative is the cinema's effort to rationalize contingency, where purposeful linearity becomes fundamental for its efficiency. The narrative and linear event become cinema's way to "harness" contingency and eliminate waste (144). Time in cinema is organized to serve the objectives of narrative.

The actuality was defined by "excess," "indeterminacy," and limitless duration. (Narrative) Cinema, however, was not. Its principal aim was to structure the contingent (the random and the accidental) into a meaningful contained form. The development of narrative in film, which privileged linearity and the event, is for Doane, the cinema's effort to rationalize contingency (dead time). The event becomes cinema's way of "harnessing" contingency to overcome its lack of meaning as represented by dead time. The event gives meaning to contingency (144). Viewed from this perspective, *Hamaca paraguaya*'s rejection of the eventful and "purposeful linearity," characteristic of the cinema's rationalization of time, exposes the uneventful thereby subjecting the spectator to the "non-narrative" (or "pre-narrative") dead time. While *Hamaca paraguaya* is clearly not an actuality, the hammock sequences, in particular, evoke an "unharnessed" contingency, where "wasted time" is preferred over the eventful narrative. The exacerbated long duration and real time shooting gesture to a "dead time" that becomes fundamental to comprehend the characters' experience.

Hamaca paraguaya returns to this early cinematic tradition by refusing linearity and the eventful narrative. The long duration shots emphasize the contingencies of the quotidian experience; the "eventless" day-to-day as told by the image. The experience of time is not rationalized and by the end does not imply a "resolute linearity." Ramón and Candida's day seems to be just like any other day since their son left, their lives confined to waiting. For Doane, the existence of a "task-oriented sense of time," prior to the industrialized "rationalization" of time, did not distinguish between "work" and "life." Seen under a non-rationalized conception of time, the excess duration in the hammock sequences, which make up 54 out of the 78 minutes of the film, acquire a revealing character. It demands a more active spectator who must paying attention to every silence, sound, and frame within the shots. Encina's choice for the uneventful achieves an unconventional experience of (cinematic) time by exposing the hidden totality often neglected by conventional film, or what Deleuze calls the cliché. The aural and visual in *Hamaca paraguaya* is emptied of conventional visual and temporal clichés. Emphasizing an uneventful duration, the film brilliantly captures a contingent quality of life. The lives of these Paraguayan parents, defined by an eternal waiting, are not subjected to rationalization. It doesn't matter if the war ended or who won. The contingent finds refuge in Encina's film.

Reflecting on the role of cinema in a post-WWII era, Gilles Deleuze called attention to the image's ability "to make visible relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented object" (xii). He envisioned post-WWII cinema "no longer [as] an undertaking of recognition [*reconnaisance*], but of knowledge [*connaisance*], 'a science of visual impressions, forcing us to forget our own logic and retinal habits'" (18-19).

Hamaca paraguaya's radicalness is perhaps what Deleuze had in mind. The film no longer seeks to "recognize," that is represent, the Chaco War. Instead, it uses the event of war as attempt to understand the nation's historical process and its consequences on national identity and the possibilities for overcoming the traumas of history. The spectral operation in the film invites reflections about temporal relations that allow for ways to critically approach and speak of the narratives of history, progress, and modernity that have conditioned the present.

Paraguay: The Role of War in the Historiographic Task

Hamaca paraguaya's characters, in their stillness and silence, signal to the isolation and invisibility that characterizes the history of Paraguay. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Paraguay experienced catastrophic external and countless internal wars, and two of the longest and dictatorships witnessed in Latin America. The isolation and invisibility extends to the cultural field. Due to the political instability and the dire social and economic conditions that followed as a result, incentivizing cultural practices was never a priority. The relatively small cultural production and its lack of circulation internationally, particularly in the last half of the twentieth century, is a telling example. Especially during Stroessner's regime (1954-1989), censorship and persecution crippled cultural and artistic expression. Except for the celebrated literary works by Augusto Roa Bastos, Paraguayan cultural production remained obscured beyond national frontiers. Roa Bastos produced his works in exile.

While devastating, war has also inspired efforts to counter this isolation and invisiblity. War and its aftermath have give rise to discourses and narratives of the nation's history. In the period following the Triple Alliance War, for example, an influential group of intellectuals, known as *Generación del 900*, inaugurated Paraguayan historiography, in which war functioned as a force defining national character and legitimizing the nation. From within historiographic discourses, intellectuals gave account for the nation's progress and failure. In their articulations of history, a linear historical progression of presidential (military) heroes were presented as the pillars on which national history stood. (Figures 5 and 6) History, then, is perceived as a lineage where strong male individuals are entrusted with the task of the leading the nation-building project. War provides the stage for this task to be accomplished. Part of the nation-building process has entailed the defense of Paraguayan way of life threatened by external powers. Defending the nation's sovereignty requires not only a military heroic figure but also the sacrifice of the Paraguayan people. In these historiocal narratives that glorify the past and the national heroes, war gives meaning and visibility to the nation.

Figure 5. Francisco Solano López ("El Mariscal"), president and commander of the Paraguayan Armed Forces during the Triple Alliance War. Solano López is one of the most celebrated national heroes due to his leadership during the conflict. His death, in the hands of Brazilian soldiers, is perceived as symbolic of the nation's heroic struggle and resistance. Painting by Juan Manuel Blanez (1864). Image taken from the website Cultura Paraguay (http://www.cultura.gov.py/lang/es-es/2011/07/el-mariscal-lopez-vuelve-a-su-palacio/)

Figure 6. Salvador Cabañas, former member of the national soccer team, featured in war themed TV ads celebrating Paraguay's participation in the 2010 World Cup competition in South Africa. Like the "Mariscal" during the Triple Alliance War, Cabañas was in charged of leading national team to victory. Source: 2010 television ad for the phone company Personal.

In the aftermath of the Trilpe Alliance War, in addition to the destruction of the country's economic, social, and political fabric, the national historical archives and much of the cultural patrimony had also been ruined.[51] As historian Nidia Areces indicates, in the wake of the conflict, Paraguayans had to face the disappearance of the "archivos del Estado y bibliotecas; la destrucción de lugares de memoria colectiva, como monumentos y símbolos nacionales; y restricciones como la prohibición del uso del idioma guaraní" (193). Blaming president Francisco Solano López for the defeat, the political leadership promoted anti-López sentiment and rejected his nationalistic ideology and policies.[52] The postwar period demanded a national reconstruction at all levels. On the cultural front, intellectuals were faced with the challenge of assessing the impact of the defeat on culture and collective identity. The task was left to the generation of men grew up in the postwar. The most influential intellectual group were the *novecentistas*, also known as *Generación del 900*.[53] They set out to create a historiography that explained the nation from the side of the defeated, a historiography inexistent at that moment.[54] The

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[51] In 1870, a sacked and abandoned Asunción remained as the only urban center. Once the war ended, the countryside population flooded into the capital. The city, however, was in no condition to receive and provide for the thousands of people overpopulating it. The image of Asunción, the country's capital, is illustrative of the disastrous conditions inflicted by the war. Historian Liliana Brezzo describes it: "[the massive exodus and resettlement of Asunción] provocó una superpoblación en la capital que, de estar totalmente deshabitada, pasó a tener entre enero y marzo de 1869, alrededor de 14,000 personas, entre militares y civiles. Esto obligó al gobierno provisorio, instalado en el mes de agosto del mismo año, a decretar una serie de traslados compulsivos—sobre todo de los desamparados y sin sustento—a campos vecinos. Tal conglomerado urbano hizo aumentar la mortalidad, las epidemias y la miseria. El fenómeno de la mendicidad llegó a su extremo entre aquellos que pertenecieron a la clase más pobre, al no conseguir volver a su casa ni establecerse de nuevo. (Reparación 200-1)

[52] Carlos Antonio López, Francisco's father, ruled Paraguay from 1840-1862. His government is celebrated for establishing liberal economic policies that achieved economic progress and streghtened the position of Paraguay in the region. Carlos A. López oversaw the creation of the railway system, telegraph lines as well as the growth of maritime and iron industries (Lambert Introduction 6). Upon his death, Francisco, his son, witnessed the end of the nationalist period. For his detractors, Francisco's imperial aspirations to extend his powers beyond national frontiers were to blame for Paraguay's defeat in the Triple Alliance War. His supporters, on the other hand, celebrated his courage and nationalist ideal. The political factions that consolidated during the 1870s and 1880s were constituted of men who had opposed Francisco Solano Lopez's government and fought alongside the allied forces. From of this generation, in 1887, emerged the Liberal and Colorado Party, Paraguay's most important political parties until today. The postwar reconstruction period was plagued by chaos and political turmoil. As scholars Andrew Nickson and Peter Lambert write: [t]he whole period from 1870 to 1940 was marked by a tumultuous series of coups, countercoups, palace "revolutions," and two-day presidencies, as rival groups within each party fought over the rich pickings to be gained from association with the foreign economic interest that soon came to dominate the country. Altogether, thirty-eight presidents ruled during this seventy-year period. (Recovery 129-130)

[53] The members included: Blas Garay (1873-1899), Juan O'Leary (1879-1969), Manuel Domínguez (1868-1935), Fulguencio Moreno (1872-1933), Arsenio López Decoud (1867-1945), Ignacio Pane (1879-1929), Eligio Ayala (1879-1930), Manuel Gondra (1871-1927), Gualberto Cardús huerta (1878-1932), the Spaniards Viriato Díaz Pérez and Rafael Barrett, the Russian Rodolfo Ritter, the Argentinian Martín Goicoechea Menéndez, and the Swiss Moisés Bertoni (Brezzo 23). For more on the *Generación del 900* and their contribution to Paraguayan historiography see Liliana M. Brezzo's essays "'Reparar la nación': Discursos históricos y responsabilidades nacionalistas en Paraguay," "La historia y los historiadores," and "Reconstrucción, poder político y revolucines (1870-1920)."

[54] Brazilian historian Horatio Doratioto claims that from the generation of men who fought in the war—especially those on the side of the victors—emerged what became the traditional historiography regarding

experience of war, an event that left the country in a state of chaos, inspired reflections on the nation's character and history. War became the catalyst for the nation to "invent" itself both literally and intellectually.

Paraguayan historiography was born with the *Generación del 900*. Its members recognized the urgent necessity to make sense of the chaos and turmoil that followed the war. Through their journalistic endeavors, which included the creation of the Instituto Paraguayo and the *Revista Instituto Paraguayo*, the *novecentistas* promoted intellectual debates to address topics like the state, culture, and identity. Historian Liliana Brezzo's explains that the *novencentistas*'s work sought to answer "*¿qué había sido, qué era y qué debía ser el Paraguay*?" (Reparar 197). *Novecentistas* identified with the Colorado Party and opposed liberals whom they perceived as favoring the foreign interests that controlled the country after the war. This gesture is significant because these authors, and texts they produced, became foundational for national historiography. In their works, war is illustrated as the epic that legitimized the actions of the national heroes, and at the same time, set in motion a forward-moving temporality associated with progress.

Juan O'Leary, a journalist, poet, and historian, and one of the generation's most prominent members, wrote extensively about the war and transformed it, "from a national catastrophe to a heroic national defense—the epic encounter of the Paraguayan nation" (Lambert and Nickson 104). For O'Leary's the war interrupted Paraguay's modernization and progress. Within this new historiography, the modernization period of the pre-war era takes on a mythical dimension, where the war is an attempt to halt (and destroy) Paraguayan progress. Consequently, in his writings there is a sense of a yearning to return to that Golden Age period. Referring to O'Leary's undertakings, Brezzo asserts:

> La guerra, en cuanto causa de destrucción de ese ideal comunitario y fraternal realizado en su plenitud es un núcleo importante y persistente en [su] discurso histórico … [O'Leary] no hablará ya de alcanzar, o conseguir o imponer objetivos para la sociedad de su época, sino de recuperar algo que en el pasado ya se tuvo, una situación ideal—independencia, unidad, autonomía—que un día fue suya y otros le arrebataron ilegítimamente. Por ello, de este mito de la edad de oro devendrá el llamado mito del eterno retorno. (Recuperar 230)

O'Leary recovers the recent past by writing about the war as national struggle that demanded the sacrifice of every man, woman, and child. War is justified as the ultimate fight to save Paraguayan "community and fraternity." O'Leary's depictions of the heroism shown by Paraguayans during the war are particularly telling. The following is his description of the battle of Piribebuy:

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the causes and development of the conflict. This narrative, he adds, "simplificou a explicação do conflito ao ater-se as características pessoais de Solano Lopez, classificado como ambicioso, tirânico e, mesmo, quase desequilibrado. Essa caracterização não estava longe da realidade e pode ate explicar certos momentos da guerra, mas não sua origem e sua dinâmica" (19). Therefore, *novecentistas* were confronted with the imposition of a historical narrative that paralleled the allied countries' actions to an intervention against Francisco Solano López, regarded as a tyrant willing to sacrifice his own people. Brezzo describes their project as "el primer relato de *los vencidos*" (Reparar 228).

> The soldiers from the three nations, those war-weary troops of the Triple Alliance, were unable to escape the fury of those desperate women. Their bayonets and swords were no match for such an enemy. Blinded by the sand in their eyes, they struck out uselessly into thin air, while the heroines of Piribebuy bloodied their hands, wreaking vengeance on behalf of those who had fallen. … How did it end, this struggle between men who fought like women and women who fought like men? The heroines of Piribebuy were wiped out, almost to the last one. (107)

It is true that Paraguay's resources could not match the superiority of the alliance. However, the surprising prolongation of war is attributed, in addition to the conflicts between the allied forces and their limited knowledge of the Paraguayan territory, to the resilience of Paraguayans, which O'Leary captures this in his writing. In his chronicle of the battle of Piribebuy, women become the heroes who fight "like men" to defend their town. O'Leary's description of heroic female figure stands in start contrast to the female figure in *Hamaca paraguaya.* For Cándida, the war is nothing but senseless. There is no justification for her son to fight and she cannot accept the sacrifices demanded from her. Rather than exalting the ennobling values of the war, she can only account for the suffering it produces: "*A mí qué me importa esa guerra. Por mí que se mueran todos*."

Brezzo identifies two texts produced by members of the *Generación del 900 as* foundational within Paraguayan historiography: *Breve resumen de la historia del Paraguay* and *Álbum gráfico de la República de Paraguay: 100 años de vida independiente 1811-1911.* The former was written by the historian Blas Garay. The latter was a collaborative effort by the group. One of the generation's most active members, Blas Garay is credited with inaugurating Paraguayan historiography.[55] He undertook the task of copying all documents related to the nation's history found in the General Archive of the Indies. *Breve resumen de la historia del Paraguay* was his effort to provide an accurate national history, citing the protagonists, the dates, and anecdotes of the actions he recounts. Garay structured the text into three sections covering three periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and the republic.

Breve resumen de la historia del Paraguay depicts the war as conflict in which Paraguay forcefully entered to defend Uruguay from Brazilian and Argentinian invasion. For the Paraguayan government, headed by Francisco Solano López, the invasion posed a threat, not only to Uruguay but also to the Paraguayan state, a threat that materialized with the secretly formed alliance: "[La alianza pretendía] hacer la guerra al Paraguay; demoler todas sus fortificaciones; despojarle de todo su material bélico, y obligarle a celebrar tratados de límites, cuyas cláusulas se estipulaban en él con absoluto desprecio de nuestro derecho" (Garay 130). Like O'Leary, Garay describes the pre-war era as a Golden Age truncated by the conflict: "El Paraguay era por esta época una de las más fuertes potencias militares sud-americanas… Poseía la república un buen ejército, arsenales, fábricas de pólvora y balas, fundaciones de hierro, regular marina de guerra, ferrocarriles, escuelas numerosas, comercio próspero" (124-125). As narrated by Garay,

[55] Garay "inauguró… un modelo erudito de escribir la historia, apoyada en documentos. Se estaba ante el momento fundacional de la historiografía nacional paraguaya y puede afirmarse que, a partir de [sus] obras, los debates sobre las visiones del pasado adquirieron una relevancia singular y la producción historiográfica se acrecentó como nunca antes" (Brezzo Historia 23).

the sacrifice of the people legitimizes the power of Solano López's and his role as the sovereign: "La guerra había durado seis años, sin que el Paraguay recibiera en todo ese tiempo un solo fusil ni un solo tiro del extranjero, y durante ella perecieron las cuatro quintas partes de la población. La Gloria que por esta Resistencia empeñadísima, sobrehumana, corresponde a López" (139). A similar historical narrative is written in the *Álbum gráfico de la República de Paraguay: 100 años de vida independiente 1811-1911*.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of Paraguayan independence to be celebrated on May 14, 1911, in 1910 the editorial house Ramón Monte-Domecq y Cía. commissioned the creation of the *Álbum gráfico de la República de Paraguay*. Due to the political unrest of the time, the project was abandoned as some of the album contributors were active political figures. A year later, the *novecentista* Arsenio López Decoud resumed the task and published the *Album* in 1912.[56] The magnificent 533-page book provides one of the first comprehensive historical narratives of the nation. Also, in the more literal sense, it contains an impressive photographic collection, 4000 images in total. A true graphic history, the album is divided into sections of photographs detailing all aspects of Paraguayan life: "*Médicos Egresados de la Universidad Nacional*," "*Generales de la República*," "*Historia del Periodismo*," "*Estudiantes paraguayos en Francia* (*en Inglaterra y en Estados Unidos*)" "*Señoras, Señoritas y Niños de la Asunción*," etc. Presented as the "biography" of Paraguay's first hundred years, Decoud's introduces the aim of the project: "[dar] una impresión completa de lo que el Paraguay fué, de lo que es y puede ser" (7). Providing a glimpse of what Paraguay "was" implied exalting its heroic character. Not surprisingly, the album included a ninety-five-page history of the Triple Aliance War written by Juan O'Leary. War becomes the instrument that allows the survival of one-fifth of the population, who survive not despite war, but because of it. At the same time, it sets a new temporality—one from which a nation can only look forward, towards a future determined by progress:

> [el álbum] dirá que no fuimos la horda de bárbaros fanatizados, el "millón de salvajes" al que debió redimirse por la sangre y por el fuego. Que hicimos patria, que intereses poderosos nos la deshicieron y que la reconstruimos pacientemente. Pertenecemos á una raza inteligente y sobria, fuerte y valerosa, capaz de sufrir sin una queja las más duras privaciones y de llevar a cabo las más altas empresas en la paz como acabo las llevamos en la guerra. (Decoud 7)

Appearing in a moment of total chaos, as the immediate inheritors of the war's destruction, the *novecentitas* acted on the necessity to create a narrative of history that returned a sense of identity and pride. The group transformed defeatism into patriotism, by appealing to national identity and unity for which the experience of war became the cohesive force.[57] For the *novecentistas*, postwar Paraguay needed to be repaired and

[56] The *Album*'s sections include: "Reseña histórica," Blas Garay; "Reseña geográfica," Arsenio López Decoud; "Historia económica," Fulgencio R. Moreno; "La guerra de la Triple Alianza," Juan E. O'Leary; "Relaciones Internacionales," Cecilio Báez; "Periodismo en Paraguay," Enrique Solano López; "La capital de la república," Manuel Dominguez; "Inmigración y colonización después de la guerra," Fulgencio Moreno; "Intelectualidad Paraguaya," Ignacio Pane.

[57] Brezzo argues that due to the popular acceptance of revisionist historiography of the time, historians who offered alternative visions of history were marginalized and "tuvieron serias dificultades para ser leídos,

historical discourse became the medium to do so. The history of the country, its "biography," is articulated through narratives framed within notions of progress. The nation is associated with a prosperous past. Before the war Paraguay was a plentiful, modern, economically independent, and peaceful land. Regaining that greatness was the principle which would guide Paraguayans towards the future once again. A similar appeal to national "reconstruction" surfaced in the 1930s, when intellectuals and politicians embraced *novecentista* discourse to promote national unity and their own nationalist ideologies.[58]

The Absurdity of War

Even though Paraguay won the Chaco War,[59] a sense of loss continues to be associated with it. Because the war was fought in the desert, water became the most coveted possession. For both sides, the conflict became an absurd moment in history not only because of the economic devastation, but also because of the death suffered by troops in the the inhospitable desert.[60] For Paraguayans, the victory contributed to

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independientemente de la importancia y calidad de sus obras" (Historia 26). If the task of historiography was to contribute to the national reconstruction process, any alternative approach to the past "resultaba inadmisible" (26). Among the "marginalized" intellectuals, she identifies Hérib Campos Cervera, Juan Francisco Pérez Acosta, Gualberto Cardús Huerta, Teodosio Gonzáles, Eligio Ayala, and Rafael Barrett.

[58] Except that in subsequent periods, the appropriation of the *novencentistas*'s discourse served different objectives, namely the implementation of authoritarianism and the political consolidation of Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship. Following the Paraguayan victory in the Chaco War in 1935, governments prioritized the remembrance of this history. The result was a proliferation of accounts of military feats and achievements during the war. A veteran of the Chaco War, Alfredo Stroessner rose within military ranks in the postwar period playing a significant role in the 1947 revolution. In 1954, he led the coup that ultimately brought him to power, where he remained until 1989. During his time in power, known as the *stronato*, a historial narrative inspired by Juan O'Leary nationalistic discourse "pasó a tener una función «terapéutica», es decir, a ofrecer una visión idílica del pasado.… [S]e trató de una «historia belicista», ya que fueron las guerras el principal interés de los estudios históricos, relegando y marginando otros procesos de importancia para la comprensión del movimiento histórico" (Brezzo Historia 27). Stroessner presented himself as the leader who would finally achieve the peace and progress Paraguayans had not experienced in almost a century. Because the *stronato* based its legitimation on appeals to national identity, Stroessner emphasized his role, and that of the Armed Forces and the Colorado Party, as protectors of the nation's progress. Stronista adherents appropriated *novecentita* nationalism to promote the idea of national prosperity and to vilify political enemies. The isolationist policy that defined the dictatorship was justified by a nationalistic ideology, that projected Stroessner, the Colorado Party, and the Armed Forces as the "continuación de la línea histórica de los héroes nacionalistas" (Nickson Régimen 286).

[59] Bolivians suffered approximately 70,000 casualties. Bolivia lost ¾ of the Chaco territory, which had been disputed by both countries long before it was suspected to hold oil reserves. Decades before the war began, Blas Garay had attempted to find official documentation that confirmed Paraguay's possession of the Chaco. This was one of his objectives while researching the General Archive of the Indies (Brezzo Reparar 213).

[60] This sacrifice is the central theme in José Marín Cañas's *El infierno del Chaco*, one of the earliest novels written about the war. Published in 1934, the novel is the fictitious diary written by a Paraguayan soldier, who dies of thirst in the Chaco. Said to be found next to the author's dead body, the "cuaderno" gives account of the horrors encountered by the troops. More than being the by-product of combat, the violence is inflicted by nature. The young soldiers battle against a merciless jungle, where many of them die of heat, thirst, and malaria. Cañas's protagonist experiences the terror when he faces the dead body of a comrade: "Tengo que irme. Ya huele. El hedor se cuelga de las ramas de la selva. Llevo de bastón un bejuco y

strengthening the nationalist spirit. Having won the war attested to the strength of national character. Consequently, and once again, war became symbolic of the nation's courage and resilience. *Hamaca paraguaya* provides a counter face of this (hi)story. It is a film about loss. The characters defy the resilience and pride associated with this history.

Hamaca paraguaya is anchored on a specific event, the Chaco War. More than a story of the actual conflict, however, the film invites a broader commentary regarding the justification of war in the name of a greater good. If the defense of sovereignty is the end the justifies the means of war, *Hamaca paraguaya* points to a crisis. The Paraguayan case, and the historical discourses that the war precipitated are useful to understand this crisis. While Ramón does encourage Máximo to go defend the country, there is nothing triumphant about war. The war has been won, but there are no flags, soldiers, or heroes. There are only two parents, tortured by the absence and possible death of their son. The war is divested of its nobility. The nation is completely absent, as if existing far away from this space, a nation that does not include them and yet demands their sacrifice. No progress comes from war. The victory or any visions of future progress do not reach Ramón and Cándida. The film's commentary is powerful. Isolated and forgotten in a most remote area, the characters are invididuals living a history that repeats itself. Encina's representation of war signals a type of layered history—of isolation, devastation, solitude—which the characters live time and again. A commentary of Paraguayan history, Encina's characters inhabit a historical stagnation of a country that, remains the same, in the same place, for too long.

Specifically regarding the historiographical task during Stroessner's dictatorship, the regime imposed a "disciplinary isolationism" (*aislamiento disciplinar*) that impeded the circulation of "nuevas y recientes formas de hacer historia [y] la libre circulación de historiadores…[Existió también una] limitación de intercambios intelectuales y [se restringió la consulta de] documentos posteriores a 1870 en los archivos públicos" (Brezzo Historia 29). The regime's imposed silence and censorship conditioned historical thinking and condemned it to stagnation and uncritical approaches. Consequently, the emergence in 2006 of *Hamaca paraguaya* was not inconsequential given the subject and its approach to Paraguayan history. The film suggests a temporal (spectral) perspective through which history and the nationalistic narratives that have impacted Paraguayan way of life can be questioned. In the film, war becomes non-idealized and unheroic. Its intervention proposes a spectral conscience that allows for a future liberated from a melancholic and oppressive relation to the past.

Opposed to glorifications, Paz Encina approaches the experience of war through the figure of the specter—through absence (and the absent dead body) that returns to haunt the present. Spectrality is instrumental for the exploration of war, and ultimately of history. History emerges from the most intimate, private, and minimal space and time. The story of two almost forgotten *campesinos* stands against justifications of war in the name of a nation. Collective identity has been forged in the history of war. From war surge, time and again, (hi)stories of heroes—courageous patriotic leaders—plotted into a national lineage of guardians of the nation. In relation to war, Encina's film opts for no-

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avanzo a tientas. Voy a cruzar la selva, aunque me quede pegado a ella. Voy a romper las carnes violentas de la jungla para llegar al río. Si alcanzo el Pilcomayo, me salvo. Si llego a las cañadas de Tarija, me salvo. Hoy he comido un pedazo de tierra. He dejado a Rodríguez solo. Si me quedo junto a él, termino por chuparle un poco de sangre" (178).

representation. The film shows no nationalistic epics or greater than life sacrificing figures. This is no inconsequential decision.

In *Hamaca paraguaya*, the experience of war becomes liberating from totalizing narratives. Removing all direct representations—no war front, no soldier, no dead body, no monuments—Encina precludes associations with the nationalist rhetoric that has defined history. These parents are two lonely people trying to deal with a loss that does not make sense; they are facing a war that does produce a sense of national, collective, pride. If these are two Paraguayans who could be any Paraguayan, Encina is not presenting an epic from which an understanding of national identity rises. There is no resolution to make sense of the loss. On the contrary, Cándida and Ramón's quotidian experience as defined by their uneventful, slow, day confronts viewers with a seemingly everlasting time of waiting. The film's temporal representation results in temporal stillness exacerbated by a continuous return that suggests a temporal accumulation, a constant wait, as if history keeps returning to the same place and the same psychological condition. *Hamaca paraguaya* points to a historical stagnation—to a layered history that interrupts (contradicts) historical linearity. It brings into evidence fragments and dissenting voices that do not fit within these narratives. Most importantly, it illustrates the haunting effect—an experience of suffering and isolation (and political precariousness)—that war does not account for.

Spectral Conscience and the Politics of *Hamaca paraguaya*

In his review of *Hamaca paraguaya,* film critic Horacio Bernades described it as a film that "speaks about a stillness: the historic stillness that makes a country remain motionless throughout a century" (n.p.). His opinion echoes Encina's feelings towards Paraguayan history and the film's temporality as her attempt to illustrate them:

> It seems to me that Paraguay keeps living the same history – with slight variations, but the same one – and I think that this is because the Paraguayan lives in an eternal state of nostalgia for a time in the past that may not have been any better, but at least had one advantage: it was in the *past.*…I wanted to find the moment between a past that had come to an end and a future that was exactly the same, an after exactly the same as the before. (Riding 277)

In the film, spectrality alludes to this historical stillness. Spectrality imposes a temporal disruption and through this process a spectral conscience emerges to challenge foundational and teleological modes of thinking. Through a spectral conscience, the film gestures toward the act of re-living the same history, which has shaped the nation's identity and historical isolation. And while the film transmits the overwhelming impact that the past (and its violence) has on the present, there is also a hint of a moment of liberation, the possibility of a different future. It comes at the end of the film when the characters are not on screen. It its most dissenting moment, the film suggests the possibility of futurity that breaks with the time in wating defining the characters' every day. In the final minutes of the film, Ramón and Cándida leave the hammock and go back

to their house to "rest." Taking with them their hammock and the lamp, they disappear in the distance. It is night and completely dark. Suddenly, it rains and the sound of the rain falling intensifies gradually. The rain that both characters had been waiting for, the rain that will fall on the Chaco and alleviate the heat, finally comes. The viewer no longer sees the characters' reaction. This is important considering the great expectation and desperation that has been produced by the anticipation of rain. Even though Cándida and Ramón are not there to express how they feel, there is a sense of relief, as if the rain breaks with the monotony and the repetitiveness of the day. The rain signals a transformation. It hints that, perhaps, tomorrow will not be the same as today.

In *Politics Out of History,* political theorist Wendy Brown examines human agency and its potential for intervention in today's world where modernity, dominated by capital, produces anxieties regarding the forces and processes defining the course of history:

> On a daily basis we live the paradox that the most rapid-paced epoch in human history harbors a future that is both radically uncertain and profoundly beyond the grasp of the inhabitants of the present. Moving at such speed without any sense of control and predictability, we greet both past and future with bewilderment and anxiety. As a consequence, we inheritors of a disenchanted universe feel a greater political impotence than humans may have ever felt before. (138)

Brown claims that the degree of profound "political disorientation" characteristic of this "post-progress" era is the result of a continued challenging and erosion of the premises on which modernity was established: a teleological and progressive narrative of history, as well as the sovereign subject, and rights-based-freedom. The undermining and constant challenging of the (smooth and linear) progressive narratives of history as predicated by modernity has brought to light the fissures and injustices on which they were built. For Brown, this fact becomes evident when we pay attention to contemporary political articulations of the relationship between past and present: "[They] are most often figured through idealizations and demonizations of particular epochs or individuals on the one hand, and reparations and apologies for past wrongs on the other" (140). It seems that, like Benjamin's angel of history, humans find themselves at a crossroads: while there is a necessity to return to the traumas and injustices of the past, there is also a demand to intervene in a present and future driven by what Brown defines as "rushing aimlessness." Her thoughts concern conditions of dispossession and political disorientation and the possibilities for human agency to achieve a "more just, emancipatory, or felicitous future order."

As a way to formulate a "politics out of history," Brown re-contextualizes Derrida's dictum "learn to live" it in the contemporary moment. Thinking through the concept of hauntology, she articulates the possibility of an emancipatory process that restores a spectral "[historical] vision and a strong sense of [political] agency" (139). Learning to live with the specters must translate as a "responsible relation" with generations, past and future: where those living in the present become responsible for that

which has been "inherited" from the past.[61] Out of this inheritance a generative force can spring: "we inherit not 'what really happened' to the dead but what lives on from that happening, what is conjured from it, how past generations and events occupy the force fields of the present, how they claim us, and how they haunt, plague, and inspirit our imaginations and visions of the future" (Brown 150).

Brown's (and Derrida's) ideas illuminate on ways in which political agency can be activated from reconsiderations between present and future relationships to past suffering. Quoting Hamlet's line, "*The time is out of joint*," Derrida insisted on the incursion of spectrality in the modern condition. Similarly, for Brown, "out-of-jointness" suggests a time that is wearing badly: "a time whose languages have grown thin or hypocritical and whose practices have grown hollow, whose ideals are neither realized nor perhaps any longer suited to the age" (154). In the present "out-of-joint" modernity, where the ideologies and institutions that sustained the narratives of progress have been undermined, justice must be sought not in the law (Brown 154).[62] For Brown, justice, the "noncontemporaneous" Derridean kind, as praxis remains undefined concept, almost abstract. However, its relationship with "futurity" gives it potentiality:

> Justice in [Derrida's] text is less institutional or spatial than temporal: it pertains almost entirely to a practice of responsible relations between generations. Justice concerns not only our debt to the past but also the past's legacy in the present; it informs not only our obligation to the future but our responsibility for our (ghostly) presence in the future…. Justice demands that we locate our political identity between what we have inherited and what is not yet born, between what we can only imagine and the histories that constrain and shape that imagination…. [N]ot only must justice have futurity—it is what *makes* futurity. (Brown 173)

"Futurity" is perhaps the closest one can get to define justice in the face of political disorientation and social despair. If the specter demands us to become responsible mediating actors between past, present, and future, this responsibility generates forms of intervention in the course of history. The possibility and power of intervention promised by a spectral conscience can restore the sense of control over the "aimless" rush of history and its "progressive" narratives. And once again, I must refer to Encina's gesture and the appearance of *Hamaca paraguaya* in 2006. The film is about the devastation and tragedy of war. It is a profound examination of the impact of conflict and the dispossession it causes. The film is as much a commentary about the past, as it is about the present condition. It is a reflection into the nature of suffering and political precarity. *Hamaca paraguaya* points to condition of suffering and uncertainty as a normalized living condition. Ultimately, it confronts viewers to people invisible to the world, where no state or institution accounts for their wellbeing.

[61] Brown claims that history cannot be separated from memory since "being-with" the specters involves accounting for some type of "inheritance" from past generations (150).

[62] For Derrida, the law, with its discourses of "right, debt, vengeance, calculation," was no longer suited or capable to restore justice (Brown 154).

Conclusion

On the night of February 2, 1989, a popular and celebrated military coup forced Alfredo Stroessner out of the presidency. The coup, supported by a younger generation of political and military leaders who had grown discontent with Stroessner's policies, was announced as a necessary step for "la defensa de la democracia y por el respeto a los derechos humanos, pero también para asegurar la unidad y continuidad del coloradismo en el poder" (Abente Brun 295). Although the adoption of a new constitution in 1992 and the introduction of free elections heralded the transition to a new era, the Colorado Party remained in power into the first decade of the twenty-first century. As Nickson points out, the decades following the coup were marked by "bitter internal factionalism, a series of banking crises, economic mismanagement, a dismal democratization process, military instability," corruption and the dominant presence of a powerful elite in the political arena (Transition 321).

In 2008, for the first time in sixty-one years, Fernando Lugo, a Catholic bishop and non-colorado candidate was elected to the presidency. Lugo, whose campaign focused on promises of social justice and freedom, was sworn into office in 2008, only to be impeached in 2012 amidst political and personal scandal. Lugo's inauguration had been "the first peaceful transfer of political power in the history of Paraguay" (Nickson 350). *Hamaca paraguaya* was released two years before his inauguration and twenty-seven years after the end of Stroessner's dictatorship. The transition to democracy—the post-stronista period—was announced as a time of transformation. In reality, no such transformation took place. Lugo's rise and fall from power is telling in this respect.

Hamaca paraguaya appeared within this context marked by contradiction. On the one hand, this was a period that promised hope for political change. On the other, the threat of a continued political order, symbolized by the Colorado Party and military-oriented ideology within national politics, never went away. Lugo's rise and fall attest to both phases. Perhaps a commentary on the former, Encina describes her film as a story about "the struggle to preserve a connection, limitless hope, and a search for the meaning of life" (Riding 276). The feeling of hope is best illustrated during the final hammock sequence in an intimate moment between Cándida and Ramón:

> Ramón: Estamos demasiado viejos. Y demasiado lejos. Ya quiero irme a dormir. Esa perra vieja está ladrando otra vez de balde.
> Cándida: No vamos a llorar.
> Ramón: No.
> Cándida: Sólo se le llora a la muerte.
> Ramón: ¡Que se vaya lejos la muerte! ¡Que me parta un rayo antes de que se me acerque!
> Cándida: Y todavía no nos morimos. No hay que estar sólo.
> Ramón: No hay que estar sólo.
> Cándida: Nos tenemos papá, el uno al otro.
> Ramón: Estamos hechos, el uno para el otro.
> Cándida: Estamos felices así.
> Ramón: Y así estamos felices.

Cándida and Ramón may no longer have their son with them, but they have each other. Perhaps there is a future beyond the time of waiting. Encina explores the historical process from a point of view that rejects grand historical narratives by focusing on two faceless *campesinos*. It is precisely a sense of futurity, a sense of change, that the film concludes with. At the end of the day, still in the hammock, almost in complete darkness, their attitudes have changed. At the end of the day, they know the war has ended and they know their son will not return. But they still have each other. The rain finally comes. Tomorrow, perhaps, they will not be trapped in the time of waiting.

Chapter 2

Confronting the Faces of War in *Malvinas: Retratos y paisajes de guerra*

On June 11, 2014, Argentine president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner inaugurated the Museo Malvinas e Islas de Atlántico Sur in Buenos Aires, a modern and interactive museum affirming the Argentine claim to the South Atlantic archipelago, under British rule since 1833. The museum provides a chronological history of the islands and recognizes the various native inhabitants of the islands and Argentine citizens who have led efforts to reclaim the territory as members of the national pantheon. The museum served two purposes. On the one hand, it created a continuity linking the history of the islands to the continental territory by putting on display their cultural and political attachment. On the other, the historical connection functioned as the unequivocal proof of the Argentinian claim and Britain's unlawful occupation. The museum was as much about the history of Malvinas, as it was a reaffirmation of Argentina's self-determination in the face of what was denounced as 21st-century imperialism. This sentiment was echoed in Fernández de Kirchner's inauguration speech when she reminded the audience of the Argentine duty, for which the museum became symbolic. The resposibility of Argentinians was to: "[t]erminar con el último vestigio del colonialismo como es el del colonialismo inglés sobre nuestras islas Malvinas.… [N]o abandonar ese reclamo histórico ni esa lucha histórica. Tenemos, no solamente la razón, sino también la verdad, la memoria"[63] (Inauguración).

The museum's war exhibition included a display of the uniforms and objects used by the ex-combatants.[64] Honoring the fallen soldiers, another exhibition room held a recreation of the Darwin Cemetery,[65] the Argentine cemetery located in Malvinas where the remains of more than two hundred soldiers rest. The museum pays homage to sacrifice of Argentinians during the conflict. It honors the young men who fought in the war. It also features prominent sections recognizing the efforts by Cristina Fernández de

[63] The allusions to truth and memory were no coincidence. The Malvinas museum was built within the grounds of the Ex-ESMA, the former navy school that served as a clandestine detention center during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), where thousands of citizens were imprisoned and tortured. Symbolic of the state violence and repression, the ESMA, turned into the memorial, Espacio de Memoria y Derechos Humanos, is emblematic of the democratization process begun 1983. The fact that the Malvinas museum was built within the Ex-ESMA is not an insignificant gesture. Its symbolic function next Ex-ESMA is noteworthy precisely because it reinforced a narrative of continuity promoted by *kirchnerista* rhetoric. The museum not only reaffirmed a historical continuity, a shared past between islands and continental territory, but it also pointed to the future of the Argentine nation, founded on principles of truth and memory. In this sense, and in relation to the history of Malvinas, the 1982 war manifested this historical continuity. Just as truth and memory legitimized the national reconstruction and search for justice for the dictatorship's victims after 1983, truth and justice legitimized the Argentine claim to the islands as well.

[64] I use the term "ex-combatant" to refer to the men who fought in Malvinas regardless of military affiliation prior or post April 2, 1982. As it will be explained, military affiliation prior to the war became a factor determinative of the ex-combatants' social and political perception after the war.

[65] The cemetery is in the settlement Port Darwin, named after the British naturalist who visited the islands in the 1830s. Port Darwin is where the war's most important battle, the Battle of Green Goose, was fought.

Kirchner and Néstor Kirchner,[66] self-proclaimed "*malvinero*" presidents, to make the Malvinas claim an official state matter. Thus, the construction of the museum and the inclusion of a war-related exhibit sought to validate both administrations' positions regarding Argentina's claim.[67] The museum incorporated the war as a historic and heroic attempt by Argentinians to reclaim and fight for a national territory and featured both presidents as the guardians of the Malvinas cause. Located next to each other, the Ex-ESMA and the Malvinas museum concretized the principles sustaining the post-dictatorial Argentine nation: justice, memory, truth and democracy, the fundamental rhetorical pillars within *kirchnerismo* politics. Symbolic of this rethoric was the display of a life-size photograph of one of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo holding the sign: "Las Malvinas son argentinas. Los desaparecidos también." The intention behind the museum's inclusion of the photograph is clear: it equates the Argentine claim to Malvinas to a matter of justice and legitimizes it as a struggle similar to the one led by the Madres who represent the fight for justice in recent Argentine history. Like the Dirty War, the recuperation of Malvinas is a matter of justice, one that has yet to be settled. Present during the inauguration ceremony was Oscar Ismael Poltronieri (Figure 7), a veteran of the 1982 war, fought against Great Britain. A war hero, Polotronieri received the highest military honors for his service. His presence during the ceremony embodied the patriotic speech given by the president.

Figure 7. Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Óscar Ismael Poltronieri during the inauguration of the museum on June 11, 2014.
Source: Casa Rosada website

[66] Néstor Kirchner, Cristina's husband, was in office from 2003-2007. He passed away in 2010.
[67] The official claims for the return of Malvinas to Argentine control were a prominent political objective within both *kirchnerista* administrations. The subject of Malvinas became a powerful rhetorical strategy for *kirchnerismo*'s fight against foreign economic and cultural domination. Having said this, it is not the intention of this chapter to contest or support neither *kirchnerista* politics nor the legitimacy of the dispute over the islands. Rather, the objective is to explore the ways in which cultural production has engaged with the debates concerning the question of Malvinas and the complexities entailed in thinking it in relation to national sovereignty.

Together the Ex-ESMA and the Malvinas museum conjure the fallen national heroes by evoking their absence. Their absent bodies and memory stand for the struggles and sacrifice demanded by the nation. As architectural monuments of history, both spaces give account of an Argentina that as a nation upholds the procurement of justice and sovereignty. Justifying the construction of the museum within the grounds of the Ex-ESMA, Fernández de Kirchner argued: "[Decidimos] que este Museo, tuviera lugar en este sitio de la memoria, en al ex Esma, [porque] la historia no se puede fragmentar…. [N]osotros que tenemos en la memoria uno de los pilares fundamentales de nuestras políticas" (Discurso). If the Ex-ESMA honored the memory of victims of the state violence, the Malvinas museum was to remind Argentinians that the nation-building project, begun in 1983, could not be achieved without the return of islands, that a complete national sovereignty was not possible without the islands. Standing next to the President, Óscar Poltronieri symbolizes this narrative. Wearing this uniform, he is the symbol of this history. The principal aim of this chapter is to explore the symbolic function that Malvinas, the war, and men like Poltronieri have played in recent Argentine history.

In 2008, Argentine photographer Juan Travnik inaugurated his photographic exhibition *Malvinas: paisajes y retratos de guerra* featuring portraits of the Malvinas War ex-combatants and landscapes of the islands. One of the portraits belonged to Óscar Ismael Poltronieri. Except that Travnik's portrait featuring Ismael, contrary to his photo during the inauguration displayed in an official government website, told a different story. The contrast between both images is striking. Photographed during the museum inauguration, Ismael poses next to the president, proudly wearing his military uniform. Summoning the attention are the six medals pinned to his jacket. The bright white and blue colors of the ribbons are the most prominent feature. In contrast, Travnik's black and white portrait shows him wearing civilian clothes. (Figure 8) While the series' title indicates that this is a "portrait of war," no detail illustrates war. In fact, no visual detail identifies the man. He is identified only in the caption accompanying the photograph. The portrait itself is divested of any nationalistic symbols. Maintaining a serious expression, Óscar looks straight into the camera. The black and white contrast underlines his graying hair, while the close-up framing highlights his facial lines.

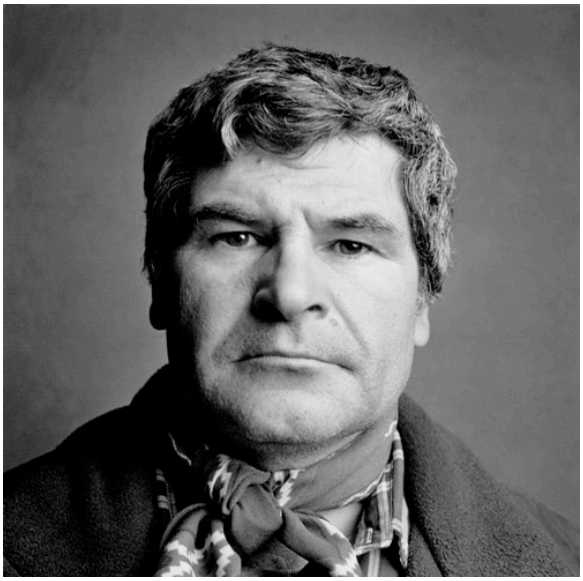

Figure 8. The portrait's description in Travnik's book: "Oscar Ismael Poltronieri. Moreno, provincia de Buenos Aires, 2007. Soldado conscripto (1962) Regimiento de Infantería Mecanizado 6."
Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

The difference between Poltronieri's photographs is revelatory. In the museum, he stands as a symbol not only of the war, but also of the nation. His uniform and military honors dictate the reading. This photograph represents a narrative of the Argentina nation that, under the president standing next to him, is committed to the defense of sovereignty and to the heroes who have defended it. Travnik, on the other hand, is does not tell the same story. His photograph is not a representation of the nation. Rather, the portrait emphasizes the personal aspects of an individual. Contrary to the museum photograph, where Ismael symbolizes a collective, Travnik's portrait individualizes his experience. Taking these contrasting images as a point of departure, this chapter explores the relationship between war and sovereignty in the Argentinian context. It addresses specifically the 1982 Malvinas War, which ended with the surrender of the Argentine Armed Forces on June 14, seventy-four days after it started and resulted in a total 649 Argentine casualties and 10,000 prisoners of war (Lorenz 84).

Centering the discussion on the debates regarding the war's justification and legitimacy, the chapter focuses on its controversial nature. Officially labeled a "recuperation," the war was led by an authoritarian government later found responsible for the torture and disappearance of 30,000 citizens. Soon after the conflict started, supporting and dissenting voices emerged in the public scene. At stake for both visions were the question and questioning of sovereignty. For supporters, on the one hand, as *la causa justa* (the just cause), the Malvinas War represented the ultimate struggle against imperialism. The war presented a historic opportunity for the islands' return to their rightful owner after one hundred-fifty years of occupation. Renouncing the war was not an option because national defense and sovereignty were at stake. Critics, on the other hand, questioned the very notion of sovereignty. Not only did they condemned the Junta's decision to invade the islands, but they also called into question civil society's complicity in supporting the war. For them, the Malvinas War could only be interpreted

as the Junta's "clean" war, the continuation of a Dirty War being waged at home. As such, the war could not be justified under any circumstances.

Cultural production had a fundamental role in revealing the absurdity of the conflict during and after 1982. Central for the argument proposed here will be photography's contribution to these debates. While literature played a significant role in questioning the conflict and denouncing its contradictions, visual culture did not have the same influence. In fact, film contributed to the propagation of non-critical assessments, which in turn, had a detrimental impact on the ex-combatants' postwar experience. Given the controversial specificity of the conflict and the unexpected surrender, upon their return, the soldiers who fought the war, especially the young conscripts, found themselves in a society that rendered them invisible and their experience silenced. The post dictatorship period entailed a process of de-militarization, or *desmalvinización* as it became known. Critical to understand the contradictory nature of the war, the ex-combatants' postwar experience exposed important tensions, which Travnik's photographical exhibition and essay exceptionally elucidates.

Juan Travnik's published essay features photographs taken between 1993 and 2007. Although the title describes the photos as "portraits and landscapes of war," they are not conventional depictions. (Figures 9 and 10) Visually, the war appears only through indirect references. Even though the captions next to the photographs identify the subject (man or landscape), there are no narratives of war. On the contrary, the images are defined by ambiguity. Due to their formal composition—the temporal ambiguity and visual austerity—Travnik's photographs expose the absurdity of the war. They also accomplish much more.

Figure 9. "Sergio Perez. Rafael Calzada, provincia de Buenos Aires, 2007. Soldado conscripto (1962). Regimiento de Infantería Mecanizado 7." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

Figure 10. "Monte Tumbledown. Cocinas de capaña argentina. 2007."
Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

By confronting the viewer with ex-combatants and the landscapes years after the conflict ended, I propose that the photographs emphasize the consequent forgetting and silencing of their post-war experience. Travnik projects raises a critique regarding the process of unseeing these subjects, who after the war became stereotyped as *los chicos de la guerra.* This is where the photographs' contribution arises. The debate concerning the legitimacy of the war was fueled by the fact that it was led by a dictatorial regime. The discussions centered on the idea of national sovereignty, whether it meant the right to self-determination in the face of (British) imperialism or the sovereignty of Argentinian citizens in the face of authoritarianism. The figure of the men fighting the war became the figure caught in the middle of such debates. The Malvinas ex-combatan was the hero fighting against an imperial force occupying what was considered a national territory. Under this light, those who supported *la causa justa* did so regardless of allegiance to the regime in power. For a section of the population, however, especially those opposing the war, the figure of the soldier unmasked the tyrannical intentions of the regime. Ex-combatants were seen as the victims who the Junta was willing to sacrifice for political gain.

In addition to rejecting monumentalized articulations of history—war as an epic—, *Malvinas: paisajes and retratos de guerra* introduces an important disjointedness (*desfasaje*) between the narratives of sovereignty under which the war was framed and the experiences it excluded. If the war became *the* historic moment when the protection of sovereignty—of the nation and the common citizen—was at stake, these photographs stress its senselessness by exposing war's dispossession of human experience. In other words, during the postwar period, the *desmalvinización* process transformed the ex-combatants into infantilized citizens. As *los chicos de la guerra* (the boys of the war), they became perceived as innocent victims sent to fight a war they were not prepared for, and most importantly, they became the victims of a regime for which war was a political strategy. In the postwar, the ex-combatant experience was determined first and foremost by a circumscription to *la causa justa.* Ex-combatant life could only be explained through

perceptions as victimized and innocent citizens of a repressive state, and because of that, as tragically sacrificed heroes.

Travnik undoes such invisibility by humanizing and individualizing their experience. His portraits give account of the survival of the human subject. These men are not solely defined by their war experience; they are not just *chicos de la guerra*. Taken within a fourteen-year period, the series captures a subjectivity no longer confined to the concepts of sovereignty, the nation, or even citizenry. The fact that these photographs are divested of direct representations of the war is significant. In addition, when there are minimal or indirect allusions to the war, these only strengthen the human aspect. Through its visual and temporal ambiguity, the photograph reflects on the individual human experience outside *la causa justa* narrative. The landscapes, alluding to a spectral quality, continue the critique. As desolated landscapes, they question the nationalistic impulse associated with the notion of sovereignty. Rather than gesturing to a nation-building project, they expose the islands as spatial ruins.

The war had a significant impact in the literary field, where compelling apprehensions of the conflict originated even as it unfolded. Working through fiction allowed authors to articulate critical anti-war positions. An opposite effect occurred with testimonial literature, which appeared after the war, when soldiers' testimonies were published and some adapted to film. Film adaptations contributed to the *desmalvinization* process that took place after June 11, 1982. Cultural production addressing the war was significant because it influenced the debates concerning the war, debates in which the figure of the soldier became central.

The War as Literature's Burden

On April 2, 1982, Argentinians woke up to the news of the Armed Forces disembarking on Malvinas.[68] Headed by then president General Leopoldo F. Galtieri, the military Junta decided to act on the historical claims of sovereignty over what was considered a national territory; the archipelago has been under British rule since 1833. The "recuperation," as the 1982 military operation was termed, was justified as the vindication of a historical right, *la causa justa* (Guber 27).[69] On the morning of April 2, Argentinians took to the streets to manifest their support. Illustrative of the national fervor are the iconic images of thousands of Argentinians gathered at the Plaza de Mayo,

[68] In his televised speech to the nation on April 2, 1982, president Galtieri declared the actions as a reflection of the aspirations of all Argentinians: "Hemos recuperado, salvaguardando el honor nacional, sin rencores, pero con la firmeza que las circunstancia exigen, las islas australes que integran por legítimo derecho el patrimonio nacional" (*Clarín* April 2, 1982). As anthropologist Rosana Guber points out, the intention behind the Junta's decision to occupy the islands was not to wage war against Great Britain. Rather, the objective was to pressure Prime Minister Thatcher into negotiating a peaceful return (Guber 29). Scholar Julieta Vitullo writes that the triumphalist (official) version of the conflict promoted by the Junta and in the press "[hizo] del conflicto una epopeya, la gesta heroica de un pueblo encendido en la defensa de su nación" (34). It should be noted, however, that as the massive pro-war demonstrations of the day illustrate, civil and political society shared the nationalist sentiment.

[69] For a history of Malvinas and the Argentine claim, see Rusana Guber's *¿Por qué Malvinas? De la causa nacional a la guerra absurda.* Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica. 2001. Guber's additional text, *De "chicos" a "veteranos" Memorias argentinas de la guerra* and Federico Lorenz's *Las guerras por Malvinas 1982-2012* are also essential sources for the study of the nature and complexities of the war.

as president Galtieri saluted from the balcony at Casa Rosada. As mentioned, the war ended with the unexpected Argentine surrender on June 14. Most of the casualties, belonging to the Argentinian side, occurred during the sinking of the Belgrano battleship on May 2. While British aerial attacks were taking place since early May, the actual warfare took place in the last weeks, after the British Armed Forces disembarked on the islands on May 27. Before the actual fighting took place, however, debates surrounding the legitimacy of the war were the major topic within public debate. Some of the most urgent concerns originated within the literary field.

Rodolfo Enrique Fogwill's *Los pichiciegos*[70] remains as the most important literary critique of the war. Much has been written about the novel,[71] but I want to highlight its use of the figure of the soldiers, particularly the voice of the inexperienced conscripts, to communicate the horrors and absurdity of armed conflict. The *pichis*, as the soldier protagonists are known, are forced to fight a war towards which they feel no attachment. Instead of defending the fatherland, they have deserted and formed an underground colony, the *pichicera*. In *Los pichiciegos*, desertion is the only escape from the horrors of war produced by the inclement weather, British technological superiority, and most importantly, the abuses committed by Argentina's military brass. Living underground, literally in muddy, freezing caves, they have established a rigid social structure where the four leaders and founders, *los Reyes Magos,*[72] rule and decide the laws of the *pichicera.* Their objective is not to win the war, but survive it. To do so, they exchange Argentine intelligence for British basic needs:

> –Mañana vas a tener que ir a cambiar dos bidones más de querosén. Pedí dulce, caramelos, dulce de leche, de membrillo, azúcar, miel ¡cosas dulces! Falta azúcar. ¡Y pedí pilas!
>
> –Pilas olvídense –dijo Viterbo.
>
> –¿Qué pasa con las pilas? –volvía a preocuparse el Turco.
>
> –No hay en toda la isla, se acabaron. No hay ni para los del comando –y señalando con la linterna a dos nuevos fundamentó-: Ellos te lo pueden decir…
>
> –¿Los ingleses tendrán pilas…? –preguntó el Ingeniero.
>
> –Esta noche vamos a ver –dijo él, y el Turco asintió, por lo que los otros entendieron que aquella noche alguno de los Magos iría a los ingleses a cambiar cosas. (Fogwill 41)

A black market economy sustained by a most valuable currency—treason—allows the survival of *los pichis:* "Decían que había como mil pichis escondidos en la tierra, ¡enterrados! Que tenían de todo: comida, todo. Muchos decían tener ganas de hacerse pichis cada vez que se venían los Harrier soltando cohetes. –Es cierto –dijo Rubione–. Cuando faltaban cosas en el siete dicen que todos ahí se cagan de hambre mientras los

[70] Originally published as *Los pichy-ciegos,* the title refers to a subterranean armadillo species typical of Northern Argentina.

[71] See Beatriz Sarlo's essay, "No olvidar la guerra: Sobre cine literatura e historia" (1994), Oscar Blanco et al.'s "Trashumantes de neblina, no las hemos de encontrar. De cómo la literatura cuenta la guerra de Malvinas" (1993) and Martín Kohan's *El país de la guerra* (2014).

[72] An allusion to the biblical Magi.

pichis preparan milanesas abajo" (Fogwill 37-38). The novel does not incur a sentimental reading. As Beatriz Sarlo points out in her analysis, *Los pichiciegos* is not an anti-war novel. Instead of reflecting on the destructive power of war,[73] Fogwill underscores the absurdity of *the* Malvinas War, not just because, like in any war, lives were lost, but because in this specific war, lives were sacrificed in the name of a senseless reason: an authoritarian regime's last resort to hold onto power. Fogwill, then, turns to farce to reveal this contradiction. His protagonists do not uphold nationalistic principles and in this war, there is no greater good to fight for. *Los pichis* are anything but patriotic:

> La radio argentina transmitía de cerca, pero se oía mal. Una tarde pasaron varias veces las arengas del comandante. Cada vez que volvían a anunciarla sintonizaban la estación británica que era mejor… [L]a música de los ingleses era mejor: los argentinos pasaban mucho rock argentino, tipos de voz infinita, canciones de protesta, historia de vaguitos de Buenos Aires. Los ingleses pasaban más folklore y tangos, y cuando ponían rock, elegían verdadero, americano, Presley. (Fogwill 99)

Even though these men are "at war," there are no nationalistic values to uphold. Nothing guarantees allegiance, not even between the *pichis.* There is no remorse or hesitation at the thought of killing each other if their security is compromised. These are not brothers in arms. Literary critics Blanco et.al have noted that in the novel*,* all nationalistic symbols are empty of meaning: American and British rock is preferred over Argentine music; British cigarettes are the coveted good; and Galtieri is the name of one *pichiciego* fighting for survival. The most important symbol of nationalistic rhetoric, in the novel, Malvinas represents the opposite. Malvinas is a place where Argentinians do not belong: "«Esto es para ellos». Había que ser inglés, o como inglés, para meterse allí a morir de frío habiendo la Argentina tan grande y tan linda siempre con sol" (Fogwill 94).[74]

Regarding the novel's refusal to be read as an anti-war novel (*novela pacifista*), Sarlo proposes: "entender a los pichis es entender precisamente lo que una guerra (no cualquier guerra, sino ésa, la desencadenada por la aventura de Galtieri) hace con los hombres" (n.p.). Reading *Los pichiciegos* as a "pacifist" novel implies an exploration of the legitimacy of the war and understand it not as "a last resort but as an undesired extreme" (Sarlo n.p.). As Galtieri's "adventure"—necessary for his political survival—war becomes trivialized and never "undesirable." Sarlo argues that the novel exposes a truth no longer associated with understanding the phenomenon of war and its logic. On

[73] Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* being the archetypical anti-war novel.

[74] Note the novel's opening description of the snow in Malvinas as perceived by a *pichi*: "Que no era así, le pareció. No amarilla, como crema; más pegajosa que la crema. Pegajosa, pastosa. Se pega por la ropa, cruza la boca de los gabanes, pasa los borceguíes, pringa las medias. Entre los dedos, fría, se la siente después" (Fogwill 13). As the soldier ponders over the snow's peculiar nature, a tone of foreignness is established. The mud-like snow becomes a recurrent metaphor for the unwelcoming territory and for a war that soldiers escape from. From the beginning, Fogwill's young protagonists proclaim their lack of attachment to the land they are supposed to be fighting for. For the inexperienced combatants, the snow —*pegajosa*, *pastosa*—represents something they do not recognize. This snow isn't Argentinian. This land isn't home. Unlike the snow back home, the snow in Malvinas is "barro pesado, helado, frío y pegajoso." It is predatory. It clutches and trespasses: *se pega, cruza, pasa, pringa*. It leaves an uncomfortable feeling that remains long after: "se la siente después."

the contrary, Fogwill's engages with what is not present in the fictional space. For Sarlo the novel's "truth" is to be found in its treatment of the "materiality," indispensable for the preservation of life in the *pichicera*. In the novel, survival depends on access to basic materials: lanterns, chocolates, sugar, batteries, etc. The *pichis* have no other goal than survival, and thus, they think of nothing else but ways in which death can be avoided:

> la reflexión sobre las condiciones no materiales de [la] muerte, cae entonces fuera del espacio ficcional de la novela, fuera del alcance de sus personajes que ven lo que les pasa y no el origen de lo que les pasa: sufren los efectos de su disposición de ideas y de actos que no conocen. Son hábiles para operar con la inmediatez de los efectos, y desinteresados en relación con las configuraciones que no pueden ser captadas por la visión y le experiencia (Sarlo p.g.)

Prisoners of the fear of death, their efforts focus on surviving the present moment, which makes any "configuration of the past [and] comprehension of the present" impossible (Sarlo n.p.). Ultimately, for Sarlo, the circulation of bodies and materials exhibits the absurdity of the Malvinas War and not of any other war: "es la guerra que ha destruido…toda idea de nación: llegados a Malvinas como soldados de un ejército nacional, las operaciones de ese ejército han deteriorado todos los lazos de nacionalidad. De la nación, lo único que los pichis conservan es la lengua" (p.g).

In its approach to the conflict, fiction denounced its senseless nature. Focusing on the tragic experience of the soldiers both at the front and upon their return, authors depicted the "recuperation" as a careless and unplanned undertaking. In this regard, *Los pichiciegos* became a model for the ideological critique embraced by other authors and critics. In fiction, the war was anything but a national epic. Fiction deconstructed the narrative that appealed to Malvinas as a national symbol of unity and patriotism. Prioritizing the representation of the conscripted soldiers' experience at the front and in the postwar, particularly the violence inflicted on them, fiction emptied the war of any meaning (*sentido*). In addition to Fogwill's novel, other literary texts addressing the war include: Jorge Luis Borges's "Juan López and John Ward" and "Milonga del muerto" (poetry, 1982); Osvaldo Lamborghini's "La causa justa" (short story, 1982); Osvaldo Soriano's *A sus plantas rendido un león* (novel, 1986); Rodrigo Fresán's "La soberanía nacional" (short story, 1992); and Carlos Gamerro's *Las islas* (novel, 1998). In recent years, a younger generation of writers have returned to the subject of Malvinas. Patricio Pron's *Una puta mierda* (2007) and Patricia Ratto's *Trasfondo* (2012) are two novels that continue the line of critique of their predecessors.

In many of these fictions, the absurd and the ironic prevail as effective artifices of representation. The soldier continues to be, in most cases, the central figure. Borges's Juan López is the Argentine soldier who reads Conrad, while John Ward, his British counterpart, has learned Spanish to read Cervantes. A romanticized vision of war, the poem places them on the front only to share the same tragic death. They could have been brothers, the narrator tells us, but instead they die, like Cain and Abel. The title in Lamborghini's short story, "La causa justa," alludes to the expression justifying the war. His story, however, is not about the war. It takes place in Buenos Aires. The protagonist is a Japanese citizen, who upholds a most rigorous honor code. A true warrior who

swears loyalty to the Japanese emperor, he wants to go to Malvinas to display his katana skills as proof of his courage and loyalty. Finally, after *Los pichigiciegos,* Carlos Gamerro's *Las islas* is perhaps the second best-known novel inspired by the war. Published in 1998, it features ex-soldiers in their postwar life, living in a neoliberal and informatics business-driven Buenos Aires. The narrative takes place in 1992, ten years after the war. Its ghosts, however, still haunt the protagonists. One of the them works as a detective for a powerful businessman who hires him to cover up his son's crime; another makes video games of war through which he creates alternative versions of the war he fought; in these digital versions, Argentina defeats the British. Haunted by his traumatic experience, a third protagonist has failed to adapt to postwar society. He is obsessed with building a faithful model of the islands because he plans to return and attempt to recuperate them again.[75]

In recent decades, younger authors have explored the war in relation to new aesthetic and political preoccupations. Some novels include: Martín Kohan's *Dos veces junio* and *Ciencias morales* (2002, 2007), Patricio Pron's *Una puta mierda* (2007), Patricia Ratto's *Trasfondo* (2012), and Federico Lorenz's *Montoneros o la ballena blanca* (2012).[76] In his elucidating analysis of Argentine literature and war, *El país de la guerra,* author and literary critic Martín Kohan proposes that Argentinian history has been written as history of war:

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[75] The following are brief descriptions of the works not described above: Jorge Luis Borges's "Milonga" describes the experience of the Unknown Soldier from the interior who, along with his "brothers" is "sent to die" to some unknown "glacial islands." Osvaldo Soriano's protagonist in *A sus platas rendido un león* is an Argentinian who has usurped the position of consul in a fictitious country in West Africa, where Great Britain has installed a puppet emperor. Upon hearing about the war, the fake consul joins the war effort by attacking the British consulate. His apparent nationalistic enterprise is only an excuse to recuperate the letters he has sent to his lover, the British consul's wife. Failing to communicate with Buenos Aires, no one in Argentina learns of his heroic deed. Rodrigo Fresan's "La soberanía nacional" is an ironic take on the concept of sovereignty. The story features three young soldiers fighting in Malvinas. Stricken with fear and cowardice upon encountering a *gurkha* (a Nepalese soldier fighting in the British army), the first soldier decides to surrender. However, when his gun accidentally fires and kills the *gurkha*, he becomes a celebrated hero. The second protagonist enlisted to go to Malvinas only to fulfill a dream: seeing the Rolling Stones in concert. To do so he wishes to be taken prisoner by the British who possibly will take him back to London. Finally, the third soldier is obsessed with being a war hero. Only if he is a beloved patriot, Argentinians back home will ignore the secret fact that he killed his girlfriend and her lover before departing to the islands.

[76] Martín Kohan's *Dos veces junio* and *Ciencias morales* explore recent Argentine history, especially the role of social complicity during the dictatorship. In both novels, Malvinas appears indirectly, as a backstory, an approach that echoes interpretations of the war as the regime's political tactic. Patricia Ratto's *Transfondo* focuses on the inherent temporality of war—the time of waiting. The story is about Argentine marines trapped in a malfunctioning submarine adrift in the depths of the ocean. Instead of actual warfare, the marines endure an eternal wait in fear of being attacked. When they come up to the surface, the war is over. For these soldiers, the war never really happens. In *Una puta mierda,* Patricio Pron approaches the war without ever mentioning any referents because language has lost its referential capacity. Consequently, ambiguity determines the narrative. The soldiers speak like Spaniards; they have no idea where they are, perhaps in Maldivas (not Malvinas), as one of them points out. The narrative presents a confusing and disorienting war where any sense of time and memory has been lost. Finally, in *Montoneros o la ballena blanca,* Federico Lorenz explores the war in relation with *montonero* ideology. As part of a subversive political operation, the protagonists head South only to end up in Malvinas. For a comprehensive study on the cultural production dealing with the Malvinas War see Julieta Vitullo's *Islas imaginadas. La guerra de Malvinas en la literatura y el cine argentinos.* Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2012.

> una historia patria que se conciba, como tanto se concibió, y que se narre, como tanto se narró, ante todo como una historia de guerra. Un género por demás predilecto, y además de predilecto hegemónico, para armar el gran relato argentino: la historia como historia de guerra…Es toda una manera de contarse, y por ende manera de entenderse: partir de la base de que la patria nació en los campos de batalla. (13)

Kohan takes the reader on a historical journey through an exploration of the literary narratives of war that have given account of the nation's history.[77] He is interested in the "effectiveness" of war narratives in poetry, music, fiction, and historical essay, in constructing the symbolic mechanisms and mythologies that give meaning to the nation and to national identity.[78] A recurrent trope within the historical narrative, war, he claims, has allowed writers and intellectuals to think, represent, and imagine the nation—whether they refer to a specific event, its origins and consequences, or imagined possibilities. From this perspective, language functions as a crucial mechanism for the incorporation of war narratives as national epics.

Kohan is interested in fiction's engagement with history because in fiction he recognizes the potential to explore the construction of historical narratives, including that which remains excluded. He attributes to fiction a capacity to scrutinize historical discourses, the ways they come into being precisely because unrealized historical possibilities—alternative histories—also impact articulations of history: "[c]ontar también lo no sucedido; contarlo porque *debía* suceder, o contarlo *para que sucediera*. Pero aquello que se narra y en definitiva no sucede, no por eso deja la realidad intacta: suscita en ella la impresión de que algo falta, de que alguien falta" (87). Much of the literary criticism regarding Malvinas War literature praised its effectiveness in exposing the contradictions. Malvinas inspired fiction reflected on what was being left out of official narratives. Consequently, fiction's "going to war" emerged as counter-narrative to official history. It dismantled the justification of *la causa justa.*

As early as 1993, in their unerring essay, "Trashumantes de neblina no las hemos de encontrar. De cómo la literatura cuenta la guerra de Malvinas," Óscar Blanco, Adriana Imperatore, and Martín Kohan pointed to fiction as the space where questionings regarding *la causa justa* provided critical answers, distanced from what they identified as triumphalist and lamenting rhetoric of the war (82).[79] It should be noted, regarding the appearance of this essay, that not only were these critics proposing a critical analysis of

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[77] Some of the wars addressed in the literature he analyzes are: the wars of independence, the Triple Alliance War, the Conquest of the Desert, Che Guevara's war, the Dirty War, and fictitious wars in contemporary literature.

[78] "La de Mitre es una historia orgánica, integradora, total (un gran relato, el gran relato de la argentinidad, en el sentido cabal de la expresión). Y es también una historia de héroes, es decir, de grandes hombres, de sujetos convertidos en agentes del destino y del tiempo inexorable… [L]a historia que Mitre compone es entonces una historia monumental, integral, heroica; una historia estatal y nacional (incluso cuando el Estado y la nación se buscaban todavía, se tanteaba todavía). Y esa historia que se escribe es por fin, en más de un sentido, una historia de guerra. La guerra es un factor determinante en esta historia" (Kohan *País* 22, 23).

[79] Their analysis looked at a corpus that included: Osvaldo Lamborghini's *La causa justa*, Fogwill's *Los pichiciegos,* Osvaldo Soriano's *A sus plantas rendido un león,* Rodrigo Fresán's *"*El aprendiz de brujo" and "Soberanía nacional," Juan Forn's "Memorandum Almazán," and Daniel Guebel's "Impresiones de un natural nacionalista."

Malvinas War literature, but they were also commenting on a group of texts that became referential for the study of the conflict. Literature, they argued, dismantled the constitutive elements of the Argentine Grand Narrative (*Gran Relato Argentino*). Based on theories regarding the constitution of the modern nation and how this nation requires an effective "grand narrative" through which it can be articulated, Blanco et al described the function of such narrative:

> homogeneizar, definir un nosotros y un ellos en un sistema de inclusión y de exclusión, otorgar una identidad colectiva que opera en el horizonte del imaginario social, a través de un sistema simbólico: nombre, bandera, himno, escudo, panteón de héroes y de hitos. Una narración del origen y de lo porvenir: una tradición y un relato futuro. La eficacia de este relato consiste en que logrará disolver las diferencias internas, haciéndolas converger y coincidir en los valores de la unidad nacional. (Blanco et al 83)

In the case of the Malvinas War, fiction unmasked the *Gran Relato Argentino* articulated as *la causa justa*, a narrative that framed the war as a national epic.[80] The popular expression "Malvinas were, are, and will be Argentinian" concretized the symbolic resonance of *la causa justa* as the grand narrative of the Argentine nation. If, as Sarlo suggested, language is the only unifying element in *Los pichiciegos*, it is precisely because the nation's grand narrative has lost its effectiveness. In these Malvinas fictions, the elements supporting the *Gran Relato Argentino* are undermined: "[L]a figura del extranjero, no se ubica ahora en el afuera, sino adentro… [L]a idea de que haya una identidad nacional se cuestiona… [L]o propio aparece constituido por lo ajeno… [N]o hay héroes nacionales… [L]o propio aparece como lo otro; lo otro se identifica como lo propio" (Blanco et al 84, 85).

In her comprehensive study of Malvinas cultural production, scholar Julieta Vitullo argues that authors were confronted with two fundamental questions: how to narrate the war without appealing to national values or heroism? what narrative forms were available to denounce its illegitimacy? This was the crossroads in which literature found itself. If, on the one hand, within the national literary tradition the epic genre had provided a structure to narrate the nation and, on the other, war was an event that required an "epic imagination," the Malvinas War complicated the association of history as epic. Vitullo asserts that writing about the Malvinas War as a national epic was no longer possible precisely because this war no longer conformed to the ideals of the *Gran Relato.* For Vitullo, Malvinas War literature bears witness to an "epic deficit." No longer a national epic, in fiction, the war conforms to picaresque conventions, a story of survival in *Los pichiciegos* or farce, reduced to absurdity in *Las islas* (Kohan 268-280).

The Question(ing) of *la causa justa*

The different perceptions of the nation and national sovereignty, on the one hand,

[80] Later I discuss the role of testimonial literature, which had a different reception and served different purposes.

and the narratives that justified the war, on the other, inspired important debates outside the fictional field. One of the most notable debates involved two groups of Argentinian intellectuals exiled because of the violence and repression carried out by the military Juntas. On May 10th, 1982, the Grupo de Discusión Socialista, formed by Argentinians residing in Mexico,[81] published the letter, "Por la soberanía argentina en las Malvinas: Por la soberanía popular en Argentina," expressing support for the war. For the group, as a matter concerning national sovereignty, the recuperation of the islands was a struggle against British colonialism, on the one hand, and the looming threat of US dominance, on the other. Even it was politically motivated, the war was vindicated because first and foremost the interests of the Argentinian people were at stake. Just as the public support and demonstrations had proven, Malvinas was a matter of "popular interest."[82] Supporting the war, however, did not imply an endorsement of the Junta's politics. This they made clear. Despite the support for the conflict, the duty of Argentinians was to remember the Junta's abuses and crimes and hold it accountable. The recuperation of the islands, however, was a matter of justice beyond the regime's actions. As expressed in the letter, their support was defined as a gesture to "ponerse de lado de los justos intereses populares":

> Reivindicar en la actual situación la indiscutible soberanía argentina sobre las Malvinas no implica, como lo quieren algunos y en primer lugar el propio gobierno, echar un manto de olvido sobre su política desde 1976 hasta el presente. Por el contario, para dar su sentido cabal a esa justa reivindicación se requiere como condición indispensable, asumir una posición resuelta y clara de repudio a dicha política. (qted. in Rozitchner 112)

> La Madre de Plaza de Mayo que, agitando una bandera argentina, defiende nuestra soberanía sobre las Malvinas al mismo tiempo que sigue reclamando por su hijo desaparecido; el obrero cesanteado por Mercedes Benz que denuncia a la vez la agresión inglesa y la política económica del gobierno militar; las multitudes que en sus estribillos atacan al imperialismo anglonorteamericano sin dejar por ello de pedir el fin de la

[81] José Aricó, Sergio Bufano, María Candelari, Horacio Crespo, Emilio de Ípola, Néstor García Canclini, Ricardo Nudelman, Nora Rosenfeld, Osvaldo Pedroso, Juan Carlos Portantiero, Óscar Terán, and Jorge Tula were among the group's participants.

[82] Those who had supported the war effort and continued to do so and after June 14 distanced themselves from the military leaders. Historian Federico Lorenz explains that the war effort brought together a diverse number of social factions, many of them antagonistic, who didn't support the dictatorship but were motivated by the hope for social unity. For Lorenz, the rock festival, *Festival de la Solidaridad Latinoamericana*, organized during the war, on May 16, 1982, was illustrative of this position. In addition to demanding the end of the war, organizers asked attendees for food and clothes donations for the soldiers. For these citizens, supporting the troops did not mean condoning the Junta. On the contrary, public manifestations of support also sought to undermine the regime: "[Malvinas fue] una posibilidad de regeneración o refundación social. Más allá del resultado del conflicto, ya nada sería igual. Para algunos, la guerra fue la posibilidad de volver a salir a las calles a hacer política. Para otros, se trataba de realizar acciones solidarias en el marco de una tradición patriótica. Los argentinos tenían la oportunidad de volver a encontrarse unidos en un esfuerzo común" (Lorenz 67).

dictadura de Galtieri. (Idem 114)

> Adherimos a todos los sectores populares de Argentina que luchan para que no sea entregada una soberanía que se está reconquistando con la sangre y el esfuerzo del pueblo, *mientras el gobierno sigue haciéndoles pagos a los ingleses para preservar su "buen nombre" y ni siquiera ha roto sus relaciones diplomáticas con Estados Unidos.* Continuemos sin claudicaciones la lucha por la plena autodeterminación. (Idem 115)

Responding to the group's position and as clear condemnation of it, Argentine philosopher León Rozitchner, exiled in Venenuela, published his own letter refuting their arguments. Like many others who openly declared their opposition to the war, he had been accused of desiring an Argentine failure. For Rozitchner this desire was real, but not fortuitous. His opposition stemmed from the fact that the war was, above all, the undertaking of authoritarian regime. Argentinians needed to be reminded of this. If for the Mexico group this contradiction could be reconciled, even temporarily in the name of self-determination, for Rozitchner this was not possible because supporting the war meant undermining the very notion of sovereignty. This fundamental contradiction needed to be questioned:

> ¿Qué tiene que ver el deseo con la razón? Si ustedes tuvieron que alejarse de la Argentina, digamos al menos para salvar la vida del destino aciago que otros, no pudieron eludir, ¿de qué pasta está hecho el deseo de ustedes que olvida el origen presente en nuestra propia sensibilidad –imaginación, afecto, terror, presencia de la muerte de compañeros, amigos y compatriotas baleados o torturados arrojados desde helicópteros vivos al mar por los propios militares argentinos? Si esta experiencia crucial que fue la nuestra constituye un índice irrenunciable de mi inserción en la historia y por lo tanto en la realidad, ¿cómo han hecho ustedes –puesto que todos tenemos amigos, compatriotas al fin, que murieron asesinados por la crueldad de esos militares que ahora ubican en el plano político–, como han hecho ustedes para silenciar el deseo de que sus autores fracasen? (35)

Desiring a military failure became an act of defense against the terror and violence that these same military leaders had inflicted on the social body. The decision to "recuperate" Malvinas and sending young and unprepared conscripts to do so was, for Rozitchner, yet another authoritarian demonstration. Therefore, the argument for national defense and sovereignty had no validity, not because the Argentine claim to the islands lacked legitimacy, but rather because if there was no justice for the victims of the Dirty War, there could be no sovereignty to defend.[83] For the Mexico group, the image of a Madre de

[83] In *Soberanías en suspenso,* Chilean literary critic Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott explores the relationship between sovereignty and the nation state within the current globalized capitalism driven by economic accumulation. Examining post-1989 Chile as the model for a nation-state functioning on a transnational neoliberal economy, he argues that the democratic governments established in the Southern Cone after military regimes continued the economic and political policies implemented by their predecessors. Villalobos-Ruminott proposes that to implement neoliberal policies, sovereignty had to be suspended through the systematization of state violence and repression. Thus, what today is perceived as the

Plaza de Mayo holding a sign in favor of Malvinas was a powerful example in favor of their argument—Malvinas as a *justo interés popular*. For Rozitchner, on the other hand, the same image was the irrefutable proof of *la causa justa* as the manifestation of the Junta's continued violence:

> Las madres de Plaza de Mayo son las que han puesto en evidencia dónde se asienta la soberanía de una nación: en la vida de sus ciudadanos que se expande desde sus cuerpos. Saben de un saber fundamental, que esos militares que las destruyeron están incapacitados para defender, en nuestra nación, ninguna soberanía que se enlace a este fundamento. … Las madres de Plaza de Mayo expresan, simbolizando la totalidad del "proceso", y mantienen presente uno de sus extremos indelebles, su fundamento de muerte, sobre el que se apoya el sistema que nuestros militares implantaron en la nación. (26-57)

From this point of view, the war could only be interpreted as the prolongation of the war at home—the Junta's politics by other means. Justifying the war on the basis of patriotic principles required accepting a form of patriotism that sanctioned state violence against its own citizens. And therefore, the figure of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo is crucial. Their persistence and mere presence in the public sphere needed to be a reminder of those citizens, whose deaths the Junta refused to recognize. For Rozitchner, condoning the war meant that Argentinians had to believe and accept the Junta's ability to defend national sovereignty—that the Junta could be trusted to defend its citizens. The Madres proved the contrary:

> Porque si así procedemos, todo acto nuevo se inscribirá en una dimensión, que tenderá a olvidar la otra –que sin embargo está allí. Por ejemplo, al inscribir los nuevos muertos en la guerra de las Malvinas como si se tratara de una guerra por la conquista de una porción de nuestra soberanía, elevaremos el dolor de estas nuevas madres al nivel político: los hijos verdaderos de la patria son los que han muerto, mandados una vez más por los militares, por la nación. Serán los muertos legítimos, éstos que los militares pueden confesar. (59)

The systematization of state violence manifested the crisis of the very notion of sovereignty. Under these conditions, no action led in the name of "national defense" could be vindicated:

> Hay dos formas de reconstruir a la nación después de semejante derrumbe: está la que ellos nos ofrecen y nos proponen canjear, aquella 'guerra sucia' contra esta otra guerra 'limpia' de las Malvinas; y está esa otra que las madres de plaza de Mayo mantienen como un índice y una invitación a

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weakening of the nation-state responds not to its extinction, but to the transformation of the sovereign relation between the state and its citizens brought about by the corporatization of politics (n.p.).

> otra nueva fundación de la nación. Las madres quieren decirnos que ambas guerras son sucias. (Rozitchner 58)[84]

The perception of the "clean" Malvinas War as the continuation of the dirty war gained resonance and influenced the ways society made sense of the war, especially after it ended. The impact of the surrender was such that General Galtieri was immediately removed from the presidency. In July 1982, the new Junta called for democratic elections and Raúl Alfonsín, was elected president the following year. At stake in the postwar period was the reconstruction of the nation after seven years of authoritarianism.[85] To do so a necessary de-militarization process took place, which Malvinas ex-combatants perceived as a type of *desmalivinización.* In the postwar period, the war became primarily associated with the Armed Forces, and because of that, it became a marginalized subject. The critique at the heart of Juan Travnik's photographs lies precisely in the impact that the consequent *desmalvinización* had on the ex-combatants.

desmalvinización and *los chicos de la guerra*

Military veteran associations surged in the postwar period with significant presence. Organizing became an effective way for veterans to gain visibility and recognition. It also strengthened their political force within new administrations. The process, however, did not occur without divisions. Illustrative of the tensions among these groups were the different terms through which they identified: veteran, ex-conscript, ex-combatant, civil-soldiers, etc.[86] As anthropologist Rosana Guber argues, in the postwar period the Malvinas ex-combatant appeared as a new national subject in the social and political arena. His incorporation and place within the social and political order, however, was anything but easy. The reason is not hard to guess. After the war, the figure of the soldier became politicized and polarizing. Caught in the middle were the

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[84] For historian Federico Lorenz, a reductionist assessment of the war—dismissing it purely as a manipulative event orchestrated by the Junta—fails to consider the complex dynamics of nationalism. It fails to account for the significant role that Malvinas, as a geographical landscape and, most importantly, as a discursive construction, has played in conceptions of the nation and national identity. In this sense, nationalist and patriotic fervor towards the war was not an effective blinding of the Argentine masses. Rather, for Lorenz, it was the concretization of a historical project of national sovereignty dating back to the 1830s, for which Malvinas became a referential element: "Desde sectores ideológicamente opuestos, acaso involuntariamente, está maniobra conceptual fue fortalecida al pintar de una manera simplista la guerra como un resabio del sagrario patriótico, restringiéndola meramente a una maniobra de la dictadura, y despojándola de todas sus aristas polémicas y potencialmente liberadoras. En ese terreno debía quedar confinada para evitar que tanto la dictadura como un nacionalismo nocivo revivieran" (Lorenz 319).

[85] A clarification must be made regarding Rozitchner, the Grupo Socialista, and anti-authoritarian ideology in the context of recent Argentine history. Historically, and particularly in during the the last dictatorship, anti-authoritarianism translated as a struggle against state violence and repression and human rights abuses commited against Argentinian citizens by the military regime. Authoritarianism did not concern matters of sovereignty, at least not as manifested in the debate mentioned above. Therein lies, then, the specificity of the Malvinas War: it was the event that precipitated the inclusion of national sovereignty as a debated, and controversial, topic. Once the war was over, as the return to democracy process illustrates, the legitimacy of the war was less discussed as matter of national sovereignty and more as evidence of the Junta's authoritarianism.

[86] See Guber's and Lorenz's works referenced earlier for more on this subject.

conscripted soldiers, who prior to the war had no military experience and were a majority within the deployed troops to Malvinas. The majority was completing their compulsory military service when the war began.

With the reestablishment of democracy, president Alfonsín's administration prioritized the procurement of justice as means for social cohesion. National reconstruction was framed under narratives of democracy, justice, and reconciliation.[87] His government oversaw the investigations and trials against the military Juntas for their responsibility in human right abuses, torture, and disappearances. Testimonies of the victims and, in the case of the disappeared, their surviving relatives, became a valuable legal means for justice.[88] Federico Lorenz maintains, however, that while the testimonies of the regime's victims contributed to the reconstruction of the nation, the experience and testimonies of ex-combatants, also perceived as victims, were absent from the public debate (Guerras 26).[89]

For the Armed Forces and its supporters, Malvinas and the war continued to play a central rhetorical function. For the military leaders, in power until December 1983, maintaining the subject of Malvinas in the national discourse was a political strategy that reminded society of their complicit role: "contraponer a las denuncias por violaciones a los derechos humanos la guerra de Malvinas [recordaba] a los críticos que en esta acción –y en la otra no está de más decirlo– no habían estado solos" (Guber 179). According to Rosana Guber, after the surrender, "evocar *Malvinas* significaba recordar la dictadura y la represión ilegal" (179). The transformed perception—Malvinas form *la causa justa* to the Junta's "clean war"—was strengthened when soldiers who fought in Malvinas were also vilified for their involvement in cases of torture and disappearance.[90]

As *la causa justa* the war had been massively supported by social and political society. In its aftermath, however, this narrative no longer justified it. The war was dissociated from a national project and the term *desmalvinización*[91] began to acquire currency, particularly among ex-combatants, to describe the "estado de olvido deliberado, expresado en la apatía y la indiferencia" (Lorenz 155). Upon their return, conscripts were forced to sign a legal document prohibiting them from revealing information about their military actions (Guber 37). The measure was an attempt by the Armed Forces to control

[87] Narratives that found echoes in *kirchnerista* politics and rhetoric.

[88] Beatriz Sarlo discusses the role of *testimonio* in *Tiempo pasado. Cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo.*

[89] For Guber, the reports of the official investigations of both the Dirty War and the Malvinas War, *Nunca más* and *Informe Rattenbach* respectively, are illustrative of the disparate resonance that each event acquired after 1982. Little needs to be said of *Nunca más* and its consequential testimonial impact for the cause of the disappeared and human right abuses. On the contrary, testimonies about the Malvinas War were almost completely silenced. In charge of conducting investigations regarding military abuses related to the war were retired military officials who assigned minimal charges to those found guilty. Contrary to the massive national and international diffusion of *Nunca más,* the *Informe Rattenbatch* was published as a supplement in Buenos Aires's journal *7 Días* (Guber 145). The report was fully declassified and made public in 2012.

[90] The soldier Alfredo Astiz became the face of this contradiction. Thanks to the circulation of a photograph showing him as he signed his surrender to the British, the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo identified him as the man who had infiltrated their organization. In addition, Mohamed Alí Seneldín, a Malvinas ex-combatant lauded for leadership during the conflict, was denounced for his participation in training military personnel in interrogation and torture techniques to be used against political prisoners (Guber 171, 180).

[91] Lorenz defines the term as "[el] sincretismo entre Malvinas y la dictadura…[L]a homologación entre cualquier reivindicación de la justicia de las causas para la guerra y de los motivos y convicciones de quienes participaron en ella con la dictadura militar" (Guerras 229).

an already damaged image as the perception of the war's absurdity gained popular appeal. Political and civil society assigned responsibility for the failure to the military regime, personified by a repudiated General Galtieri. Guber argues that because it became perceived as a military caprice, the war no longer pertained to "los argentinos."

> [L]a guerra de Malvinas era considerada la guerra de los dictadores, y quienes tomaron parte en ella (y también en su entusiasmo) eran sospechados de culpables de la derrota, de inclinaciones autoritarias, y muy frecuentemente de colaboradores de las Fuerzas Armadas. Los civiles en general comenzaron a mostrarse como víctimas del engaño de la propaganda bélica oficial. (Guber 198)

The ex-combatants' invisibility in the postwar period resulted from associating the war with a purely military political strategy. *Desmalvinizar* meant that the ex-combatant experience was now a non-national cause. *Desmalvinizar,* Guber convincingly claims, meant *desnacionalizar.* This invisibility placed them at the margins of a reconstruction project from which they began a struggle to be recognized and prove their adulthood (Guber 154).[92] In tandem with their invisibility, or perhaps contributing to it, was the propagation of the infantilized image: *los chicos de la guerra.* This stereotype acted as if freezing the young men in time. It denied them the right be seen and to be recognized as adults in all their human complexity. Cultural production contributed to promoting their victimized and infantilized perception.

Two months after the Argentine surrender, the journalist Daniel Kon published the interviews he conducted as ex-combatants returned from Malvinas. Published under the title, *Los chicos de la guerra,* Kon's text recounts the ex-combatants' journeys, from their deployment to their return to the continent. The interviews emphasize the difficulties and horrors of war: the experience in battle, their preparation (and lack thereof), the abuses and failures of military brass, etc. What makes Kon's project particularly relevant, given its historical moment, is how his own voice and ideological position frames these narratives, ultimately mediating their reception. In Kon's language, Guber observes the ambivalent nature that became the intrinsic characteristic associated particularly with conscripts: society sent them to Malvinas as men capable of defending a nation, but welcomed them back as victimized and defenseless boys.[93] The book's introduction is an urgent call to hear directly from the men who were in Malvinas. Kon presents them as new generation of men lacking political experience and a past (2).[94] His

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[92] Guber argues that in the postwar period Malvinas ex-soldier identity was enunciated from a position of 'liminality.'

[93] In *Partes de guerra* (1997), Graciela Speranza and Fernando Cittadini collect the testimonies of ex-soldiers and active military officials gathered between 1994 and 1996 and organize fragments of these testimonies into a chronological war account. The collectivity of voices reveals the transformative effect of the conflict. Still critical of the war, these men describe their involvement as a consequential experience shaping their subjectivities and making them politically conscious citizens. *Partes de guerra* exposes the complexity constituting the ex-combatant identity, regardless of military affiliation prior to the war. The testimonies challenge the victim stereotype and the vision of defeatism associated with the Malvinas soldier.

[94] The book enjoyed widespread success, which can be explained by the minimal media coverage of the war in Argentina. The information that circulated was almost exclusively derived from the military reports describing daily operations. The images that did circulate in the national press transmitted a cheerful,

voice directs the reader as to how the testimonies of the "eighteen or nineteen-year-old, inexpert soldiers, those whom the world, since the beginning of the war christened as '*los chicos*'" must be understood (Kon 2). Kon's protagonists are neither soldiers nor adults; they are unskilled boys.

Rosana Guber notes a crucial contradiction regarding masculinity in relation to military institutions and service. She argues that prior to the war, compulsory military service in Argentina, obligatory since 1901, symbolized masculine passage into "adulthood, citizenship and nationality." For conscript soldiers during the Malvinas War, however, military service prolonged their passage. Their characterization as "inexperienced," "unskilled," "unprepared," "under-aged" and, ultimately, as "victimized" boys confirmed their infantilized perception. Upon their return, their reintegration to civil life depended on the help of other adults: military officials, their parents, or their "madrinas de guerra" (*war patrons*), etc. Conscripts became associated not with independence, heroism, and adulthood. On the contrary:

> No podían disponer de sus compensaciones de guerra, pero venían de emplear armamento pesado y quizás matando o herido de gravedad al enemigo. Jóvenes hombres, reconocidos por la sociedad y el estado como 'soldados argentinos' mientras estaban en las Islas, se convirtieron en civiles ni bien volvieron al continente y, al tiempo de paz, en civiles extraordinarios que dependían de la asistencia militar, que sabían de guerra, pero que no seguirían carrera militar… condición intermedia y ambigua de ni niños ni adultos, ni militares ni civiles. (Guber Chicos 61)

As *chicos de la guerra*, they were not treated as adults, but rather as infants or (traumatized) victims.

The release of Bebe Kamin's 1984 homonym film, based on Kon's book, consolidated the infantilized stereotype. The film *Los chicos de la guerra* follows the lives of three young men, Fabian, Pablo, and Santiago; coming from different social classes, all three are drafted. The film begins with the image of wounded and traumatized soldiers in the islands. The Argentinians have surrendered and are taken prisoners by villainous-depicted British troops. A chronological depiction of their lives is presented via flashbacks. Thus, from a violent and death-ridden front, the film cuts back to 1968, Fabian's middle class childhood room full of innocence and family love. Through back and forth narration via flashbacks, the film traces the transformation of innocent, happy, and naïve boys into victimized soldiers. The military dictatorship, not the war, emerges as the great villain disturbing a harmonious social order, exemplified by the lives of the three protagonists. Fabian grows up in a loving household that instills in him patriotic values. Contrary to his gun-loving, high-ranked military father, Pablo is passionate about playing piano and classical music. Santiago, the third protagonist, works hard to make ends meet and economically support his family back in Corrientes.

For Guber, the film fails because it depicts these three men as citizens devoid of political or social consciousness; they lack any self-reflection. As such, the film is unable to present a critique of the war, which appears as a complementary narrative to the film's

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almost triumphant, vision of the war. British and Argentine journalists covering the conflict left the islands early on and, due to military censorship, conducted their reporting from Buenos Aires.

central focus: the rise of authoritarianism where Malvinas functions as a military tactic that withers Argentinians' political/revolutionary spirit. Lacking any contextualization and explanations regarding its origins and development, Kamin's film presents the war as an authoritarian disciplinary method used against a politically disengaged society. Consequently, Kamin's young conscripts can only be helpless victims of repressive social and political structures. In Pablo's case, for example, in addition to an oppressive family environment, personified by his abusive military father, his school becomes another repressive institution.

Traumatized and affected by their war experience, upon their return from Malvinas, all three must readapt to civilian life. Breaking his promise to hold Santiago's job, the café owner has hired a younger boy who has taken Santiago's place. Without a job, disillusioned, and with no support system, Santiago becomes lost in Buenos Aires, a city that was never home but is more alienating now. Unable to adapt to postwar life, Pablo commits suicide using the gun his father forcefully taught him to use.[95] Fabian successfully reintegrates to society, because his parents, girlfriend, and friends are there to support him. This happy environment was the fate he was always destined to have, as proven by his childhood room flashback. The film message is clear: even though militarism interrupted his journey, in the end, natural order is restored.

One of the last scenes shows Fabian at a rock concert, holding his head up, proudly looking ahead. He can live again. The dictatorship is over. He enjoys life again and, as the image suggests, he has promising future because harmony and social order have returned. The lasts images are comprised of film footage of real ex-combatants marching on the streets of Buenos Aires in 1983 three years before the film's release, on the first anniversary of the war. Their celebratory tone produces a strong emotional effect. The dramatic images of real ex-combatants celebrating and embracing each other evoke hopefulness. These images, which most Argentinians have probably seen, send a message of reassurance. The viewer soon forgets the fictional tragedy. Both Fabian's fate, a cheerful young man enjoying a rock concert, and the street celebrations give the film a sense of resolution. All is well and there is no burden to bear. While the fictional story confirms the perception of the men as boys and victims, the street celebrations give witness to their safe return home. The boys are fine and, like Fabian, they have reintegrated. Published more than twenty years later, Travnik's portraits argue for the contrary.

Unfreezing Time, Undoing *los chicos de la guerra*

The austerity in Travnik's portraits of the ex-combatants underlines the presence of the subject and, yet, nothing in the space or the background hints at details about their personal stories or their personalities. These visual representations emphasize individuality without offering a specific reading. While the collection includes some two-third and full-length body shots, most of the photographs are close-up headshots. In the portraits, the striking prominence of the face accentuates the intensity of the look. The

[95] This is an eerie foreshadowing of reality. Suicide became a common fate among ex-combatants. According to unofficial figures reported in Clarín, the number of suicides accounted for over four-hundred in 2013 (Reclamo).

face and the persistence of the sustained look throughout the series serve a haunting function; the look demands a response from the viewer. "Portraits reflect social realities," art historian Richard Brilliant asserts (9). In the work of art, the face "catches the essence of the human relationship and consolidates it in the portrait through the creation of a visible identity sign by which someone can be known, possibly forever. The sign constitutes the admission that there is 'someone' out there worthy of identification" (Brilliant 14). In Travnik's portraits the face and the sustained look establish the identity of someone, whose existence was defined by the process of socialization that occurred after the war.

As a medium of representation, then, the portrait accomplishes an important indexical function. As indexical signs, the portraits document presence of *someone worthy of identification.* In Travnik's photographs, however, this operation is not as simple. His portraits defy the conventions of genre. Anne Marie Heinrich, Sara Facio, and Marcos Lopez are the three renowned Argentine portraitists of the twentieth century, whose photographic work also includes black and white portraits. Heinrich and Facio photographed some of the most influential personalities of the Latin American cultural and artistic scene. Theirs, however, are not ambiguous. By offering glimpses into the photographed subject's personality, their portraits gesture to specific subjectivities. Travnik plays with this tradition, undoing this form of representation by foregrounding ambiguity and neutrality. His portraits do not tell much about their subject. The key to understand them lies in their temporality. In capturing time, they bear witness to its passing, which becomes a crucial element.

Overall, the black and white portraits share a similar composition. Except for the first portrait where the ex-combatant poses next to a window, in all the rest, the men are photographed in an empty space. The emptiness is deliberate. In the photographs, a wrinkled cloth used to neutralize the background is visible. When the men are seated, a similar cloth covers the seats. The spatial uniformity across the portraits has a twofold effect. First, even when the background changes color, from gray to black, the black and white composition endows the portraits a homogenous tone. Nothing in the space stands out. No textures or outstanding colors disturb the spatial solemnity. Second, the emptiness in the background and overall space intensifies the austerity, which becomes the striking feature of the series. Even the lighting seems to be just enough to light the face. The austerity—in the color, light and space—lays bare the overpowering presence of the face. In addition to the name and the association to the war, nothing about the men is known (Figure 11).[96]

[96] Dutch photographer Rineke Dijkstra created a similar project when she photographed young men entering military service, *Olivier* (2000-2003) and *Israeli Soldiers* (1999-2000). The *Olivier* series features Olivier, a young French man, in a series of portraits taken in a three-year period. In *Israeli Soldiers*, Dijkstra photographs men and women at different stages of their military service in the Israeli army. On an individual scale, like Travnik's images, Dijkstra's are austere. In Dijkstra, however, there is no ambiguity. Her subjects are civilians becoming part of the Armed Forces. The power of her work lies in the stark contrast revealing their transition (and transformation) from individuals to members of a collective. The series highlights the sacrifice and disappearance of individuality. Unlike Tranik portraits, Dijkstra's series does not resist a reading. On the one hand, the portraits emphasize the transition from adolescence to adulthood. On the other, their aim, as described by the artist, is to show the tension between men as individuals and as members of a community. http://www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/2003-09-10_rineke-dijkstra/

Figure 11. "Epifanio Casimiro Benítez. Ciudad de Buenos Ares, 1994. Soldado conscripto (1962). Batallón de Infantería de Marina. No. 5." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

Malvinas: Retratos y paisajes de guerra reveals these men twenty-six years after they became the iconic figures of the Argentine surrender and, consequently, a failed national project. As a collectivity confined to a stereotype, the individual and the personal became unseen and silenced. The portraits demand that the viewer looks back; the photographs tell "here [they are],"[97] *los chicos de la guerra.* Except that they are no longer the men whose identities were confined to a shameful experience, as victimized soldiers or, perhaps most importantly, as men complicit in state violence. On the contrary, Travnik shows adults, individuals not solely defined by the Malvinas War and who, as a collectivity, are no longer seen under an infantilizing gaze. In this respect, the ambiguity of the portraits is significant.[98] Testifying to the passing of time, the photographs expose the men in their invisibility, while refusing any narrative of war. They are neither *retratos de guerra* nor portraits in the conventional sense since they don't provide any specificity as to who these men are in their present lives. Ultimately, the portraits deal with the construction of subjectivity, one which debates concerning *la causa justa* and *desmalvinización* marginalized.

[97] In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barths asserts that the photograph cannot "escape" deictic language: "the Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of 'Look,' 'See,' 'Here it is'" (5).

[98] See for example Ernst Friedrich's text *War Against War* (1924) or Abel Gance's film *J'Accuse* (1938). Both feature close-up portraits of severely disfigured WWI soldiers. Explicitly anti-war, the images intended to produce horror and shock by revealing the human destruction of war, the "face of war" as Friedrich called his photographs. Subtitled in four different languages (German, French, Dutch and English), Friedrich's images identify the men and include powerful anti-war judgments. Ambiguity is crucial to understand Travnik's commentary regarding the Malvinas War. Since the ultimate objective in Friedrich and Gance's work is the condemnation of war, there cannot be ambiguity.

The first portrait is a medium shot of a young man sitting down. He looks straight to the camera holding a solemn demeanor. The artificial lighting lights the right side of his face casting a shadow on the other side, leaving it almost in the dark. He appears to wear civilian clothing, a sweater and shirt underneath a raincoat. Pinned to his coat, on his chest hangs a war medal. The black and white color of the photograph has blended any distinctive colors of the medal and ribbons. In both, however, cartographic depictions of the two largest islands comprising the Malvinas archipelago, Soledad and Gran Malvina, are visible.[99] The caption identifies him as Luis Alberto Gómez. (Figure 12) When he was photographed in 1994, he was thirty-two years old. He must have been nineteen or twenty when he fought in Malvinas. This is all the information provided by the photo. Is this the jacket he wears in the photo the same one he used during the cold months of 1982? Perhaps. Does he have a family? What does he do for a living? These questions remain unanswered.

Figure 12. "Luis Alberto Gómez. Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1994. Soldado Conscripto (1962). Regimiento de Infantería Mecanizado. 12." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

Like Luis Alberto, thousands of soldiers, conscripted or not, must have been honored for their service. Besides this fact about his military recognitions, however, the portrait contains no specific details about his life story or war experience. Through this visual lack of specificity, the portraits make an important observation. What makes these faces part of a collectivity is the very fact of having been the protagonists of war. This is no small detail and the photographs gesture to their common experience. In the series, there are indirect visual references to Malvinas. These allusions bear witness not just to the actual war fought in 1982, but also to a war that continued after the surrender, a struggle to be seen and recognized. A second gesture arises through photography's inherent temporality. Situated within a tension between past and present, the photographic medium evokes presence and absence, materiality and immateriality. Barthes described this tension as photography's phantasmagoric quality. In these

[99] Known to the British as East and West Falkland.

photographs, a spectral quality points to a past that is made present.

Engaged with both past and present, all photographs, Barthes explains, contain the return of the dead (9).[100] In Travnik's work, this temporal engagement is revelatory. The portraits first and foremost assert the presence of the body, but they do so by pointing to its spectrality, spectral not only in relation to photography as a medium of representation, but also in relation to being unseen, as what Derrida would call, the specter's haunting. In the photographs, these bodies return from the past ("the return of the dead"). This ambiguity—as photography's lie—illustrates an inherent contradiction constituting the narratives that made *la causa justa* and the *desmalvinización* process possible. These bodies, the portraits tell us, were the materiality that made the sovereignty narratives possible. In the postwar period, however, these same bodies were forgotten and dispensed with. The visual allusions to the war are a reminder of this contradiction.

Of the sixty-three portraits included in the series, thirteen include direct allusions to the war, the islands, or Argentina. Like in Luis Alberto's photo, these references are represented mainly in the ex-combatants' attire. They are as subtle as the collar of a camouflage military jacket and as conspicuous as a full military uniform. As expressed in their testimonies, for many soldiers the war presented the opportunity to take part in a historic struggle. Regardless of the debates questioning the war and their participation, taking part in the war was a patriotic duty.[101] For many soldiers, the recuperation of Malvinas remained an unfinished endeavor that had yet to be completed. Even after the surrender, their conviction and belief in the cause continued; as illustrated by Gamerro's protagonist in *Las islas*, many ex-combatants saw themselves returning to the islands to complete the mission. In Travnik's project, the allusions to the islands and the war evoke a similar sentiment. Exiquiel Vargas's portrait is an example. A conscript soldier during the war, Exequiel displays a sense of pride reinforced by the six war medals on his jacket. Romualdo Ignacio Bazán, another ex-combatant, who remained in the Navy until 2006 as the caption informs, wears an impeccable high rank uniform. Holding his gloves and hat in his hands, he looks straight to the camera with elegance and self-confidence. Both men's postures convey honor. Above all, these two portraits transmit a sense of belonging, as if proudly announcing: "I fought in Malvinas;" "I belong to the Armed Forces."

The allusions to Malvinas also invoke reprobation. This time, however, the attention is turned back to the viewers as if the faces in the portraits demanded explanations: the specter demanding that we look back. Ramón Almua's face, for example, has a scar running from the outside corner of his eye all the way to his hairline. His arm rests on a sling. The scar and sling are more prominent than his military attire. Captured in a medium shot, posing sideways, Ramón maintains a reproaching expression. His eyes force the viewer to look back and witness his visible disappointment. Are his scar and arm injury war wounds? There are no answers. His haunting stare expresses disapproval. Something is expected from viewers, except that as viewers, we can't know what this might be. It is our responsibility, our burden, to accept this uncertainty. The invocation to the viewer is less ambiguous in the portrait of Raimundo Villagra, taken in 1999. Stitched on to the left shoulder of his jacked is an Argentine flag. Underneath the front pocket, there is a visible phrase: *Yo tengo memoria*. (I remember). The effect could

[100] Photography as the "motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead" (Camera 32).
[101] See the testimonies in *Partes de guerra* and *Los chicos de la guerra.*

not be more powerful. The statement immediately interpellates viewer. It recriminates. It forces viewers to ask themselves, if *they* remember, perhaps shamefully accepting that unlike him, they forgot. "*Yo tengo memoria*" epitomizes the burden of memory and reminds that Raimundo Villagra has been the keeper of it. He has born the burden of memory. The phrase incriminates a complicit society that forgot the ex-combatants. In contrast with the statement's denouncing function, Raimundo's face betrays no expression. The wrinkles on his forehead reveal the passing of time. Despite time's passing, he remembers.

In the portraits bearing no direct references to Malvinas, through their ambiguity, Travnik achieves a reversal of the forgetting and unseeing that resulted from the *desmalvinización* process. In her introduction to Travnik's essay, literary critic Graciela Speranza argues that the photographs confront Argentinians to the war legacy: "lo que cuenta, en suma, es lo que la reunión de rostros y paisajes, imposible hoy salvo en el arco de la obra, no dice y obliga a preguntarse. ¿Qué quedó de la experiencia real de Malvinas? ¿Qué aprendimos de las atrocidades de la guerra? … Frente a *ellos* estamos *nosotros* interpelados por esas miradas…" (Retratos n.p.). In this confrontation—"us" with "them"—Speranza sees the possibility for an articulation of the "unspeakable experience" of the Malvinas war. While the notion of "unspeakable experience" refers to the shocks and traumas produced by war, a problem made all too familiar by Benjamin in "The Storyteller," in the Argentinian context, the experience of Malvinas soldiers is also marked by the unspeakability resulting from the silencing that took place after June 1982. In addition to filling a visual void—Malvinas as a war "with no images"—, the specificity of the photographic medium presents an important reflection regarding the war and the debates that contested its legitimacy. The process and development of Travnik projects, conveyed in the photographs through a nuanced temporality, is critical to create such reflection.

Except for three portraits, the remaining sixty show the ex-combatant looking straight to the camera. As mentioned, all of them share the imposing presence of the gaze. Some faces betray no expression. Some seem confrontational or suspicious. In others, the men do not look straight at all. They look to the side. The ambiguous temporality suggested by the series adds another layer of complexity. The visible age difference between the men, resulting from the extensive period in which the photos were taken, produces a disquieting ambiguity. The portraits are arranged to show the ex-combatants in their thirties, forties, even fifties. The juxtaposition continues throughout the series—a portrait of a young ex-combatant followed by a much older looking one and vice versa. Portrait eleven, for example, shows Santiago Dionel Mambrini in his thirties. He wears a button-down shirt and a metal chain hangs down his neck. The portrait on the right also belongs to him, except it shows a different Santiago, an older version of him. (Figures 13 and 14) In both portraits, taken in 1993 and 2007 respectively, Santiago's eyes confront viewers clearly revealing that he has aged. In his second portrait, he is in his forties. His hair is shorter. The curls have disappeared. Wearing a black t-shirt, the wrinkles on his neck and face are visible. Not only have the wrinkles deepened, but dark spots are visible as well. His eyes are expressive, perhaps revealing sadness or fatigue. The contrast between both images is striking. Time has passed. More than anything, the series emphasize the passing of time.

Figures 13 and 14. "Santiago Dionel Mambrini's portraits as displayed in Travnik's published book. The photogaphs were taken fourteen-years appart, in 1993 and 1997."
Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

Walter Benjamin attributed a revelatory capacity to the photographic medium, which distinguished it from other technologies. He detected in the photograph an ability to reveal hidden meanings that were not discernible at a conscious level.[102] Photography's superiority lied in its capacity to focus on the small and on details. Contrary to painting, these technological qualities granted photography its independence from the author. One should not be as naïve, however, as to propose the Travnik's portraits devoid of authorial intention. On the contrary, Travnik did, after all, have a very specific objective in mind: confront viewers with an unfamiliar vision of the war.[103] The close-up choice makes this confrontation becomes truly effective and affective as well. The close-up is particularly revelatory. It exposes the subtlest marks that the passing of time has left, as Santiago's photos makes evident. What Travnik's portraits reveal is the irrefutability of subjectivity—a life existing as concrete and real as the photograph itself. In other words, while the portraits refuse to inform about Santiago's life—his work, family, or hobbies—, they are the confirmation that he has lived for twenty-five years after June 14, 1982.

Although Santiago is the only ex-combatant featured in two portraits, the non-chronological order of the series replicates the temporal effect. By 2007, the ex-combatants were in their forties or fifties. Yet, some faces do not reflect the time that has

[102] "It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this *optical unconscious*, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Details of structure, cellular tissue, with which technology are normally concerned—all this is, in its origins, more native to the camera" (Benjamin Photography 512-513). For a theorization on the Benjamin's concept "optical unconscious" see Rosalind E. Krauss's *The Uptical Unconscious.*

[103] "Mi interés era acercarme a cada uno de ellos como ser humano y alejarme de la mirada más cercana al lugar común que dan los medios de difusión que en general cuando llega el 2 de abril publican fotos del que juega al futbol vestido de futbolista… Me interesaba mostrar los rostros y confrontar los rostros con los del espectador" (Travnik Entrevista).

passed. Some look almost as young as they would have during the war. Portraits 29 and 32 in the series are a clear example. (Figures 15 and 16). Taken in 1994, portrait 29 features 34-year-old Guillermo Díaz. Looking straight to the camera, the minimal lighting obscures the left side of his face. Portrait 32 shows 49-year-old Alfredo Pucci. Photographed in 2007, Alfredo's hair is mostly gray and balding. Looking straight as well, the three-quarter view shows half of his face. The age contrast is stark. The critique conjured by the portraits is produced by that which resides outside the frames, with what is not seen. In the past, Alfredo, now a middle-aged man, was also young, and, perhaps, as innocent-looking as Guillermo. On the other hand, by 2007 Guillermo must also be a middle-aged man. Perhaps his hair is graying. Perhaps he shares Alfredo's accusatory expression.

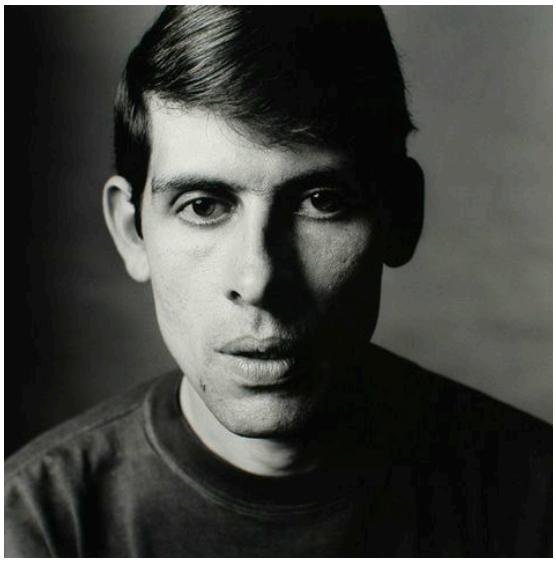

Figure 15. "Guillermo Gustavo Díaz. Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1994. Soldado conscripto (1962). Crucero A.RA. General Belgrano." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

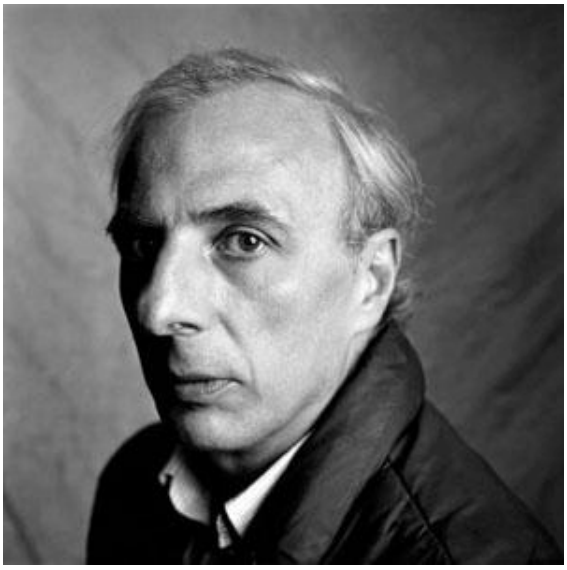

Figure 16. "Alfredo Jorge Pucci. Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2007. Soldado conscripto (1958). Compañía de Comunicaciones Mecanizada 10." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra.*

These assumptions are possible precisely because series' temporality gives the assurance of subjectivity and life experience beyond the Malvinas warfront. These men, the portraits suggest, continued living their lives. "They exist out there," the images communicate. For Barthes, the inherent temporality of the photograph was determined by its referent, which was not an imitation. The painter, for example, could create reality without seeing it. Discourse depended on signs whose referents could be "and more often [were] 'chimeras'" (76). Speaking in a time before the advent of digital photography and the challenges it posed to traditional conceptions of photography, for Barthes, the photograph was noteworthy because of its referent possessing a concrete existence. The photograph existed because of it: the "'photographic referent' [is] not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph" (76). The photograph authenticates reality and the past, what is and what has been: "*the thing has been there."* In a similar way, in their call for recognition, Travnik's portraits point to presence manifested as the ex-combatants' existence. "I have been here," "I am here" each face, each gaze makes known.

In his argument against the war, León Rozitchner pointed to the Junta's description of the Argentine operation as a "recuperation." The term, he believed, masked a ominous fact: the imposition of authoritarian power on the Argentine people. If for some, including the Grupo de Discusión Socialista, the term "recuperation" legitimized the war as *la causa justa* and a "justo interés popular," for Rozitchner, the same term manifested the regime's politics through violence:

> Los militares argentinos penetraron por la fuerza, rompiendo la paz, en el recinto dominado por Gran Bretaña, y con su justa razón de viejos derrotados (apoyados por la fuerza) dijeron: son nuestras. Hasta aquí no hay guerra, se dirá. No hay guerra porque tenemos la razón en ocuparlas, y no hay guerra porque si bien exterminamos a 30,000 argentinos al ocupar

> el país, no matamos a ningún súbdito inglés al ocupar las Malvinas.… Pero al montar esta comedia militar, con el guiño de ojo a su patrón, los EE.UU., esperaban que esa invasión armada quedara sin respuesta. Y sin respuesta militar inglesa quería decir: no habría resistencia del Imperio, no habría por lo tanto guerra. Quiere decir habría otra vez impunidad, eludiendo la muerte, y el riesgo como lo hicieron adentro. (75)

But there was British resistance, and an impressive manifestation at that.[104] The Argentine surrender came five weeks after the sinking of the ARA Belgrano, the most tragic day of the war, when hundreds of Argentinians died. For Rozitchner, the ill-conceived aggression, disguised as a "just recuperation," was the Junta's distraction against the pressure faced at home:

> Así con el gobierno militar argentino, que recurrió a la "recuperación" de las Malvinas porque había llegado a los límites de su entrega y de su brutalidad. Y que por ese camino no se podía seguir, y se tenía que salvar acudiendo a cualquier medio. Pero ese medio no podía ser cualquiera en verdad: tenía que ser tan grandioso como para que pudiera ocultar la magnitud de la destrucción que hicieron de nuestra soberanía real, que tratarían de ocultar con esa reconquista simbólica. (81)

At stake in the postwar period was the debate, not about the legitimacy of the claim over the islands, but about the actions of the regime and the conditions under which it decided and led the recuperation. Victims of the subsequent *desmalvinización,* the ex-combatants were frozen in time. Caught in-between, they became citizens stigmatized as *chicos de la guerra.* Boyhood is no longer present in Travnik's portraits. Instead, they evidence the individual and lay bare the process of adulthood. In doing so they expose the disposability to which ex-combatants were condemned. The series reverses their invisibility by capturing them, literally, growing old stripped of all categorizations associated with the military and the authoritarian state.

In the ambiguous temporality evoked by the series of images emerges a spectral element. Through the jolting between past and present, these photographs are also about the future. Because the intention is not to show the war, neither portraits nor landscapes are *de guerra.* This fact is not inconsequential. There is an act of liberation in the refusal to represent the Malvinas War. Through the deliberate rejection of any associations with the role that defined the Malvinas' ex-combatant identity, the photograph achieves effects a type of freeing from the past. Therefore, the temporal disjointedness invoked by portraits is effective. By calling the portraits and landscapes *de guerra* only to divest them of all visual representations of war, a critique emerges regarding the war as a conflict that was fought in the name of a profoundly questioned sovereignty.

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[104] As Eric Hobsbawm notes, more than sovereignty over the islands, the British intervention aimed to promote Margaret Thatcher's and her party's credibility at home. Engaging in war with a weaker country was an attempt to rally political support during a period of economic and political crisis. Deploying its impressive military technological force, and displaying it a grandiose manner across the Atlantic, did not intend to defeat an evidently inferior opponent. Rather, the British showcase of military strength sought to demonstrate Great Britain's geopolitical power and position within a late twentieth-century global order.

Considering specifically the portrait as a style of representation, Travnik's photographs emulate those used by the modern state to identify its subjects. Every subject needs a photo ID to prove affiliation to the state, to be legally recognized and enter citizenship. Like an ID photo, Travnik's portraits are austere, minimal, and neutral. Unlike a photo ID, however, the ambiguity arises from the disjointedness between the series title and its visual representation: neither the Malvinas War is to be found in the portraits, nor it is the intention of the visual to represent a narrative of the ex-combatant's war experience. Visually nothing identifies these men as "conscripts," "marines," or "Argentine citizens." By actualizing their experience, one no longer associated with Malvinas, the portraits make visible a narrative of survival, not *de guerra*. This is a story of survival despite *la causa justa,* despite *malvinización,* and despite *los chicos de la guerra.* The portraits attest to the archive's act of actualization (*ponerse al día*). This action is significant for in becoming actual (current), the archive gestures to the actualization experience. It brings it up to date.

The spectral element of the series, then, inscribes a futurity to the portraits. These are men who struggled to find a place for themselves, especially within the narratives that framed the reconstruction of the nation and the return of democracy. Therefore, as specters, the photographs are about survival of the human aspect. Photographing both landscapes and ex-combatants in their invisibility defies their symbolic function and calls for justice as recognition. The spectral presence demands the recognition of a humanity that has been denied. As *los chicos de la guerra,* their experience was condemned to a discursive token used for political gain, and on the part of civil society, to expunge their complicity in the war.

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin argued for the responsibility of historical materialist to empathize with those who are never recognized in the narratives of the "victors" (392).[105] Inspired by this notion, George Didi-Huberman reflects on the current state of affairs dominated by either the over-exposition or the sub-exposition of people. He is referring specifically to those who have no claim to the ways in which they are represented in (to) the world, those who are always at risk of disappearing. In the work of art and, and in photography, Didi-Huberman sees a messianic potentiality that can do justice to this disparity: "conquistar una parcela de humanidad: de eso debería ser capaz una obra de arte, con la condición de hacer la historia narrable, con la condición también, de producir la anticipación de un hablar con otros" (26). Art must assume this responsibility because it has the potential to "conquer" "parcels of humanity" in an age when its "disappearance" is at stake: "la siempre

[105] Benjamin claims that historical materialism—the historiography he champions over historicism—entails an "act of empathy." This empathy results from an awareness and understanding of what is at stake when history only reflects the narrative of the "victors": [e]mphatizing with the victor invariably benefits the current rulers. The historical materialist knows what this means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which current rulers step over those that are lying prostate. According to traditional Practice, the spoils are carried in the procession. They are called "cultural treasures," and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For in every case these treasures have a lineage, which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great geniuses who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of others who lived in the same period. There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. (392). For Benjamin, the historical materialist's responsibility is to empathize with those buried by the triumphal procession of the victors, those whose "toil" is embedded, yet never recognized in the "cultural treasures."

responsabilidad consiste en organizar nuestra espera para esperar ver –para *reconocer*– a un hombre" (13). Travnik's photographs achieve a similar effect by reversing invisibility and the unseeing process. The visual austerity and temporal ambiguity actualize their experience by pointing to the concreteness of life, by presenting the human subject outside of citizenship (one related to the military institution) and outside of the state (the military instution being the manifestation of it). Divesting the series of war representations, the portraits reject to inscribe these subjects within the social pacts that defined their association to the nation. The lack of certainties regarding their personalities and present stories underscores the human and the individual.

In the portraits, most of the ex-combatants wear civilian clothes. If as Speranza asserts, Travnik confronts "us" (as viewers, as Argentinians) with "them," visually, nothing differentiates "them" from "us." The captions confirm that they share a common past. They all served a specific role in the war. That is all the viewer knows. This is where the portraits' gesturing towards the future becomes critical. These men are ex-combatants, but they are also fathers, brothers, sons, workers, middle-aged, Argentinians, *bonaerenses*, *correntinos*, dancers, etc. In what is probably the most optimistic and cheerful portrait, ex-combatant Carlos Waispeck wears a t-shirt with a sign that reads "Salsa Lessons." The shirt has a photo of him next to the late Cuban salsera Celia Cruz. What makes this portrait powerful is the refreshing (and surprise) element of finding Celia Cruz in a "portrait of war."[106] This is the only photograph where specific aspects of the ex-combatant's personality can be speculated. Carlos could be a salsa instructor, Celia Cruz's biggest fan, or simply a salsa dancer. The portrait provides a glimpse into a personal story. Other portraits show wounded men, in a wheelchair or wearing prosthetic legs. In this case, they tell a story of hardship and physical suffering. Are they war-related wounds? Perhaps. More than the history of war, the portraits tells stories of the individual lives that continued in spite of it.

The portraits suggest that this community—the *boys* who fought a war—was always "at risk of disappearing," at risk of being unseen. Through the temporal ambiguity, photography documents the construction of their subjectivity and, in doing so, it attests to their survival. As a testimonial of their struggle, the photographs denounce their disposability by confronting "them" with "us" and demand recognition of their humanity. Travnik's landscapes demand another type of recognition. Like the portraits, they expose the contradiction between the islands symbolic role and invisibility. The beautiful yet spectral landscapes challenge the role of Malvinas within nationalistic narratives.

Desolated Landscapes, Beauty as Ruins

In Travnik's published essay, the landscapes come first. This is no small detail. Graciela Speranza writes that for Argentinians, imagining the experience of war often entails thinking about distant wars, Vietnam or WWII, but not Malvinas. Perhaps this is because more than evoking the act of war in the more conventional sense, as the event upholding nationalistic sentiments, the Malvinas War is perceived not as Argentina's war but the military dictatorship's. The same cannot be said about the islands, which, for

[106] Possessing a cheerful personality, Celia Cruz was notorious for her extravagant and colorful looks.

many Argentinians, represent a strong symbol of nationalism. Under this view, even if the war was lost and denounced as a military failure, the Argentine claim over the territory never lost validity. The defeat only proved that the recuperation did not occur in the ideal moment.[107]

Travnik's landscapes evoke two distinct reactions. The first one is awe, produced by their beauty. These are truly beautiful black and white photographs of mysterious unrecognizable landscapes. The second is a sense of disappointment at the bleakness of the actual territory, perhaps forcing the viewer to ask the question: was a war fought over these barren lands? Black and white and austere, like the portraits, the landscapes contrast the nationalistic rhetoric and imagery conjured by Argentinian political and social rhetoric. Desolation becomes the predominant motif. Calling attention to their desolation and inhospitable nature, Travnik defamiliarizes its symbolic role. The landscapes confront viewers with a Malvinas territory that, contrary to the nationalistic discourses associated with it, exposes a state in ruins and a failed national project. It is impossible here not to recall the sentiments expresed by Fogwill's protagonist as he faces his surroundings: "Había que ser inglés, o como inglés, para meterse allí a morir de frío habiendo la Argentina tan grande y tan linda siempre con sol." If Malvinas has historically been projected as the ultimate promise for national sovereignty—*Malvinas fueron, son y serán argentinas*—, and this was in fact what President Fernández de Kirchner denounced in her speech during the museum inuguration, Travnik's landscapes challenge this interpretation by underlining their futility and unproductivity. As ruins, these landscapes "of war" underscore the islands' marginalization and true invisibility.

Especially since the day in which the Armed Forces disembarked on the islands, the most visible icon representing the Malvinas War is the islands' cartographic depiction. During the war, the image enjoyed massive circulation as the printed press included it in its daily chronicling of the events. It was not uncommon to find the map in magazine and newspaper ads expressing support to the war. Along with this cartographic representation, other images and expressions began to circulate, reinforcing a historical and cultural attachment with the islands. The poem "Marcha de las Malvinas,"[108] written

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[107] In *¿Por qué Malvinas? De la causa nacional a la guerra absura*, Rosana Guber traces the historical debates—the different social and political actors and positions—dealing with the subject of Malvinas as a national cause. Guber explores moments in history during which the term "Malvinas" became a symbol that encapsulated different meanings that gave sense to specific modes of being Argentinian or ways of thinking about national identity. Her argument proposes that the 1982 conflict became another instance, in a long historical tradition, in which the term "Malvinas" responded to nationalist sentiment and need to make sense of the concept of "nation." After 1982, no longer referring to the islands, the real cause of dispute between both nations, "Malvinas" came to signify "the war," as well as the surrender and consequent shame and the silence. Guber asserts that for centuries, more than referring to the actual territory, "Malvinas" has served as a discursive referent for Argentina and Argentinian identity: "'Malvinas', entonces, no sería una esencia de los argentinos sin la cual dejaríamos de ser tales, sino un vehículo construido para expresar una presencia y una historia tumultuosa, inquietante y frecuentemente sanguinaria. 'Malvinas' es una ventana hacia los modos en que los argentinos nos hemos habituado, a veces de manera imperiosa, a vivir, a pensar y actuar, a imaginarnos en el mundo y nosotros en él" (20).

[108] The poem was the winner of the 1939 government sponsored poetry contest aimed at increasing knowledge about the islands within the Argentinian population, as well as to diffuse and promote the recognition of Malvinas as a national cause (Guber Por qué 105).

"Marcha de las Malvinas," Carlos Obligado.

Tras su manto de neblina / no las hemos de olvidar. / "¡Las Malvinas, Argentinas!", / clama el viento y ruge el mar.

by the poet Carlos Obligado in the 1830s, became the popular anthem expressing national clamor for the territory and support for the conflict. Perhaps no other words have put into circulation a more vivid picture of the archipelago and the nationalist sentiment it evokes. Obligado's poem symbolically reclaims the territory as the extension of the Fatherland (*ningún suelo más querido, de la patria la extensión*), for an immortal Argentinian rule. This romantic vision, however, highly contrasts the actual territory, which Guber describes: "[Malvinas is] archipiélago de 11,789 km^2 de superficie helada durante ocho meses al año, arrasada por vientos de hasta 130 km/h, poblada por unas 360 ovejas por habitante y sin yacimientos petrolíferos considerables" (Por qué 16-19). As per this description, sheep are the islands' biggest resource. Malvinas' inhabitants, known as *kelpers*, accounted for only 1,800 at the time of the war (Guber Por qué 18). Thirty-years later, in 2012, the population had increased to 2,900. Kelpers identify with British culture. Therefore, more than a shared history and traditions, the territory is what cements the Argentinian perception regarding the integration between the continent and the islands.

In addition to the historic claim (the islands as a territory of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata) and the legal argument (the islands and continent sitting on the same tectonic plate), nationalistic imagery and rhetoric have reinforced the continental identification with Malvinas' territory. Not surprisingly, in Obligado's poem, the archipelago's natural features are featured prominently. The mantle of fog (*manto de neblina*) is an evocative image of the islands. In fact, Óscar Blanco et al's essay title conjures Obligado's verses only to suggest an ironic take: "Trashumantes de neblina, no las hemos de encontrar." In the poem, the islands inspire the poetic voice. Nature impedes the act of forgetting, because it is nature, in its most vigorous attitude, the voice that claims allegiance to the Fatherland. The "clamoring" wind and the "roaring" sea become incessant cries revealing the true identity of these islands. Even when the mantle of fog keeps them separated, they are not to be forgotten. Fog may hide the islands, but it will not suffice, as they will continue to cast back their white and blue colors. Poetic language transforms the land into the national flag. Behind the fog, warns the poetic voice, lay the white covered hills and the blue sea. No hand is capable of uprooting this organic and unconquerable flag: "*ni de aquellos horizontes nuestra enseña han de arrancar*." If Malvinas is extolled as a beloved land within the Fatherland, it is so because they are the most patriotic. Depicted in a colorful and dynamic fashion, Obligado's Malvinas emerge as an idyllic place, eternally waiting to be recognized, loved, and freed by the Fatherland. Travnik undoes this nationalist vision by producing a profound estrangement in the encounter behind the mantle of fog.

Travnik's decision to photograph the islands was inspired by his interaction with the ex-combatants. Throughout the years, it became clear that the islands were inextricably linked to their experience. For a project featuring the protagonists of the war,

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Ni de aquellos horizontes / nuestra enseña han de arrancar, / pues su blanco está en los montes / y en su azul se tiñe el mar.

¡Por ausente, por vencido / bajo extraño pabellón, / ningún suelo más querido; / de la patria en la extensión!
¿Quién nos habla aquí de olvido, / de renuncia, de perdón? / ¡Ningún suelo más querido, / de la patria en la extensión.

¡Rompa el manto de neblinas, / como un sol, nuestro ideal: / "Las Malvinas, Argentinas / en dominio ya inmortal"!

…

visual representations of the landscapes were also necessary: "I wanted to show what they saw, photograph what their eyes saw and be where they were" (Travnik interview).

Returning to Malvinas was a characteristic that marked the ex-combatant social landscape during the 1990s. Going back to the site of war enabled opportunities for closure and mourning. Historian Federico Lorenz cites the return of war veteran and journalist Edgardo Esteban as an illustrative example.[109] Commenting on the spectacularization and media coverage of Esteban's experience, Lorenz concludes: "[L]os medios gráficos, televisivos y radiales siguieron cada uno de los pasos dados por Esteban en su regreso a las islas, y … en su encuentro con el pasado. … [S]iguieron su comunicación en directo con su familia en Buenos Aires y, episodio central del viaje, transmitieron y fotografiaron su llanto ante la tumba de Vallejos, el soldado muerto en su lugar" (268, 270). In their symbolic return, Travnik's photographs achieve an opposite function. Rather than a return to the familiar, his landscapes produce estrangment by defamiliarizing any nationalistic aspects. Travnik underscores the territory's bleakness and isolation.

Taken during the months of April and May 2007, the landscapes aimed to visually capture the islands as close as possible, as the ex-combatants had seen them. The impulse to historicize is critical because, contrary to the portraits, the landscapes' historicizing effect—their turn to the past—undermines the symbolic role of Malvinas within nationalistic rhetoric. Regarding the war as *la causa justa*, inherently gesturing to the futurity of a national project, the landscapes emphasize the islands' state of ruins. Thus, on the one hand, in bringing together ex-combatants and landscapes, the book symbolically achieves the formers' return to the latter, an encounter that, as Speranza has noted, is only possible within the limits of a project such as this. On the other hand, the profound desolation exposed in these visual representations divests the territory of the dynamism and patriotism ascribed to the islands. As *paisajes de guerra,* these islands do not claim any patriotic allegiance. On the contrary, their inhospitable nature evokes not the future of a nation, but its ruins. In them, the past comes to haunt the present. Travnik's landscapes materialize the spectral logic, the revenant that comes back, the "thing," as the non-present presence that is "there."

[109] Esteban narrated his experience in his 1993 novel *Malvinas, diario del regreso* (*Iluminados por el fuego*). The novel's second edition was published in 2005 simultaneously to the release of its cinematographic adaptation, *Iluminados por el fuego*, directed by Tristán Bauer. The theme of return is also the subject of the 2014 film *La forma exacta de las islas*, directed by Diego Casabé and Edgardo Dieleke. Their film follows the return of two ex-combatants almost thirty-years later. In one of the most powerful scenes, one of them desperately attempts to find the exact position of his unit during the war, where he pays tribute to a fallen comrade.

Figure 17. "Goat Ridges. Cajones de municiones británicas al sur del monte *Dos Hermanas*. 2007." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra*

Landscapes, W.J.T. Mitchell asserts, are powerful instruments of cultural signification; cultural practices capable of forming subjectivity as well as naturalizing social and cultural constructs" (Introduction 1-2). Landscapes are never the representation of "something," but rather "a representation of something that is already a representation in its own right… [L]andscape is already artifice in the moment of its beholding, long before it becomes the subject of representation" (Mitchell Imperial 14). The color and formal composition in Travnik's landscapes is crucial in suggesting an ideological counter-narrative to the territory's historical symbolic function, iconized through its cartographic depiction and patriotic personification. Shot in black and white, the gray hues overpower the space, giving it a monotonous tone. Land and water, grass and rocks reflect the same color. There are no green hills. There is no blue sea. Only the different shades of gray and the different textures of the objects depicted distinguish one from the other. (Figures 17 and 18)

A second striking aspect of the landscapes is their flatness and openness. The lens situates viewers in the middle of barren rocky territory. Nothing obstructs the view in these sites of war. The lens' task is to capture the remains, what became of the islands after the conflict. While some photographs show actual remains such as abandoned burners, fuselage debris, and artillery cases, others just display empty spaces. As with the portraits, visually nothing in the landscapes identify the places. No signal reveals that the photographs were in fact taken in Malvinas. In their color neutrality, in their topography—flat, rocky, and arid—, the landscapes give away no specificity in terms of geographic location. Only the captions identify the objects and places represented. If the photographs' ambiguity is produced visually, the texts underneath anchor them to a very specific historical event: the war in 1982. Only through the titles viewers are able to recognize these landscapes as *paisajes de guerra.* As such, they direct the view to a specific moment in history. This temporal operation, however, no longer evokes grandiosity and futurity. On the contrary, these territories are projected as abandoned ruins. And yet one must not forget the aesthetic impulse. While these images conjure

desolation, abandonment, and ruins, they do so by projecting beauty and by producing an aesthetic pleasure. Therein lies their effectiveness as well.

Figure 18. "Pradera del Ganso. Huella del impacto del avión del capitán (PM) Fausto Gavazzi. 2007." Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra*

The de-familiarization—Malvinas not as the Argentine flag, but as grey desolation—hints to an ironic perspective. Malvinas was supposed to be the greatest feat in contemporary Argentinian history: the recuperation as the realization of a national building project envisioned since the 1830s. The landscapes, however, reject triumphant visions extolled in nationalistic rhetoric: *tras el manto de neblina no las hemos de olvidar*. In their spatial desolation and in their ruin, the photographs undo the futurity implied in nationalistic discourses and images.

Art historian Joel Snyder examines nineteenth-century photographs of the American western frontier and analyzes the role of landscape photography in the "appropriation and domestication" of space. He argues that photography was instrumental in articulating different visions of how the American west was to be perceived and developed. Looking at Carleton Watkins's and Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs, Snyder proposes two contrasting territorial apprehensions that reflected different economic and cultural ideologies. On the one hand, an "invitational" character defined Watkins's photographs of the Pacific Coast. Depicting a harmonious and aestheticized west ("smooth, seamless, and remarkable resolution of detail"), Watkins, according to Snyder, presented the North American Pacific as "potential real estate and as a site for eastern investment and development" (187). An ideal space, it anxiously awaited eastern investment and settlement. O'Sullivan, on the other hand, rejected consumable romanticizing visions. On the contrary, his "contrainvitational" photographs portrayed the west through "bleak, inhospitable, godforsaken, anesthetizing landscapes" (Snyder 195). If Watkins evoked the real estate potential of the frontier, O'Sullivan underscored its unproductivity. Watkins conjured the "familiar;" O'Sullivan alluded to "the unintelligible" (Snyder 189). Snyder's analysis is fitting to understand the function

of Travnik's landscapes. Not only do they illuminate on the ideological and naturalizing character of landscapes, but they also achieve an effect that resonates with O'Sullivan's work.

The *paisajes de guerra* capture a feeling of desolation, particularly when considering the significant space taken up by the actual land within the photographs. All the landscapes share a similar spatial configuration. Because of the close-up framing, the land occupies most of the photograph's space leaving the horizon's line at the very top. This composition has two effects. On the one hand, it affects the perspective. By placing the viewer in a very close position to the focused objects and to the ground, the choice for close-up creates the impression of a viewer who is on ground level; it places viewer in the perceived landscape. From such a close perspective, the rocks, the war remains (when present), and even the grass is recognizable. The terrain of Malvinas is there to be apprehended in all its detail. On the other hand, given the position of the horizon's line at the top, the view of the sky is reduced. Most photographs depict the sky as a thin strip of gray at the top. When photographed in a wider shot, and thus depicting a bigger sky, the grayness of the clouds and sky or the visible fog renders the landscape somber, almost dreadful. No longer a blue sky, a blue "roaring" sea, or a snow-covered field, nature has turned dark and gray. I propose that rather than figuring a vision of the future, the desolation suggests the return of the past.

The overwhelming barrenness and emptiness evoke a profound sense of solitude and abandonment, confronting the viewer with a forgotten Malvinas. As *paisajes de guerra*, these photographs project hostility and inhospitability. Travnik challenges discourses that hail the islands as a promised land that ennobles the nation and convey a sense of a future to come. This observation falls in line with the function of landscapes as modernizing and conquering instruments. The configuration of landscapes was essential for the modernizing projects that many Latin American nations underwent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Landscapes inspired important sociopolitical debates that promoted territorial expansion as a means for national and economic development. As a necessary step within the nation-building process, modernity depended on the conquest of peripheral territories in the name of progress. Landscape appropriations of the periphery delineated the nation's future defined by civilization and productivity. The contemplation of a landscape, for example, sets in motion Sarmiento's vision for Argentina's future:

> La inmensa extensión del país que está en sus extremos, es enteramente despoblada, y ríos navegables posee que no ha surcado aún el frágil barquichuelo. El mal que aqueja a la República Argentina es la extensión: el desierto la rodea por todas partes y se le insinúa en las entrañas: la soledad, el despoblado sin una habitación humana, son, por lo general, los límites incuestionables entre unas y otras provincias. Allí la inmensidad por todas partes: inmensa la llanura, inmensos los bosques, inmensos los ríos…" (56)

The future and progress of Argentina lies in its territorial vastness. Sarmiento's immense territory, however, is full of life: rivers, forests, and plains everywhere. The problem is not the territory's potential to host life, but its loneliness and lack of civilized

settlement. As per its association with imperialism,[110] landscape has inscribed in itself a sense futurity. Similarly, on his appropriation of the Argentinian territory, Sarmiento projects the future progress, which depended on the domestication of the immense, savage and unpopulated territory. If historically, the Malvinas islands have been inscribed with a symbolic sense of futurity, its cartographic representation, especially since 1982, stands for that future. Argentina will not be complete until the archipelago, the natural extension of the Fatherland, is unified with the continental territory. Travnik's landscapes reject such futurity because what defines them is their aridness and its inability to support life. The photographs' estrangement effect turns the attention not to the potentiality of the territory, but rather, to its ruins, to the remains of a lost war. They historicize by anchoring the perspective on the past and its imprint on the present.

If the war's (and the islands') most recognizable referent is the familiar cartographic rendering, Travnik's "contrainvitational" gesture turns to the unintelligible. No longer a colorful and harmonious representation, his landscapes are alienating, unrecognizable and fragmented. If the cartographic visualization of the archipelago provides the vision of a unified future nation, the photographs expose a territory shut off from the world. Nothing beyond the clouds or the fog can be seen. No human being inhabits the lands. Like the portraits, the landscapes undo the form of invisibility to which this territory has been subjected over the last one-hundred and fifty years. These, and not the patriotic images, are the Malvinas that few Argentinians have truly seen.

The close-up framing produces a sensation of enclosure as if Malvinas have been closed off and forgotten by the world outside. No longer a question of futurity, the war remains imply a ghostly presence that invokes the past—the past's irruption in the present. Malvinas as ruins (the ruins of war) concern the past, not the future. What defines these landscapes is not their productivity or inhabitation, but rather the defeat and the experience of a lost war. The remains speak of a truncated project about a nation that never was. There is one photograph that more evidently invokes this ghostly aspect (Figure 19). Taken at night, the landscape of Mount Kent shows the remains of an Argentinian helicopter. Laid bare in the foreground is the debris, which twenty-five years later amounts to what looks like metal scraps. The use of artificial lighting gives the photograph an eerie effect. The light relegates nature, what is supposed to be the central focus, to the background. It is dawn. The darkened hill and clouds allow for minimal natural light to illuminate the horizon. Thus, what otherwise would be a landscape in the dark due to the lack of natural light is transformed into a landscape of violence and destruction.

[110] Imperialism "conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of 'culture' and 'civilization' into a 'natural' space in a progress that is itself narrated as 'natural.' Empires move outward in space and are a way of moving forward in time; the 'prospect' that opens up is not just a spatial scene but a projected future of 'development' and 'exploitation'" (Mitchel Imperial 17).

Figure 19. "Monte Kent. Restos de helicóptero Puma del Ejército Argentino. 2007."
Juan Travnik, *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra*

The evident artificial lighting suggests a strange and unnatural presence. The close-up framing gives the remains of the helicopter an overpowering force. The close-up and the lightning force the attention towards the past as it conjures questions regarding what happened. Why is this helicopter there? What happened to the pilot? It is neither Mount Kent nor the horizon that viewers must see, but rather, the ruins of a war machine. The horizon and what lies beyond, the future, give way to what lies right in front, the past. No longer concerning the future of the nation, the landscape invokes its ghosts.

Conclusion

Speaking of the Malvinas museum's significance for Argentine history, on the day of the inauguration, its director, Jorge Gilles, expressed: "No será el museo de la guerra, sino que recorrerá toda la vida e historia de las islas. Será el primer museo nacional sobre las Islas Malvinas en la historia del Estado Argentino" (Primer n.p.). And so it is. The trajectory, in the modern three-story building, takes the visitor in a multisensory and interactive tour where all the information and visual displays confirm this history. The attractions include: videos and timelines recreating the history, as well as the stories of notable events and *malvinero* heroes,[111] and a children's room where young visitors can explore the islands through electronic tablets. There are spaces dedicated to the archipelago's geography, flora and fauna. The hightlight of the tour, however, comes at the end. The visit ends on a scaffold-like structure next to an enormous glass wall. Looking outside, through the glass, the visitor sees a huge shallow

[111] Including homages to the Gaucho Antonio Rivero, who in 1933 led a revolt against the British. The Operativo Cóndor is also featured. Not to be confused with Operación Cóndor, the 1966 Operativo Cóndor was a militant operation to take back the island led by young Argentinians. The members, turned national heroes, most of them young peronistas, kidnapped a plane flying from Buenos Aires to the South and forced it to land on Malvinas. The flag they displayed on the islands upon landing became yet another symbol of the historical struggle. The flag is on display at the museum.

pool next to the building. In the middle of the pool sits a cartographic depiction of Malvinas. Next to the pool, an iron cut-out of the ARA General Belgrano, the battleship sunk by the British, stands. Waving over the museum, the Argentine flag overlooks both the islands and the Belgrano. In a truly symbolic gesture, then, the museum achieves what the war could not: it unites continent and islands.

As illustrated by the museum, Malvinas and the war continue to play an important role in official nationalistic rhetoric. Especially in the last decades and within *kirchnerismo*, Malvinas has emerged as a foundational discursive construct giving sense to political agenda.[112] If *desmalvinización* was the term that emerged to describe the militarization and de-nationalizing aspect of the war, in recent decades, official rhetoric pushed for efforts to "malvinizar" and to monumentalize the Malvinas narrative once again. Promoting national claims over the archipelago and the right to self-determination became a flagship of *kirchnerismo*.[113] This turn to *malvinización* transformed the war, once again, into a national heroic deed. Malvinas and the war evolved from the justified cause to *the* national cause. In a truly ironic twist, the circulation of an official discourse regarding the vindication of Malvinas, and the war, presented itself as a manifestation of the *Gran Relato Argentino*: the "yet-to-be-annexed" islands (*islas irredentas*) as the cause for which Argentinians must fight.

Regarding the monumentalization of Malvinas, memory is projected as that which must be guarded. This means that the place of the fallen soldiers and surviving ex-combatants in history is paralled to that of previous Malvinas heroes. Historian Federico Lorenz takes a critical position against the insertion of the 1982 conflict and the ex-combatants into a historical lineage or a larger Malvinas narrative. Responding to the creation by the Fernández de Kirchner administration of a fifty-pesos bill commemorating the anniversary of the war, Lorenz condemned the bill's illustrations. These included: the islands' cartographic depiction, a map of Latin America, and, on the reverse, an image of the Gaucho Rivero riding a horse while waving the Argentine flag, an allusion to Operativo Cóndor. In the bill, an imposing Rivero, dressed in gaucho attire,

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[112] Rosana Guber traces the monumentalization of Malvinas and the war back to the 1990s, with the inauguration of the "Monumento a los Caídos en la Guerra de Malvinas y Atlántico Sur" in the center of Buenos Aires on June 24, 1990. The monument, according to Guber, reflected president Carlos Menen's intention to "transformarse en el líder de la memoria nacional en contraste implícito con el gobierno anterior… acusado frecuentemente por los ex-combatientes, por la Fuerzas Armadas y por el mismo Menem de 'desmalvinizador.'" (179). As for the impact on this new official positioning on the ex-combatants and their situation, Guber explains that the government took specific measures to provide economic and health benefits. It was during this time when ex-combatant organizations began to appear in the social and political scene. Although the moment served as a public and political platform for the ex-combatants' exposition, it was more beneficial to Menem's agenda: "Al homenajear a los caídos en la guerra de Malvinas —ex-soldados, suboficiales y oficiales— Menem usó el reconocimiento de quienes murieron en las Islas para aplacar a los oficiales retirados que pedían la liberación de los acusados por violaciones a los derechos humanos… Su objetivo era cerrar un pasado que todavía obstaculizaba su administración. El símbolo de "nación" fue usado como un medio para establecer la unidad no partidaria: los muertos eran un medio adecuado para levantar dicha unidad" (Guber 184).

[113] October 2004, during a speech honoring Malvinas veterans, Néstor Kirchner ratified his commitment: "Malvinas es la causa nacional, es la causa de todos los argentinos, es causa del Estado nacional, es causa de la Patria y es una bandera irrenunciable e inclaudicable que nunca habremos de bajar, la defenderemos en todos los foros que tengamos que defenderla (Discurso). Identifying with Peronist ideology, both Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's political agendas prioritized social justice, economic independence, and sovereignty. Their commitment to the Malvinas cause symbolized their politics.

dominates. The image of the Darwin Cemetery, the only reference to the war, is relegated to the background. For Lorenz, the bill exemplifies the dangers of monumentalizing and historicizing narratives of Malvinas. Assuming the war as another event within a historical arch and the ex-combatants as part of a historical/heroic lineage, these narratives, he claims, obscure the specificity and the complexities of the war.

Lorenz's opinion echoes the critique suggested by Travnik's photographs in relationship to the ex-combatant experience. Assumed as a uniform collectivity, in the bill and in the museum, ex-combatants are once again thrown into anonymity. Lorenz writes: "yo hubiera querido ver en el dorso del billete de Malvinas alguna referencia a los soldados combatientes, y no que aparezcan como cruces anónimas … como si no hubiera sucedido nada desde 1833, y sobre todo, desde 1982.…Cambiarle la historia a los soldados, poniéndolas en una línea que no es la que sostuvieron todos ni antes ni después de la guerra, también es mantener su anonimato" (Discurso). For Lorenz, official discourses about Malvinas foreclose possibilities for debate regarding the experiences of war and social responsibility. Reducing their experience to an image of the cemetery obscures their experience as much as the expression *los chicos de la guerra* did.

In dialogue with Lorenz's reflections, I believe that Travnik's project resists the impulse of putting the ex-combatants "en una línea que no es la que sostuvieron todos ni antes ni después de la guerra" (Lorenz Discurso). Travnik's portraits work against the anonymity into which these men were thrown after they no longer served as the bodies supporting *la causa justa.* The photographs capture their subjectivity by actualizing their experience. Photographing their invisibility, Travnik emphasizes the human being, not the soldier. Although there are allusions to the war, not all these men have the same attachment to it, or at least that is the suggestion. This fact strengthens their individuality and human aspect. Some continued serving in the military; others didn't. Some perhaps still suffer consequences of their experience; others, perhaps, don't. The fact is that there are no certainties regarding their present experience and this ambiguity is the project's great achievement.

The landscapes, on the other hand, challenge the symbolic role that Malvinas has served historically—the symbol of self-determination, sovereignty, and nation building. Undoing the familiarity that cartographic representations of Malvinas evoke, Travnik photographs direct the view to another kind of invisibility. He confronts viewers with a territory in ruins. The landscapes are anything but invitational. On the contrary, they illustrate desolation and precariousness. If official and monumentalized narratives instill a sense of futurity in Malvinas, Travnik's landscapes point to the past. This is the nation in ruins—the failure of a national project.

This chapter started with a comparison of Óscar Ismael Poltronieri's photographs. Photographed in the museum as a symbol of a monumental history, Óscar is an ex-combatant turned hero. Within this narrative, Oscar is destitute of his individuality. He can only be a patriotic/nationalistic emblem comparable to the Gaucho Rivero and the young peronistas leading the Operativo Cóndor. All are the symbols materializing *la causa justa*. In Travnik's photograph, the national hero disappears. The temporal and visual ambiguity exposes the human being. No longer a *chico de la guerra,* Oscar Ismael could be a grandfather, a father, and ultimately, something other than just a "Malvinas hero."

In the second half of the nineteenth century, American photographer Matthew Brady became a household name as his photographs chronicling the Civil War gained prominence. Brady photographed a nation in the making through renderings of the actions at the front and his portraits of the American soldiers. He visually captured the men and the epics that made the birth of the United States, as a united nation, a reality. The Malvinas War was projected as a fight for the nation as well. As *la causa justa,* this was the war that would put an end to centuries of colonialism. It was monumentalized, and continues to be, as the fight for self-determination. Only that sovereignty and self-determination had to be questioned because they demanded the sacrifice of young men who paid the price of invisibility and marginalization. *Malvinas: Retratos y paisajes de guerra* brilliantly exposes the faces that materialized this sacrifice.

Chapter 3

The Invisibility of War in *Requiem NN*, *La sirga*, and *Los ejércitos*

On October 2016, Colombians went to the voting booths to decide whether they would finally put an end to the armed conflict that afflicted the country for over five decades. In what some perceived as Colombia's Brexit moment given the shocking result, the voting majority rejected the historic peace deal agreed upon by the Santos administration and the leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's oldest and largest rebel group. While the referendum was later passed by parliament and the settlement of the peace deal is currently underway, the resolution of the war is still uncertain. For now, certainties regarding the conflict concern its devastation: it left more than two-hundred thousand dead citizens and over six million forced internal displacements; in 2015, Colombia accounted for the second largest displaced population, second only to Syria (Semana).

The disappearances and internal displacements produced by the violence are illustrative of the catastrophic toll that the five-decade war has inflicted on the population. These numbers speak for the perpetuation of violence in everyday life, especially since the 1980s, a period that witnessed a transformation of the conflict. During this decade, with the surge of a profitable illegal drug economy, the political interests driving the conflict were superseded by the economic. This is not to say that there were never economic interests at stake. In fact, since the beginning, the war was also a dispute over land distribution reform. The appearance of a profitable global drug-business, however, opened the way for new groups seeking control of it to become the important actors in the conflict. No longer, then, did the war involve state armed forces and left-leaning guerrillas, but also drug cartels and paramilitary groups.

Within the last thirty years, ten percent of the population has been displaced by violence. This is a staggering number, especially when considering that Colombia's population amounts to forty-eight million. According to official figures, between 1985 and 2010 more than 300,000 victims of guerilla and paramilitary groups were reported, in addition to the more than 51,000 disappearances reported by 2010. (Haugaard and Nicholls 3). Of these, 32,000 are categorized "forced disappearances." When considering the number of unreported disappearances, the figures become daunting. If the history of Latin America can be understood as one of constant displacement, when it comes to the modern Colombian nation these abysmal figures turn its history into horror. Cultural production provides fruitful reflections as one confronts this history.

Literary scholars Felipe Martínez-Pinzón and Javier Uriarte propose that war, as a military and discursive operation, reconfigures and (re)signifies space. In its discursive function, they add, war allows for "nuevas formas de decir" because as a spatializing operation it "(re)articulates" relationships between the state, subjects, and territories (7, 9). War is the event where "meaning proliferates" (Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte 22). Yet, the the languages that attempt to reproduce war must confront its ungraspable nature

(*inasibilidad*) (23).[114] Analyzing the representation of war in literature specifically, literary scholar Kate McLoughlin suggests that representations of war make manifest what "writing can do with the ineffable and the intractable" (8). For McLoughlin as an experience, war is defined by "extremeness," what Maurice Blanchot characterized as "that which 'couldn't possibly belong to the order of the things which come to pass'" (qtd in McLoughlin 8). The challenge faced by those attempting to represent war results precisely from the fact that war takes the individual "away from the familiar and the ordinary" (8). Confronted with the urgency to represent the "ineffable and intractable" nature of the experience of war, authors must find languages that render visible the unfamiliar, the extraordinary, and the extreme.

In this chapter, I explore the idea of war's discursive function in relation to the cultural production addressing Colombia's prolonged war. The chapter examines the "new languages," as the proliferation of meaning, that have redered visible the experience of war. Regarding *el conflicto armado interno,* as the war is known, I propose that the conflict has opened spaces for cultural production to find experimental ways of representing the war—*nuevas formas de decir.* In the Colombian context, a hypervisibility of violence predominates within the cultural field. Violence has been, in fact, a topic around which a whole cannon of literature has been organized, *la novela de la violencia.*[115] As for visual works, the hundreds of documentaries detailing the drug-related violence of the 80s and 90s, the infinity of images promoted in the media and more recent fictionalized TV series have depicted the violence in Colombia through epic struggles of good versus evil.

Interested in different approaches to saying or articulating the war, I explore literary and visual works that veer away from an aesthetics of hypervisibility: Juan Manuel Echavarría's documentary *Requiem NN* (2013), William Vega's fiction film, *La sirga* (2012), and Evelio Rosero's novel *Los ejércitos* (2006). I argue that they turn to experimentation to engage with an aesthetic that brings into crisis notions of visibility. Taking Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte's perception as a point of departure, I propose that while the war makes possible the emergence of "nuevas formas de decir," the works examined ahead present new forms/ways of seeing. Rather than showing the actual conflict, they are commited to a type of framing violence that underscores the impact of war on daily life. No longer interested in explaining or rationalizing the conflict, these three works are preoccupied with conditions of suffering and/or survival that characterize the experience of war.

War has been articulated through metaphors of vision, not only as the event that "[disipa] zonas de niebla que distorsionan [la] mirada" but also as a type of invisibility that remains in its aftermath (Mártinez-Pinzón and Uriarte 8). If war allows for new ways of "saying," I analyze the following literary and visual works as aesthetic forms that engage with new ways of seeing, where the act of seeing is compromised. The insistence to represent a war that can no longer be seen and, at the same time, has become part of

[114] Frederick Jameson shared the perception regarding the difficulty of the task of representing war when he expressed that war is "ultimately unrepresentable" (1533).

[115] For an analysis on narrative and violence in Colombia see María Helena Rueda's *La violencia y sus huellas.: Una mirada desde la narrativa colombiana* and Juliana Martínez doctoral dissertation on the work of Evelio Rosero, *Mirar (lo) violento: rebelión y exorcisimo en la obra de Evelio Rosero.* Rory O'Bryen's *Literature, Testimony and Cinema in Contemporary Colombian Culture. Spectres of La Violencia* examines specifically the cultural production addressing *la Violencia.*

the everyday experience underscores the complexities and senseless nature of the Colombian war. Senselessness in this case lies in the impossibility to comprehend the suffering and human loss that the war has created. *El conflicto armado interno* has been and continues to be justified under a logic of "us" against "them," whether by the State's Armed Forces, (left-wing or right-wing) military groups, or drug cartels. Violence is a means to justified (political or economic) ends: the re-establishment of a certain order. Under these articulations, for each side, the use of violence makes sense. The works studied in this chapter, however, point to the counter-face of this logic. How can one comprehend the existence of a fifty-year long war, the longest war in history? How does one make sense of the fact that six million citizens have been forced into displacement? How does one make sense of a war where citizens adopt the unidentified dead victims as a way to return to them, even in death, a sense of dignity, as Echavarría's documentary shows? Bringing into crisis the act of seeing, the films and literature analyzed gesture towards an impossibility to do so.

A reflection on the new ways of seeing the war is preoccupied in underscoring, first and foremost, the invisibility of subjects whom the war renders socially and psychologically precarious—whether they are the combatants involved in conflict, as Travnik's photographs show, or those living beyond the front, like Encina's protagonists. As the Colombian case shows, particularly the works studied ahead, the distinction between who fights and who waits back home, is no loger easily distinguishable. The war takes place at home and everyone is somehow involved in fighting it. It seems that there is no inside and outside of war. Despite this difference, however, like in the previous chapters, the works examined in this chapter engage in representations of a war that no longer conforms to traditional conceptions. On the contrary, war is divested from any nationalistic and patriotic associations. War is no longer a national affair, a necessary obstacle that must be undertaken in the name of the greater good. As *Requiem NN*, *La sirga*, and *Los ejércitos* illustrate, war has turned the world unhinged (*desquiciado*) and it has radically affected life and conditions of living in commun; it no loger safeguards the common good. No longer the ultimate sacrifice towards progress, war interrupsts and disrupts daily life. These works engage temporalities that refuse linearity, and which ultimately, expose a history that becomes arrested or suspended in time.

These literary and visual objects emphasize a temporal disruption produced by the perpetuation of war into the quotidian experience. War throws time out of joint and these works insist on the fact that war interrupts life and precludes History or progress to move forward. Rather than a linear, teleological temporality, they concern a circular or arrested time. Complicating the visibility of the violence of war and foregrounding its temporal interruption, they make visible processes of social and political precariousness. Ultimately, I argue that they challenge notions regarding the configuration of the social pact—the living in common—as individuals are forced to inhabit the world in a perpetual state of war.

el conflicto armado interno, History's Longest War

Anthropologist María Victoria Uribe Alarcón examines the violence of the war in Puerto Berrío, a small Colombian town located on the banks of the Magdalena River, the

most important river connecting the interior with the Caribbean. Uribe Alarcón points to Puerto Berrío as a microcosm of the war, a region illustrating the complex political and economic landscape that has determined the country's history since its independence. She traces the origins of the violence in Puerto Berrío to the period known as *la Violencia*[116] during the 1940s and 1950s, when liberal and conservative factions engaged in a political struggle that left 200,000 Colombians dead. The nationwide antagonism between both sides, which existed prior to *la Violencia*, exploded after the assassination in 1948 of the liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. The event marked the beginning of a struggle defined by bloodshed and terror. Both sides waged a cruel war where new tecniques to kill and inflict pain were invented.[117] The creation of the National Front coalition in 1957, allowing both parties to share political power, put an official end to *la Violencia.* In rural sectors, like Puerto Berrío, however, where adherence to both ideologies had been strong, the violence did not cease.

Puerto Berrío continued to be a contested territory between armed groups that appeared in the 50s and 60s, some the direct inheritors of the ideologies and aims sought during *la Violencia.* As Uribe Alarcón writes,

> in the 1950s, the Conservative Party maintained political power and territorial control in the area through its power over the police force and local hired assassins. By 1965 the guerrilla group, the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional), appeared in the region, which was replaced around 1973 by the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia). The FARC became the hegemonic power in this area until 1983, when paramilitary groups began to take over. (Disappeared 42)

In the 50s and 60s left-wing guerrillas appeared in the scene fighting for liberal causes and ideologies, a revolutionary sentiment and upheaval that extended throughout the continent. In Colombia, the counterinsurgency actions of the Armed Forces and paramilitary groups, the latter working in complicity with the former, aimed at suppressing labor and peasant uprisings as well as eliminating Marxist and/or communist affiliation and guerrilla organizing within the territory (Disappeared 42). The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a rise of internal violence, as other groups fighting for political and/or economic interests became new participants in the conflict. María Helene Rueda writes that while in the 60s and 70s, the political antagonism and violence continued, it was in the 80s, with the rise of the drug-trafficking business that the violence turned the country into a war zone comparable to the levels of *la Violencia.*

> [El] recrudecimiento de la violencia interna … se da a partir de los años noventa, quizás la etapa más devastadora del conflicto armado en Colombia, porque en ese momento el narcotráfico se consolidó como factor importante de la violencia, tanto porque muchos traficantes de drogas recurrieron al terror para presionar a las autoridades que los

[116] The upper case V distinguishes this period from other moments of unrest in the history of Colombia.
[117] Uribe Alarcón has published extensively on this subject. See for example her essays: "Antropología de la inhumanidad: un ensayo interpretativo del terror en Colombia" and "Dismembering and expelling: semantics of political terror en Colombia."

> perseguían, como porque los grupos armados de derecha, como las AUC[118], y de izquierda, como las FARC, comenzaron a involucrarse en el tráfico de drogas para financiar sus guerras. (Violencia 170)

Engulfed in a decades-long internal war, Colombia has endured a political polarization perpetuated a multiplicity of armed groups. The influx of a lucrative drug economy, in which peasants also take part through cultivation and production, the consequent war on drugs that allowed US involvement, and the proliferation of criminal groups acting outside of the law intensified the violence.

Colombian Art's "going to war"

Juan Manuel Echavarría is among a prominent group of Colombian visual artists and filmmakers whose works concern the country's history and association with violence.[119] Doris Salcedo and Óscar Muñoz are the two most well-known artists.[120] While Salcedo has found a bigger international audience as a result of her wide circulation in international art houses, museums, and festivals, Muñoz's oeuvre remains to be seen beyond Colombia.[121] Both artists, however, engage in an art committed to the political stakes of mourning and memory. Their works challenge the reification and monumentalization of memory by appealing rather to fragmentation, to ruins (as destruction or disintegration), and to the ephemeral, ungraspable, character of memory.

Temporality is especially relevant in Muñoz's oeuvre. His exploration of the representation of time, and its passing, entails meditations on the artistic medium itself—the fragility of its materiality. The video installation *Proyecto para un memorial*, showing Muñoz at work, is a pertinent example. Only visible in the frame is his hand tracing with water on a slab of concrete the anonymous faces of the victims of violence in Colombia. The photos with which he works are taken from newspaper articles. This fact makes a powerful commentary regarding their anonymity. What he traces on the concrete is the image of an image. His actions restore a sense of individually and memory to anonymous victims but only in the fleeting moment. *Proyecto para un memorial* invites viewers to reflect on the dangers of creating a sense of complacency and, as scholar Acosta López points out, closure. If anything, his work confirms the transitory and ephemeral character of memory. Not sooner does the face begin to be recognizable than the water with which it is traced slowly dries up. The artist's hand races against the passing of time, which does not allow for the face to be completely traced. The face and gestures, the images of an image, exist for a short moment denying artist and viewer the ability to appreciate in its completed state. Appearing and disappearing time and again, trapped between absence and presence, the faces make manifest complexities involving memory and its

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[118] *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, the most notorious right-wing paramilitary group.

[119] Doris Salcedo, Óscar Muñoz, Beatriz González, William Vega, and Oscar Ruíz Navia are just a few names.

[120] For an analysis of Salcedo's work, its political and theoretical implications, see Mieke Bal's *Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedos's Political Art.*

[121] Colombian curator José Roca's confirms the lack of circulation of art even within Colombia: "Si uno le pregunta al colombiano, digamos, medio, seguramente le mencionará a Botero; y una persona un poco más educada le nombrará la "Grieta", de Doris Salcedo." (Cronos)

representation. In this case, the medium itself becomes incapable and insufficient. It can only speak for the inherent loss and precariousness of memory.

Muñoz's *Alientos* is just as compelling. It is composed of a series of apparently ordinary mirrors that require viewers to breathe into them. The viewer's breath (*aliento*) brings into presence anonymous faces belonging to the victims of violence, images that, once again, he collected from newspapers. The presence of the faces, the activated mirrors, is not possible without the viewer's complicit participation. The installation establishes a pact between the war's victims and the viewer by inacting something similar to what Wendy Brown calls a "spectral conscience." The act of breathing into the mirrors demands that viewers take responsibility in the preservation of memory by bringing the image to life and into the presence, even if it is only for a few seconds. Therein lies the force of Muñoz's work.[122]

In the case of Juan Manuel Echavarría, most of his work has scrutinized the central role that violence has had in shaping the history of Colombia. "Silences" (2010-2015) documents abandoned schools in rural zones where displacement has forced citizens out of towns. (Figure 20). The photographs show abandoned spaces in ruins and overtaken by nature. Emptied of any nationalist or educational symbolic gesture, in the present, these former schools amount to ruins, the remains of an interrupted and failed education project. In the photographs, the blackboards are the only recognizable trace of the former citizen-forming sites. Once serving as tools to educate and build a nation, in their present state the blackboards only bear witness to a truncated future in the face of war. In these regard, the commenaty resonates with Travnik's landscapes of Malvinas. "Bolivar's Platter" (1999) is a video installation of still images showing the destruction of a ceramic platter bearing the text: "República Colombiana Para Siempre." The work elicits critiques regarding the history of the Colombian nation, from the wars of independence to the present armed conflict. Alluding to Simón Bolívar, the South American hero of independence, the video begins with still images of a pristine and elegant platter that slowly begins to shatter. As the photographs transition into each other, the video slowly shows the platter's destruction accompanied by shattering sounds. Completely destroyed by the end, the platter has turned into a mount of powder clearly resembling cocaine, an ironic and devastating reflection on the destruction toll that violence has wrought on Colombians.

[122] Although her analysis pertains Muñoz's *Proyecto para un memorial*, scholar María del Rosario Acosta López's description could also apply to *Aliento*: "the attempt to preserve the past as living memory must always be carried out in the form of loss, that is, in the form of its "absenting." Art, therefore, must attempt here to present the past as what can never be fully present… [T]he work does not exercise *justice* (if we can speak of such a thing in this context) by means of a temporality that comes along with presence but rather through a radical interruption of presence that claims for what cannot be fully recovered in the present but nonetheless remains unforgotten" (77-78, 79).

Figure 20. Juan Manuel Echavarría, "Silencios" (2011)

Working with victims of violence has been a recurrent characteristic in Echavarría's projects. *Mouths of Ash* (2003-2004), for example, is a series of videos featuring the survivors and victims of the 2002 massacre in the small town of Bojayá. The powerful close-up video recordings show the men and women singing about their horrific experience.[123] Singing and music opens a cathartic space allowing them to cry and speak up about their experience. Transformed into poignant songs, these testimonial portraits account not only for an individual experience of trauma, but also, as a collectivity, they constitute the construction of a historic collective memory. The project "The War We Have Not Seen" (*La guerra que no hemos visto*, 2009) was conceived as an official attempt to create a "historical memory project." It was the result of Echavarría's work with former members of paramilitary and guerrilla groups, demobilized under the Justice and Peace Law passed in 2005.[124] Participating in Echavarría's art workshops, ex-combatants produced pictorial representations of their involvement in the conflict. Due to security concerns and to safeguard the authors' anonymity, the paintings were exhibited in Bogotá without their names. The anonymity and silence associated with the paintings reinforced a symbolic ambiguity since the

[123] The massacre left more than one hundred dead, most of them victims who were caught in the middle of a skirmish between FARC and AUC members.

[124] Put into effect in July 2005, the "Ley de Justicia y Paz" allowed the demobilization of right-wing guerrillas in Colombia. It provided incentives, usually in the form of lighter sentences for crimes committed, to facilitate their transition into civil life. In exchange, the former soldiers collaborated in efforts to seek truth and justice for the victims. As *Semana* reported in 2009: "31,664 paramilitary fighters have demobilized and more than 18,000 weapons have been handed in to the government. In the 1,867 so-called 'free version' trial hearings, rebels have implicated as alleged allies 140 members of the Armed Forces and 209 politicians, among them 120 mayors and 28 senators. As far as the crimes are concerned, paramilitaries have confessed to 6,549 homicides and 975 disappearances of members of the Armed Forces, and 621 bodies have been handed back to their relatives. Only one paramilitary, alias "El Loro" (The Parrot), has been convicted." http://www.semana.com/international/articulo/justice-and-peace-lawfour-years-later/105636-3

authors may very well have been the perpetrators of the depicted crimes.[125] This is no insignificant gesture. More than assigning blame, the project confronted spectators with the reality of a war to which all Colombians have fallen victims. María Helena Rueda points out that in addition to visualizing the traumas of war, these paintings constitute an archive of war images.

Creating an archive becomes a necessary and appropriate space for critical reflections. What these artistic expressions suggest is that after the thousands of stories and news of terror endured by Colombians for decades, art is still capable of inciting conscientious thought beyond the act of pointing fingers. Works such as "The War We Have Not Seen" manifest this urgency. As the title indicates, the project confronts the viewers to an invisibility that can be analyzed on different registers. On the one hand, as "painted testimonials," the images provide access into an individual experience, in this case, the war seen from the perspective of those directly involved in the conflict. Whether it shows the point of view of a perpetrator or victim, the exhibition presented experiences that most viewers, although they might not be victims themselves, will still relate to. On the other hand, historically *la guerra colombiana* has been a rural war, involving and affecting especially peasants and populations in the interior. Exhibited in Bogotá's Museum of Modern Art, "The War We Have Not Seen" was presenting to *bogotanos* a war that, for the most part, has been seen (and experienced) via images in the press. In any case, the role of a visual archive in making the conflict visible and its contribution to the public debate is noteworthy.

Adopting the Dead in *Requiem NN*

In Echavarría's extensive oeuvre one senses a strong conviction regarding the political and ethical potential of the artwork. This quality remains in his trilogy addressing Puerto Berrío's history. Echavarría began documenting the adoption practice taking place in Puerto Berrío in 2006. Throwing corpses into rivers has been a common practice among armed groups in Colombia. In fact, the 1964 film, *El río de las tumbas*, directed by Julio Luzardo, tells the story of a Colombian town affected by the mysterious appearance of dead bodies in a river. As Uribe Alarcón explains, rivers such as the Cauca and the Magdalena "have been truly converted into moving cemeteries for unidentified bodies, which are known in Colombia by the abbreviation NN"[126] (37). Due to its location along the Magdalena, many of these bodies end in Puerto Berrío, where the state places them in the public cemetery.

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[125] This fact created concerning controversies given that for some social sectors, the exhibition and the overall project leveled the experience of both victims and victimizers. This project and its exhibition were perceived as endangering the process of bringing justice to the victims. María Helena Rueda's analysis emphasizes that the anonymity associated with the paintings complicates the ex-combatant's position. In other words, because some ex-combatants may be directly responsible for the atrocities depicted, the paintings raise important ethical implications. As authors of these works, ex-combatants are not just bystanders in an armed conflict, but rather the victimizers who, for some viewers, must be accountable for it.

[126] The acronym is used throughout the Spanish-speaking world to describe someone whose identity is not known. Commonly understood as *ningún nombre* o *sin nombre*, it comes from the Latin *nomen nescio*, literaly "I do not know the name."

For many decades now, inhabitants have adopted the NNs by marking the tombs with the word "chosen" (*escogido*). In exchange for miraculous favors, including the return of a disappeared relative, jobs, good fortune, protection, etc., adopters promise to give the NNs a proper name and move them to a permanent ossuary. The transfer of the NNs' remains to an ossuary is significant. If NNs are not claimed after a certain period, they are put into a mass grave to make space available for incoming bodies. In addition to its practical function, the ossuary has symbolic role. The ossuary assures that the NNs retain their individuality and name given by the adopters. The ossuary rescues the NN from eternal oblivion. It also leaves open the possibility for future identification, a process that is forever foreclosed by placement in the mass grave. Before then, however, once the tombs are "chosen," adopters paint them and adorn them with flowers or written text; they even protect them with glass or iron as a way to prevent others from choosing them. The adoption is complete when the NN is given a name, a symbolic gesture that makes them a member of the adopter's family.

"Requiem NN," Echavarría's first part of the Puerto Berrío triology, was a video installation showing a series of still photographs of the cemetery tombs. The second part, "Novenario en espera," (*Novenario* On Hold) was a photographic installation resembling the walls of the cemetery. In the Catholic faith, *novenario* are the nine daily prayers done after a person's passing. Echevarría wanted the project to address the suffering of the victims' relatives unable to mourn their dead, a phenomenon all too familiar in Colombia. Through lenticular photographs dissolving into each other, creating an effect of movement, *Novenario en espera* emulated the cemetery's transformation over time. The simulation of the passing of time exposed viewers to the changes suffered by the tombs after their adoption.

The use of still photography has been constant in Echavarría's work. In the documentary, *Requiem NN*, the third and last part of the series, photography has a critical function as well. It is pertinent to underscore this fact given that Echavarría is not a filmmaker, but an artist who remains outside of the frame. This apparent absence is a prominent structure of the documentary, as there is no voice or presence to explain the (hi)story of violence in Puerto Berrío. While viewers are shown the adoption practice and the struggles facing the inhabitants, there is no direct illustrations of the war. It is not explained. Like in *Hamaca paraguaya* and *Malvinas: retratos y paisajes de guerra*, viewers of *Requiem NN* will know as much about the Colombian war after watching the documentary as they did before.

Released in 2013, *Requiem NN* highlights the ways in which ordinary citizens deal with the violence and death toll caused by the war. Through talking head interviews, the film's most prominent feature, members of the community give testimony of their experience. These amount to two contrasting views regarding the NNs and their adoption. On one side are the civilians who are in one way or another directly involved with the practice: the citizens who adopt them, the gravedigger who places the bodies in the tombs, the *animero* or soul keeper who prays for their souls and the citizens who have taken bodies out of the river, etc. On the other, the film features local government employees speaking about the legal procedures dictated by the state to deal with the NNs. Their task, they explain, is made difficult and at times impossible by the adoption. The firefighter and the forensic pathologist, for example, explain that the reason behind the

government-imposed laws to prohibit the practice aim to maintain order and official control.

Figure 21. Puerto Berrío's *animero* or "soul keeper." Juan Manuel Echavarría's *Requiem NN.*

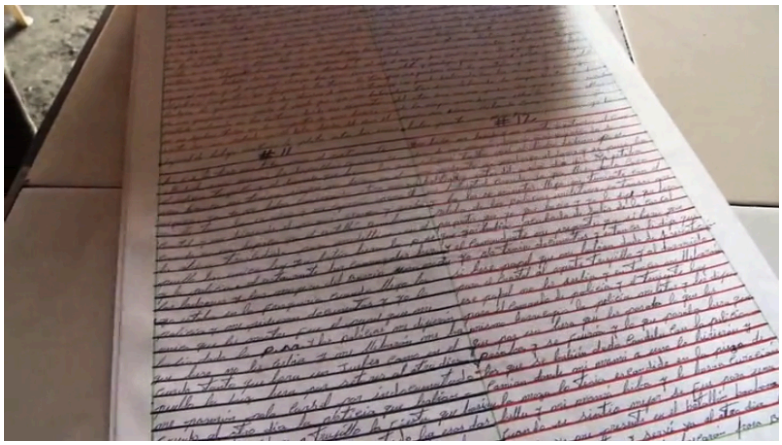

Figure 22. The diary kept by the *animero* where he has recorded the history and stories of the NNs. Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN.*

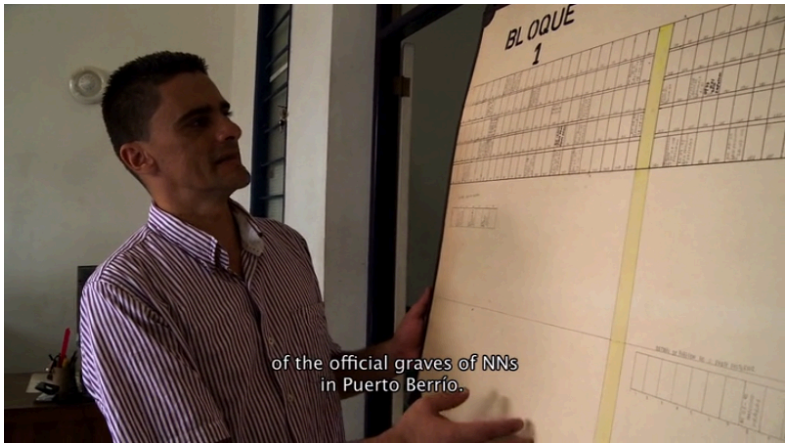

Figure 23. Puerto Berrío's medical examiner explaining his work with the NNs.
Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN.*

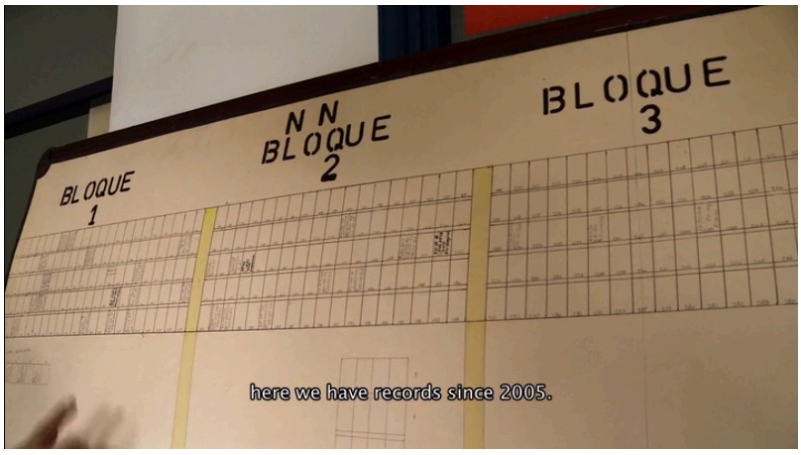

Figure 24. The layout of Puerto Berrío's cemetery, the record kept by forensic officials to keep track of the tombs where the bodies of the NNs have been placed.
Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN.*

Due to the moral responsibility he feels towards the NNs, the *animero* leads the town in prayer hoping that it will secure the NNs' eternal rest. In addition, he keeps a written history of the violence he has witnessed for decades (Figures 21 and 22). What amounts to a fifty-year-history—his and the NNs'—is archived in his writing pad. The *animero* explains:

> as a soul keeper, I've seen a lot of things, so I got the urge to "tell" it in a diary from my childhood until now. The souls from purgatory have helped me out many times, so how can I forget them? I can't forget them. It doesn't scare me to remember bad things because in this diary I have to tell stories about the violence here in Berrío. If this bridge could talk, My God, it would tell us how many bodies were thrown from here.

While he may not know the identity of the NNs, there is still a conviction that written language can capture something unique about their histories and the history of violence in the town—a uniqueness that otherwise would be lost forever if it were not written. The urge to tell responds to a necessity to protect the history of the individuals who make it up, the personal aspect for which the bridge cannot bear witness to. Faced with the possibility of condemning the NNs to oblivion, his language is an attempt to rescue them in the form of a personal connection recorded as a personal memory. His writing starkly contrasts the geometrically ordered record kept by the medical examiner (Figures 23 and 24). On this scientific board, the NN's record is encapsulated by a statistical number neatly assigned to one rectangle. Nothing there speaks to the personal, neither about the NN nor about the impact they have in the town and the connection created with the inhabitants. The *animero* and the medical examiner represent two types of knowledge, each one making a case for a worldview attempting to make sense of a daunting reality. Similarly, the collective testimonies featured in the documentary expose a defenseless and vulnerable society, where criminality, violence, and the rule of an arbitrary use of violence have normalized death, disappearance, and displacement. Documenting the adoption practice, first as photography and then as film, *Requiem NN* reveals the social and political precariousness experienced as a result of never-ending war.

As most of the cultural production dealing with Colombian history of violence, and particularly the internal armed conflict, Echavarría's work is concerned with showing the disposability—as death, disappearance, and displacement—that the war produces. *Requiem NN* successfully juxtaposes two types of knowledge, represented by the *animero* and adopters, on the one hand, and the forensic doctor and firefighter, on the other. Regarding the latter, war has turned this statistical knowledge, the knowledge of the state, insufficient to account for the violence of war. The adoption practice illustrates the ways in which the act of living in common has been disrupted. Daily life in Puerto Berrío entails living with suffering and death. Consequently, and this is the documentary's powerful contribution, the adoption and naming process undoes the dispossession and invisibility inflicted on the victims. Challenging the state's statistical knowledge, the adoption gives visibility to the bodies turned invisible by incorporating them back into the social sphere. If the war turns bodies disposable and thrusts them into the impersonal realm as numbers, the adoption practice restores a sense of identity and individuality.

Often a less abstract artistic style, when compared to artists such as Salcedo and Muñoz, Echavarría's political engagement concerns the impact of war on specific subjects be they *campesinos*, Afro-Colombian populations, or members of armed factions. In *Requiem NN*, Echavarría employs documentary techniques that allow him to incorporate the voices of the direct victims of the war's terror or individuals who have witnessed its violence. The film does not present the town's plight as a struggle between heroes and villains. It does not include official versions; it doesn't mention the issues at stake or the armed groups involved. Like Puerto Berrío's inhabitants, the spectators can't decipher who the perpetrators of violence are. Instead, laid bare on the screen is the presentation of a town overtaken by war. Contrary to most documentaries dealing with this subject, which illustrate the war from a specific point of view or through the examination of a (heroic or villainous) figure or military group, *Requiem NN* achieves

more than a pure pedagogic or illustrative objective.[127] It offers an opportunity to explore how the documentary genre can enrich representational techniques and contribute to debates beyond simplistic or Manichean approaches.

The armed conflict resembles a civil war where multiple factions dispute political hegemony and control of certain territories. If war, in its classical definition is understood as an instrument of the state, a "politics through other means" employed to confirm its legitimacy, the very notion of legitimacy is questioned in the Colombian case. The figure of the soldier illustrates this questioning. The soldier was central in Juan Travnik's photographs and Paz Encina's film. Alluding to the absent and invisible figure of the soldier was crucial in their works precisely because at stake in their representation was an understanding of the contradictions concerning the justification of war. Echavarría confronts viewers with a Colombian society held hostage by a never-ending war and the social decomposition it generates. In this regard, while no two wars are ever the same, *la guerra colombiana* does allow for new reconsiderations of armed conflict in the 21st century.

The presence and irruption of paramilitarism sets the Colombian conflict apart from the wars studied in the previous chapters. Literary scholar Joshua Lund has proposed that paramilitarism is the phenomenon that defines contemporary war: "the war of our time is fought on paramilitary terms, beside the military, not military, a lot like the military, but different" (64) He identifies three variants. The first manifestation is the state's militarization of its police force. The second is an extreme version of the first—a state of exception where "the police move from seeing themselves (ideally) as servants before their fellow citizens to soldiers confronted by a dangerous enemy. The reconceptualization of neighborhoods as 'war zones' speaks volumes. The neighbor becomes the enemy combatant" (64). In *Vulgar paramilitarism*, what he defines as the third variant, the state becomes a "tacit or explicit" supporter or "organize[s], yet 'informal,' vigilante or security forces" (64).[128]

For Lund the armed conflict in Colombia is a manifestation of *vulgar paramilitarism* precisely due to the participation of self-defense security forces (*autodefensas*).[129] The conflict became even more labyrinthine and vicious after the

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[127] The list includes *FARC EP-50 años en monte* (Yves Billion, 1999), *Tirofijo está muerto* (Revista Semana, 2008), *El baile rojo-La historia sobre el genocidio contra la Union Patriótica* (Yesid Campos, 2003), *Impunity* (Hollman Morris and Juan José Lozano, 20011), *Falsos positivos* (Simone Bruno and Dado Carrillo, 2009), *No hubo tiempo para la tristeza,* (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2012), *Colombia Caught in the Crossfire* (Romeo Langlois, 2012), *Paramilitares en Colomiba: Águilas negras* (HISPANTV, 2012), *Colombia's Hidden Killers* (Vice, 2013), *Los rostros de la memoria* (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2015) *Guerrilla Girl* (Frank Piasechi Poulsen, 2005), *Colombia, la guerra que no existe* (Llum Quiñonero, 2010), and also the photographical essay, *Violentology. A Manual of the Colombian Conflict* (2012) by photojournalist Stephen Ferry

[128] Uruguayan journalist Carlos Fazio explains the implications of paramilitarismo as the new modality of war in the twenty-first century: "[E]l paramilitarismo no es, como se pretende, un actor independiente, a la manera de una "tercera fuerza" que actúa con autonomía propia. El paramilitarismo es una estrategia sistemática del Estado…. Siendo creación del Estado, el paramilitarismo persigue los mismos objetivos políticos y de guerra que los militares, actúa como una brigada encubierta con impunidad garantizada para el genocidio social y político" (Acerca del paramilitarismo).

[129] "Colombia is the obvious choice for critical reflection on vulgar paramilitarism, the proliferation of local security forces that operate with impunity alongside the state. But the general historical trajectory of Colombia's 'autodefensas,' well known as it is, only reinforces the risks of proposing tidy definitional

appearance of self-defense right-wing armies, particularly the UAC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*) who acted in complicity or under the protection of the state as the number one enemy of the left-wing guerrillas, the FARC and ELN especially (64).[130] The multiplicity of armies vying for power raises questions regarding legitimate uses of violence and, most importantly, about who holds or claims the right to it. Contrary to Clausewitz's perception of war, in *la guerra colombiana*, the state no longer holds a monopoly of violence. In Echavarría's film, the figure of the soldier speaks to this transformation.

Figure 25. Members of the Colombian Armed Forces shown in *Requiem NN*. Their presence suggests that they have become part of the town's daily landscape. Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN*.

Like in Encina's and Travnik's work, in *Requiem NN*, the figure of the soldier is absent but in a different sense and with a different intention (Figure 25). At various moments in the documentary the military soldier appears briefly as if by coincidence in the sequences showing the streets of Puerto Berrío. At times accompanied by the voice-over narration of the adoption testimonies, these sequences demonstrate daily life and the soldier as a figure who has become part of it. The incidental brief appearance is one more element constituting the space in which the protagonists move. The soldier's appearance and acknowledgment is important for two reasons. First, the presence of the armed forces "protecting" the streets normalizes the war as part of an every-day occurrence. Just as children playing, animals wandering the streets, or workers going about their day, the soldier is part of that routine. War is something that inhabitants live with. Second, depicted as an ignored and marginal subject, the soldier reverts the symbolic role

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parameters around paramilitarism: from their primordial origins as the private little armies of large landowners, to their appropriation into the Cold War fight against communism, to their modernization as security forces for drug cartels, and finally to their consolidation against the FARC and the attendant blood-baths of the 1990s, it is no easy thing to say what exactly it is that the paramilitaries *do* in relation to the state" (Lund 64-65).

[130] Although a demobilization process was begun during the administration of Álvaro Uribe in the early 2000s, many of its leaders and members, which accounted for 40,000, resumed their involvement in criminal activity after 2006, when the process ended.

inscribed by discourses concerning war. The protagonist in an "all against all" war, the soldier in *Requiem NN* is a figure in crisis. He is no longer just a sacrificial token representative of the state's legitimacy, one that civilians must support and fight for. The military has lost legitimacy and credibility. It is complicit in a violence that turns civilians into the enemy. Rather than the guardian of life, the soldier is complicit in a system that turns the very citizens into disposable bodies. Living in war, then, translates as vulnerability. Facing displacement, death, or disappearance, citizens have no one to turn to. In *Requiem NN,* Blanca Nury, the mother whose two children have been disappeared, illustrates this condition. (Figures 26 and 27)

Figures 26 and 27: Blanca Nury shown in the documentary walking the streets of Puerto Berrío looking for her disappeared daughter and son. Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN.*

In what spectators should assume is her every day routine, the documentary shows Blanca walking the streets. While life goes on in the town, she tirelessly looks for her disappeared son and daughter. Armed with a Xerox copy of her daughter's picture, she asks the people she encounters if they recognize her, describing specific features that might help with the identification. Her efforts are fruitless, but she continues. Life in Puerto Berrío goes on. The streets she walks are the same streets guarded by the military.

She, however, cannot turn to them for help. They are incapable of helping. In a sense, she is also fighting the war, against the military, against the guerrilla, and against paramilitary forces. Blanca walks in a town trapped between visible and invisible armies.

The case of Colombia makes evident a crisis of the sovereignty of the state in that war no longer functions as its political instrument. On the contrary, war is the event that debilitates by bringing into crisis its legitimacy. As such, Lund's proposed characteristics regarding contemporary war are of especial interest for an analysis of the war as represented in the documentary: the first is the state's complicity with paramilitary groups (*autodefensas*), and their consequent impunity, and the second, the neighborhood as a "war zone," where the neighbor is perceived as an enemy combatant rather than a civilian in need of protection. The appearance of drug cartels transformed the war and magnified its dimension. More than political ideologies, a drug-trafficking oriented market became the decisive force dictating the distribution of power (or the struggle over it). The violent intervention of paramilitarism, in addition to the cartels' own violent methods, contributed to the elusiven and inapprehensible nature that has characterized the war in Colombia. "Provisional" becomes a fitting adjective for the conflict (Mártinez-Pinzón and Uriarte 25). By capturing this elusiveness, visual culture has generated insightful critiques.

The ungraspable quality (*inasibilidad*) is at play in the Colombian context as brutality has become the omnipresent manifestation of the struggle. Transforming the territory into "war zones" disputed by multiple unrecognizable armies,[131] the war has turned the neighbor into a potential enemy. Faced with such a reality, cultural production turns to experimental languages to represent it.

Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte highlight visual and written languages capable of elucidating the ungraspable nature of war. Cultural production, they claim, should make the spectator "reflexionar sobre los mecanismos de su representación, artificios de lo natural, [cómo la producción cultural los] recodific[a] de distintas maneras para dejarnos ver cómo opera la guerra en tanto dispositivo epistemológico y máquina proliferante de significados" (25). *Requiem NN*, *La sirga*, and *Los ejércitos* pursue a similar task. They direct the view to the politics of armed conflict by exposing its *sinsentido.* Especially in Juan Manuel Echavarría's works, political discourses associated with the war in Colombia reveal themselves empty of meaning. His work directs the view away from rationalizing narratives that articulate the logic of war and its legitimacy and focuses instead on a state of affairs where the disposability of personhood is the norm.

Requiem NN emphasizes the lurking presence of the war. It does so by way of testimonials and sequences showing daily life from the point of view a wide spectrum of the population affected by the violence. As the film suggests, the war has thrust Colombia into perpetual violence and uncertainty. The adoption practice makes this fact visible. Housing the victims of violence in public cemeteries is not a phenomenon unique to Puerto Berrío. Cemeteries across the nation have become the final resting place for thousands of unidentified bodies, placed there by official authorities or by victimizers for whom cemeteries, just as clandestine mass graves, are ideal places to get rid of their victims.[132] This symbolic function of the cemetery was the focus of Beatriz González's

[131] An experience brilliantly captured in Evelio Rosero's novel.

[132] "Una gran cantidad de los desaparecidos de Colombia bien podrían estar en los cementerios oficiales del país…. Muchos cuerpos no identificados (llamados "NN") están enterrados en los cementerios de la

2010 exhibition, *Auras anónimas.* Inspired by the photograph in a newspaper article of two men carrying the body of a victim, González chose Bogotá's Cementerio Central as the place from which enunciate the imperative to create spaces of (and for) memory to honor and remember the victims of the conflict.[133] On each of the nine thousand tomb niches housed in the cemetery, González painted black silhouettes resembling the men in the photograph.[134] An impressive project due to its magnitude, the thousands of images were a powerful statement on various levels regarding the future task for Colombian society. The silhouettes were a reminder of the catastrophic death toll left by decades of social and political antagonism. In addition, they confronted Colombian society to the tasks of memory and healing yet to be done. The images not only represented a literal weight, the dead body carried by the living, but also the burden of war as the traumatic experience that Colombians must work through.

Focusing on cemeteries, Beatriz González and Juan Manuel Echavarría call attention to the haunting unreported history of the Colombian war. In *Requiem NN*, the unreported history also passes through the Magdalena River as a history literally dragged along its current. In both their analysis of the adoption practice in Puerto Berrío, scholars María Victoria Uribe Alarcón and María del Rosario Acosta López argue that it enables the potential for community through the incorporation of the NNs to society and humanization of the dead. From an anthropological perspective, Uribe Alarcón argues that the adoption establishes an agreement between the NNs and the citizens who adopt them. This agreement

> allows the NN to fulfill its role to adopt a new identity and become part of the world of the living. When the soul grants a favor, whoever has requested the favor later promises to provide housing in an ossuary and gives the deceased his or her surname thus converting the dead into part of his or her family. The ossuary and a new name convert the NN into a person again. (Disappeared 41)

The adoption becomes an act of defiance given that in allowing the NNs to share a social space with the living, the citizens revert the ostracism and oblivion intended by the violent death and consequent fate (Uribe Alarcón Disappeared 42). The adoption returns the NNs to the realm of the political as bodies with personhood, as subjected bodies that matter. Acosta López's commentary, on the other hand, concerns Echavarría's photographic exhibition and its engagement with a politics of memory.[135] She proposes

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nación. Esto no significa que no sean víctimas de crímenes. Por toda Colombia, los grupos armados ilegales y las fuerzas oficiales de seguridad utilizaron cementerios legítimos como terreno donde depositar a sus víctimas (Haugaard Nicholls 19).

[133] At the time the cemetery was being demolished to give way to a recreational park, so the project also aimed to criticize utilitarian practices characteristic of a neoliberal, consumerist society that in this case, did not prioritize, or allowed, the preservation of memory (Lápidas).

[134] In González's words: "Hay que crear, de parte del arte, unos sistemas que fijen estas imágenes y guarden la memoria…En esta época de guerra es muy importante hacer una reflexión sobre los sitios ceremoniales, los sitios que guardan la memoria. Estos sitios de culto están siendo abandonados para convertirlos en otras cosas" (qted in Lápidas).

[135] In her essay, "Memory and Fragility: Art's Resistance to Oblivion (Three Colombian Cases)," Acosta López analyzes the works by Echavarría, Óscar Muñoz, and Doris Salcedo.

that Colombian art accomplishs a type of justice, a Hegelian inspired justice that by liberating the past from immutability provides new avenues for remembrance:

> Art, however, has another way of *remembering,* because its aims are different to those of an archive-type memory. Art actively transforms facts into past; it produces the very experience of their passing by and consequently interrupts their *immutability*....[T]he past—in its ungraspable form—proffers new possibilities for comprehension. (Fragility 74)

For Acosta López the strength of art relies in its evocation of fragility, which speaks for the ungraspable, aphoric, nature of memory. Situated in the threshold between oblivion and the reification of the past, as absolute presence, art engages in the work of remembrance by evoking experience only in its "passing by." In doing so, it refuses definite closure.

Echavarría's photographs in motion used in *Novenarios en espera* and in the documentary, capture the passing of time, as well as the impossibility of mourning. Acosta López argues that the images mark the "fictional encounter" between unmourned bodies and the bodiless names given by those who adopt them. The image as photograph does not compensate for an absence, but rather it guards the secret of this absence, the secret of memory:

> the work of art only accompanies this ungraspable and unimaginable mourning through its empty and ghostlike presence. In this case, the image is similar to the graves it portrays: it shelters the dead and guards the truth of a secret that will not be revealed to us. Hence, the work keeps the act of mourning present in its absence; it keeps the pledge to mourn a person who is no longer present. (Acosta López 86).

For Puerto Berrío inhabitants, the adoption not only symbolizes an ethical commitment to the humanization of the NNs, but it also reinforces a sense of community by giving a sense of futurity to the social body:

> what I find in the encounter between these nameless dead bodies and these bodiless names that are cried for, buried, and remembered in the threshold between memory and oblivion, is the story of a road that leads to the possibility of making amends with a present that would otherwise be impossible to face … Rescuing these dead bodies from the river and mourning them is also a way to avoid being carried away by other currents: it is a decision to keep on living in the name of those who are no longer present. (Acosta López 83)

Echoing Acosta López and Uribe Alarcón, I propose that Echavarría's documentary underscores the central role that the adoption practice has in the community. I am, however, interested in how the documentary brings the war into visibility: an exacerbated use of talking head interviews, an observational camera, and the insertion in the

documentary of still photographs. The transition from an installation, featuring only photographs, to the documentary genre emphasizes the invisibility of the victims and their impact in reconfiguring the community.

Refusing direct representation, *Requiem NN* conjures the war and its destruction by delving into the quotidian experience. The documentary begins in medias res. There is no voice-over narration to contextualize the images or the story about to be told. If this is the story of the disappeared, there is no official version to explain it or the political ideologies and forces that have caused them. All explanations are absent. The first sequence shows a contemplative view of the Magdalena River. Trees and tree trunks, among other objects, are dragged along its current, which foreshadow the stories that will be revealed in the following testimonials. The river sequences are recurrent, as the film continually comes back to them to insist on the Magdalena's protagonist role in the (hi)story being told. Without any voice-over commentary, the film turns to the citizens of Puerto Berrío.

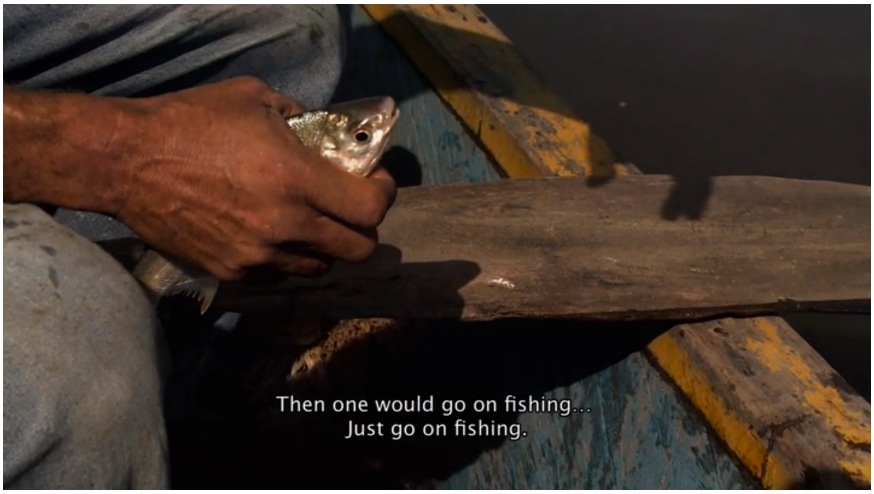
Reflecting a gamut of social actors, the interviewed subjects talk about their experience. The duty of telling and advancing the story is left up to them, via talking head interviews. The exacerbation created by the accumulation of testimonials (including the ones in voice-over) reappearing time and again, added to the lack of a narrating voice, oral or written, reveals two telling aspects. First, it effectively underscores the strong will for individual self-determination constituting daily life in Puerto Berrío. Adopting and looking after the tombs responds to a personal and ethical initiative. Exemplary of this is the soul keeper's diary. The story of the mother, Blanca Nury, is perhaps compelling in this respect. After the disappearance of her two children, she adopts an NN hoping that it will grant her the miracle of seeing them again. There is also the town's gravedigger in charge of placing the remains of the NN's in the tombs and the person who deals with the adopters. Second, the exacerbation of talking head testimonies lays bare the lack of conditions and protection that would ensure the social welfare in this town, including the protection of life. These men and women act on their own, under religious and community traditions, rather than in accordance with the state law.[136]

Requiem NN does not point fingers. It does not reveal villains. This is not to say that the documentary is not provocative. It certainly exposes an urgent problem and demands solutions. Its approach, however, is less expository. No "voice of authority" intervenes to explain the conflict. Echavarría is absent in the film[137] and there is no music to suggest emotions. Stripped of any non-diegetic sound, the plight of Puerto Berrío is

[136] The film *EL río de las tumbas* also features the disposal of bodies into rivers. Inspired by Italian neorealist aesthetics, Julio Luzardo's film does not offer an in-depth exploration of the conflict, although it does allude to *la Violencia*'s history by depicting mysterious characters who might be involved in some guerrilla activity. The film focuses instead on the corruption of local and federal authorities and their complete indifference toward the dead. Contrary to Puerto Berrío's inhabitants, Luzardo's fictional characters remain unaffected. Their attention is focused on the patronal fiestas and the beauty pageant about to take place. Ensuring the success of the festivities is more important than looking after the bodies floating down the river.

[137] Within the Latin American documentary film tradition, Brazilian filmmaker Eduardo Coutinho masterfully employed the talking head technique. His visible presence within the films, however, made clear that he was the authority figure guiding the testimonies and organizing the way in which the lives and the stories being presented in front of him were to be represented on screen.

exposed, unembellished. Presented alone and in a town that goes about its day, indifferent to their suffering and struggles, the inhabitants are displayed in all their vulnerability.



Figures 28: The fisherman shown at work while his voice in voice-over narration reveals his experience with the bodies found in the river. Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN*.

Following observational documentary conventions, *Requiem NN* focuses on observing the town's everyday life and so the film's interpretation must be made through visual associations.[138] The emphasis relies heavily in observing the subjects in their daily life. As the film advances, the testimonies remain and often serve as voice over while a nonintrusive camera follows the subject daily experience, which is structured by the never-ending war. The observational sequences reveal a system, as the adoption of the dead, that has been created to deal with the dispossession of life and suffering. As Blanca Nury walks about the streets, her voice over reminds viewers that she is tirelessly looking for her disappeared children. As the camera follows the fisherman in his boat, from another time and place, his voice tells of the corpses he has rescued. The beautiful images show him at work. (Figures 28). His voice, however, brings the war into presence. The exacerbated presence of testimonies and observational sequences bring the war into visibility by displaying the perpetuation of violence in the quotidian experience.

The film begins with images of the Magdalena River. The subjective point of view shot places the viewer in a boat traveling down its stream as vultures wait menacingly on the riverbank. The h(a)unting images[139] eerily foreshadow the tragedy about to be told. As the camera hunts the surface, it encounters the trees that have made a home in the river or the trunks being dragged along the stream. (Figure 29) The sound of the flowing water betrays the Magdalena's immensity and force. A non-sequential shot cuts to the gravedigger, who at this point has not been introduced. He beings his day, opening the cemetery doors. The following non-sequential shot shows still photographs

[138] Film scholar Bill Nichols distinguishes six principal modes of documentary filmmaking: poetic, observational, expository, participatory, reflexive and perfomative (n.p.).
[139] The images position viewers as hunters expecting to find NNs in the water. Haunting images, they also suggest the ghostly presence of death.

of individual tombs. In silence, with a black background, the still photographs slowly transition into another. The back and forth between sequences of the river, talking head interviews, and the still photographs is the recurring structuring montage of the film. A tension arises, however, between the river and the still photographs sequences because each suggests a different temporality. Out of this tension arises a historical critique that has implications on the war and its "unreported" history and the (in)visibility of specific groups of citizens.

Figure 29. *Requiem NN*'s sequence of the Magdalena River.
Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN*

Figure 30. Through still photographs the documentary depicts the cementery tombs. Shown in slow motion between cuts to black, they show the tombs' transformation after the adoption.
Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN*

Felipe Martínez-Pinzón describes the Magdalena River as the geographical marker onto which Colombian economic fantasies have been projected: "[El liberalismo económico] pretendió hacer del Magdalena una avenida por la que entraría el comercio

internacional y saldrían materias primas…. En el río Magdalena podemos leer las fantasías de agroexportadoras de los civilizadores de antaño y de los tecnócratas de hoy.…La historia de Colombia no pasa por el río Magdalena, [la historia de Colombia] *es* el río Magdalena" (Arte n.p.).[140] One of the figures evoked by Martínez Pinzón's assertion is the nineteenth century Colombian intellectual José María Samper, who espoused economic liberalism as the country's avenue towards progress and modernity. *De Honda a Cartagena* (1858), his famous text in which he chronicles his journey through the Colombian interior, offers a romantic description of the national geography. Navigating through the Magdalena River allows him to envision the nation's future modernization made possible by the advantageous territory. In his diary, technology and trade are the two symbols that would ennoble and civilize the nation, both culturally and economically.[141]

This history, alluding to nineteeth-century nation-building projects of modernization, is resonant in the documentary's contemplative images of the Magdalena River. Puerto Berrío's life and economy is organized around it. The river sequences introduce this historical dimension. Rather than a distanced view, the images force viewers to navigate its waters. Through these sequences, viewers also navigate the nation's history. Except that the irony, prevalent in other works by Echavarría as well, turns it into a history no longer defined by fantasies of modernity and economic progress. Echavarría thrusts viewers into the history of *la guerra colombiana*, a history of perpetual political struggles, a civil war dictated by the circulation of people, drugs, arms, and economic profit. The fantasies harbored in *Requiem NN*'s Magdalena River are the result of a Colombian state overtaken by violence, where bodies have become the disposable

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[140] Nostalgic and romanticizing visions of the past and history should be looked at with caution. Echavarría's works, *Bolivar's Platter*, for example, may evoke similar attitudes towards early moments in Colombian modern history: associating the past, such as the wars of independence or nation-building projects, with a more virtuous or purposedful violence than contemporary conflict, precipitated by a drug economy. The process of modernization that most Latin American nations underwent at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth entailed the marginalization and extermination of indigenous communities and groups perceived as barbarous or backwards. Therefore, it is important to note that romanticizing apprehensions, while highlighting the function of war in nineteenth century to differentiate it from current armed conflict history, run the risk of minimizing the violent history that resulted in the extermination of entire populations.

[141] "¡Qué bien contrastaban en el puerto de Conejo la chimenea del vapor, soltando sus bocanadas de humo espeso y arrebatado por el viento de las selvas, con el mástil delgado, altísimo y secular del cocotero, en cuya cima se columpiaba al soplo de ese mismo viento el pabellón de palmas en sortijadas y flexibles! El cocotero, sembrado desde el tiempo de la colonia, seguía vegetando; pero el vapor, hijo de la República e instrumento de la libertad, venía a envolverlo entre sus cortinas de humo saludándole con los silbidos de la locomotiva."

"El día que ese excelente río sea navegable por vapor, como el Magdalena, se desarrollará un gran progreso industrial en esas comarcas de asombrosa fertilidad y riqueza. No hay un tinte estimable, una madera exquisita, un metal o un producto de los trópicos que no pueda obtenerse allí para llevarlo por el Cesar y el Magdalena al consumo del mundo comercial."

"Entre tanto, la navegación por vapor, bien regularmente establecida en las aguas del caudaloso Magdalena; las nuevas instituciones federalistas, que permiten hacer esfuerzos más directos en el inmenso valle que aquel río fecunda, para darles vida social a sus aisladas poblaciones, y el desarrollo indefinido que allí puede tener la agricultura intertropical, mediante el ensanche del consumo en los mercados exteriores, desarrollo que comienza a iniciarse, son elementos que hacen esperar que no muy tarde las regiones hoy desoladas que el viajero contempla con profunda tristeza, serán la tierra de una raza enérgica y valerosa, que alcanzará el bienestar con la práctica de la democracia y la actividad de la industria."

commodity. In a sinister way then the fisherman cleaning the fish becomes the exception to the norm. Unidentifiable bodies, dehumanized subjects, invisible citizens—the unreported history of the war—are what people should expect to find in the river. The film plays with these expectations. It turns them into the norm. That is why, every time a tree trunk floats on the river, is not an NN, but it could be. They share the same faith.

Through the still photographs, however, the film subverts the dehumanizing temporal flow of history. (Figure 30) Contrary to the river sequences that seem to wander aimlessly, the still photographs focus the attention on the tombs. Transitioning slowly, they remain long enough for the viewer to read the text, appreciate the details, and in some cases, witness their change over time. As the film progresses, the still photograph sequences exhibit more embellished and personalized tombs. The adopters' personalization entails an individualizing process symbolized by the naming of the NNs, restoring, as Uribe Alarcón suggests, the identity that the war dispossessed them of. Consequently, the steps of this process include: choosing the NN's tomb, asking for a favor, the granting of such favor, giving the NN a proper name, and the eventual transfer to an ossuary. Treating them as family members, the adopters take care of the tombs, speak to them, and even celebrate the NN's birthday. In comparison to the river sequences, the still photographs capture the individualization and personalization process.

The use of still photography in film has been a common practice since the early decades of cinema. As its most basic unit—as a frame—the photographic image allowed directors to reflect on the cinematic medium and language. Given its ontological nature, photography was endowed with the potential to (re)produce the real. Believed capable of capturing a specific moment in time, the moving image became extoled for its ability to reproduce time. By the 1920s, with the establishment of narrative as cinema's hegemonic conventions, the (moving) image became confined to temporal linearity in the service of narrative modes aiming for a "photographic reality." Film scholar Bill Nichols explains that narrative cinema's "photographic reality" became regarded as constrictive by directors who believed it "subordinated personal perspective to spectacle or fact" (n.p.)[142] "Photographic reality" limited poetic expression. While the latter was inspired by a necessity to "see the world anew," the former sought to replicate the world. Breaking away from narrative cinema conventions and linear storytelling liberated creative potential. This gesture was especially resonant for avant-garde filmmaking in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Avant guard film, with all its experimentation, called attention to the filmmaker's unique point of view. Documentary filmmaking emerges during this period out of a necessity to find within the cinema's own language new forms for storytelling.[143]

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[142] "The empirical ability of film to produce a photographic record of what it recorded struck many of these artists as a handicap. If a perfect copy was all that was desired, what room was left for the artist to see the world anew?" (Nichols n.p.).
"The avant-garde flourished in Europe and Russia in the 1920s. Its emphasis on seeing things anew, through the eyes of the artist or filmmaker, had tremendous liberating potential. It freed cinema from replicating what came before the camera to celebrate how this "stuff" could become the raw material not only of narrative filmmaking but of a poetic cinema as well. This space beyond mainstream cinema became the proving ground for voices that spoke to viewers in languages distinct from feature fiction" (Nichols n.p.).

[143] "What matter most for the development of documentary was the refinement of specifically cinematic story-telling techniques, from the parallel editing of D.W. Griffith to the use of different camera lenses and

Keeping in mind these historical and aesthetic considerations, the still images in *Requiem NN* also account for a unique artistic expression. Juan Manuel Echavarría is not a filmmaker, but an artist for whom photography has been an important medium. The still images are a signature mark of his exploration of the war in Puerto Berrío. It is the recurrent motif in the project's transition from the photographic and video installation to the film. The inclusion of still photographs not only provides an avenue to experiment with the cinematic language, but it also maintains an artistic (poetic) vision. In film form, where the testimonials complement the intervention of the photographs, Echavarría finds a new form of storytelling, a new form of seeing the war. The plight of Puerto Berrío and the history of Colombia's unreported history are seen "anew" in contrast with journalistic, memorializing, or pedagogically oriented documentaries, many of which take a particular stance or tone towards the war. *Requiem NN* is not a documentary illustrating an official history. The artistic perspective arises out of the images, both moving and still, as they make visible the invisible faces of the conflict.

In *Requiem NN*, the photographs function to undo the erasure and dispossession that the war inflicts. The still photographs challenge the disposability as the normalized condition. The insertion, as an animated archive, introduces a new temporality that interrupts and disrupts the temporality of the rest of the footage. Their stillness and the consequent process of incorporation they exhibit challenge the historical flow. Through an act of animation, the still photographs make visible invisibility and disposability. Turning to other instances of uses of photography in documentary film is illuminating to understand how the animation in Echavarría's film is achieved.

48, Susana Sousa Dias's 2009 film, explores the oppression and violence experienced during the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal (1926-1974). In the film, Sousa Dias utilizes the archived photographs of political prisoners—the same photographs taken by the state, which were used against citizens as a form of repression and control. The film's powerful critique relies on the re-contextualization of these images. Through slow motioned micro-movements within each photograph, which are synchronized with present day testimonies of the depicted subjects regarding their experience of incarceration and political persecution, *48* undermines the very authority and control that the photographs originally were meant to exert (Viegas 15, 16). The animation, and in Dias's case the re-contextualization, of the archive has consequential implications. It reanimates a "past that serves to reinterpret the present" as the film is also a strong reflection on present day Portugal (Viegas 16). Dias's work is helpful to understand the function of the still images in *Requiem NN*.

Unlike Dias, Echavarría is not re-contextualizing photography. By inserting them into the film and slowly transitioning one into another, however, he animates them to function within a temporality that interrupts the flow of the rest of the footage, particularly the sequences showing the never-ending flowing currents of the Magdalena. As photographs, their own ontological temporality offers important aesthetic and political

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distances to frame characters and events. Story telling also elaborated the many ways in which an action or event could be told from different perspectives (from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, the perspective of a third-person observer, or the points of view of different characters, for example). These perspectival options promoted the search for a voice with which to represent the historical world in ways that were not necessarily spoken but, instead, embedded in film form (editing, framing, music, lighting, and so forth)" (Nichols n.p.).

implications. *Requiem NN* engages a different archive, one that belongs to the state and is symbolic of its control. Each body found in the Magdalena is assigned an officially identifiable ID number that becomes part of the official state-kept record. Once they are chosen, the tombs, which are also identified with the NN's ID number, begin their transformation. Often, this includes the erasure of the state assigned number. As a result, tension arises between the inhabitants, on the one hand, the state's scientific and rationalized system of control or the religious authorities, on the other. For the state, the erasure of this number makes any consequent identification efforts difficult, if not impossible. In fact, local authorities prohibit citizens from rescuing bodies and oppose the adoption practice.[144] For the church, the alteration of a tomb disrupts the solemnity and respect associated with the dead. Local church authorities oppose the adoption practice because it turns the cemetery into a circus.

As a form of subverting state control, the adoption practice reveals a mechanism employed to cope with a war that no longer guarantees social well-being. On the contrary, this is a war that creates the conditions for leaving in a complete precariousness. The film illustrates how the adoption generates new forms of community organization and re-articulations of familial bonds. Resembling the Magdalena River stream, the forensic record tells a history of violence, a history about the nation, and a history about a struggle for political/ideological hegemony. The forensic record, erased by the adoption process, tells the unreported history of war. The still photographs, on the other hand, pull viewers back to individual stories and to micro-Histories. Opposing the relentless flow of history, each photograph returns to a very specific moment in time, when a hand painted the tomb, wrote the word "chosen," or gave the NN a proper name. Each photograph becomes the indexical mark of an effort to undo the invisibility that the war inflicts.

An act of resistance and subversion, the adoption practice generates possibilities for community when living in a perpetual state of war and when war becomes precariousness-producing machine turning populations disposable, forcing them into displacement, and foreclosing possibilities to live life in dignity. The tombs in this case have a crucial symbolic function in providing Puerto Berrío inhabitants a way to deal with the war. Writing about a post 9/11 context, philosopher and theorist Judith Butler described that the political antagonism reinforced by the wars and the violence that preceded it had turned societies into fear and panic towards those perceived as "others." The new global reordering had created conditions that denied the humanity of the "other," seen now as an enemy and threat. In *Precarious life*, Butler proposed that, as a result, the lives of "others" had become ungrievable. Consequently, she argued for the reestablishment of an ethical relationship with and towards the "other," a relationship requiring the recognition of his or her humanity. Turning to Levinas's notion of the face, Butler sees a possibility for this type of recognition—an ethical address that one is no longer able to refuse:

> I would like to consider the 'face' … to explain how it is that others make moral claims upon us, address moral demands to us, ones that we do not ask for, ones that we are not free to refuse… It seems to be that the 'face'

[144] This measure has political implications. As more bodies are rescued, the number of deaths reported per town increase. Prohibiting this practice lowers the town's mortality rate and reduces the perception of violence.

> of what [Levinas] calls the 'Other' makes an ethical demand upon me, and yet we do not know which demand it makes (131).

Not exclusively human, Butler conceives the face and the ethical demand that it makes as the condition of precariousness to which all human life is vulnerable: "To respond to the face, to understand its meaning, means to be awake to what is precarious in another life, or rather, the precariousness of life itself" (Butler 134). Understood as the capability of being injurable, and all human life is, the condition of precariousness has the potential to establish a more ethical relation between "us" and those whom we see as "others," through the very recognition of humanity as a shared precariousness.

I propose that a similar address is established in the case of the adopted NNs, between the NNs and their adopters. Thinking about the Colombian context in Butler's terms, however, demands caution since the NN as "other" does not equate to the type of "otherness" she is advocating for.[145] Her understanding of precariousness as the capability for injurability is at stake in the adoption ritual. The tombs symbolize that capacity—an all too real condition—to be injured. As a manifestation of the Levinasian face, the tombs establish a relationship with the Puerto Berrío inhabitants precisely because they make manifest the precariousness and fragility of human life, and in this specific context, the vulnerability of Colombian life. In the tombs, inhabitants recognize the humanity that the war erases. In them, they recognize a shared injurability.

[145] She is writing about a post 9/11 context, where the demarcations and antagonism between US society (*us*) Iraqis (*them*) had become normalized because of the US involvement in war.

Figures 31 and 34: Mother of two disappeared children, Blanca Nury adopts an NN, whom she names after her son. The last sequence shows her writing the name on the tomb.
Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Requiem NN.*

Italian philosopher, Roberto Esposito explores the distinction between persons and things, a binary based on which modern Western thought has organize human experience. Esposito positions the body as the central element ignored by this binary. Its centrality rests on the fact that the body is what links both concepts: "in order to be such, a thing among things, the object must be manifest to the sensory organs as something present. But must also disappear when I detach myself from it, excluding it from my field of vision" (n.p.). This formulation seems to be at play in the Colombian context. It is in the contact (physical and emotional) between persons (adopters) and things (tombs) that a new pact and a new community is constituted. The tomb requires the active participation of bodies that achieve the resignification of the NN. This is what is at stake. *Requiem NN* exposes the disposability of subjects in a social environment—a perpetual war—where terror has become part of the quotidian experience. The last sequence in the film shows Blanca Nury, the mother whose face and story have become familiar by now. (Figures 31 and 32). She is at the cemetery, cleaning a tomb that has been painted blue. As she holds a brush and green paint, her voice in voice over starts: "I made you a promise, and I have come to fulfill it. I am going to give you the name of my son."

Changing between close-ups and medium shots, the camera stays by her side recording the naming. The sequence cuts to the still photograph of that same tomb, and that is the end of the film. The NN has been named: "Jhon Jario S B." In these last images, the uncertain place occupied by the adopter becomes more visible. Between legality and illegality, the determination of their actions and their conviction in the adoption practice remains unaltered. Victims (and possible targets) in a war that no longer guarantees life, they refuse to renounce the practice. The cemetery becomes a powerful political public space. As an act of resistance, the adoption re-elaborates social relations within the quotidian experience.

The Fog of War *La sirga*

Released in 2013, William Vega's *La sirga* successfully captures the invisible, yet omnipresent terror (and horror) that the war has imposed on Colombians. In doing so, the film transmits the senseless inapprehensible nature. While it has remained almost invisible to the world outside, Colombian cinema tradition dates to the silent period. As it occurred in most of Latin America during the twentieth century, however, foreign films, Hollywood, in particular, dominated national markets. Despite its scant tradition, Colombian cinematography has witnessed the creation of notable and innovative film projects.

Colombia's most renowned writer, Gabriel García Márquéz was a film enthusiast whose career expanded into the cinematic field.[146] In collaboration with Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, he adapted to the screen Juan Rulfo's story "El gallo de oro." He also wrote *Tiempo de morir,* an original screenplay directed by Arturo Ripstein. He also collaborated with Álvaro Cepeda Samudio, Enrique Grau Aráujo, and Luis Vicens, to direct *La langosta azúl* (1954), a film celebrated for its surrealist experimental aesthetics. Notable among Colombian cinema also are the social documentary films by Jorge Silva and Marta Rodríguez. Their ethnographic filmmaking exposed the social, cultural, and economic conditions of marginalized communities. *Chircales* (1966-1972)*,* for example, is a compelling depiction of of the brick-making community of Chircales in the outskirts of Bogotá. Silva and Rodríguez's work, which remains to be studied in depth, is an important contribution to the history Latin American documentary filmmaking.

During the 80s and 90s, Víctor Gaviria's films captured the violence-ridden reality faced by poverty-stricken urban populations. Mirroring a period marked by the appearance of drug-trafficking business and a consequent rise of violence, Gaviria's "neorealist dramas" focused on the powerlessness and poverty impacting Colombian disenfranchised youth. *Rodrigo D: No futuro* (1990) and *La vendedora de rosas* (1998), his most well-known films, presented characters trapped by oppressive structures and systemic violence. Gaviria's films depicted societies that marginalized and destroyed its most vulnerable members. Very often, he used nonprofessonal actors who came from the very desolate and marginalized communities he depicted. This fact inspired morbid fascination as the usually adverse fate of his protagonists became the subject of public interest.

Within the last decade, there has been a renewed effort by filmmakers to explore social and political realities. Directors like Óscar Ruíz Navia and William Vega are leading the way, heading their own production company, Contravía. William Vega worked as an assistant director in what became Oscar Ruíz Navia's first feature, *El vuelco del cangrejo* (2009). Three years after *El vuelco del cangrejo* was released, Vega released his own feature, *La sirga* (2012). Both films earned critical appraise. *La sirga*, in particular, was compared by critics to "apocalyptic masterpieces" by Beckett and Tarkovsky (Towrope). While these comparisons are not a common occurrence in Colombian cinema, in this case, they were not gratuitous. The aesthetic and technical principles guiding Contravía's mission entail a commitment to experimentation with

[146] García Márquez founded Cuba's film school, Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in 1968.

modes of storytelling. Vega and Ruíz Navia's greater vision includes the creation of an independent cinema interested in exploring the cinematic medium.[147]

For filmmakers such as Vega and Ruíz Navia, working against more traditional forms of representation demands a necessary displacement away from conventional storytelling and away from traditional centers of production. Film critic David Oubiña points out that this process is characteristic of the New Latin American independent cinema. With access to a more sophisticated technology, filmmakers are finding new and more critical languages: "the challenge to any contemporary aesthetical proposal is to be able not only to take advantage of … new technology but also to convert it into compositional techniques. That is, to work from a critical juncture … between technique, materials, and content…" (44).[148] Both Ruíz Navia and Vega have found cinematic strength by turning to the margins. First, there is a literal displacement of the cinematic technology given that the stories do not take place in traditional film production centers like Bogotá or Cali. Their films wander into peripheral spaces not often seen in film. Second, and as consequence, the experimentation with technique is dictated by an impulse to find new ways to see these spaces:

> [Que la locación] tenga suficiente poder como para convertirse en otro personaje. [La Concha, the town where *La sirga* was filmed] era lo que catalizaba las relaciones. Era un lugar que a pesar de ser un lugar tan vasto, generaba una claustrofobia. Luego plantear una película que su esencia está en la naturaleza, en el exterior. Esto lo obliga a uno a obedecer esas leyes de la naturaleza, cómo el lugar te guía, qué puedes rodar hoy y qué no" (Entrevista).

Location in *La sirga* becomes an important character, perhaps the most important. As for the questions concerning the way in which the war appears in these cinematic perspectives, space plays a significant role.[149] Especially *La Sirga*, space is reconfigured by a war that inhabits it without ever directly asserting its presence. War lurks the space in a spectral condition because its violence is never seen. Trapped in a perpetual war the

[147] Contravía's projects, as per its mission statement, "se caracterizan por la búsqueda de estéticas y narrativas renovadoras, por afrontar con profundidad diversas problemáticas contemporáneas y por la exploración de distintas formas de producción alternativas…" ("Qué Hacemos").
[148] Oubiña addresses the tension between technique and technology proposed by Adorno: "whereas the first refers to the mechanics of composition, the second alludes to the medium of (re)production" (Oubiña 44).
[149] Óscar Ruíz Navia's *El vuelco del cangrejo* alludes to the war only marginally. Bordering between fiction and documentary, it features La Barra, a real Afro-Colombian community fighting against the advance of progress and modernity represented by a white foreigner who wants to convert the beach into a tourist destination. Daniel, the protagonist, arrives to La Barra looking for a boat that will take him to Panama. Nothing about his life is revealed, not even the reasons why he wants to leave. As he waits, Daniel witnesses the inhabitants' plight to maintain their way of life. The war appears as part of the quotidian experience. The Armed Forces radio station is heard throughout La Barra. The voices coming from the radio extol the Armed Forces as the guardians and heroes of the nation. As characters go about their day, the television screen shows news footage of the war. It shows soldiers and leaders of left and right-wing armed groups, as well as two of the most politically charged symbols of the war: the flag of the Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and Carlos Castaño Gil, the founder and leader of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia.*

horrific violence it generates, the characters inhabit the world in a permanent state of displacement.

La sirga begins with a long shot showing the silhouette of an impaled man, resembling a scarecrow, in the middle of an open country field. (Figure 34). Leaving the viewer wondering if it is in fact a dead man, the ambiguous image foreshadows the violence that is yet to come. Suddenly, a young woman appears walking through the fields as if without direction. (Figure 35) Wearing a red sweater, she stands out in the cold and foggy landscapes. Her deep breaths betray her exhaustion. Even the camera seems to know better as to the direction in which she must head. Disoriented, she walks out of the frame. The camera does not follow; it remains fixed in the opposite direction, until the woman walks back in. She continues and suddenly, collapses. Her name is Alicia. She is looking for a distant uncle. These first sequences establish the tense and ambiguous atmosphere that defines the story. They also introduce the imposing and hostile presence of nature. This is not a welcoming space. It is cold, harsh, and most importantly, it is a space that compromises sight. Things are not seen clearly, if seen at all. Although there is a vastness and beauty to the landscapes, rather than opening up a field of vision, nature forecloses it. It conceals, rather than reveals; fog takes an important symbolic role.

Figure 34. William Vega, *La sirga*

Figure 35: The first sequence shows a disoriented Alicia, who has escaped the violence in her town. William Vega, *La sirga.*

Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte point to fog and smoke as the two par excellence metaphors of the before and after of war. Because war is associated with a lack of visibility, fog especially becomes an effective discursive mechanism for that which prevents action and that which dissipates. Fog makes war legible despite its unpredictability. As a discursive artifice of the state, fog justifies war as a necessary act: "una operación de disipación de zonas de niebla que distorsionan su mirada al permanecer impenetradas por ella…. aquello que debe ser eliminado en la medida en que se interpone entre el Estado y el telos civilizatorio (8-9). Proposing a second metaphoric role, they associate fog to unpredictability, the constitutive element of the act of war (8).[150] This second assertion—war as "a lack of certainties" and "a space of invisibilities"—is particularly persuasive because it does more than describe a battlefield experience concerning battlefield calculations and actions. In the literature and film analyzed in this chapter, fog accounts for the state of being in war, whether in the battlefield or far from it. In *La sirga* fog impregnates space. Nature and space become prescient warning signs of war. Fog sets the tone for how the characters experience it, as a presence that haunts them without revealing itself.

William Vega employs formal strategies that call attention to the act of seeing. Not being able to see becomes the film's a recurrent leitmotif. The frame composition effectively captures an impossibility for transparency. Sight is compromised, because there is always something—fog, an object obstructing the camera, or a framing device—impeding it. The film plays with the viewer making him or her conscious of his or her inability to see as well. As Alicia and her friend visit an abandoned building, a shot from the interior shows the lake through a dirty glass window. (Figure 36). The shot focuses on the objects far in the distance, the lake and boat anchored on the pier. It remains like that for a moment. Suddenly, the depth of field changes and focuses the attention on the the broken glass. Clear on the screen now is the cause for the breaking. A hole produced by

[150] An echo of Clausewitz's description, war as "the province of uncertainty" (Marínez-Pinzón and Uriarte 9).

what seems to have been a gunshot is fully revealed. Not even this window has escaped the war's violence.

Figure 36. The glass window broken by what seems to be a gunshot. William Vega, *La sirga*

Even when framed from an enclosed or distanced point of view, the space suggests a spatial openness and vastness. Despite this, nature is never reassuring, quite the opposite. The frame composition as obstructed views or frames within frames produce the feeling of something strange lurking within the space, something that viewers are not allowed to see. (Figure 37). Noises accentuate the sense of haunting and contrast the disturbing silence of the characters. Noises contribute to the tone of suspense: the lake's current, the hostel's roof blown away by the wind, and the non-stop wind blows. What haunts La Concha, the town where *La sirga* takes place and what viewers never fully see, is a brutal war being fought out of the frame. The war is the reason behind Alicia's arrival. She escaped from her village, massacred and burned down by an unknown army. With both her parents killed, she goes to La Concha to find her only relative alive, her uncle Óscar. Out of compassion, he allows her to stay to help with the renovations of La sirga, the hostel he owns. With the tourists' arrival fast approaching, Alicia works alongside Flora, Óscar's worker. Despite her distant demeanor, Flora is as close to a mother figure Alicia will have. Mirichis and Freddy, the young men in the story, are two major characters who impact Alicia's life. Like her, Mirichis is an outsider who also escaped the violence in his town. In La Concha, he works

Figure 38. Alicia and Flora preparing dinner. Before this scene, the film shows them from the outside through a clear glass window. From this perspective, however, they cannot look outside. The glass is no longer transparent. William Vega, *La sirga*

transporting goods on the lake. Freddy, Oscar's only son, mysteriously left the town to unknown whereabouts. He returns to La Concha shortly after Alicia's arrival.

The scarceness of dialogue and demure personality of the characters contribute to the lack of visibility of the war. There is minimal conversation between characters and when there is, their attitude is somber, almost unfriendly. Except for Mirichis and Alicia's interactions, the characters don't relate to each other in a friendly attitude. The implication is that everyone, in one way or another, is impacted by the violence taking place around them. This also explains the tension that sets the tone in the film. The characters are either victims (Alicia, Óscar, and Flora) or presumptive militants in the conflict (Mirichis and Freddy). All this, however, remains as speculation, because little information, if any, is revealed. Who were the men who burned down Alicia's village? The possibility of finding out vanishes when Alicia cannot remember the color of bracelets worn by the perpetrators, a subtle detail that could give away their identity. The film suggests that Mirichis is also involved in the conflict. Working at the lake, he mysteriously transports and delivers guns to unknown men. The lake becomes an important symbol. Its openness is deceiving. On the one hand, it generates life. Óscar is trying to set the trout farm that will boost the fishing economy in the town. On the other hand, it is where death and violence roam.

Unannounced, Freddy returns home with an injured arm, claiming to have burned it accidentally. His explanation creates ambiguity about his possible involvement in the massacre in Alicia's village. Óscar disapproves of Freddy's activities, which again, he never discloses. For Freddy, however, whatever he does he considers it work. In Colombia, paramilitarismo became a major factor when right-wing armed groups were set up as private forces hired to protect landowners from left-wing guerrillas for whom kidnapping and extortion had become a principal financing avenue. The enmity between *la guerrilla* and *los paramilitares* grew as drug production and trafficking became a lucrative business to finance their operations. An involvement in paramilitarism could explain not only Freddy's sudden departure to "work" in an activity that his father disapproves, but also his change of attitude towards community organization in La Concha. Once a young man willing to help his neighbors, he now reproves his father's

fishing cooperative. Even after all these hints and even when Freddy suspiciously follows Mirichis, everything is speculative. The violence happens out of frame. The dialogues reveal half-truths that only reaffirm the ambiguity. Not much is seen and nothing is explained. The film depicts a war that inhabits every space and every moment of life, but always invisible and inapprehensible.

In *La sirga* the experience of war is uncertainty, precisely because everything remains nebulous and out of sight. The invisibility—the fogginess of the war[151]—is constituted also through the limited view into the characters' interiority. There are gestures that provide small glimpses into their feelings but these only account for conjectures regarding their points of view. The most telling images in this regard is Alicia's sleepwalking. Every night after she arrives to La Concha, she sleepwalks and buries a lit candle in the mud, a clear sign of the trauma she has experienced. After Óscar's brief mention of it to her, the subject is never dealt with. The minimal facial and body expressions translate as a resistance to reveal too much. The film's avoidance of point of view shots contributes to the limited view into their interiority. Viewers never see the world through the characters' eyes. The lack of point of view shots intensifies their alienation. Whatever tragedy or feeling the characters go through, they do so alone. The film is impregnated by the tension between the horrific events going on and the resistance to reveal their feelings. As such, the war becomes disconcerting and alienating.

Tragedy unfolds after Freddy's arrival which causes Alicia's hopes for a new life to vanish. The tourists never come; the weather damages the hostel; Flora stops coming; Mirichis is killed. The war has caught up with Alicia, and again, she must leave. The last sequence shows her fleeing again. As she walks away, her red sweater stands out. The color red appears twice in this rather monochrome film, first in Alicia's sweater and the second time in the piece of cloth Mirichis uses to communicate with his suspicious partners. Coincidentally, they were the two characters who dreamed of a future life away from La Concha. The war, however, vanishes their hopes. It vanishes them.

Narrating the War in *Los ejércitos*

Evelio Rosero's 2006 novel *Los ejércitos* traces the destruction in San José, a small town at the center of a territorial dispute between multiple armed groups, including the Colombian armed forces. Narrated from the point of view of the retired teacher Ismael Pasos, the novel begins with an idyllic scene denoting the peace and tranquility of life in the town:

> Y era así: en casa del brasileiro las guacamayas reían todo el tiempo; yo las oía, desde el muro del huerto de mi casa, subido en la escalera, recogiendo mis naranjas, arrojándolas al gran cesto de palma; de vez en cuando sentía a las espaldas que los tres gatos me observaban trepados cada uno en los almendros. Más atrás mi mujer daba de comer a los peces en el estanque: así envejecíamos, ella y yo, los peces y los gatos, pero mi mujer y los peces, ¿qué me decían? Nada. Sin entenderlos. (11)

[151] Clausewitz used the expression "fog of war" to refer to the uncertain nature of war. Errol Morris used as title for his 2003 documentary, which explores the relationship between US history and modern warfare by looking into the life of former Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara.

Having nothing else to do, except grow older along with his wife Otilia, also a retired teacher, Ismael spends his days in the tranquility of his house, shamelessly lusting after her voluptuous neighbor and her fourteen-year old adopted daughter, Gracielita. The act of seeing sets in as the central action in the narrative. In this place, even the cats stare. They stare at Ismael. Ismael gazes at young Eusebito, the neighbor's younger son, who just as Ismael lusts after his older sister: "Eusebito la contemplaba a hurtadillas, y yo lo contemplaba contemplándola" (13). Ismael's voyeuristic habit reveals more than just the sexual fantasies of an old man nearing the end of his life. Having lived his whole life in this town and having taught almost everyone in the town, he has seen its history. Thus, the act of seeing establishes the atmosphere in the narrative. In this first scene, Ismael is in control of life and illustrative of this is his position as he stands in the ladder looking down as he apprehends the objects, animals, and persons around him.

Soon, however, the image of a perfect and paradisiac afternoon gives way to horror. The peace is only illusory and the violence reveals itself as part of a quotidian experience and, most importantly, as that which until then had escaped Ismael's gaze. An example is his description of the afternoon when he met his wife of forty-years. He remembers the assassination of an old man by a young boy: "Era un niño. Nunca supe si lo siguieron o dieron con él, y jamás me resolví a averiguarlo; al fin y al cabo, no fue tanto su mirada lo que me sobrecogió de náuseas: fue el físico miedo de descubrir que era un niño. Un niño" (23). And just as he describes his life in the town, a myriad of other tragic events surface creating a constellation of the war's devastation in the region, a war to which he seems to be indifferent: Gracielita's parents were killed by a bomb explosion while attending mass, Ismael's neighbor, Hortensia Galindo's husband, has been kidnapped for four years, and the violence has forced inhabitants in neighboring towns to abandon them. Used to living with violence, San José's inhabitants are indifferent to it. On the fourth anniversary of the disappearance of Marco Saldariaga, Ismael's neighbor, people gather at his house as a show of support for his wife. What used to be a grim and solemn gathering, has turned, after four years, into a celebration where hardly anyone thinks about Marcos.

The center of the drug-growing territory, San José is besieged by multiple unknown armies, leaving inhabitants overtaken by confusion and violence. The war unfolds as a ghostly presence that no one can understand and from which no one escapes, especially the most vulnerable. Children, pregnant women, and even Otilia, Ismael's wife, disappear. As the narrative progresses, the devastation facing the town becomes more horrific. Yet, Rosero's language rejects a spectacularizing aesthetic. Instead, his language obscures and highlights the conflict's chaotic nature. Once the war reaches San José the empty streets acquire a phantasmagoric character, haunting Ismael, and emptying him of his memories:

> qué mal sueño son estas calles vacías, intranquilas; en cada una de ellas me persigue, físico, flotando el aire oscuro…Pensar que no hace mucho me jactaba de mi memoria, un día de éstos voy a olvidarme de mí mismo, me dejaré escondido en un rincón de la casa… y pase lo que pase será la guerra, resonarán los gritos estallará la pólvora, sólo dejo de decirlo

> cuando descubro que camino hablando en voz alta, ¿con quién, con quién? (83-84)

Rosero's narrative complicates the act of seeing and this becomes the guiding mechanism of representation of the narrative. Not only does language compromise the act of seeing but it also calls attention to the normalization of an erotic/exotic association with violence. As described above, the narrative starts with the image of an old man fantasizing about the oversexualized body of her neighbor and that of her teenage daughter. One of the last scenes in the novel, mirrors the beginning by conjuring again the act of seeing on the part of Ismael. The scene at the end, however, no longer alludes to the seemingly innocent actions of an old man desiring a young woman's body. On the contrary, the grotesque and repulsive scene at the end asserts the senselessness of the war and, thus, provokes questions regarding the consumption of violence and its representation. Turned into a war zone, San José is no longer a safe town. At the end, most inhabitants, those who are able to, flee. Desperate to find Otilia, who has been missing for days, Ismael returns home only to find a harrowing scene at his neighbor's house:

> Detrás de la ventana de la salita pude entrever los quietos perfiles de varios hombres, todos de pie, contemplando algo con desmedida atención, más que absortos: recogidos, como feligreses en la iglesia a la hora de la Elevación. De tras de ellos, de su inmovilidad de piedra, sus sombras oscurecían la pared, ¿qué contemplaban? Olvidándome de todo, sólo buscando a Otilia, me sorprendí avanzando yo mismo hacia ellos, otra esfinge de piedra, oscura, surgida en la puerta. Entre los brazos de una mecedora de mimbre, estaba –abierta a plenitud, demadejada, Geraldina desnuda, la cabeza sacudiéndose a uno y otro lado, y encima uno de los hombres la abrazaba, uno de los hombres la hurgaba a Geraldina, uno de los hombres la violaba: todavía demoré en comprender que se trataba del cadáver de Geraldina, era su cadáver, expuesto ante los hombres que lo aguardaban, ¿por qué no los acompañas, Ismael?, me escuché humillarme, ¿por qué no les explicas cómo se viola un cadáver? ¿o cómo se ama? ¿no era eso con lo que soñabas? (202)

The grotesque image becomes the counter-face of what was narrated at the beginning. If the beginning confronted viwers with with an erotic sexualization the female body, intended for pleasure and entertainment, the last scene denounces the erotic pleasure produced by looking at violence. Ismael rhetorical questions remind of this erotization.

In *Los ejércitos*, invisibility de-naturalizes the act of seeing so that uncertainty becomes the only way one can speak about and inhabit war. Nowhere is this intention clearer than when the journalist arrives to San José to report on the war. Looking and behaving more like a tourist, the young woman journalist, "oculta su mirada detrás de unos anteojos negros." Coincidentally, she is the niece of the general in charge, who has granted her access to the war zone. Ismael describes their encounter: "hoy en la mañana la vi pasar ante mi puerta: se detuvo un instante, pareció dudar; miró a su camarógrafo como si lo interrogara; el joven hizo una mueca de impaciencia. La periodista se

preguntaba seguramente si era yo, un solo viejo sentado a la vera de mi casa, un buen motivo para una foto. Decidió que no y continuó su camino" (125-6). To the journalist, the story of Ismael is not important even though he, more than anyone else, can give testimony of the war she is reporting. She is not interested in the old man. An outsider, she literarily refuses to see; thus, the symbolic sunglasses.

San José does not provide TV or newspapers a spectacle worthy enough for an audience. In a parallel gesture, Rosero's narrative opposes a simplistic and morbid look into the war. For Ismael, the only certainty is his uncertainty about who is causing the devastation. He does not know Otilia's wherabouts; he doesn't know who took her, where to look, or what will/has become of her. The ambiguity of the novel's title, the armies, is telling in this respect. Who are these armies? It doesn't matter. What matters is that the war condemns citizens of San José to the uncertainty and confusion of the war and the certainty of its destruction: "*pase lo que pase será la guerra*," Ismael tells himself. Engrossed in his own desperation not only to find his way home, but also to find Otilia, Ismael loses track of time. War obfuscates thinking and throws time out of joint. It thrusts the town into a temporal loop, where living in war is the only mode to inhabit this unhinged world. The time of war is always the past and the present. The novel's first and last sentences illustrate this temporal suspension: "*Y era así*" and "*Así será*."

Conclusion

The works analyzed in this chapter evidence what Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte describe as war's "clearing" function (*despejar*). Perhaps a better translation is war's capacity to render (in)visible: "si hay elementos que el Estado empieza a ver y a administrar con claridad a partir del conflicto, al mismo tiempo hay espacios que dejan de verse, acaso de manera definitiva" (9). In the case of the war in Colombia, more than space, subjects are rendered invisible, through displacement, disappearance, and death.

In *La sirga,* after Mirichis's death, Alicia's plan for a better future vanish. Alone, she must escape once again. With no family or friends to go to, Alicia is condemned to an uncertain future. The last scene of the film shows her entering the frame, walking across it, and disappearing in the cold, menacing nature. In *Requiem NN*, Blanca Nury has her very own journey ahead of her as she continues her tiredless search for her children. Like her, the inhabitants of Puerto Berrío continue looking after the NNs. The ending in *Los ejércitos* is not more hopeful than Blanca's. The only people left in San José are those without the resources to secure a way out, those who are too old and weak, and those who, like Ismael, wait for a loved one to return. Resolute to stay, however, in a defiant gesture, Ismael decides to face the armies, whoever they may be.

Requiem NN, *La sirga,* and *Los ejércitos* show worlds turned unhinged, with no authorities or institutions one can turn to for help. Consequently, everyone must find his/her own way to survive the war and restore even a minimal sense of order.

While these literary and visual narratives represent the injurablity of life, they also gesture to acts of resistance—as the adoption of corpses forgotten by the state, as an old man who in the time of death musters the courage to face the enemy and smile, or as the resilience to survive against all odds, like Alicia.

What then can be made of this turn to invisibility? On the one hand, these literary and visual narratives refuse historicizing the war. Instead of a totalizing narrative, they emphasize the void and fragmentation. How can representing and historizicing this war can get Colombians closer to understanding such devastation and dehumanization? The answers seem to be "it can't." On the other hand, ultimately, these works pose an urgent question regarding concepts such as citizenship under conditions of dispossession, disposability, and marginalization. It seems that for Colombian cultural production at stake in representing the war is the insufficiency of such concepts to name the experience of living and surviving war.

Conclusion

This dissertation started with the question regarding the representability of war. As it concludes, however, more than an affirmation of its possibility or impossibility, what the visual and literary works examined make evident is the difficulty of such a task.

Echoing schorlarship preoccupied with war and its representation, both in Latin American and beyond, this project underscores two facts related to the subject. First, war is experienced and comprehended differently by individuals and, as scholar Tim O'Brien affirms, when a war ends, it has been experienced in a million different ways. Bringing together the extensive corpus of cultural production dealing with war and highilighting its contribution to public debates, this project brings attention, first and foremost, to the multiple ways in which The Chaco War, the Malvinas War, and war in Colombia have been experienced. Particularly in the case of Paraguay and Argentina, the production of works within the last two decades speaks to a necessity to scrutinize the conflict's continued impact on contemporary life. Second, this project calls attention to efforts that seek to experiment with mediums of representation. I contend that it is through experimentation that cultural production is most capable and effective to transmit what McLoughlin called "the extremeness" of the war experience. What this "extremeness" achieves, I believe, is the ability to take readers and spectators to an experience of alienation and de-familiarization. It is this effect of war that I find most engaging in order to take an analysis away from celebratory and nationalistic apprehensions. Looking at the counter face of war, not as an event engendering national and social cohesion, but as a contradictory process that disrupts daily life and processes of living in common, is a more effective way to scrutinize the experience of *precarization* (social, psychological, and political) that defines the subject who experiences war.

This project, thus, contributes to scholarship concerning war in Latin America, on the one hand, and contemporary aesthetics trends within literary and visual culture on the other. In relationship to the former, studying war within a comprehensive lens and framework remains a difficult task and this is due to factors that become evident when one considers two different instances, the Chaco War and Malvinas War, for example. Their dimensions in terms of length, political aims, the economic, technological, and social resources required, the death toll, etc., are not proportional. The challenge, thus, is finding the appropriate theoretical and analytical framework that allow in-depth investigations of each, whether one looks at the economic, social, or political impact. While classical theorizations are pertinent to think about war between nation-states, the internal armed conflict in Colombia exhibits the exhaustion of classical conceptions when applied to the study of contemporary war, when the referents continue to point to Clausewitz, Hobbes, Schmit, among others. More than anything, the participation of *paramilitarism* in contemporary conflict proves theorizations by Clausewitz, Hobbes, et al, unfit.

The necessity to explain war within a national frame poses another challenge. Wars are the product of specific processes of national/local formation. Analyses of works like *Hamaca paraguaya*, *Malvinas: paisajes y retratos de guerra*, or *La sirga*, for example, cannot escape an explanation of the histories that gave rise to them. Referring to

the national (historical) process is necessary to understand the processes and experiences of subject formation and/or (national) identity with which these works establish dialogue. Despite these challenges, the necessity of war studies is evident and crucial to understand its impact on individual, local, and national experiences. Scholarly approaches like Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte's *Entre el humo y la niebla: War and Culture in Latin America* are exemplary in this sense. Similarly, I hope that this project also contributes to discussions on cultural production and its capacity to elucidate on the political, social, and aesthetic implications of war in Latin America.

Focusing on specific conceptual and analytical approaches suchs as "senselessness," "making sense," "(in)visibility," "spectacularization" and "indirect representation" proves fruitful to examine the implications of the war in each of the specific cases examined. However, and most importantly, these concepts have been effective as a first attempt to delve int the aesthetics preocupations driving experimental gestures within contemporary Latin American representations of war, as manifested by the literary and visual objects studied. As I conclude this dissertation, I recognize the limitations of situating war, particularly in a project studying more than one, within binary frameworks. While I contend that the works studied direct our view to the senseless nature of armed conflict—an enlightened conception of war, indeed—the idea of all war as "senseless" is certainly a controversial one. Debates such as this must be considered and, when speaking of
"senselessness," each case demands qualification. A similar position must be taken when speaking of "making sense." While this project proposes that the experimental gestures analyzed point to the impossibility of making sense of the devastation created by war in that no political rhetoric can justify the pain, suffering, and death it inflicts, they are still making sense of something. They are attempts to understand what it means to live in war or live after war.

Perhaps, then, more than speaking of "better/worst," "correct/false" "ethical/unethical" ways of representing war, the study of war should focus on the mediums and the languages employed to represent it. Perhaps a more fertile, and less restricting, analysis must veer away from concepts of spectacle or hypervisiblity, and speak instead of new ways of "framing" conflict. Judith Butler's defense of the photographic capacity to engage a more ethical/political intervention when it comes to representing war serves as a fitting guide. Her faith in the photographic medium relied on the medium's language to frame specific understandings ("readings"). This project originated in an interest to delve into what these different representations of war have to say about it. What do we make of a slow film about the Chaco War? What do we make of photographs of war that don't illustrate war? What do we make of a documentary about a war that does not explain it?

Studying these objects as new ways of framing conflict allow a comparative framework within a global context. Are the aesthetic preoccuppations manifested by Latin American artists, writers, and directors shared by their contemporaries in other parts of the world? Are they confronted by the same challenges? This dissertation contributes new apprehensions regarding the aesthetic and experimental trends present in contemporary Latin American culture. What is the state (and the stakes) of contemporary Latin American culture? In recent decades, slow films, for example, have been influential and effective in exploring the local dynamics at play that are in tension with the global

impulse that defines the contemporary moment. Whether it is Paz Encina in Paraguay, Lisandro Alonso in Argentina, or Nicolás Pereda in Mexico, their slow films explore and expose local realities and identities rarely seen on film before.

Turning back to the subject of war, these new ways of framing war expose new visions of it that, at the same time, challenge existing conceptions related to the war and to the medium itself. Paz Encina's film where war haunts the quotidian experience as a spectral presence confronts Paraguayans with a representation of war never seen before, divorced from patriotic tones. Slow film aesthetics also becomes an effective way to meditate on national identity and the impact that the historical process has had on it. In the case of Travnik's work, his photographs conceive war in a way that contrasts with stereotypical representations. They also make evident the ability of photography to reflect on recent Argentinian history, dominated by the politization of questions of memory and justice. Finally, the case of Colombia poses the greatest challenge to cultural production. More than any other war, perhaps, the internal armed conflict is the most recurrent topic within Colombian cultural production during the last decades. For artists, directors, and writers, the challenge seems to be finding new languages to frame it.

As the works studied in the third chapter prove, cultural production rises to the occasion. They also tell us that there is more to be said about war and about those who experience it. If anything, this dissertation contributes to exposing the urgency of cultural production to speak, to frame, our contemporary moment.

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