



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
Dipartimento di Filosofia e Comunicazione
Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici di Bologna



This project has received funding from the European Union's 7th Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration under grant agreement PIRSES-GA-2013-612352

MEMOSUR CONFERENCE



A Lesson for Europe: Memory,
Trauma and Reconciliation in
Latin America

15 – 17 June 2017

Book of Abstracts

Dores Cruz

(University of Cologne)

*Tales of Memory, Nation and Empire: Lusophone perspectives on
memory from the metropole and colonial spaces*

Colonial and postcolonial discussions on European empires and colonial spaces are central in the theory of memory construction and its materiality. But while colonial experiences vary according to specific chronological and geographic contexts -as well as colonial power- the concept of colonialism is often presented abstractly or through the lens of British colonial experience. Going beyond a monolithic approach, this paper examines an example of colonial materiality outside the English case, as manifested in Portugal and Mozambique during the colonial and post-colonial period. It explores how the colonial ideology of Portuguese Estado Novo (New State) was materialized to construct a unified “motherland” that embraced metropole; and conversely it also explores the use of cult of personality in heritage and memory construction in Mozambique during the period of post-independence.

Francisco Estévez

(Director of Museo de la Memoria y de los Derechos Humanos – Santiago de Chile)

Memory is also a human right

The concept of Memory as a social construction gives a sense of historical belonging to new generations. Their space in society is definitely complex - singular and interdependent at the same time - since its inhabitants recognize themselves in an identity that precedes them and in the transformative dynamics that life in common means. The right to memory arises, as an affirmation or denial, of this awareness of belonging to the different places where the history of men and women as social beings is elaborated.

The dictatorships of the region were relentless in repressing the right to memory. When they are imposed they will have to persecute the cultural expressions of the left, with the burning of books, the closure of the media, the prohibition of compromised music, the closing of university schools among other persecutory measures. At the same time, democratic conceptions of state, country or nation would be distorted to the point of becoming exclusive or totalitarian concepts.

The dictatorial governments extended the repression of the right to the memory to the hiding of the truth with respect to the crimes resulting from their violation to the human

rights. This, of course, refers to the actions of military or police intelligence agencies and the operation of detention centers, torture and imprisonment of opponents whom they considered internal enemies. And at the same time, as a terrible consequence of the political, economic and socio-cultural dictatorship of undemocratic regimes, the fate of thousands and thousands of people who were detained and disappeared or executed and disappeared were extremely treacherously denied.

The denial of the truth and denial of justice by the State towards the victims and their next of kin of these crimes against humanity imply in themselves a very serious violation of the right to memory. This has been established by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, such as the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and Reports of Special Rapporteur, as well as the jurisprudence in this area of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The creation of Commissions of Truth in the different countries of the region allowed defeating the denial. The public policies on memory and human rights, as well as the museums and sites of memory that were later opened, have had the greatest importance in defending the value of truth to those who have denied it. Now, however, the right to memory must face other threats: forgetfulness and relativity.

With forgetfulness, it is intended to minimize the present effect and future consequences that are associated with the crimes against human rights committed by dictatorships of yesterday and therefore to allow the impunity of its perpetrators. And with the action of relativity seeks to justify as inevitable, from the existence of social and political conflicts in democracy, those institutional behaviours that precipitated and supported the civic-military coups and the establishment of repressive systems against that part of society that would lose its Right to have rights.

Veronica Estay Stange

(CIREMM and Université de Paris 8)

Traces of the disappearance, disappearance of the traces

The aim of this intervention is to establish a parallel between two memorial phenomena in which absence and emptiness play a fundamental role: forced disappearance and postmemory. The first implies the impossibility of accessing the evidence, the material traces that would allow the construction of the story of the "facts" and thus give form to an experience whose logical, symbolic violence lies largely in its impossible narrative closure: hence the unbearable suspense that introduces the disappearance. Postmemory

implies, on the contrary, the impossibility of acceding to the *quid* of remembrance whose affective, pathetic mark remains, however, in the following generations, who suffer in a way "effects without causes." In this case, what is absent is not the traces but the experience in his own flesh and therefore the concrete remembrance that produces them: postmemory is the trace of a disappeared remembrance. Between traces of the disappearance and disappearance of the traces, we will analyze several works and artistic practices from Chile and Argentina that, instead of filling the vacuum, show it intact, explaining it. On this basis, we will outline a typology of the motive of the absence in the discourse, studying its ethical and aesthetic implications. More generally, we conclude with a reflection on the problem of the vacuum in the construction of memory.

Daniel Filmus

(Member of the Latin American Parliament)

Policies of Memory, Policies of Forgetfulness. The role of Education

The article deals with the problem of school transmission related to social memory and, in particular, historical traumatic processes and events. In this regard, it is based on the consensus that the educational system is the instrument chosen in modern societies to transmit values, cultural patterns and the historical memory of adult generations to young people. It is proposed that the selection of the contents to be included in the curricular design for this transmission is neither "neutral nor naïve". It is a decision of a political-ideological nature that depends to a large extent on the capacity of different economic, social and political groups and interests to influence the State definitions that determine the strategies of educational transmission.

In this context, the cause of the absence of subaltern groups in society (women, indigenous peoples, workers, etc.) and certain social processes or traumatic events like wars and Genocides, in the context of schools is produced by those who devalue the presence of these protagonists and events of social history. In Argentina, this "forgetfulness" has been exacerbated by military dictatorships that applied policies of censorship, repression, persecution, disappearance, and death for those teachers who did not accept the policies of ideological control imposed by state terrorism.

The article focuses on what happened with the policies of "memory and forgetting" during the period of Argentina's nascent democracy that emerged in December 1983, in relation to two deeply painful and traumatic events for society: State terrorism that dominated the

last dictatorship (1976-1983) and the war for the recovery of sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands. With this objective, in a first period, the democratic forces under the presidency of Raúl Alfonsín managed to place these events in the public discourse. Progress was also made towards ensuring that those guilty of human rights violations were judged and convicted for their crimes. This process had its correlation in the democratization and the inclusion of these themes in the educational system. However, this process is reversed with an offensive from the sectors linked to those who committed state terrorism. Democracy moves backwards and dictates laws that "forgive and pardons" the guilty and "Un-Malvinizes" society while withdrawing these themes from school curriculum.

Only in 2003 did a new government recover the initial impulse to judge and punish the guilty and recuperate a full memory of the dramatic and traumatic periods that afflicted Argentina's recent past. After describing the public policies and legislative changes that allowed for the re-introduction of the subjects of State Terrorism, the Malvinas and the terrorist acts against the Embassy of Israel and AMIA in the school system, the article ends with a profound concern and major challenge. On one hand, there is preoccupation with regards to the government that took office the past December 10th, which promotes policies of "forgetfulness" regarding these traumatic events of Argentine history. On the other hand, the challenge of democratic sectors that, in a context of permanent struggle between memory and forgetfulness, to prevent the imposition of impunity for those who committed crimes and the exclusion of these issues in the education of new generations. Only in this direction can we prevent wars and genocides from recurring.

Niall Geraghty

(ILAS, University of London)

On legacies of violence in the arts

This paper will examine the ways in which select works of literature, cinema and visual art from Argentina and Chile have utilised religious knowledge and sacramental experience in order to transform legacies of a violent past into political struggle directed towards the future. It will first be argued that, in his novel *Insomnio* (1986), Marcelo Cohen deploys biblical references in order to delineate and resist new forms of power relations emergent in the immediate aftermath of the most recent Argentine dictatorship of 1976-1983. Thereafter, it will be proposed that Patricio Guzmán's film *Nostalgia de la luz* (2010) is underpinned by the logic of the *felix culpa* and becomes an act of communion designed to reactivate past political struggles. Finally, a radical re-examination of the work of León Ferrari (1920-2013) will be proposed. Where Ferrari's work mixed art, politics and an *acute criticism* of the Catholic Church, it will be suggested that it can, in fact, be considered a

source of profound theological thought and experimentation which can renovate and reinvigorate Latin American liberation theology.

Nora Hochbaum

(Director of Parque de la Memoria – Buenos Aires)

Parque de la Memoria - Art, Politics and Memory

Nora Hochbaum is the general director from Park of Memory – Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism since 2009. On the decade of 1990 she was the director of the Centro Cultural Recoleta. She had one of the most controversial exhibitions of León Ferrari. On 2006 she worked as director of the Argentinean house in Paris for around two years.

On this conference, she will present the project of the Memory Park and how important it is to keep on working with art and memory. For the Argentinean society, it's been a strong relation between them to think over our recent past and how is related with our present. In her presentation she will talk about the different areas that comprise the park, the exhibitions of diverse artists, cultural activities and the projects that continue struggling for Memory, Truth and Justice.

Grace Livingstone

(University of Cambridge)

Arms, Oil and Islanders. Constructed Memories versus the Archival Record: British Interests in the Falklands (Malvinas)

How accurate are collectively constructed national memories? The dominant British narrative of the Falkland conflict is that of Britain standing up to an aggressive dictator. Most British politicians and historians suggest that Britain's primary interest in the Falkland Islands is protecting the rights of the Islanders. In contrast, most Argentine accounts suggest that Britain's primary is securing access to strategic and economic resources. By looking at the newly-opened British government papers in the National Archive, this paper

looks at the relationship between the British government and the Argentine military regime before the 1982 conflict. It outlines the economic, political and military links between the two governments. It also looks closely at the attitude of British government and British companies towards oil and other natural resources in the South Atlantic and Antarctica.

Alejandra Naftal

(Director of *Sitio de Memoria ESMA* – Buenos Aires)

*ESMA Memory Site Museum - former Clandestine Center of Detention,
Torture and Extermination. An experience of political and social
consensus*

ESMA Memory Site Museum was opened on May 2015 in a building icon of the trauma encrypted in the city of Buenos Aires, the largest of the 600 Clandestine Detention and Assassination Centers during Argentina's military regime that took place from 1976 to 1983 when 30,000 people disappeared. A unit of torture functioned at ESMA with more than 5,000 people imprisoned most of whom were thrown alive into the sea during the 'flights of death'. ESMA also hosted a clandestine maternity where babies were born and stolen by the military.

Our Museum is a symbol of the past thanks to the voice of survivors and to the claims and tireless struggle of Human Rights Organizations, Grandmothers and Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Family of Disappeared and Sons and Daughters for the Identity and Justice, among others.

As a Museum related to personal lost and collective trauma, we would like to address the challenges we faced in creating a Museum in a contemporary archaeological site which involved debating and agreements between different actors; survivors, families, and a team of interdisciplinary professionals. Working together with our community, members of our society that still mourn loved ones and those traumatized by grief both personal and socially, we encountered diverse expectation of what would be appropriate to present in this context. The former Casino de Oficiales (Officers House) was transformed into a Memory Site Museum. The building is a physical testimony to human rights violations and as part of legal evidence cannot be touched, therefore the display was worked as an 'unplugged' installation.

We wish to address the political controversies of hosting a museum, considering the ethical dilemma of restaging terror. Our challenge was creating a space relevant for our communities today and telling a story where the voices of direct victims could be heard.

Our objective is being a Museum where “the uncomfortable can feel comfortable and the comfortable can feel uncomfortable”.

We believe our past violent history of State terrorism must be used as a tool for advocacy and violence prevention. At ESMA Memory Site Museum, we work in finding creative ways for our past history to be relevant to contemporary issues, choosing not to reenact a concentration camp and presenting the testimonies of the survivors. Museums are essential in redressing human rights violations. Our challenge was creating a space relevant for our communities today and telling a story where the voices of direct victims could be heard.

Annalisa Sacchi

(IUAV, Venezia)

Antigone's claim: or the aftermath of European Fascisms on stage

Moira Fradinger has written that, in the original version of Sophocles, the tyrant orders that Antigone’s corpse should be left unburied, like that of Polyneices, not realizing—or perhaps precisely realizing—that the representation of such a lack of funeral rites would contaminate 2,500 years of Western imagination, much in the way Polyneices’ corpse had begun contaminating Thebes. This lack of ritual, a certain lack in symbolization, might well be what propelled Antigone’s travels through both fictional and real life theaters around the world.

It is strictly this lack of ritual, the exhibition of the immobile body, that keeps on mobilizing living bodies, in theatres, movies, and in society alike.

In the many versions of Antigone produced in Latin America, and especially in Argentina, the problem of burying the body is striking precisely because of the absence of the bodies of the desaparecidos. In Griselda Gambaro’s *Antigona Furiosa*, for example, the play is completely re-written and is profoundly influenced by the civil disobedience of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, while the absence of the body of Polyneices fills the stage through the protest, the mourning and the rage of Antigona.

If we move to Europe and North America, in the panoply of the works I will consider, we’ll see how the aftermath of the Nazi and Fascist regimes left a landscape populated by hundreds of unburied Polyneices. I will take into account a certain genealogy that starts with Bertolt Brecht’s *Antigone der Sophocles*, transmigrates into the Living Theatre’s version of *Antigone*, infects the imagery of a movie produced as a happening (Liliana Cavani’s *The year of cannibals*) and activates one of the later productions of Italian theatre group Motus, *Syrma Antigónes*.

In this pendular movement between Latin America and Europe, between absence and presence, between phantoms and corpses, Antigone keeps on embodying the power of mourning, of sisterhood, and of memory, and stands as the mythic figure in which is encrypted the essential gesture of civil disobedience.

Adam Sharman

(University of Nottingham)

What is postmemory?

My paper is about the notion of 'postmemory'. It takes one example from Argentine documentary film-making, Nicolás Prividera's film *M* (2007), and one exemplary theorization of postmemory, Marianne Hirsch's book *The Generation of Postmemory* (2012), a collection of essays some of which date back to the late-1990s or early 2000s. The paper will explore the importance of the word *generation* in Hirsch's formulation of postmemory and ask whether the US-based theorist and the Argentine film-maker (who is also a theorist) really have the same thing in mind when they mobilize the memory of others. It will suggest, finally, and in accordance with Hirsch's observation that 'we certainly are, still, in the era of "posts"', that, at least on the evidence of two examples, postmemory is the scion of some very old things (elegy, art, ideology-critique).

Cecilia Sosa

(CONICET - Universidad Tres de Febrero, Argentina; University of Nottingham)

*On how to live after loss. Affective reparation and collective pleasures
in postdictatorial Argentina*

In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Jacques Derrida argues that learning how to live is not a lesson that one discovers from life. Rather, it is something that comes from the dead, or better from the borders between life and death. In my presentation, I propose that Argentina's aftermath of violence also offers the possibility of learning how to live collectively after loss. Drawing upon the process that opened up after a military regime of terror caused some 30.000 citizens to vanish, infamously known as *los desaparecidos*, I show how different ways of dealing with trauma has shed light on different experiences of reparation.

In order to develop this argument, I focus on *Aparecida* (2015), an autobiographical book written by the journalist Marta Dillon, which tells the story of her mother, Marta Taboada, kidnapped in 1977 and whose fate remained unknown for decades. In 2010, her remains were recovered. I argue that Dillon's book is embedded in the public culture of the Kirchnerist years (2013-2015), a controversial political period in which the past was rewritten and in which many of its symbols reappeared; like Taboada's body. During that time, grief became both a right and an official duty. While positioning *Aparecida* within a broader series of postmemorial productions, I contend that many of these controversial narratives managed to challenge the duty to remember while encouraging wider audiences to share in grief. Usually relying on playful and ironic imaginaries, the production these younger generations offered empowering and non-victimizing accounts of trauma in which humour was also present.

Published by the end of the Kirchnerist years, Dillon's book demonstrated how grief could announce forms of exhilaration, effervescence and empowerment. In this sense, I argue that a seemingly minor text can teach us something in relation to kinship, mourning and pleasure, not only in the context of contemporary Argentina but also in broader scenarios affected by loss. While embodying a queer, insurgent voice for upcoming times, Dillon's book ultimately helps to illuminate a more inclusive politics of grief for expanded scenarios