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Introduction to "Citizens of Memory: Affect, Representation, and Human Rights in Postdictatorship Argentina"

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Citizens of Memory

Affect, Representation, and Human Rights in Postdictatorship Argentina

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Introduction

Hope is memory that desires.—Honoré de Balzac, “A Prince of Bohemia”¹

This is a book about memory. More specifically, it is a book about efforts at recollection in postdictatorship Argentina and about the hoped-for futures they set in motion at a particular moment in time. It is about sites, images, narratives, and practices that address the collective trauma of state terrorism and its enduring presence; and it is about the ways in which storytelling, by framing remembrance, helps constitute communities of belonging. The memorial works studied here ask us to pay attention; in capturing our attention, they seek to seed possibility. The ways in which they move us are not always predictable. Our interactions with them do not follow the most carefully laid out scripts. The affects they elicit are not always positive. But in eliciting affects they are generative. This is a book about the power of memory to move us somewhere else, against indifference.

In perhaps one of his most poignant poems, Argentine poet Juan Gelman poses a series of questions as he imagines the fates of his disappeared son and *compañeros* [fellow militants], their missing bodies, their bones, in their final resting places:

si dulcemente por tu cabeza pasaban las olas
del que se tiró al mar / ¿qué pasa con los hermanitos
que enterraron? / ¿hojitas les crecen de los
dedos? / ¿arbolitos / otoños
que los deshojan como mudos? / en silencio²

[if gently by your head passed the waves
of the one thrown into the sea / what happens with the little brothers
they in-earthed? / do small leaves sprout from their
fingers? saplings / autumns
that defoliate them like mutes? in silence]³

His opening lines conjure the death flights through which thousands of citizens, deemed enemies of the state by the military regime, were killed, their bodies tossed into the Rio de la Plata, often tied and weighted down to ensure their vanishing. They are addressed to a singular death, a cadaver at the bottom of the sea gently rocked by waves as another body breaks through the water. One body, then two, lead the poet to wonder what happens with those other “little brothers” disappeared by the machinery of terror, those buried in the ground, in *fosas comunes* [mass graves] and in unmarked graves.⁴ This thought evokes the image of new growth sprouting from their fingers, their bodies turning into small trees and giving way to the natural cycle of life and death, to Autumn’s falling leaves and the silence of a figurative winter. Gelman’s artistry is evident here, in his ability to transform through metaphor the scene of annihilation into something more, something generative. And it is evident, too, in the way he manipulates language to create pockets of intimacy vital both to the construction of collective memory and to the forward-looking work this memory might engender. These pockets opened through language manifest, for example, in his erroneous conjugation of the verb “enterrar” [to bury] in the poem’s first stanza. His subtle transformation of “enterraron” [they buried] is like a snag or a slap after the caress of the opening lines; the word’s deformation interrupts the gentle flow of questions in which it is inserted and demands we pay attention, revisit what is written there, to try to understand the very finitude of death, and simultaneously, the always present and also creative nature of mourning. Like a thud, or a prick, like the Barthesian punctum, the word emerges from the poetic unconscious and is not corrected: retaining in the preterit construction of the verb the present conjugation of the root [*entierran*] and therein the word for earth [*tierra*], it manages to articulate the unbearably lasting, almost inassimilable reality of a loved one’s body deep under ground, rendered mute and surrounded by silence, in humid darkness, but also in the very medium from which that voice’s life-nurturing energy, its legacy, might be harvested. Referencing thus the physical matter of the tomb, Gelman prepares the metaphor of the tree and the genealogy of resistance it figures. From the silence that closes the opening stanza, the poem goes on to remember those gone, to name them, to reconstruct their militancy and their humanity with tenderness, effectively reconstituting the shared hopes of a shattered collective. And then, having

touched these memories, the poem ends with the muteness of bones disintegrating in a summer night.

The title poem of a collection Gelman wrote during his exile in Rome, “Si dulcemente” [If gently] speaks to the immediate wound and maps the scene of devastation. It follows the series “Carta Abierta” [Open letter] that was addressed to his disappeared son and opens up Gelman’s family album to affiliations born through militancy, exile, and mourning after a crushing defeat.⁵ As an ex-Montonero who took up arms in the late 1960s and early 1970s before breaking with the guerrilla organization, and who lost his son, daughter-in-law, unborn granddaughter, and countless friends and fellow militants, Gelman belongs to the generation decimated by state terrorism.⁶ His poetic voice draws on a reservoir of language ripped from the very viscera of grief, evoking at times an infant’s babble, at times a mourner’s howl. Well-known for his linguistic experimentation and neologisms, his poetry has received considerable critical attention, most of it linking his literary journey to the militancy that helped to shape it. These interpretations share an understanding of Gelman’s work as marked by struggle and loss, and by a specific experience in time and space that nevertheless labors to identify a “somewhere else” ([“otras partes,”] *Hacia el sur*, 1981–1982), what Kate Jenckes calls “an openness to what may come.”⁷ This openness is evident in the languaging that defines his practice, one that “reconfigures legibility, intelligibility, and sense-making by heeding the liminal—the not-yet-available to culture.”⁸ But it is simultaneously marked by gestures of reassemblage, reparation, and witnessing that join together to constitute a political project. Indeed, the affective and palimpsestic nature of Gelman’s work, its ability to acknowledge genealogy while resisting ossification or paralysis, makes it an effective medium for the transmission of memory—a memory that does not create monuments to the fallen but rather labors to remake the world with and beyond them, through their instruction.

I begin with Gelman because his poetry in many ways anticipates the labors of memory engaged from an even greater distance (temporal, generational, affiliative) that form the subject of this study. Reaching back to the past and projecting itself forward through fragments chosen in the present, Gelman’s metaphorical language synthesizes the kind of work advanced by the mnemonic imagination, a term coined by Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering to describe “the manner in which the past attains or regains significance for the present and the future, and makes of remembering a creative process.”⁹ Like “Si dulcemente,” the case studies that follow speak to the necessity of siting memories born from the collective trauma of state terrorism not only to mourn what was lost—a loved one, a community, a way of life, a political project—but also to understand the present through that prism and to lay the

foundation for a more perfect union. The work they perform in this respect is not unique; but their faith in the exceptional power of creative expression to shape a collective vision, engage an audience, and pave a way forward sets the particular forms of memorial culture that interest me here apart. By eliciting affective responses in new historical actors, they generate experiences informed by this past to shape the social compact. My analysis of material, narrative, and figurative memorial sites seeks to understand how they do this, sharing Alejandra Oberti's and Roberto Pittaluga's conviction that,

más que aportar a una memoria consolidada, esta perspectiva alentaría a pensar los "lugares de memoria" como lugares que interrumpen la reproducción sossegada del presente para instarle las deudas con el pasado. Contrariamente a los "objetos fríos" que quieren los historiadores para acercarse "sin prejuicios" y "sin presiones" al pasado, proponemos narraciones "apasionadas", en el sentido de que posean la capacidad de incidir sobre el presente, sobre los sujetos que miran a través de esas narraciones el pasado reciente, alentando en ellos una disposición a la escucha.¹⁰

[more than contribute to a consolidated memory, this perspective encourages thinking about "sites of memory" as sites that interrupt the calm reproduction of the present in order to raise its debts with the past. As opposed to the "cold objects" that historians privilege to approximate the past "without pressure" or "bias," we propose "impassioned" narratives, in the sense that they are able to influence the present, to influence those subjects who view the recent past through them, cultivating within them a receptive disposition.]

Reading spatial, literary, and visual registers as instances of *impassioned narratives* that catalyze a new attentiveness, my approach to the cultural practice of recollection as "a social activity that organizes the energies, affects, and forces of memory"¹¹ posits these registers as interventions in the public sphere that, by inciting deep reflection and an active engagement with the legacies of state terrorism, contribute to the development of new political subjectivities invested in the construction of a less violent future.

This exploration of memorial culture in postdictatorship Argentina is indebted to a growing body of scholarship in the fields of memory and trauma studies, much of it informed by work on the Holocaust. In addition to building on Pierre Nora's by now classic conceptualization of *lieux de mémoire* [sites of memory] and Maurice Halbwachs's articulation of a collective and consensual memory, Andreas Huyssen's contributions have been key for my thinking about memory as palimpsestic and as the construction of a present in which it seeks to intervene. Marianne Hirsch's work on postmemory has been equally important in helping me think about the question of inter-generational transmission.¹² The interdisciplinary project directed by Elizabeth Jelin and

Carlos Iván Degregori on memories of repression in the Southern Cone has helped me further to map the specific field of Latin American memory studies in which I situate my own work. Informed by European scholarship on practices of remembrance surrounding the Holocaust, Jelín's *Los trabajos de la memoria* [*State Repression and the Labors of Memory*] posits memory as a field of struggle between competing narratives that at different times and in different contexts vie for primacy in what Steve Stern has called the nation's memory box.¹³ Building on the intellectual ground explored in journals like *Punto de Vista*, *Confines*, and *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, the studies coordinated by Jelín and Degregori through the Memories of Repression project help bring into focus the region's postdictatorial landscape as a vital territory of shifting, contested discourses that feed each other like a chorus and refrain.¹⁴ Rhizomatic in nature, they signal the complex and often fraught ethical, social, and political imaginaries manifest through their symbolic enactments. And they remind us with every iteration that, as Gilles Deleuze once noted, memory "is the membrane which, in the most varied ways . . . makes sheets of past and layers of reality correspond, the first emanating from an inside which is always already there, the second arriving from an outside always to come, the two gnawing at the present which is now only their encounter."¹⁵

Citizens of Memory: Affect, Representation, and Human Rights in Post-dictatorship Argentina seeks to expand the frameworks through which to read these encounters by giving serious consideration to how affect operates within them. My thinking along these lines builds on Teresa Brennan's definition of affect as "the physiological shift accompanying a judgment," on her "idea that affects *are* judgments, or, as a new vernacular has it, attitudes."¹⁶ This idea becomes especially clear when the focus is on transmission given the premise that, as Brennan argues, "all affects, including even 'flat affects,' are material, physiological things. . . . Via a forceful projection, they may be felt and taken on board by the other, depending on circumstances."¹⁷ My approach to affect is also indebted to Jill Bennett's study on representations of trauma in contemporary art, and especially her emphasis on what art can *do*, "its capacity to sustain sensation [to quote Deleuze's definition of art] rather than to communicate meaning."¹⁸ I borrow from her the distinction between *communicative* and *transactive* trauma-related art to underscore those memorial works that oscillate in between. It is my contention that while not all memory work can be described as transactive—that is, as art that "touches us" without "in and of itself convey(ing) the 'meaning' of trauma"¹⁹—the most effective registers, those with transformative potential, usually operate in this way. Resisting the sometimes clumsy didacticism that can accompany official and politically functional commemorations, the spatial, visual,

literary, and performative sites of memory I examine all catalyze “affective transactions” that “lead us toward a conceptual engagement” with the contents they organize.²⁰ Moreover, unlike the static images of a fixed past that critics like Nelly Richard, Hugo Vezzetti, and Beatriz Sarlo caution against, I argue following Mieke Bal that it is the way these memorial initiatives “are affectively colored, surrounded by an emotional aura that, precisely, makes them memorable.”²¹ Each potentially introduces, as Jens Andermann notes, “a critical fold, a heterotopic interruption” in the postdictatorial landscape, encouraging encounters that incite reflection and invite new conceptualizations of self and of community.²² While Bennett limits her study to visual art forms, her theoretical framework has rich implications for understanding how a wide range of cultural and artistic interventions might operate on the social field and for thinking through the relationship between culture, politics, and human rights. Such an approach can help illuminate why certain forms of memory work prove more effective than others at mobilizing constituencies. It opens the possibility of analyzing what practices are generative in this sense, as well as what kinds of effects they might produce. And it is helpful in unpacking the negative affects the over-saturation of memory can also unleash, the visceral, unthought rebuke that overtly political or functionally profitable uses of particular discourses can engender.

In studying memorial initiatives as aesthetic interventions that are part of a larger human rights agenda—something approximating a pedagogy of human rights—this study resists what for a long time has seemed an unbridgeable divide, at least in the Latin American context, between dominant critical perspectives in cultural studies and those of human rights activists. As Andermann explains, “Whereas postdictatorial critics were reluctant to forsake the radical negativity of *avanzada* [avant-garde] art as a strategic site of resistance . . . memory activists would insist on the need to wrest places of encounter from the postdictatorial state, both in terms of actual, physical sites and of the inclusive, dialogical symbolic practices and memorial forms these sites might shelter.”²³ The debate between these two camps in Argentina struck a particularly strident note in the mid-1990s during the so-called memory boom. The resurgence in media attention and in activism that characterized this period brought renewed attention to the dictatorship’s still open wounds after what had proven to be a tortuous road in the pursuit of justice during the democratic transition. As is well-known, the initial investigation by the National Commission on the Disappeared [Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, CONADEP] into the crimes committed during the dictatorship and the publication of *Nunca Más* [*Never Again*], its report documenting nearly 9,000 deaths and disappearances, led to the prosecutions in 1985 of the nine commanders in chief of the armed forces. Of the nine leaders, five were found

guilty and sentenced to prison terms ranging between four years to life, and four were acquitted.²⁴ Their trials were followed by additional prosecutions of known repressors and security officers in lower ranks that were brought forward by civilians in Argentina's criminal courts. This judicial process came to an abrupt halt, however, with the passage of the Ley de Punto Final (Full Stop Law) (1986) and Ley de Obediencia Debida [Law of Due Obedience] (1987), legislation implemented by President Raúl Alfonsín's administration (1983–1989) to quell increasing military unrest, including an attempted coup. The progress made in prosecutions appeared to be undone during the subsequent administration when, under the leadership of Carlos Saúl Menem (1989–1999), all those who had been sentenced were pardoned. It is in this context of impunity that the public expressions made by key actors in 1995 triggered a "boom de la memoria" [memory boom].²⁵ These included ex-Naval Captain Adolfo Scilingo's confession of his participation in the death flights, confirming, from the perspective of a perpetrator, what had long been suspected regarding the systematic elimination of those denominated subversives by the state's security forces; the televised public apology of the Army's Commander in Chief, General Martín Balza, whose *mea culpa* represented the military's first formal acknowledgment of its crimes; and the emergence of a new kind of human rights organization, Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (H.I.J.O.S.) [Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence], comprised of the children of the detained-disappeared who by then were young adults.²⁶ The media sensation their confluence provoked through the course of 1995 was further fueled by the proliferation of public commemorations, films, and testimonials that marked the twentieth anniversary of the coup the following year. At a time when efforts to achieve justice for victims of state terrorism remained stalled, when there seemed little hope of reversing the amnesties granted by President Menem or of halting the democratic state's expansion of the neoliberal policies issued in by the dictatorship, new forms of social protest joined a resurgence in memorial initiatives to contest the federal government's preferred discourse of reconciliation and forgetting.²⁷

It is in this context, too, that leading cultural critics like those associated with the journals *Punto de Vista* and *Confines* registered their critiques of testimonial gestures that, they contended, rather than problematize the past threatened to foreclose it.²⁸ As human rights organizations and new social actors mobilized to recover sites and render testimony as evidence of the crimes committed—in other words, to stake their claims to truth against forgetting in the absence of justice and punishment—their practices were called into question both for privileging partial and subjective accounts premised on personal suffering and for uncritically recycling forms of creative expression

associated with the militant tactics of a defeated political project. Reflecting on the activism of H.I.J.O.S. in 1998, Vezzetti wondered, for example, about the possible continuity between the “protagonismo casi exclusivo de los afectados directos” [almost exclusive protagonism of the directly affected] and the perceived failure “de promoción y expansión de la acción pública sobre derechos y libertades” [of public actions promoting and expanding rights and freedoms], interpreting the resurgence of testimonial culture as consonant with the “privatización de la esfera pública, que venía a quedar ocupada por los reclamos fundados en la sangre”²⁹ [privatization of the public sphere, which comes to be occupied by blood-based claims]. While Vezzetti’s concerns derived, in part, from a justified suspicion of “la pulsión memoriosa, complaciente cuando no reivindicativa, que vuelve sobre la experiencia, los ideales y las luchas de los 70”³⁰ [the complacent, when not vindicating, memorial drive to reexamine the experience, the ideals, and the struggles of the seventies], they were also premised on a particular understanding of the relationship between politics and aesthetics. Indeed, his critical perspective dovetailed neatly with positions expressed in *Punto de Vista* from its inception during the dictatorship. As Miguel Dalmaroni notes, the journal directed by Sarlo explicitly favored “una poética de la literatura y del arte que intentaba someter a crítica y dejar atrás las estéticas de las culturas de izquierda; contra la simplificación—realista, populista, pedagógica, etc.—de la forma por el recurso a retóricas ya configuradas, que conducía a la repetición y, lejos de interrogar nuestros sistemas de sentido, los confirmaba”³¹ [a poetics of art and literature that attempted to critique and leave behind the aesthetics of leftist cultural expressions; against a simplification of form—realist, populist, pedagogical, etc.—that resorted to already configured rhetorical techniques leading to repetition and that, far from interrogating our systems of meaning, confirmed them]. Stressing the need for cultural practices that defied easy consumption, formally distinct from the populism of militant cultural production of the 1960s and 1970s, this line of critique looked askance at the preponderance of memorial initiatives that recycled old tropes as if the simple documentation of personal suffering were sufficient to guarantee historical insight. Instead, it signaled as exemplary those interventions crafted with critical distance that resisted closure through an aesthetics that called attention to the allegorical ruins of a defeat, with “silencios y con huecos que mantienen, en contra de lo ya sabido, interrogantes que no tienen respuesta”³² [silences and gaps that maintain, against the already known, questions with no answers].

Sarlo’s book-length study, *Tiempo pasado: Cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo* [Time past: The culture of memory and the subjective turn, a discussion] would go on to develop this position in detail.³³ Rather than finding

common ground with what she identifies as the younger generation's preferred textual modality, Sarlo argues that the subjective turn evident in the deployment of testimonial accounts is counterproductive to the transmission of memory if what is sought is historical understanding of a traumatic past. Instead, feeding a hunger that can never be satiated, "La proliferación del detalle individual cierra ilusoriamente las grietas de la intriga, y la presenta como si ésta pudiera o debiera representar un todo, algo completo y consistente porque el detalle lo certifica, sin tener que mostrar su necesidad"³⁴ [the proliferation of the individual detail provides the illusion of closure; it suggests a capacity or responsibility for representing a whole, something complete and consistent as certified by the detail, with no need to demonstrate its necessity]. Sarlo's response to strategies like those deployed by H.I.J.O.S.—their very bodies proffered as evidence of the lasting damage of state repression and mobilized to interpellate others through political affiliations—seems to derive from a binary conceptual model in which a "relación afectiva, moral, con el pasado (es) poco compatible con la puesta en distancia y la búsqueda de inteligibilidad que son el oficio del historiador"³⁵ [moral, affective relationship with the past is hardly compatible with the distance and search for meaning corresponding to the historian's profession]. Questioning postmemorial culture's ability to generate thoughtful and critical appreciations of the past when affect is a driving force, she deploys a critique that reifies the opposition between heart and mind.³⁶ This leads to Sarlo's dismissal of works like Albertina Carri's film *Los rubios*³⁷ [*The Blondes*] and her conclusion that "Una utopía revolucionaria cargada de ideas recibe un trato injusto si se la presenta sólo o fundamentalmente como drama posmoderno de los afectos"³⁸ [a revolutionary utopia full of ideas is unjustly treated if it is presented only or fundamentally as a postmodern drama of affects]. While responding to the needs of the market at a particular point in time, Sarlo insists that subjective accounts like Carri's that proliferated following the boom are inadequate consolations that project the illusion of historical understanding and of justice rather than advance their cause.

While the skepticism expressed by Sarlo and other leading intellectuals of the memory boom may have been well-founded, the assumptions underlying it—namely, that expressions derived from personal proximity to trauma stymie thoughtful engagement or critique—in hindsight prove problematic.³⁹ It is clear, after all, that *Los rubios*, to stick with this example, triggered precisely the kind of deep reflection and response that Sarlo and her counterparts reserved for *avanzada* aesthetics and for arguably more *objective* academic treatises, as if these were not also subjectively encoded. It reflects careful attention to form and problematizes its presentation of historical events to explore the varied complicities that enabled the implementation of

state terrorism as well as its social residues. Given examples like Carri's, is it not possible that instead of neutralizing dissent and demobilizing the search for justice, the cumulative effect of testimonial gestures like those that *Los rubios* deploys actually helped to pave the way for the reversal of amnesties and the groundswell of prosecutions that came to define the twenty-first-century Argentine landscape? Indeed, shaped by the context of impunity in which they were generated, the concerns expressed by Sarlo and others regarding the subjective turn evidenced in (post)memorial culture appear today as limited and limiting, aligned with a "history within institutions of knowledge and learning which has tended to associate *particular kinds of people* with affect and unreason"⁴⁰ and that also might be read as subjective and affectively driven. My own position is that, rather than demobilizing, all of these approaches, together, contributed to the seachange in transitional justice that Argentina experienced after 2001.⁴¹

Written over the last decade, after both the memory boom and Argentina's 2001 historic collapse, *Citizens of Memory* bears the imprint of its own context of production during a period that in transitional justice literature has been called the "final phase" in the "trend toward accountability."⁴² As such, its general optimism coincides with the "full-scale return to justice and memory initiatives from 2003 onward," achieved through the combination of "the positive *evidentiary, international, opposition moments* (that) had been building since the mid-1990s" and the "*political moment* of Néstor Kirchner's election."⁴³ The confluence of these moments led to the annulment of the amnesty laws, the judiciary's reform, and the resumption of prosecutions. Indeed, as Francesca Lessa notes, "the early 2000s (saw) a convergence of objectives and goals between the Kirchner administrations and human rights groups to such an extent that the traditional banners of truth, justice and memory championed by activists (were) elevated to national duties by the government."⁴⁴ While this convergence was viewed as generally positive by human rights organizations that had fought to end impunity, it also generated new tensions, including questions about the instrumentalization of memory by the executive branch, its marketing and political usefulness as decoy through performances aimed at neutralizing dissent and masking persistent forms of everyday violence and injustice.⁴⁵ And yet, whether interpreted as the righteous culmination of a decades-long struggle for justice or simply as the temporary effect of an opportunistic rebranding by a political party, the leading role that memories of Argentina's last dictatorship assumed after 2003 in national discourse is undeniable. It makes their study all the more urgent as memory activists continue to mobilize through artistic initiatives to inflect not only contemporary understandings of the past but also, through them, the collective imagination of a different future.

The memorial gestures I analyze are all relatively recent, developed just prior to or during this “final phase” in transitional justice. As such, they are deeply inflected by the debates that the memory boom triggered. Traces of these debates are evident not only in spatial enactments forged in the countermonument tradition, like those deployed by the *Parque de la Memoria* [Memory Park] with its refusal of monumental structures suggesting closure, but also in the memorial work of artists, writers, filmmakers, and human rights practitioners seeking to activate memory and to *unsettle* accounts, thereby provoking within their various audiences the desire to look, feel, think, and look again. And yet, albeit shaped by the questions of their time, the memories and methodologies they deploy and the affects they engender are not constrained by them. Acknowledging this dialectic, the chapters that follow trace how new historical actors appropriate and represent this past, resignifying their memories of state repression according to their own loci of enunciation and the demands of their present. I have chosen to include a range of approaches to memory work—performative and archival, live and scripted—out of the conviction that, in spite of their differences, they all function as *sites of becoming*. Insisting on the matter of memory as their medium, they open up moments in time and space, and labor, through these interstices, to inflect subjectivities, guide collectives, and shape the territory ahead.

Citizens of Memory thus builds on the important contributions of Argentina’s leading memory critics. But it does so from the vantage point of greater geographical and temporal distance, and with an awareness of how much has been accomplished over the last decade. As such, the book departs from previous efforts to analyze dictatorial cultural production, the majority of which were completed at a time when a fuller accounting with the past and some measure of justice seemed almost impossible.⁴⁶ Rather than dismiss the challenges posed by the critiques of the subjective turn, however, it asks that we take them seriously, sharing the conviction that “es más importante entender que recordar, aunque para entender sea preciso, también, recordar”⁴⁷ [understanding is more important than remembering, although in order to understand it is also necessary to remember]. In so doing, it echoes what has become a common refrain in the field of memory studies: that simple remembrance is not enough; that memories are always in the making, always plural, and always partial; and that memorial discourses can be and have been used to generate new forms of oppression, war, and genocide. *Citizens of Memory*, however, approaches such gestures of remembrance in postdictatorship Argentina as complex expressions worthy of study precisely because of their ability to unfurl the “present pasts” and to move us collectively through their affective imprimaturs to imagine our future otherwise.⁴⁸ How they do this varies. And it is not my contention that these works of

memory can singlehandedly (or even in concert) bring about that *nunca más* they share as their horizon. But the labors they perform—affectively colored, always partial, and deeply engaged with the present—are very much part and parcel of the larger project of securing greater access to human rights, not in competition with it, and not a distraction from what truly matters.⁴⁹

Informed by the intersection of trauma studies, memory studies, and human rights, the case studies that make up this book engage the victim-perpetrator binary that provides the impetus for the subjective turn. But they also move beyond it to explore the uses of recollection for the constitution of new political subjects and collectives committed to “moral witnessing, testimony and civic courage.”⁵⁰ Recognizing that rights claims can be used by neoliberal democracies “to immunize a power structure against radical transformation,”⁵¹ the mnemonic interventions this book explores nevertheless insist on their corresponding potential to “facilitate new ways to constitute life politically.”⁵² They pursue, in this sense, that “shift from vulnerabilities and catastrophes in the past and from the subsequent move into trauma theory to the politics of prevention”⁵³ that Huyssen recently identified when he argued for the coupling of memory studies with human rights. What is more, cognizant of this need, my own approach to these works of the mnemonic imagination seeks to unpack what their deeply felt appeals to various memories and constituencies might activate. Beginning with the establishment of physical memorial sites to map a cartography of repression, the chapters that follow explore initiatives focused on active transmission and conclude with a consideration of how, through pedagogical repertoires that facilitate a sustained engagement with this past, new historical actors are coming of age as citizens of memory in contemporary Argentina. The refrain that memory, in itself, is not enough thus organizes the arc of this book.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The book’s point of departure takes as its subject the physical ruins—material, affective, and symbolic—from which three of Argentina’s most iconic sites of memory have been constructed. Two of the sites studied occupy literal ruins, locations where clandestine detention centers once functioned: Club Atlético and the Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (*Higher School of Mechanics of the Navy*), known by its acronym, ESMA. The third, the Memory Park, is the result of an unprecedented collaboration of human rights organizations, survivors of detention, relatives of the disappeared, and the city of Buenos Aires government intended to honor victims of state terrorism. While not built on actual ruins, the Memory Park’s proximity to the

University of Buenos Aires (with which many of the disappeared were affiliated) and to the Rio de la Plata (where many of the disappeared met their deaths) imparts upon it a heavy symbolic weight. All three sites were initially developed during or after the memory boom, but their actual manifestations and modes of operation have not remained static. Chapter 1 consequently traces the debates that shaped the sites and the ways in which each has sought over the last decade, more or less successfully, to “awaken us to collective thinking that takes us to the frontier of action.”⁵⁴

Chapter 2 explores the work of Argentine photographers who take as their subject the damage done by the operation of state terrorism in the 1970s and early 1980s. It suggests that photographic images have played a particularly effective role in both denouncing repression and mobilizing resistance, beginning with the first strategic deployment of their missing children’s images by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo on their Thursday rounds. My analysis focuses on two factors that help explain photography’s special power to activate recollection in the postdictatorial landscape. The first is that photographs insist on an always present negotiation with the specific pasts they capture because, as Roland Barthes reminds us, the founding order of photography is, after all, referential: “in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past.”⁵⁵ In other words, that *being there* is recalled in a present that bears witness to it and is, in turn, resignified through that relation. Enabling a sort of double vision, photographs not only incite reflection, but also invite new conceptualizations of self and of community through the encounters they figure. The second factor takes its cue from Jill Bennett’s claim that “while clearly words can be put into the service of sense memory, vision has a very different relationship to affective experience, experience that—while it cannot be spoken as it is felt—may register visually.”⁵⁶ In her formulation of “empathic vision,” the process of making and of consuming images serves not only to reference affective experience, but also to stage and activate it.⁵⁷ It is in this sense that photographs might be understood to labor as sense memories capable of catalyzing affective transactions; they seed histories of trauma in their audiences before they are fully understood or appreciated so they will not be forgotten.

The photo essays I analyze issue from directly affected victims (relatives, friends, fellow militants) and from members of the postmemorial generation whose creative uses of the archive invite new forms of solidarity and critical consciousness. Two of the installations studied, Marcelo Brodsky’s *Buena memoria* [Good memory] and Lucila Quieto’s *Arqueología de la ausencia 1999–2001* [Archaeology of absence] are products of the memory boom; intensely subjective, they respond to a context in which official rhetoric sought to foreclose the past.⁵⁸ By putting themselves in the picture,

they invite others to do the same, and in so doing, to consider the ways that the legacies of repression continue to haunt the present. The most recent photographic exhibition studied, Natalia Calabrese's *El presente del pasado* [The present of the past], makes an important leap.⁵⁹ Bypassing both the personal trauma and private grief that characterized the subjective turn in the mid-1990s and the representations of innocent youth as victims that for so long prevailed, Calabrese speaks directly to the question of "implicated subjects"⁶⁰ in order to interrogate the role of the bystander and the witness in the texture of this history.

Chapter 3 revisits the guerrilla violence that marked the 1960s and 1970s through a study of documentaries created by the children of militants who lost their parents to state terrorism. Like Laura Podalsky's *The Politics of Affect and Emotion in Contemporary Latin American Cinema* that draws "on recent research in a variety of disciplines about the cognitive potential of affect," my analysis is "concerned with how certain works encourage their spectators to feel in ways that acknowledge alternative ways of knowing (about) the recent traumatic past of the 1960s and 1970s."⁶¹ Produced following the testimonial surge of the mid-1990s, the films I study mobilize affect to approximate deeper, more complex understandings of the political activism and of the forms of armed struggle that defined their parents' generation. If, as María Sonderéguer notes, "Durante los ochenta, la revaloración del estado de derecho y de las libertades individuales que signó la reconstrucción democrática en Argentina definió así una suerte de 'pacto' sostenido por el temor a la repetición de un pasado traumático, y la demanda de justicia se limitó a un reclamo de juricidad que canceló otros reclamos"⁶² [During the eighties, the revalidation of the rule of law and individual liberties that characterized Argentina's democratic reconstruction defined a kind of "pact" sustained by the fear of repeating a traumatic past, and the demand for justice was limited to a claim for legality that canceled out all other claims], a shift in the politics of memory in the 1990s made it possible to examine the historical erasures haunting that historical present. Taking up this postponed review of events, members of the postdictatorship generation effectively challenged through their documentary film projects the "pacto político, e ideológico-cultural, unido a las condiciones que la lógica neoconservadora impuso al desarrollo y a la racionalidad de la democracia"⁶³ [political and ideological-cultural pact, together with the conditions that the neoconservative logic placed upon the democracy's development and rationality]. Chief among the heretic memories they explore are the military-political formation of the Montonero movement. The review of the past that these documentaries advance, speak not only to the ideological premises expressed in the 1970s, but also to the ways that the evocation of Peronism continues to interpellate

masses of Argentines in the present. Refusing to romanticize their parents' choices, they challenge the discourses of solidarity and of resistance commonly evoked by the generation of survivors and victims, and sometimes elide their representation of militancy altogether. My analysis of the films *Papá Iván* [Father Ivan], *Los rubios*, and *M* locates their shift in perspective within the context of neoliberal democracy, the politics of memory that Carlos Menem's presidency pursued, and the emergence of demobilizing commemorative practices associated with the gradual institutionalization of a regime of memory.

Chapter 4 focuses on a narrative approach to memories of terror, with time, distance, and fiction as recollection's midwives. Its point of departure is Tomás Eloy Martínez's *Purgatorio*, a novel about the affective afterlife of trauma.⁶⁴ Written by a member of the dictatorship generation from the perspective of exile, the novel combines memoir and fiction to explore the far-reaching legacies of state violence. Instead of clear answers it poses a series of questions: What comes after repression, loss, and violent dispossession? How might the haunted—the exiled, the refugee, the migrant—help illuminate other worlds? What is the work to be done (from) somewhere else, where the local is far from the site of loss, and yet always in dialogue with it? and, What is the role of the outsider, and of literature, in witnessing and collective memory work? Conceived in the context of newly viable transitional justice initiatives and set in post-9/11 New Jersey, *Purgatorio* undermines received notions of citizenship and of belonging, and troubles the aspirational constructs of truth and of reconciliation. It highlights instead the impossibility of closure, the fraught nature of all acts of recollection, and the pivotal role a vigilant migrant sensibility must play in the articulation of a postnational human rights agenda fit for the twenty-first century.

The final chapter of this book draws on performance theory to address the rich cross-pollination of cultural, institutional, and pedagogical initiatives in postdictatorship Argentina through a case study of the Comisión Provincial por la Memoria (CPM) [Provincial Commission for Memory]. Located in the provincial capital of La Plata, the CPM was created in 2000 by the Buenos Aires Legislature to investigate and disseminate information related to the last Argentine dictatorship as part of the broader democratization process. Housed in the very building where the Directorate of Intelligence for the Buenos Aires Police Force operated until the mid-1990s, the CPM has transformed the site into a living memorial dedicated to the recuperation of this history and to the active defense of human rights. In addition to managing the once-secret archive of police intelligence found there, the CPM has developed programs devoted to research and education, a Committee against Torture, a museum, and a communications wing. In chapter 5, I focus primarily on one of its

signal initiatives, *Jóvenes y Memoria: Recordamos para el futuro* [Youth and Memory: Remembering for the Future].⁶⁵ Sponsored in high schools throughout the Province of Buenos Aires, this pedagogical program prompts students to investigate local histories of repression and facilitates the creative articulation of their findings in the format of their choice. The yearlong program culminates with an encounter at the Peronist vacation complex of Chapadmalal, where thousands of students gather to showcase different modes of discovery and recovery through their documentary and creative work. Guided by Diana Taylor's thoughts on the archive and the repertoire, I analyze the "live and the scripted" facets that make up the program's various scenarios and highlight the affective transmissions that its memorial work makes possible.⁶⁶ Its structure of carefully choreographed encounters designed to deepen the participants' shared commitment to democracy and the ongoing defense of human rights not only epitomizes the transition from a politics of memory to a politics of human rights that the CPM enacts, but also showcases how, through their practices of recollection, citizens of memory in postdictatorship Argentina are transforming sites of repression into spaces of hope.

NOTES

1. Honoré de Balzac, "A Prince of Bohemia," in *The Unconscious Mummies* [*Les Comédiens Sans Le Savoir*], trans. Ellen Marriage (New York: P. F. Collier, 1900), 89.

2. Excerpt from Juan Gelman, *Si dulcemente* [If gently] (Barcelona: Lumen, 1980) 79. Copyright 1980, Herederos de Juan Gelman, used with permission.

3. This translation is my own, but it draws from Juan Gelman, *Dark Times Filled with Light: The Selected Work of Juan Gelman*, trans. Hardie St. Martin (Rochester, NY: Open Letter, 2012), 87; and Juan Gelman, *Unthinkable Tenderness: Selected Poems*, trans. Joan Lindgren (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 38.

4. The addressee is most likely Juan Gelman's son, Marcelo, to which the poems immediately preceding this one are directed. Marcelo's body was identified in 1990, ten years after his *Si dulcemente* (79), in a cement-filled drum found in the San Fernando River. Among the "little brothers" the poem goes on to name are Paco Urondo, Rodolfo Walsh, and Haroldo Conti, all writers and militants assassinated during the dictatorship. Walsh and Conti's remains were never recovered.

5. The book *Si dulcemente* is comprised of three series of poems: the first is titled "Notas" [Notes], the second "Carta abierta" [Open letter], and the third "Si dulcemente" [If gently]. "Notas" is dedicated to Eduardo Galeano and Helena; "Carta abierta" to his disappeared son; and "Si dulcemente" to another *artista comprometido* [committed artist], Juan Carlos Cedrón, whose brother, Jorge Cedrón—Montonero filmmaker and long-time Gelman collaborator—was assassinated in Paris in 1980, the very year of its publication.

6. Montoneros refers to the Peronist left-wing guerrilla group active in Argentina in the sixties and seventies.

7. Gelman's "Otras partes" (Somewhere else) first appeared in the collection *Hacia el sur* (Southward) (Mexico: Marcha, 1982) 15–16; for a translation see Joan Lindgren's *Unthinkable Tenderness*, 91–92. Kate Jenckes, "Juan Gelman's Open Letters: Mourning and Mundo Beyond Militancy." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 169.

8. I am drawing here on Korean poet, Myung Mi Kim's definition of languaging, quoted in Jean Umh, "'Languaging' the Third Space: Language as Activity in the Prosody of Myung Mi Kim," ed. C. J. Martin. *Jacket* 2, April 12, 2013, <http://jacket2.org/article/languaging-third-space> (accessed June 10, 2014).

9. Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, *The Mnemonic Imagination: Remembering as Creative Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13. Acknowledging that "this kind of association has . . . been a common feature of literary studies or art history with, among other things, imagination being accepted as significant for the aesthetic form in which memory is represented," Keightley and Pickering nevertheless note "in contemporary memory studies . . . a marked tendency to separate (them) and . . . to attend to their differences over and above their potential interactions" (4). Their work seeks to counteract this trend by developing "a sociological aesthetics of remembering" that not only recognizes the creative tension inherent in all acts of recall, but assigns it appropriate weight (12). Like them, I am convinced that memory and the imagination are deeply intertwined, both part of "a vital process in making coherent sense of the past and connecting it to the present and future" (5). But I owe my own thinking about these issues to my trajectory in Latin American literary and cultural studies, and especially to Eduardo Galeano's essay, "Defensa de la palabra. Literatura y Sociedad en América Latina" ["In Defense of the Word. Literature and Society in Latin America"], published in the journal *Nueva sociedad* 33 (November–December 1977), 17–24. Galeano writes about the necessity of the creative imagination to bring about change during one of the darkest periods in his country's, and the region's, history. Having fled the military dictatorship in his native Uruguay, he observes that "una literatura nacida del proceso de crisis y de cambio y metida a fondo en el riesgo y la Aventura de su tiempo, bien puede ayudar a crear los símbolos de la realidad nueva y quizás alumbre, si el talento no falta y el coraje tampoco, las señales del camino. . . . Sostener que la literatura va a cambiar, de por sí, la realidad, sería un acto de locura o soberbia. No me parece menos necio negar que en algo puede ayudar a que cambie" (21–22) [A literature born in the process of crisis and change, and deeply immersed in the risks and events of its time, can indeed help to create the symbols of the new reality, and perhaps—if talent and courage are not lacking—throw light on the signs along the road. . . . To claim that literature on its own is going to change reality would be an act of madness or arrogance. It seems to me no less foolish to deny that it can aid in making this change] (*Days and Nights of Love and War* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983], 177). In describing my own arrival at the concept of the mnemonic imagination by way of the Latin American experience, I aim to clarify how I appropriate the term. For me, the mnemonic imagination includes the literary but extends beyond it to other forms of cultural production;

it signals not only the creative reconstruction of the past all acts of recall entail, but more emphatically the visionary thinking that underlies them. The acts of memory this book considers have in common the same horizon. They draw from the past to extract historical lessons in pursuit of that “*Nunca Más*” [Never Again] proclaimed at dictatorship’s end. And their imaginative projections articulate a new kind of social compact premised on truth, justice, and the defense of human rights.

10. Alejandra Oberti and Roberto Pittaluga, “Temas para una agenda de debate en torno al pasado reciente” [Subjects for a debate agenda about the recent past], *Políticas de la memoria. Anuario de información e investigación del CeDInCI* [Politics of memory CeDInCI’s annual publication of information and research], nos. 4–5 (2003–2005): 12.

11. Adrian Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 3.

12. See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

13. I refer here to the program directed by Elizabeth Jelin and Carlos Iván Degregori under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council, whose studies regarding experiences with state terrorism in the Southern Cone were published in the Siglo XXI “*Memoria de la Represión*” (“Memory of repression”) series, beginning with Jelin’s text, *Los Trabajos de la memoria [State Repression and the Labors of Memory]* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España, 2002), trans. Judy Rein and Marcial Godoy-Anatívia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). Steve Stern develops his concept in his “Introduction to the Trilogy: The Memory Box of Pinochet’s Chile” in *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile: On the Eve of London 1998* (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 1–6.

14. The journals *Punto de Vista*, ed. Beatriz Sarlo, and *Conjines*, ed. Nicolás Casullo in Argentina, and *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, ed. Nelly Richard in Chile, were vital to the discussion of memory in the mid-1990s, establishing the terms of debate that continue to shape the field in the Southern Cone today. Oscar Terán, Hugo Vezzetti, Ricardo Forster, Carlos Altamirano, María Teresa Gramuglio, Pilar Calveiro and Idelber Avelar are some of the most important voices associated with this work in Argentina. Nelly Richard’s *Crítica de la memoria: 1990–2010* [Critique of memory: 1990–2010] (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2010); and her *Cultural Residues: Chile in Transition*, trans. Theodore Quester and Alan West-Durán (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Beatriz Sarlo’s, *Tiempo pasado: Cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo* [Time past: the culture of memory and the subjective turn] (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2005); and Hugo Vezzetti’s *Pasado y presente: Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina* [Past and present: war, dictatorship and society in Argentina] (Bue-

nos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002) represent more recent interventions that continue the critical perspectives of the earlier publications. For an excellent discussion of this critical landscape see Miguel Dalmaroni, "Dictaduras, memoria y modos de narrar: *Confines, Punto de Vista, Revista de Crítica Cultural, H.I.J.O.S.*" (Dictatorships, memory, and narrative modes: *Confines, Punto de Vista, Revista de Crítica Cultural, H.I.J.O.S.*), *Revista Iberoamericana* 70, nos. 208–9 (July–December 2004): 957–81, an analysis also included in his monograph, *La palabra justa: Literatura, crítica y memoria en Argentina. 1960–2002* [The just word: literature, critique and memory in Argentina, 1960–2002] (Mar del Plata, Argentina and Santiago, Chile: Editorial Melusina RIL editores, 2004).

15. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema Two: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 207; first published *Cinema 2: L'image-Temps* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985).

16. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (London and Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 5; emphasis mine.

17. *Ibid.*, 6.

18. Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 18.

19. *Ibid.*, 7.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Mieke Bal, "Introduction," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (London and Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), viii.

22. Jens Andermann, "Placing Latin American Memory: Sites and the Politics of Mourning," *Memory Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 2015): 5.

23. *Ibid.*, 5–6.

24. "La sentencia" [The judgment], *Diario del juicio* (December 11, 1985): 29. It is important to note that under the Two Demon theory, Alfonsín also pursued prosecutions of leading leftist militants; figures like Mario Firmenich were tried for crimes committed prior to the coup, were sentenced, and served prison terms before being pardoned during the Menem administration.

25. Daniel Lvovich and Jaqueline Bisquet, *La cambiante memoria de la dictadura: Discursos públicos, movimientos sociales y legitimidad democrática* [The changing memory of the dictatorship: Public speeches, social movements, and democratic legitimacy] (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2008), 59.

26. Adolfo Scilingo's testimony was published by the journalist Horacio Verbitsky in the book *El Vuelo* (The Flight) (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1995), translated into English a year later as *The Flight: Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior*, trans. Esther Allen (New York: New Press, W. W. Norton, 1996); Martín Balza made his statement in April 1995; H.I.J.O.S. also made their first public appearance in April, in La Plata, and formalized the principles of their organization at their first national gathering in November of the same year. For more on the wave of media attention Scilingo's televised interview provoked, see Claudia Feld's excellent study, *Del estrado a la pantalla: las imágenes del juicio a los ex comandantes en*

Argentina [From podium to screen: the images of the trials of the ex commanders in Argentina] (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores; Social Science Research Council, 2002), especially 103–11.

27. Perhaps the most significant form of social protest to emerge at this time was the *escrache*. These political demonstrations were conceived of by H.I.J.O.S. as a way of *outing* repressors in their own neighborhoods—“si no hay justicia hay escrache” [if there is no justice there is *escrache*]; the spectacular nature of these highly choreographed public denunciations enabled communities to express their moral condemnation and gave the human rights movement tremendous visibility. For more on the *escrache* see Hugo Vezetti, “Activismos de la memoria: El ‘escrache’” [“Memory activism: ‘the escrache’”], *Punto de Vista* 62 (November 1998): 1–7; Ludmila Catela da Silva, *No habrá flores en la tumba del pasado: La experiencia de reconstrucción del mundo de los familiares de desaparecidos* (There will be no flowers on the tomb of the past: The experience of rebuilding the world of relatives of the disappeared) (La Plata, Argentina: Ediciones Al Margen, 2001); Susana Kaiser, “Escraches: Demonstrations, Communication, and Political Memory in Post-dictatorial Argentina,” *Media, Culture and Society* 24, no. 4 (July 2002): 499–516; and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). For more on this periodization, and on the memory boom of the mid-1990s, see Gabriela Cerruti, “La historia de la memoria” [The history of memory], *Puentes* 1, no. 3 (March 2001): 14–25; Gabriela Cerruti and Sandra Raggio, “El estado de la memoria” [The state of memory], *Puentes* 4, no. 11 (May 2004): 4–7; and Federico Guillermo Lorenz, “Las conmemoraciones del golpe militar de 1976. Memorias de aquel 24” [Commemorations of the 1976 military coup. Memories of that 24th], *Todo es Historia* 34, no. 404 (2001): 6–26.

28. Miguel Dalmaroni’s study of the work pursued in this area by journals like *Confinés*, *Punto de Vista*, and *Revista de Crítica Cultural* provides both an excellent background and in-depth analysis of the debates discussed here. As he notes,

Se trata en todos los casos de publicaciones periódicas en las que la literatura, el arte y, más en general, las prácticas culturales, o la reflexión crítica acerca de esos tópicos, se cuentan entre las preocupaciones principales y recurrentes. Todas, a su vez, tienen un vínculo importante con la cultura política e intelectual de las izquierdas de las décadas de 1960 y 1970, y con el campo universitario. Tres de ellas—las argentinas *Confinés* y *Punto de vista*, la chilena *Revista de Crítica Cultural*—responden a proyectos de grupos de intelectuales que, a partir de la llamada ‘transición democrática’, revisaron críticamente esas tradiciones de la izquierda y, casi en todos los casos, se vincularon estrechamente a la investigación académica y a los circuitos locales y latinoamericanos de producción e intercambio universitario. (“Dictaduras, memoria y modos de narrar.” 957–58)

[These are all periodicals in which literature, art, and more generally, cultural practices or critical reflection about these, figure as principle and recurring concerns. At the same time, they all have important ties with the Left-wing intellectual and political culture of the sixties and seventies and with the academic field. Three of them—the Argentine *Confinés* and *Punto de Vista*, the Chilean *Revista de Crítica Cultural*—respond to projects advanced by groups of intellectuals that, beginning with the so-called “democratic

transition.” critically revised those leftist traditions and, virtually in every case, aligned themselves closely with academic research and local and Latin American circuits of university production and exchange.]

See also María Sonderéguer’s “Los relatos sobre el pasado reciente en Argentina: Una política de la memoria” [Accounts of Argentina’s Recent Past: A Politics of Memory], *Revista Iberoamericana* 1, no. 1 (April 2001): 99–112, for another excellent analysis of these debates.

29. Vezzetti, “Activismos de la memoria,” 2. Vezzetti was only one among a number of critics and public intellectuals who expressed concern about a subjective, testimonial culture that appeared to privilege heroic narratives of militancy and approached the past through a reductive victim/perpetrator binary in a crime and punishment framework. Others who weighed in on this debate, largely mediated by the journals *Confines* and *Punto de Vista*, include Ricardo Forster, Alejandro Kaufman, Héctor Schmucler Nicolás Casullo, Raúl Beceyro, Oscar Terán, Emilio de Ipola, and Beatriz Sarlo (Sonderéguer, “Los relatos sobre el pasado reciente en Argentina,” 108–10).

30. Vezzetti, “Activismos de la memoria,” 4.

31. Dalmaroni, “Dictaduras, memoria y modos de narrar,” 960.

32. Vezzetti, “Activismos de la memoria,” 4.

33. Beatriz Sarlo, *Tiempo pasado: cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2005).

34. *Ibid.*, 70.

35. *Ibid.*, 56–57.

36. It should be noted that Sarlo, herself, rejects the term “postmemorial” as a useful concept to describe a new modality, finding that “la inflación teórica de la posmemoria se reduplica así en un almacén de banalidades personales legitimadas por los nuevos derechos de la subjetividad que se despliegan no sólo en el espacio trágico de los hijos del Holocausto, sino en el más amable de inmigrantes centroeuropeos a los que les ha ido bien en América del Norte y pueden encontrar pocos traumas en su pasado que no se refieran a cómo integrarse en las nuevas costumbres y modas” (*Tiempo pasado*, 134) [the theoretical inflation of postmemory is thus redoubled through an array of personal banalities legitimated by the new rights of subjectivity deployed not only in the tragic space of the children of the Holocaust, but also in the kinder one occupied by center-European immigrants who have encountered good fortune in North America and can find few traumas in their past that deviate from the question of how to assimilate to new customs and fashions].

37. Albertina Carri and Alan Pauls, *Los rubios*, directed by Albertina Carri (Argentina: Primer Plano Films; Women Make Movies, 2003).

38. Sarlo, *Tiempo pasado*, 91. Viewing Albertina Carri’s *Los rubios* as “un ejemplo casi demasiado pleno de la fuerte subjetividad de la posmemoria” (Sarlo, *Tiempo pasado*, 153) [an almost too flagrant example of the subjective nature of postmemory], Sarlo dismisses its real achievement—the way in which it articulates a future for the heirs of the disappeared in their own terms.

39. Sarlo notes two exceptions to this rule, Pilar Calveiro’s *Poder y desaparición: Los campos de concentración en Argentina* [Power and disappearance: Argentina’s

concentration camps] (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2004); and Emilio De Ipola's, *La bamba: Acerca del rumor carcelario y otros ensayos* [The lip: on prison rumors and other essays] (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2005), first written in 1978. Both are scholarly works by academicians who, while also victims of repression, bring their theoretical training to bear on their analysis of the dictatorship's clandestine detention camps (*Tiempo pasado*, 102–15).

40. Melissa Gregg, *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 4; emphasis in the original.

41. As Kathryn Sikkink sums it up, "Argentine human rights activists were not passive recipients of a justice cascade, but the pioneers and propagators of multiple new tactics and transnational justice mechanisms. The human rights innovations are so extensive that I consider Argentine social movement activists and members of the Argentine government to be among the most important protagonists in the area of human rights accountability" (*The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions are Changing World Politics* [London and New York: W. W. Norton, 2011], 89–90). For more on the role of human rights organizations in advancing transitional justice goals, see Francesca Lessa, *Memory and Transitional Justice in Argentina and Uruguay: Against Impunity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

42. Lessa, *Memory and Transitional Justice*, 70.

43. *Ibid.*, 69; emphasis in the original. Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) was succeeded by his wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–2015); subsequent references to the Kirchner years, unless otherwise noted, are to the period covered by their combined administrations.

44. *Ibid.*, 79.

45. On the thirty-ninth anniversary of the coup, the fissures generated within the human rights community during the Kirchner decade were evident. There were two marches to mark the historic day, both commemorating the disappeared, but one in favor of the government and one organized by the opposition. In La Plata, one arm of H.I.J.O.S. burnt effigies of Hebe de Bonafini, a leading figure of Asociación Madres Plaza de Mayo [Association of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo], and of César Milani, named Army Chief by Fernández de Kirchner in December 2013 in spite of being accused of dictatorship-era crimes, in an embrace. In a press release claiming responsibility, they explained their action stating their opposition to "governments like the Kirchners' [that] knowingly generate fractures that weaken the popular field via two-faced human rights policies and political cooptation to distribute favors" (HIJOS La Plata, <http://hijosprensa.blogspot.com.ar> [blog], n.d. [accessed March 27, 2015]). See also Hugo Vezzetti, *Sobre la violencia revolucionaria: Memorias y olvidos* (On revolutionary violence: memories and omissions) (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2009); *Accounting for Violence. Marketing Memory in Latin America*, ed. Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); and Lessa, *Memory and Transitional Justice*.

46. I am thinking here of the path-breaking work of Idelber Avelar, Diana Taylor, Marguerite Feitlowitz, Francine Masiello, Miguel Dalmaroni, Hugo Vezzetti, and Beatriz Sarlo, to name just a few of the leading scholars in the field. I do not mean

to suggest that their contributions are in any way uniform—they represent diverse and very rich approaches to postdictatorial cultural production that have deeply impacted my own work.

47. Sarlo, *Tiempo pasado*, 26.

48. I borrow the term “present pasts” from Andreas Huyssen’s study, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

49. I have learned a great deal from reading the works of and working with a number of scholars whose writing and research on postdictatorship Argentina share this conviction, among them Miguel Dalmaroni, Gabriela Cerruti, Ana Longoni, Elizabeth Jelin, Fernando Reati, Nora Strejilevich, María Sonderéguer, Laura Podalsky, Susana Kaiser, Diana Taylor, Ludmila da Silva Catela, Vikki Bell, Diego Diaz, and Sandra Raggio.

50. Henry A. Giroux, “Higher Education and the Promise of Insurgent Public Memory,” *Truthout*, March 9, 2015, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/higher_education_and_the_promise_of_insurgent_public_memory_20150309 (accessed March 10, 2015).

51. Fernando J. Rosenberg, *After Human Rights: Literature, Visual Arts, and Film in Latin America, 1990–2010* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 6.

52. *Ibid.*, 9.

53. Andreas Huyssen, “Memory Studies and Human Rights,” *Profession*, May 2, 2014, <https://profession.commons.mla.org/2014/05/02/memory-studies-and-human-rights/> (accessed February 26, 2015), 1.

54. Francine Masiello, “Scribbling on the Wreck,” in *Telling Ruins in Latin America*, ed. Michael J. Lazzara and Vicky Unruh (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 37.

55. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, div. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 77; emphasis in the original.

56. Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 31.

57. *Ibid.*, 21.

58. Marcelo Brodsky, *Buena memoria: Un ensayo fotográfico de Marcelo Brodsky* (Buenos Aires: La marca, 1997); Lucila Quieto, *Arqueología de la ausencia 1999–2001, El mundo*, 2001, <http://casanovaarqueologia.blogspot.com/> (accessed May 5, 2015).

59. The photographic exhibition by Natalia Calabrese, *El presente del pasado*, was presented at Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti (exEsma), Buenos Aires, in 2014. The photographs are available on the her website at <http://www.nataliacalabrese.com.ar> (accessed October 13, 2016).

60. I borrow the term from Michael Rothberg, “Trauma Theory, Implicated Subjects, and the Question of Israel/Palestine.” *Profession*, May 2, 2014, <https://profession.commons.mla.org/2014/05/02/trauma-theory-implicated-subjects-and-the-question-of-israelpalestine/> (accessed March 5, 2015).

61. Laura Podalsky, *The Politics of Affect and Emotion in Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 8. While Podalsky's work focuses primarily on well-known feature films judged by critics to be "apolitical and sensationalistic" because of "formulaic narratives laced with blatant emotional appeals (that) work like sandpaper to abrade the face of the past to be easily forgotten" (8–10), like her I am interested in how these "types of cultural production can encourage an embodied recognition of loss . . . reanimate the traumatic past and replay affective legacies deemed 'excessive' by the neoliberalism's regimes of rationality" (20).

62. María Sonderéguer, "Los relatos sobre el pasado reciente en Argentina," 102.

63. *Ibid.* The passage in full reads:

Durante los ochenta, la revaloración del estado de derecho y de las libertades individuales que signó la reconstrucción democrática en Argentina definió así una suerte de 'pacto' sostenido por el temor a la repetición de un pasado traumático, y la demanda de justicia se limitó a un reclamo de juricidad que canceló otros reclamos. Ese pacto político, e ideológico-cultural, unido a las condiciones que la lógica neoconservadora impuso al desarrollo y a la racionalidad de la democracia, diseñó una política de la memoria. . . . Pero si desde fines de la dictadura se obturó la posibilidad de narrar los acontecimientos sociales y políticos de la primera mitad de la década del setenta, y el presupuesto que operó como soporte fue la llamada teoría de los dos demonios, en los últimos años diferentes testimonios comenzaron a realizar una nueva revisión de los hechos del pasado reciente. (*ibid.*)

[During the eighties, the revalidation of the rule of law and individual liberties that characterized Argentina's democratic reconstruction defined a kind of 'pact' sustained by the fear of repeating a traumatic past, and the demand for justice was limited to a claim for legality that canceled out all other claims. That political and ideological-cultural pact, together with the conditions that the neoconservative logic placed upon the democracy's development and rationality, designed a politics of memory. . . . But if from the time of the dictatorship's end the possibility of narrating the social and political events of the first half of the decade of the seventies was blocked, and the paradigm in operation was the so-called Two Demon Theory, in recent years different testimonies have begun a new review of the recent past.]

64. Tomás Eloy Martínez, *Purgatorio* (Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2008).

65. See Comisión Provincial por la Memoria, "Apertura CHAPA 2013: A 30 Años de Democracia los Desafíos de Vivir Juntos," *Jóvenes y Memoria: Recordamos para el futuro*, November 26, 2013, <https://youtu.be/kz3-UDDF7ZE> (accessed November 23, 2015); and "El encuentro," *Jóvenes y Memoria: Recordamos para el futuro*, n.d., http://jovenesy memoria.comisionporlamemoria.net/?page_id=767 (accessed February 26, 2016).

66. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 32.