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***Un Modelo de Resistencia, un Estado Neoliberal: Teacher and Student Responses to the Death of Carlos Fuentealba***

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of B.A. in Hispanic Studies from  
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for \_\_\_\_\_  
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“When all the parts are sold, what is left?”

“Something more to sell. A whole is more than the sum of its parts, so we sell the personality. A personality is a media-product and easy to sell. A presence is the same thing as personality, no?”

“Presence is not for sale.”

“If that's true, it's the only thing on this earth which isn't.”

“ A presence has to be given, not bought.”

- John Berger, The Shape of a Pocket

## INTRODUCTION

As I walk through the halls of CPEM N°69 I get a strong sense of the political engagement of the school. Even empty of its students enjoying winter vacation I get the sense of their fervor as I look at all of their work on the walls. The halls are lined with posters demanding justice for those responsible for the death of Carlos Fuentealba, the school's recently slain teacher. There are homemade posters about the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, the student rebellion during the years of the last military dictatorship known as “*la noche de los lápices*,” and, most striking of all, a poster that frankly states: “*La justicia es ...una porquería que cada vez que la sociedad la necesita se borra. En otros términos- no existe!*” ‘Justice is...rubbish that every time society needs it is erased. In other words- it does not exist!’ I am at the school to talk to teachers and the students of Carlos Fuentealba about the ways they have responded to the death of their friend, co-worker, and mentor. CPEM N° 69 is a unique place, a refuge for its slum-dwelling students and a beacon of hope in the community, but it is not alone in its resistance to a government that many believe seeks to erase the rights, jobs, and lives of both its students and teachers. As the students, their teachers and fellow educational workers with the *Asociación de Trabajadores de la Educación de Neuquén* respond to the death of Carlos Fuentealba, they join forces with countless others to reject the dehumanizing effects of

neoliberalism.

On April 3, 2007, the beginning of Holy Week, the teachers and education workers from the *Asociación de los Trabajadores de la Educación de Neuquén* (ATEN) gathered to occupy the highway, cutting off Ruta 22, in Arroyito, Neuquén. ATEN already had a month of protest behind them when they decided to go to Arroyito to continue to petition for higher wages. Soon after ATEN arrived, Governor Jorge Sobisch, a member of the *Movimiento Popular de Neuquén* party, which has enjoyed a long history of governance in Neuquén, ordered the police to repress the demonstration using any means necessary.<sup>1</sup> The police forced protesters out of the road with rubber bullets and tear gas. As the protesters retreated, Carlos Fuentealba, a math and science teacher from CPEM N° 69 riding in a Fiat 147, was surrounded by police from the *Grupo Especial de Operaciones Policiales* (GEOP), who fired a tear gas grenade directly at Fuentealba from just a short distance away. The grenade struck him in the neck and wounded him mortally. He was rushed to the hospital, but died the following day. The country immediately erupted in mass demonstrations and strikes in solidarity with Fuentealba and the teachers of Neuquén as well as in protest of the police brutality that killed him. Fuentealba's assassin was quickly

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<sup>1</sup> *El Movimiento Popular de Neuquén* is a neo-peronist party that emerged in the early 1960s and the only one to not reintergrate later into the *Justicialista* party. It is also the only provincial party that has enjoyed uninterrupted control of since 1983. The party was led by Felipe Sapag until the mid-1990s and was heavily based on his own personal connections. Though two of Sapag's children were killed during the dictatorship, during his time he did little to punish military repressors and in almost all cases aligned the MPN with official politics in Buenos Aires. (Petrucci 2005, 18-21)

identified as Darío Poblete, a member of GEOP who already had two criminal charges against him for the violent abuse of a prisoner and another detainee. Eventually Poblete was prosecuted and sentenced; however the popular demand is for the prosecution of now-former governor Jorge Sobisch, who ordered the police to use any means necessary to quell the protest.

In their decision to occupy the main routes of Neuquén, ATEN followed in the footsteps of countless other groups around the world who have chosen to use “*piquetes*” as a form of protest against neoliberal reforms that privatize and undermine public services such as education<sup>2</sup>. Sadly, the violence of the repression that resulted in Fuentealba’s death at the hands of the police also follows a long and tragic history of state terrorism in Argentina. Those who perpetrate abuses in the name of progress and modernization have long enjoyed official impunity in Argentina and are often members of the government themselves. The last dictatorship in Argentina began with a military coup on 24 March 1976. One of the primary goals of the military regime was the implementation of its neoliberal project, which included massive privatization of both industries and services and the opening of Argentina's markets to foreign investment. However, there was substantial resistance to the new junta's plans; in fact many scholars have argued that the dictatorship was necessary to transition Argentina into this economic model. To ensure the efficacy of its projects the military government "disappeared" over 30,000 people suspected of being “subversives-” a term broadly applied to encompass all those affiliated, even tenuously, with leftist ideologies. Even today many of those responsible

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<sup>2</sup> The form of protest used by ATEN on 4 April 2007 in which protesters occupy major highways in order to have their demands met. The term *piquete* is unique to Argentina, though the strategy is nothing new and has been used throughout Latin America and the world as an important form of protest. The *piquete* emerged as a tool of resistance in Argentina in 1996 when unemployed workers (as part of the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados*) organized a road blockade in Plaza Huincul and Cultral C6 in the province of Neuquén. (L6pez Levy 83)

for kidnapping and torture during the dictatorship remain at large in civil society.<sup>3</sup> Despite Argentina's current democratic government, deaths and disappearances still occur, and many of those who committed human rights abuses during the dictatorship, not only continue to serve as part of the police force, but have yet to be prosecuted. A recent case in La Plata illustrates this point well: Jorge Julio Lopez was kidnapped and tortured in 1976 on the grounds of being a political dissident. He disappeared for a second time in September 2006 after testifying against the man responsible for his torture during the dictatorship; this time he has not reappeared and those responsible have not been identified. (Trigona, September 2007) In addition to Lopez's highly public disappearance, in which many believe the police force of the province of Buenos Aires to have been complicit, many protesters have been killed by police officers under the democratic governments of both Carlos Menem (1989-1999) and Nestor Kirchner (2002-2006). (Album ) As in the dictatorship, these deaths have gone unprosecuted. Violence and impunity are twin legacies from the dictatorship that Argentina has not yet resolved. In this study I seek to show how Fuentealba's death, in the context of Argentina's recent history, is being read and presented by various historical actors as yet another casualty of the advancing globalization that pushes the neoliberal vision of progress regardless of its human cost.

Although the military junta of 1976-1983 began the neoliberal project in Argentina, the policies did not end with a return to democracy. Carlos Saúl Menem, the two-term president of the 1990s (1989-1999), continued to pursue neoliberal policies during his term. Of particular importance to Neuquén was Menem's privatization of YPF, the state-owned oil company, which

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<sup>3</sup> After the 1983 democratic elections that ended military rule in Argentina there were a series of high profile trials to prosecute high-ranking officials in the military, but democratic President Raúl Alfonsín's 1984 Due Obedience law granted impunity to lower ranking officials who were acting under the orders of superiors when they committed human rights violations. Later, in 1986 Alfonsín passed *Punto Final* an act that set February 23, 1987 as the end date for trials of those accused of crimes against humanity during the dictatorship. (Feitlowitz, 14-15)

he eventually sold to the Spanish company Repsol. Following the YPF-Repsol merge there was a massive surge of unemployment (within seven years the company reduced its 51,000 employees to a mere 5,600). Neuquen and the city of Cutral C6 in particular, along with Tartagal and General Mosconi in Salta, were some of the areas most economically afflicted by the privatization of YPF. (Petrucci 2005 31). In addition to privatization of industries, schools that previously received federal funding suffered tremendous cuts and a government-mandated curriculum revision. In 1993 congress passed the *Ley Federal de Educaci6n (LFE)*, which removed job security for teachers, turned over responsibility for the schools to the underfunded provinces and imposed a concentrated curriculum on primary schools so that secondary schools could be used for vocational education. All of the basic educational requirements previously fulfilled throughout primary and secondary schools were to be consolidated so that all of the basic educational requirements could be met during primary school. Secondary school was shortened to three years and the curriculum was focused on preparing students for many of the technical jobs that were eliminated during the unemployment surge of the nineties and the crisis of 2001 (Petrucci 39-40). In 1995 congress passed another educational reform, *La Ley de Educaci6n Superior* which imposed similar limitations on universities. (Petrucci 2005 39) As the Argentine congress passed these reforms, neoliberal policies were spreading to developing and developed nations worldwide, principally led by the incentivizing programs of international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that encouraged these reforms. It is in this context that the members of ATEN took to the streets to protest: to defend an education slowly being devalued, dismantled and converted into a "public service" subject to market forces.

I first became aware of Carlos Fuentealba on the first anniversary of his death, April 4,

2008, months before I would end up walking the halls of his school. News reports memorialized the teacher and chronicled the many demonstrations in solidarity with the teachers of Neuquén that day, reaching me in La Plata, where I was studying. Soon after I encountered *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homicida*, a documentary produced by the students of CPEM N 69 in conjunction with the program *Jóvenes y Memoria: Recordamos para el Futuro* (an initiative of the *Comisión Provincial por la Memoria* in La Plata, Buenos Aires). I remember being struck at the time by the visceral understanding of the event that the documentary afforded me. Initially, what compelled me towards my research was the intersection of education and resistance visible in both the responses of Carlos' students and those of his fellow members of ATEN in the wake of the assassination. The popular response to his death, it seemed, was intricately linked to a public response to the encroachment of neoliberal educational policies. It is here that I began my investigation.

In what follows I analyze three cultural products made in response to Fuentealba's assassination: the documentary made by Carlos Fuentealba's former students, *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homicida*, the *piquete* in which Fuentealba lost his life, and the *Album para no Olvidar* in which news clippings, essays and art commemorating the fallen teacher and reflecting on this moment are compiled. The study of cultural products is important to the study of neoliberalism because representation is one of the key methods used to both legitimize dominant discourse and to repress dissenting voices in the struggle for interpretative power and hegemony. The repression executed by neoliberal discourse includes both the physical and ideological suppression of resistance and the deliberate distortion of reality. The motivation behind this distortion is to undercut resistance and to mask even the needs for its existence. Cultural production, then, is a battlefield for contestatory power.

The students of CPEM N°69 and teachers in solidarity (as *piqueteros* and members of ATEN) in the making of a documentary and an Album pose important challenges to the neoliberal discourse in Argentina that has permeated all aspects of life, including education. Like the *piquete*- a public performance of resistance- they undermine the hegemony of neoliberal discourse as supported in the mainstream media and create spaces for new political and social imaginaries. I argue that these cultural products represent resistance to neoliberalism in the ways that they expose its failures and contradictions. In chapter one I argue that the *piquete* in which Fumentalba participated was effective successful not only because it made public and visible ATEN's complaints against neoliberalism, but also because it made public the repression that often accompanies *piquetes*. In chapter two I make the case that the *Album para no Olvidar* illustrates the history of repression in Argentina to counter the official narrative that denies the continuity of violence from the dictatorship to the current democratic administrations. It also creates a space in which to highlight previous traditions of resistance in Argentina and the ways they are being used to shape responses to Fumentalba's death. Finally, I analyze *Un modelo de vida, un estado homicida*, the product of a pedagogical project that provides the students of CPEM N 69 with an alternative to the stultifying education promoted by neoliberalism and medium through which they can articulate and contextualize their grief.

## CHAPTER I: *Piquetes* and the Politics of Visibility

“Pay attention! Something is evil in the macroeconomic plans, something is not functioning in the complicated mathematical calculations that sing the successes of neoliberalism.” – John Berger, *The Shape of a Pocket*

John Berger, the author of *The Shape of a Pocket*, offers an astute analysis of resistance in modern times. We may look to him to help us understand the success that the *piqueteros* and those in solidarity with Fuentelba have had in rejecting neoliberal reforms. Berger decries our current age as a time when the Necessity of life has no place in public discourse. Necessity, he maintains, “is what you kiss or bang your head against. Today, in the system's spectacle, it exists no more. Consequently no more experience is communicated. All that is left to share is the spectacle, the game that nobody plays and everybody can watch”(13). Berger argues that what is communicated rather than Necessity is personality. Personality is quite different from presence, however. A personality is “a media product and easy to sell.” It is what we sell when “all the members have been separated and all the parts sold.” (248) Presence, on the other hand cannot be bought or sold. It is freely given and speaks directly of participatory experience. The spectacle of progress embodied by neoliberalism is being subverted by the *piqueteros* in Argentina as they replace empty media personalities with a contestatory presence.

The *piquete*, the form taken by the protest in which Fuentelba was killed April 4, 2007 is a form of resistance that has emerged only recently in Argentina. A *piquete* is a strategic road blockade in which protesters- usually from marginalized sectors- gather to occupy main roads and set fire to tires and other material in order to prevent the passage of traffic (with the exception of ambulances). The rise of the *piquetero* movement directly coincided with the rise of nineties neoliberal reforms and has since emerged as an important new strategy employed by a multitude of groups and interests in various countries. The *piqueteros* have become, as Peter

Stallybrass and Allon White have emphasized in the *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, "symbolically central" as a resistance to neoliberalism, both despite and because of their actual marginalization in society (Stallybrass and White 20). The first *piquetes* were used by *movimientos de trabajadores desocupados* (MTDs) [or unemployed workers' movement] in June of 1996 when disgruntled workers mobilized and set up roadblocks in Cutral C6 and Plaza Huincul in the Patagonic province of Neuqu6n. In 1991 the state-owned oil company YPF was privatized and closed plants in the area. The resulting plant closings left nearly 4,000 *neuquinos* without jobs and many without electricity. Negotiations, however, surfaced around 1996 for the opening of another factory. When this new factory did not in fact open, citizens again took to the streets in protest. (L6pez Levy 83)

It is important for us to consider some of the more endemic origins of the *piquete* on April 4, 2007. Neuqu6n's unique political and social climate created the fervent counter-culture that nurtured the first *piquetes* and the culture of resistance that defines ATEN. Despite its geographic position on the periphery of Argentina, Neuqu6n has been one of the centers of social activism and militancy in Argentina in recent decades. The confluence of opposition that resides in Neuqu6n is comprised of various currents and parties, but has been able to unite in remarkable ways considering its diversity. One reason for this unity is the MPN's consistent dominance in provincial politics. The party has such a stronghold in the area that it would not be feasible to imagine that any one splinter opposition group could attain power. Instead, leftist groups in Neuqu6n have to band together based on their mutual opposition to official politics rather than based on their own proposed platforms. The presence of so many leftist groups can be accounted for in part by the large number of Chilean and domestic or internal exiles that sought refuge in Neuqu6n during the dictatorship, which was often extended to them on behalf of

the province's progressive diocese, headed by Bishop Jaime De Nevares. There are also unusually close alliances between leftist groups like Christians and Marxists, Autonomists and Trotskyists, Marxists and Peronists, teachers and employees of the state. Members of ATEN are likely members of another group and even those who are not members of ATEN most likely have a connection to the organization and offer their support for its mobilization. One of the greatest phenomena of the last decade in the area is the proliferation of recovered factories in the area.<sup>4</sup> Neuquén contains a large concentration of these abandoned factories that were taken-over by its former employees following the 2001 crash and one of the most internationally and nationally notable recovered factories: Zanon or la Fábrica sin Patronos (FaSinPat). (Petrucci 2008 3)

The physical act of blocking highways so central to the *piquetes* represents not only a material obstruction to the flow of goods and the path of neoliberalism; it also has highly symbolic weight. In "Citizens of Memory: Reconfiguring the Past in Post-Dictatorship Argentina" Silvia Tandeciarz discusses the ways in which Argentines create and transform spaces of post-dictatorship memory. One of the sites discussed is the *Club Atlético*, which during the dictatorship functioned as a clandestine center of torture, but over which there now runs a highway. Analysis of the ways citizens have made this highway, once an amnesiac tool of the dictatorship, into a site of memory will provide a useful lens with which to understand the

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<sup>4</sup> Beginning in the 1990s factory workers in Argentina formed cooperatives in order to continue doing their jobs and take control of their factories when the owners were forced to shut down due to bankruptcy. This trend only intensified after the 2001 crisis, which forced many factories to close down and declare bankruptcy. Often workers have had to physically occupy their factories to prevent the government from taking control of them. However, the transition to worker-run factories has also been legally facilitated in a variety of ways including: the enactment of laws that allow municipalities to expropriate closed property in order to donate them to workers and temporary loans of factory property. (López Levy 90-96)

*piqueteros* symbolic use of the highway in their resistance to neoliberalism. The *Atlético* was a clandestine torture center that operated from February to December of 1977 in the southern end of Buenos Aires, near the working-class neighborhood of *La Boca*. Up until it was demolished, it functioned as a torture center; the prisoners were transferred elsewhere in order to build the *Autopista 25 de mayo*. The construction of the *autopista* over the former site of the *Atlético* erased all traces of the horrific activities that went on there, effaced any evidence that would incriminate the military regime and denied the memories and experiences of those who were tortured and killed there. Now, however, in years since the return to democracy, those who wish to preserve the memory of the *Atlético* are reclaiming the space below the highway, where the detention center once stood. The site is now covered with paintings, sculptures and graffiti proclaiming the names of repressors as well as the poetry of Juan Gelman and Mario Benedetti mourning the lives of those lost in the struggle against the dictatorship. (Tandeciarz 159-162)

More importantly, for our purposes as Tandeciarz argues:

The recollection the *Atlético* performs also contests institutional forgetting. It is a place where conflicting memories erupt, where the will of the dictatorship- and subsequently democratic regimes under neoliberal transition- to bury its violence under a discourse of progress is undone by the will of its victims to recall their trauma and to map it on the city's facades.  
(Tandeciarz 159)

A highway, built in the name of progress and advancement, but at the expense of those it purports to serve, is a symbol of neoliberal discourse. As those who have marked the *autopista* with the pain of the past to counteract official amnesia, the *piqueteros* occupy highways and attempt to physically interrupt the flow of history that has led Argentina to the current neoliberal quandary it finds itself in.

A mural in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of San Telmo further illuminates this argument. The *Mural museo de cine* depicts a filmstrip that begins with the 1976 coup and

chronicles the tragedies of the military dictatorship and the 2001 economic collapse ending with the *piquetes* of the last decade. The mural ends with the command: "*No tapar el mural...estamos cambiando la película*" "Don't cover the mural...we are changing the film." This mural explicitly inscribes the link between the coup in 1976 and the economic crisis of 2001. It also indicates that the struggles in which *piqueteros* engaged in are directly challenging the cycle of repression begun with the dictatorship. (Asamblea "Plaza Dorrego")

The symbolic importance of the *piquetes* as a form of resistance to neoliberal violence made evident at both the Atlético and the Museo del Cine also was evident on April 4, 2007, when Carlos Fuentealba joined ATEN on Ruta 22 towards Arroyito: by taking the street, they refused to remain invisible. Not only did they proclaim their economic and material needs; they resisted the institutional lie that neoliberal reforms are synonymous with progress. In the space that remains, I analyze the orchestration of the events of the particular *piquete* in which Fuentealba was killed. I argue that the events of April 4, 2007 were the result of a deliberate choreography on behalf of both the protesters from ATEN and the police who were responsible for the repression. The spectacle of power embodied by the police and bolstered by neoliberal discourse encountered the equally spectacular, yet subversive *piqueteros*. The physical struggle to control Ruta 22 is also proved a struggle in the field of cultural representation to resist neoliberalism, with the street serving as a stage upon which police and protesters embody the dialectic tensions between control and chaos, between the face of social protest and the government's efforts to maintain political control in Argentina.

A first significant aspect of ATEN's is the timing of the union's decision to stage the *piquete*. ATEN had been protesting for close to a month to demand higher teachers' salaries and an increase in educational grants before they decided to use a blockade. As Holy Week

approached, ATEN's demands were still unmet and they saw an opportunity in the expected influx of travelers to the region. A blockade of a major Patagonian highway ensured that the numbers of people inconvenienced by the blockade would be even higher than at any other time. As tourists and oil trucks alike made their way to Neuquén that week before Easter, they were halted by the teachers protest. (Trigona April 2007) Unlike the effect of a teachers' strike that is normally most strongly felt by the students who are unable to attend school because of their teachers' involvement, a *piquete* is effective because it transfers the burden of its resistance to the government (they are vested with the ability to end the strikes with a concession to demands) and oftentimes to oil companies and other trucking companies that are inconvenienced by blocked highways. With a *piquete*, then, the pay and treatment of teachers are no longer just the concerns of those involved in the school; they become a public concern because the failure to address these issues has an immediate impact on the public sphere and the circulation of traffic in the region. This effect was intensified during the protest on April 4 because of the many tourists that were unable to travel to Patagonia for the Easter holidays and the many within the southern provinces counting on the profits of that tourism. With more people affected it was more likely the protest would gain national attention and that the government would be willing to meet their demands in the resolution of the conflict. Unfortunately, that was not the way in which the government responded to the *piquete*.

As the *piqueteros* flooded Ruta 22, they challenged the presumed hegemony of rights and privileges in Argentine society. By stopping the flows of traffic, they opposed the precedence given to the more bourgeois right to transportation on the roads and asserted their own right and the right of all workers to peacefully organize in defense of their jobs and dignity. In addition to demanding a salary increase, I posit, ATEN demanded visibility- the visibility of workers and

their struggles. While neoliberalism produces "*nuevos desaparecidos* as a result of unemployment, disease, environmental pollution, repression, depression and hunger" it engages in a spectacle of progress and democracy. Resistance must be repressed if the government is to maintain the farce of its promises (Album 2). But the members of ATEN, families, and others interested in defending the rights of teachers to a just wage and of students to have access to good education who gathered on Ruta 22 called attention to the failures of neoliberalism. It is the same phenomenon described by Subcomandante Marcos, leader of the Zapatista resistance movement in Southern Mexico, when he explains to the author John Berger why the Mexican government has so aggressively tried to eliminate the Zapatistas:

That their very existence, in the moment that they (the indigenous Zapatistas) speak out and are heard, is converted into a reminder of an embarrassing omission of 'neoliberal modernity' ...For this system which concentrates wealth and power and distributes death and poverty, the *campesinos*, the indigenous, do not fit in the plans and projects.  
(Berger 226)

Like the Zapatistas, the *piqueteros* insistently remind the nation and the government that the poverty in which they live is real and that the official discourse of progress has failed to be reflected in their own lives.

ATEN's decision to stage a *piquete* is also significant because of its historical context. I make the argument that to stage a *piquete* is to ally oneself with the legions of *piqueteros* who preceded them in their defense of education and opposition to neoliberalism in Argentina. Ruta 22 where the 2007 *piquete* took place is the same road in which ATEN had previously marched in repudiation of the *Ley Federal de Educación (LFE)*. Proposed in 1997, the *LFE* is one of several educational reforms that serves to alienate students from an education that would either speak to or inform their actual experiences. The law resulted in the elimination of arts and humanities as well as in the reductionist polimodal system that reduces the number of years

required of secondary education and makes it preparatory education for specific technical skills that may or may not aid them in future employment (Petrucelli 2005 38).<sup>5</sup> The relevance and necessity of what is taught in school become a commodity to be downsized and consolidated in order to more effectively produce compliant human capital. The 1997 *piquete* by students, parents, and teachers in solidarity with ATEN was able to prevent the law from being implemented in Neuquén the way it was in the rest of Argentina. In ATEN's choice to follow in the legacy of this successful protest, I read a continuity of cause. The motivations behind the April 2007 protest were related to those that fueled the *piquete* ten years earlier. The teachers who marched with Fuentealba saw the reduction of their pay as part of a national project to implement neoliberal reforms (like the LFE) that erode public education in order to standardize and pacify human capital. This vision of unity- the recognition that the same rights are being violated now as 10 years prior under President Menem- represents a resistance in itself. It is a resistance in that it refuses to be duped by the spectacle of progress of the dominant discourse that claims that things have changed in Argentina and that democracy reigns and human rights abuses are no more.

Though ATEN's occupation of Ruta 22 holds power and significance because of its previous success there, it is also haunted by the ghosts of a previous repression. Teresa Rodríguez, a janitor involved in the 1997 protest that won ATEN the rejection of the LFE, was killed by the police 10 years- to the week- before Fuentealba was assassinated there. The four policemen found responsible for her murder have since been released and pardoned. (Trigona

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<sup>5</sup> Though vocational training in itself is not to be discredited, the form of vocational training implemented through the LFE alienates students from skills relevant to their lives (ie those required for jobs available to them, or skills that can help students become autonomous agents in their society) is actually anything but liberating and ensures a reproduction of current structural inequalities.

September 2007) Rodríguez is consequently a rallying point for *piqueteros*, but also serves as an example of the administration's willingness to expend human life in the name of "order." It is agreed upon by many, especially within ATEN, that the attack on Carlos Fuentealba was planned and executed with the express intent of serving as a further lesson to current and would-be *piqueteros* that they will not be tolerated or appeased by the government. Marcelo Guagliardo, the undersecretary of ATEN, reports that after the first trial related to Fuentealba's death

*"surgió...que el operativo fue desmedido, que se concentraron seis cuerpos especiales de la policía (sin precedentes), con innumerable provisión de pertrechos represivos. También que hubo una reunión, dirigida por el entonces gobernador, la noche anterior, que existía permanente comunicación directa entre: los jefes policiales, Pascuarelli y Sobisch"* 'it came out that the operative was excessive, that they concentrated six special corps of policemen (without precedent), with innumerable repressive arms. Also that there was a meeting, directed by the then-governor, the night before, that there was constant communication between the police chiefs, Pascuarelli [the undersecretary of security present at the assassination] and Sobisch.' (Guagliardo)

What the trial also made clear is that Fuentealba was not a specific target of the repression, in fact it seems that it did not matter who it was that was killed, as long as there was violent repression of the protest in order to serve as a lesson, to reassert control over the public sphere and routes of commerce.

The execution of the violence during the repression on April 4 is even more illustrative of the ways in which the police, in conjunction with and under orders from the governor, sought to establish dominance over the *piqueteros*. After only a few hours of protest, the police arrived to evacuate the *piqueteros*. In photos and video footage of the clash one can see rows of police in riot gear advancing upon unarmed protesters. In a clear display of power, water canons accompany the police and threaten to knock down any obstructing *piqueteros* (*Album para no Olvidar* and *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homicida*). The protesters were ordered to evacuate the road and were in the process of doing so when the violence began. The excessive

violence employed in removing the protesters was not used because the *piqueteros* posed a security threat. Fuentealba was in a car when he was shot as he was retreating along with the other *piqueteros* in compliance with police requests. The tear gas was not used because there was an equivalent fight being waged by the *piqueteros*; it was to discipline and punish them for the protest itself.

Sobisch's response to the protest, the violent suppression of the *piquete* and the death of Fuentealba is also a wake-up call to the people of Argentina. By making their protest public, *piqueteros* also ensure that any violation of their rights will also be witnessed. Neoliberal ideology and practice alienates because it fragments the continuity of policy between the dictatorship and democratic governments, but then repackages these fragments to appear *as* whole. With the nation watching as people flood the streets in condemnation of Sobisch, Fuentealba's death cries out, "Listen. Something is happening...that is forcing us to die in order to have a voice, to be seen, to live" (Berger 229) The whole country is witness to the crimes committed against the *piqueteros* and in turn is invited to come to their defense.

The official response to Fuentealba's death has been a strong and befuddling affirmation that "What appears is good; what is good appears" (Debord) In the wake of Fuentealba's murder and accusations of Sobisch's own complicity, Sobisch responded: "*Al ser consultado sobre la decisión tomada la semana pasada durante la protesta docente en la que murió Carlos Fuentealba, Sobisch señaló que "volvería a tomar la misma decisión".*" When consulted about the decision made the past week during the teachers' protest in which Carlos Fuentealba died, Sobisch indicated that "he would make the same decision again." He defends the need to make decisions like the one that resulted in Fuentealba's death in order to eliminate opposition by any means necessary: "*De ninguna manera me va a hacer dudar cuando tenga que hacer cumplir la*

*Constitución y las leyes en defensa de las minorías*" "There is no way you are going to make me doubt when I have to uphold the Constitution and the law in defense of the minorities."

(<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/04/08/um/m-01396137.htm>) He justifies his decision with his defense of minorities, but it is unclear just who these minorities are. Leopoldo Reyes, a worker from FaSinPat who participated in the protest attests that "Jorge Sobisch gave the order to brutally clash with protestors because they wanted to clear the highway for tourists" (quoted by Trigona April 2007 ). In his claim to defend minorities Sobisch allies himself to these persecuted groups he obliquely mentions. He creates the sense of an incursion on national security and encourages a culture of fear. Security is crucial to tourism and as Argentina recuperates from the chaos that followed the 2001 economic crisis the country must be able to market itself as a stable destination worthy of European and North American tourists, including those delayed by the 2007 Holy Week demonstrations. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* Marxist geographer David Harvey elucidates the relationship between security and the doctrine of unlimited market freedom. One of the central contradictions of neoliberalism, he argues, is that "If 'there is no such thing as society but only individuals' as [Margaret] Thatcher initially put it, then the chaos of individual interests can easily end up prevailing over order. The anarchy of the market, of competition, and of unbridled individualism...generates a situation that becomes increasingly ungovernable." To counter this, the government depicts itself "as besieged and threatened by enemies from within and without." (Harvey 82-83) As in his educational politics, the ways in which Sobisch decided to deal with the protest were guided fundamentally by economic concerns.

Though Sobisch is part of the democratic government that has been in power in Argentina since the 1983 election of Raul Alfonsín, his claims of the importance of order over

human rights and the antagonism he portrays echo the discourse of the junta. The two-demon theory, popular during the Alfonsín administration, maintained that Argentina during the dictatorship was caught between two demonic forces, the guerrillas who threatened the stability of Argentine life and the military that responded to the guerrillas' violence with the disappearance of 30,000 individuals and the torture and kidnapping of others (Crenshaw 247).

This theory creates the image of a just war, of two forces battling for power and rationalizes the state-sponsored terrorism of the military while blaming its victims for their fate. Sobisch uses the same paradigm to describe the societal conflict demonstrated by the death of Fuentelba.

Because he justifies himself in this way, as a righteous defender, we see that he is not even attempting to distance himself from his actions. Instead, he uses the conflict between teachers and government that manifested itself on April 4<sup>th</sup> as fuel to aid in acquiring the consent necessary to sanction official repression.

The discourse of Argentine politicians who tout their progressive reforms and criticize the human rights abuses of the dictatorship without acknowledging the ways in which they continue the violent legacies of the nation's past are an embodiment of what Guy DeBord calls the "society of the spectacle." The spectacle, Debord asserts, seeks to obscure reality. In the spectacle, "Everything that was directly lived has receded into representation." Life becomes a series of relations "mediated by images." These images affirm the dominant discourse and maintain that "What appears is good; what is good appears." The fragmented vision of reality that the spectacle presents appears deceptively whole and seems impermeable to questioning. As the case of Sobisch shows, neoliberal ideology and practice alienate because they fragment the continuity of policy between the dictatorship and democratic governments, but then repackage these fragments to appear *as* whole. And yet Sobisch's response to the protest, the violent

suppression of the *piquete* and the death of Fuentelba are also a collective appeal to the people of Argentina. By making their protest public, *piqueteros* also ensure that any violation of their rights will also be witnessed. With the nation watching as people flood the streets in condemnation of Sobisch, Fuentelba's death cries out, "Listen. Something is happening...that is forcing us to die in order to have a voice, to be seen, to live" (Berger 229). The whole country is witness to the crimes committed against the *piqueteros* and in turn is invited to come to their defense. *Piqueteros* resist the spectacle by making visible these inconsistencies.

The spectacle is, as John Berger tells us, "the game that nobody plays and everybody can watch," Diana Taylor, however, offers another perspective of the dubious value of public spectacle when considered comprehensively. Taylor writes that it "both builds and dismantles a sense of community and nation-ness....it stirs and manipulates desire, allowing a population insight into events and blinding it to the meaning of its situation...it presents both an invitation to cross the line between actor and spectator, and a prohibition" (Taylor ix). The spectacle of progress promulgated and practiced by the dominant discursive powers in Argentina is complemented by a spectacle of power that prohibits resistance and "blinds the populace to the meaning of its situation." However, when the spectacle of resistance performed by the *piqueteros* encounters these displays of power it constitutes a subversion and complication of the alienating spectacle of neoliberalism. The spectacle that the *piqueteros* use subverts the language of the society of the spectacle because it communicates an expression of real needs and draws its strength from the protesters physical and symbolic presence. The *piquete* is a forum in which those Argentines omitted from the neoliberal national imaginary are able to articulate for themselves the ways in which they have been marginalized and the fundamental needs that their government has left unmet. Because Experience and Necessity are fundamentally anti-

spectacular and they constitute a complication of and resistance to the spectacle; They expose the complicit inability of the modern media and official discourse to address the reality of the "nuevos desaparecidos" of neoliberalism.

## CHAPTER II: Against Forgetting

The "*Album Para No Olvidar*" is emblazoned with the crimson words "*Nunca Más!*" scrawled above images of Carlos Fuentealba and a variety of posters and graffiti relating to his death. Above the words "*nunca más*" is the demanding caption: "*Carlos Fuentealba ¡Presente! ¡Justicia ya!*" The album, created by the *Asamblea por los Derechos Humanos Neuquén*, contains a series of news articles that appeared after Fuentealba's death, drawings and letters from students from all around Argentina, and various contributions from the sponsor organizations. The compilation is yet another way in which educational workers in Neuquén, as well as those in solidarity with their cause, continue to resist the encroaching repression of neoliberalism. They have created a space in which they challenge mainstream assumptions and claims about the dynamics of resistance and control in the nation. One of the most clear ways they do this in the "*Album*" are the strongly asserted connections they draw between the human rights violations committed during the dictatorship and those of the present democratic governments. Through language and imagery they present a unified narrative, a history of violence and repression but also of resistance. Though the names may have changed and the rhetoric improved, the Argentine state, the "*Album*" reminds us, has continued to wage a war of terror against its own citizens.

The presence of *Asamblea por los Derechos Humanos Neuquén* as a producer of the "*Album para no Olvidar*" makes a strong statement about the piece's framing of Fuentealba's death. Just a year APDH Neuquén created the album for Carlos Fuentealba they completed another *Album para no Olvidar: Nunca Más : Terrorismo de Estado : Recopilación Periodística a 30 Años del Golpe Militar : 1976-2006 : Album para no Olvidar* (Biblioteca Nacional de Maestro). The 2007 album for Fuentealba alludes and directly responds to the earlier one made

to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1976 coup. Just as *Jóvenes y Memoria* normally involves itself in issues related to the dictatorship and therefore found reason to take on the proposal of students from CPEM N69, it seemed also a natural link for APDH and ATEN and produce an album following in the tradition of the former's work against state terrorism.

ADPH's involvement in the issue is a strong signal that the right to resist and protest is a fundamental human right. A violation of the rights of resistance is a violation of human rights and this is one clear issue in which the policies of the dictatorship have left their legacy in contemporary Argentina.

A little bit of inquiry into the material side of production also reveals some significant information. On the underside of the album's folio cover, along with editorials and letters of introduction from ATEN and APDH, there is a note about publication. All of the binding and printing was done by the *Cooperativa Chilavert Artes Gráficas*, a cooperative of workers who recuperated the printing press where they were employed before the 2001 economic crisis.

Following the crisis there were a string of factories that were shut down, but were eventually seized and re-organized under worker control. The *Cooperativa Chilavert* currently functions as a printing company, graphic design studio, library. It is also home to a project in popular education that provides secondary education for youth in the area who were not able to get into the local public schools and offers a series of workshops that include instruction in dance, photography and topical discussions. (Cooperativa Chilavert) The recovered factory movement is a response to the failure of the neoliberal economic model and ADPH's decision to partner with the *cooperativa* is an important way in which the *Album* project links itself to other anti-neoliberal movements in Argentina. The first few pages of the album are occupied by a brief history entitled "*Carlos Fuentealba, la Patagonia Rebelde, y la historia que continúa*" which

begins by telling the story of Fuentealba's death, but then traces back through other similar deaths that have occurred as a result of the "silencioso genocidio neoliberal" (3). It links these abuses, these violations of human rights to a larger flawed system, the model upon which Argentina has predicated itself and the fundamentals of capitalism. It very explicitly states:

*Antes y después de estas muertes en protestas sociales, hubieron muchas otras muertes como consecuencia del mismo sistema. Gatillo fácil. Desaparición de mujeres víctimas de trata. Cromañón. Los muertos y las muertas, siempre del mismo lado. Víctimas de la pobreza. Víctimas de la desesperación. Víctimas de la corrupción. Víctimas de la desocupación. Víctimas de la indiferencia. Víctimas del capitalismo"*  
(3)

Although much of this section is about the repression that workers have historically faced in Argentina, there is an insistent implication throughout that though there always has been an authoritarian current in the Argentine government there also has been resistance. The images shown along the text help to illuminate and suggest this dialectic. The term *Patagonia Rebelde*, used at the top of the page in the title and also as a reference to the place where Fuentealba's death took place, is dual-purposed. It not only suggests a wild and rebellious Patagonia, a relentless and brutal stretch of landscape, but, it also alludes to a particular event, a 1921 unionist rebellion that ended in a violent massacre at the hands of the Argentine army. While also remembered as *La Patagonia Trágica*, the choice to use "rebelde" in the reference conveys in one phrase both a sense of confident rebellion and a keen awareness of the historical government repression. (Monografías) The photos that run along the side reinforce this same notion. The first photo is of strikers detained by a colonel in 1922 and the one below it is of the burial of rural workers killed in the 1921 massacre in Patagonia. These photos precede images of protesters carrying flags and posters in support of Carlos Fuentealba with the condemnation "*La misma impunidad!*" and posters denouncing the deaths of others such as Teresa Rodriguez and Anibal Veron, both *piqueteros*. Like the reference to "*La Patagonia Rebelde*" these images are

important because they link current abuses to those that occurred in the past. As such they deny any separation- or fragmentation- between past human rights violations and impunity and the actions of post-dictatorship democratic governments. Inherent in this revelation is the presence throughout Argentine history of a repressive government. This very linking is itself a form of resistance: it is a refusal to believe that deaths like Carlos Fuentealba's are random or unprecedented.

An integral part of the *Album's* critique is its insistence that the state continues to engage in terrorism against its own people. Among news-clippings from Argentine newspapers proclaiming: "Teacher strike because of the repression in Neuquén" "A teacher gravely wounded in a road blockade in Neuquén," and "Violent evacuation: a teacher dies" float the words "*Un país que mató a un maestro nos deja sin palabras*" 'A country that killed a teacher leaves us speechless' (4). The accusation is clear: *the country that killed a teacher*. The country is the government and the police that are responsible for the murder, but some blame is attributed to a complicit populace that allowed a teacher to be murdered without consequence to his murderers. On another page, a cartoon from *Página 12*, an important center-left periodical, begs the question: "*¿Por qué el estado, mi estado, en nombre de nosotros, me tiene que matar?* [sic]" 'Why does the state, my state, in the name of us, have to kill me?' This question challenges the statements that Sobisch's claims that his decision was made in defense of the constitution and of the rights of the minorities (see chapter 2). However, both *Página 12's* response and Sobisch's defenses echo the discourse during the military dictatorship. The junta defended their actions and convinced a substantial fraction of the Argentine people that the excesses committed by their officials were what was necessary to defend the country. In order to protect itself, it had to kidnap, torture, and kill its own citizens. Something that Argentina has had to grapple with since

the return to democracy is the enormous amount of guilt and accusation that accompanies those survived the state terrorism: Guilt because the majority of the Argentine population that allowed the government, without much protest, to "disappear" their fellow citizens and thereby, in some way, feel a sort of perversion that they may have tacitly approved of the junta's dictum that order and security triumph all. The same accusation is being made here to both the government, that argues that it is defending the very people it seeks to repress, and to the Argentine people who buy into the idea that order, stability and the promise of progress must triumph over the lives of those exercising their rights to protest.

In addition to its accusations of state terrorism, another way the Album links the abuses during the dictatorship and the current police abuses that lead to deaths like Carlos Fuentealba's is through its appropriation of symbols and language used by human rights organizations that work on behalf of victims of the dictatorship's violence. The "*Nunca más!*" on the cover also appears in numerous images of protesters that turned out to support ATEN following Fuentealba's death in 2007. That cry of "never more" is a direct reference to the dictatorship and the document of the same name signed in 1983 by the Argentine government that promised there would "never more" be the violence and terrorism that characterized the years of the military junta. Since then, "*Nunca más*" has become the ubiquitous rallying cry for those protesting the deaths of *piqueteros* and the disappearance of Jorge Julio López in 2006. It is a reminder of the government's promise to the Argentine people to end state-sponsored violence and how far it still has to go to fulfill it. Along the same lines, one of the captions in the Album reads: "*Miles de personas marcharon en el país en repudio del fusilamiento público del docente neuquino Carlos Fuentealba.*" "*Fusilamiento*" is a much stronger word than "assasination" or "murder" or "killing;" fusilamiento refers to an execution, a public execution, and the intimation here is that

Fuentealba, like those who disappeared at the hands of the military junta, was executed by the State without trial, due process, or the possibility of mounting a defense. The men and women like Fuentealba who were *fusilados* by the state are referred to as "*desaparecidos*." These are all very intentional choices that illustrate the continuous nature of repression in Argentina. The same system is responsible for the deaths of Julio López, Fuentealba, and the 30,000 individuals disappeared by the junta.

Beyond its strategic and purposeful language choices, the *Album para no Olvidar* contains a careful mix of collected news-clippings from familiar newspapers like *Página 12*, *Clarín*, and *El País*, as well as other original contributions. The use of everyday newspapers provides a sense of legitimacy to the narrative the Album constructs, but also represents an appropriation of dominant modes of communication that allows APDH and ATEN to control the way this information is digested. The Album concentrates coverage of the protests in solidarity with Fuentealba and interviews with witnesses, friends, and family together in a way that allows them to unify their message of resistance and solidarity. Instead of being fragmented by tangential news pieces or items that contradict the content of the articles they chose, readers consume these images and text while guided by the photos, poems and captions included by APDH and ATEN. The other pieces used in the Album such as letters from students from all around Argentina, drawings, photographs of graffiti, and a photographic sequence narrating the events of April 3, 2007 help guide the readings of the news pieces, but also give voice to those often left out of mainstream coverage. One graffiti pictured reads: "*Tu legalidad mata, somos ilegales*." 'Your legality kills, we are illegal.'<sup>(6)</sup> This establishes a clear "us and them" dynamic between those who repress and those who are repressed, but stresses that division has been imposed on the Argentine people. As during the dictatorship, those who oppose the orderly

“Western and Christian” model of progress professed by those in power become un-Argentine, illegal citizens in their own nation. It is from this position that ADPH produced the Album: from a subordinated margin within the Argentine national context. The inclusion of graffiti, of students drawings- like the words of those close to Fuentealba and those chosen by APDH- legitimize and recognize those "illegal" voices that seek to denounce the violence of the Argentine government. The Album states "*Hemos aprendido a reconocer que es lo que no queremos, lo que no avalamos y tambien por que luchamos...*" ‘We have learned to recognize that which we don't want, that which we don't guarantee and also why we fight.’ (10) *The Album para no Olvidar* is a product of this realization. Through its production a movement defines itself and creates a space for themselves to continue this fight. The Album openly denounces "what they don't want" and draws attention to the historical repression that workers have faced in Argentina; in so doing it resists that very oppression. The Album thus functions as a vehicle to clarify the consistencies between the dictatorship and Argentina's current democratic government that mainstream discourse seeks to obscure, and also as a space in which to clearly articulate "why they fight."

### CHAPTER III: Documenting Resistance

Images of the police, armed with rubber bullets and tear gas, flash across the screen while the lyrics of Once Tiros, the Uruguayan band, narrate the scene: "*Mediocre/la policia la que tenemos que en vez de educarte busca pelearte y aca estoy/En medio de estos señores que con abuso tratan de intrusos a gente libre haciendo uso de su condición/Mediocres son...*"

'Mediocre/The police we have that instead of educating you look to fight you and here I am/ In the middle of all these guys who with abuses try to intrude on free people making use of their condition/They're mediocre.' We see a crowd, demonstrators in the middle of the highway fleeing a cloud of smoke in a state of panic. Then the scene switches to a confrontation with the police while the music warns "*Cuidado con la cana o que va pre*" 'Careful with the cops or you'll be put away.' Now the protesters form a line to face off with the police who are advancing with their shields while the people hurl insults and condemnation their way. Viewers are assaulted by the repeated images of the police acting against the protesters, the grief of the protesters as they find out there has been a death, the subsequent confrontation with the police. The death that they learn of is Carlos Fuentealba's. The footage is part of the documentary *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homocida* produced in 2007 by Fuentealba's former students.

The documentary *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homocida* was produced by Fuentealba's former students at CPEM N°69 with the program *Jóvenes y Memoria*, a program of the *Comisión Provincial por la Memoria* in La Plata, Buenos Aires. The program was established in 2002 "*para promover el tratamiento de la última dictadura militar en las escuelas secundarias bonaerenses*" 'to promote the treatment of the last military dictatorship in high schools in the province of Buenos Aires.'

(<http://www.comisionporlamemoria.org/jovenesy memoria/el-programa.htm>). In their web site,

*Jóvenes y Memoria* describe their mission this way:

*...activar el proceso de construcción y transmisión de la memoria colectiva como forma de afianzar los valores en derechos humanos, las prácticas democráticas y el compromiso cívico de las nuevas generaciones. Se trata de impactar sobre la subjetividad de los jóvenes, en sus formas de percibir el presente y en la capacidad para pensarse como sujetos autónomos, conscientes y responsables de sus opciones y prácticas. 'to activate the process of construction and transmission of collective memory as a way to reinforce the values of human rights and democracy and the civic commitment of future generations. It is about impacting the subjectivity of the students, in their ways of perceiving the present and in their capacity to think of themselves as autonomous subjects, conscious of and responsible for their choices and habits.'*

(<http://www.comisionporlamemoria.org/jovenesymemoria/el-programa.htm>)

Normally the projects that *Jóvenes y Memoria* select are related to the military dictatorship and are proposed by students from the province of Buenos Aires. However, *Jóvenes y Memoria* realized the grave implications for human rights and impunity pertaining to Carlos Fuentealba's case and accepted CPEM N°69's proposal as a natural addition to the 2007 group of accepted participants. Every year groups of students from public schools in Buenos Aires submit proposals to *Jóvenes y Memoria* for projects, the majority of which are for documentaries.

*Jóvenes y Memoria* then reviews the proposals and decides selects certain number of them. Once accepted, the students are mentored by volunteers from *Jóvenes y Memoria* who help them with content development and provides equipment, and training in how to use a camera. This is how it that that the year in which students from CPEM N°69 were accepted into the program they joined other students working on similar projects. *Un modelo de vida un estado de homicida* was an exceptional project both because it was produced by students outside of the province of Buenos Aires and because Fuentealba's death, the subject of the documentary, is such a pressing current event. The documentary was first screened at the 2007 end of the year event in Chapadmalal that concludes *Jóvenes y Memoria* every year, but it was also shown in the nation's capital and when the CPEM N° 69 students returned to Neuquén. Though many of the

documentaries made as part of *Jóvenes y Memoria* are screened outside of Chapadmalal and the particular communities from which the student-participants come, they all discuss issues of national importance. What happened in small towns across Argentina can tell us much about the national political scenario and about the state of human rights in the nation. By screening the documentary in Buenos Aires, the students who made *Un modelo de vida, un estado homicida* were able to underscore the importance of what happened to Fuentealba to the rest of the nation.

*Un modelo de vida, un estado de homicida* does not begin with the striking montage of images and audio that introduced this chapter. In reality, that point in the documentary functions as a bridge, a moment in which the viewers are able to engage with the conflict that surrounded the death of Carlos Fuentealba. The purpose of the documentary is clearly to honor the memory of Fuentealba, but to do that the students had to address also his political commitment, and how his life fit into a broader panorama of contemporary life in Argentina.

In the beginning we see footage from a ceremony to crown Fuentealba "the king of the school." A little embarrassed and blushing, he accepts the crown from his students and they applaud him. What follows is a series of personal testimonies about Fuentealba given by his colleagues at the school, former students, and his widow, Sandra. What these sequences do is show us the many ways in which Fuentealba and his death are significant. We understand that his absence is felt because of his strong political commitment, but also because he was a beloved friend. Miguel, a teacher at CPEM N° 69 grows tearful as he confesses that "*Hay momentos en que se siente su presencia. Hay momentos en que duele mucho la ausencia.*" "There are moments when you feel his presence. There are moments in which his absence hurts so much.' These personal testimonies and the still images of Fuentealba with his two daughters or drinking mate in the schoolyard make viewers pause and engage with Fuentealba away from a political context.

They feel the joy when the students cheer him on as they crown him and imagine the heartbreak his family must feel at his loss.

The second section of the documentary begins with a montage of the police conflict. Fuentealba now becomes a political actor involved in the struggles on the screen. The stream of images of the events of April 4 follows the pattern of a commercial newscast in order to create an "anti-newscast." There is a repetition of images that forces the viewer to focus on the power dynamics so evident in the unfolding of the clash. The viewer is made to see over and over the strength, force and brutality of the police advancing on the protesters who in turn retreat and then confront the police enraged and grieving after Fuentealba is killed. There is a sequence that mimics a car-chase and Hugo Alvarez; CPEM N 69's director provides an "eye-witness account of the protest and repression all of which create a feeling reminiscent of the sensational nighttime news of mainstream media. The students have chosen to accompany the montage with the song "Lacanao" by Once Tiros whose lyrics codify the significance of the images being transmitted: *"policias son traficantes, son delincuentes, son mala leche, son asesinos, son violentos"* 'the police are traffickers, they're delinquents, they're nasty, they're violent.' The footage is interspersed with commentary from Marceló Guagliardo (ATEN's general secretary). He offers a political reading of the events: *"Tiene que haber un antes y después del 4 de abril donde no necesitemos ir a la calle, donde no necesitemos estar en las protestas en las rutas para tener condiciones mínimas de trabajo en las escuelas."* "There must be a clear before and after April 4, where we no longer need to take to the streets, where we no longer need to be in the highways protesting to have minimum working conditions in the schools." In this sequence Guagliardo plays the role of the "expert" weighing in to tell us what to think about what we see. The footage played over and over, for which we hear this commentary is not official footage

mined from a news network, but rather the product of a hand held camera operated by a fellow member of ATEN during the confrontation. The documentary itself uses very little material that would have been transmitted by mass media sources following the protest and murder. There is no weight given to the official interpretation of events; the students have substituted their own narration about what happened to Carlos Fuentealba and why in Arroyito.

The third and last section of *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homicida* offers a portrait of Fuentealba's fellow teachers at CPEM N° 69 with whom he shared a pedagogical philosophy and a commitment to social justice. Several of the students offer that Fuentealba was always "with everyone:" the students, janitors, and teachers. Like the other professors at CPEM N° 69 Fuentealba encouraged the students when they felt driven to drop out of school. The students also expressed solidarity with their teachers' political and social struggle. One student, Jonatan concludes "*Estoy de acuerdo con la lucha de los maestros porque tiene que pedir lo que necesitan.*" 'I agree with the teachers' struggle because they have to go ask for what they need.' One student in particular offers a moving testimony about the impact that Fuentealba had on his life. Another student, Yonatan, confesses that "*Me costaba antes...no tenía cosas. Estaba demasiado bajo de recursos como para venir a la escuela.*" 'Before it was hard for me...I didn't have things...I had too little resources to be able to come to school.' Now, however, he tells us things are different: "*Si necesito algo, trabajo y consigo lo que necesito. Nos dio [Fuentealba] un ejemplo a seguir.*" 'If I want something, I work and get what I need. He [Fuentealba] gave us an example to follow.' The teachers, conscious of the need to fight in defense of the school and their jobs, have shared a liberating and transformative education with their students. Fuentealba was a construction worker before he became a teacher and was inspiration to many of the students. Yonatan affirms that because of Fuentealba's example, he has come to the conclusion

that "*El estudio es lo único que me va a sacar adelante...para no terminar siendo el ayudante al ayudante al albañil.*" 'Study is the only thing that will carry me forward...so that I don't end up being the assistant to the assistant to the construction worker.' The students' testimonies support the *piquetes* of their teachers and demonstrate that the *piquetes* have been an important lesson to them in how to resist the effects of neoliberalism. The teachers at CPEM N°69 have not given their students a pacificatory education in order to stanch the questions and confusions that arise from the contradictions of modern life, instead they have given their students inspiring examples of how they can take control of their own reality. As the teachers go to the streets to demand what they need, the students learn how also to make their own voices heard. In the production of *Un modelo de vida, un estado homocida* the students of CPEM N 69 express their own horror of and resistance to the events of April 4<sup>th</sup> despite the muzzling effects of institutional policy and rhetoric.

In order to understand the importance of the teachers' position vis-à-vis neoliberal educational reforms, it may be useful to take a brief detour to examine its historical context. In her collection of essays about contemporary life Beatriz Sarlo, the Argentine cultural critic, discusses the "school in crisis" (Sarlo 101). She gives a realistic but gloomy look at the destiny of those students educated under neoliberalism. Under neoliberalism everything (and especially social values) is subject to the market in the promotion of profit and maintenance of corporate and capitalist interests, rather than the promotion of social values such as equality. In this climate, she concludes that "*la cultura juvenil queda presa del mercado de los mas-media en una dinámica sin contrapesos*" (Sarlo 103) 'Youth culture remains prisoner to the market of mass-media with all of the odds stacked against it.' The state schools do not provide opportunities to create new cultural syntheses that challenge mass-mediated youth culture. Sarlo critiques the

effects of globalization and neoliberalism in the following passage:

*Cuando la administración educativa pierde poder y recursos, los grandes ministros de educación son, en verdad, los gerentes y programadores del mercado, cuyos valores no impulsan una sociedad de ciudadanos iguales sino redes de consumidores fieles.* When the educational administration loses power and resources, the biggest ministers of education are, in truth, the managers and programmers of the market, whose values do not promote a society of equal citizens, but rather networks of loyal consumers.  
(Sarlo 103)

Sarlo believes the inability of schools to educate their students in relevant ways creates a generation of indifferent citizens incapable of critically confronting problems in their own lives. Those that will gain the least from this sort of education are those from already marginalized groups. The school continues to reinforce the inequalities of society, and ensures the political blindness of its young people in relation to their own reality.

Sarlo wrote "*La escuela en crisis*" in 1993. It is important to consider the historical context of the publication of her piece in *Clarín*, a popular Argentine daily. In 1993 Argentina was a relatively affluent Latin American country. Argentines were able to go to Miami, Europe and many were able to enjoy a fairly luxurious lifestyle. This was the era in which *Menemismo*<sup>6</sup> was in full swing. As the historian Ariel Petrucelli describes:

En la Argentina, como en casi toda América Latina, el neoliberalismo parecía haber logrado el sueño dorado de las clases dominantes-...que las políticas de concentración de ingresos, recorte de los gastos públicos y 'flexibilización' laboral se impongan con el aval de las urnas. 'In Argentina, as in almost all of Latin America, neoliberalism seemed to have fulfilled the golden dream of the dominant classes-...that the policies of concentration of wealth, decrease in public spending and the "flexibilization" of the labor force prevailed at the the approval of the ballot box.'  
(Petrucelli 30)

However, the constant growth of this golden dream was too good to be true and would not last long.

Despite its apparent wealth, in 2001 Argentina suffered an economic crisis that radically

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<sup>6</sup> *Menemismo* refers to President Carlos Menem's presidency, which was characterized by neoliberal reforms.

changed the country. Upon the publication of "La escuela en crisis" consumerism ruled in an era of complete commercialization in a country populated with people with the resources to participate in the consumerism promoted by the directors of the market. During the glory days of 1990s neoliberalism the market seemed to be working for the country, however in 2001 the atmosphere was markedly different. The crisis demonstrated that Argentina did not control the market; rather the market controlled it. The appearance of this essay in the 2001 collection *Tiempo Presente* is notable. "La escuela en crisis" was not at all nullified by the new economic crisis; in fact, the arguments appear to be even stronger in light of the current crisis. Pedagogies that leave their students incapable of confronting crises of contemporary life and that produce "networks of loyal consumers" would seem to be especially alienating in schools populated by students who have suffered at the hands of the market. The messages conveyed in school regarding consumerism and the passivity of the citizens of a globalized world are a sharp contrast to the reality that the students live. The economic crisis in 2001 served for many as proof of the failure of the project begun by the military and dutifully followed by Menem's neoliberal reforms. The crisis put in relief the consequences of sacrificing human dignity for a place in the global market. In a contemporary context, in which I will analyze the documentary produced by the students of CPEM N 69, this disconnect is felt even more strongly than when all of the wealth promised by the market seemed a reachable dream. In the wake of the 2001 crisis the deceptions of neoliberalism can be seen much more clearly and help create the conditions necessary for resistance to begin.

Sarlo's work illustrates the dangers of neoliberalism, but it is precisely this reality that *Jóvenes y Memoria* and Fuentealba struggled to resist, Sarlo also overlooks the well-established roots of a pedagogy of resistance in Latin America, the roots of which come primarily from

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator whose ideas gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. The pedagogical projects of Freire and those that sought to replicate his models alternative pedagogy that seeks to empower rather than alienate. This sort of “transformative education” has historically focused on marginalized or oppressed groups and has directly linked educational practice with social change. ATEN and Fuentealba are not anomalies, nor are they recent indicative of a recent trend in Argentina. They follow in the tradition of countless others that preceded them. Sarlo’s oversight is her analysis does not allow for the existence of these alternative pedagogies that challenge the neoliberal encroachment on education. (Morrow)

Clearly the teachers at CPEM N 69 have resisted this disciplining by the market. That their pedagogical practice has enabled the production of *Un modelo de vida un estado de homicida* –a direct effort to remove the blinders that constrain the students of CPEM N 69– shows that despite their power, such neoliberal reforms can be effectively resisted. The resistance of the piqueteros and the students who made *Jóvenes y Memoria* lies in their unwillingness to accept Sobisch’s explanations of Fuentealba’s murder and the continual violations of their rights. Through *Jóvenes y Memoria* the students critically approach the events that led to the assassination and contextualize them away from fragmenting and imprisoning master narratives. Although Sarlo describes with clarity the consequences of neoliberalism for education, the students’ project shows that her gloomy prognosis is far too narrow and hegemonic.

The usefulness of Sarlo’s critique is that it sheds light on one part of the process of neoliberalization in schools. John Berger offers us a look at the other side, at the “pockets of resistance” that form in opposition to neoliberalism. In correspondence with the Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos, Berger describes the necessity of constructing new frameworks with

which to read the world:"...the first step towards building an alternative world has to be a refusal of the world-picture implanted in our minds and all the false promises used everywhere to justify and idealise the delinquent and insatiable need to sell. Another space is vitally necessary."

(Berger 214) An important element in resistance to neoliberalism is the creation of an alternative narrative. The students of Carlos Fuenetalba were compelled by a desire to tell their own story, which contrasts so much with the impunity and indifference that has characterized the official response. To imagine another world is to resist. The recognition of another reality, the affirmation of Fuentelalba's life and death is a denunciation of the world-picture that neoliberalism presents. Berger emphasizes the importance of denunciation: "The act of resistance means not only refusing to accept the absurdity of the world-picture offered us, but denouncing it. And when hell is denounced from within, it ceases to be hell." (Berger 214). In *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homocida*, the students of CPEM N°69 denounce the death of their teacher as well as the impunity of those responsible for his death. They made the documentary to denounce those in power who order the use of whatever force necessary to repress teachers and those who choose to sacrifice human development for economic development.

The production of *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homocida is*, more than anything, a forum in which the CPEM N°69's students, teachers and the Sandra, Fuentelalba's widow can express their pain in public. To make private pain public is to provide a point of departure in which resistance can be born. The art of Frida Kahlo became popular for this same reason; in her art she expresses her personal pain as proof of her sentience and in this way, "painting her own image...she speaks of the whole sentient world" (Beger 160). In his explanation of the value of Kahlo's art, Berger offers a description of the resistance that we see born in the documentary:

That she became a world legend is in part due to the fact that in the dark age in which we are living under the new world order, the sharing of pain is one of the essential preconditions for a refinding of dignity and hope. Much pain is unshareable. But the will to share pain is shareable. And from that inevitably inadequate sharing comes a resistance.  
(Berger 164)

*Un modelo de vida, un estado de homocida* gives place and value to the grief of the the students of CPEM N°69, Sandra, and Fumentalba's comrades in ATEN. In the student's expression of grief and pain they are able to make sense of the death of Fumentalba. It does not have to remain a tragic event attributed to the cruel randomness of the world. Because of their production of the documentary they can contextualize Fumentalba's death in a struggle much larger than his singular life. They discover that they can link their own lives to this struggle and this recognition is liberating. To be able to understand systems of power and oppression means that one can act upon this knowledge. To be able to express pain is in a way also to denounce reality, as Berger describes. To express pain is to recognize a point of rupture, in which the students stop accepting the sentence that "this is life and this is how things happen". It is to say something is wrong. Things do not have to happen this way. With this consciousness they can avoid becoming "the loyal consumers" that Sarlo describes.

The consciousness that the students reveal in *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homocida* demonstrate did not emerge from a vacuum., but rather from a confluence of factors and influences that oppose the dehumanizing effects of globalization. The production of the documentary was directly facilitated by *Jóvenes y Memoria*. It is also a direct result of the work of Fumentalba and the other teachers at CPEM N°69 and in Neuquén. The teachers of CPEM N°69 offer other services to their students. Their students have been empowered by their teachers and by the example of Carlos Fumentalba to re-signify his death. They wrest interpretive power of the events and their own lives from the hands of those who control the

media and who issue official responses to the murder. Instead of being pacified by their education, they receive the encouragement necessary to combat the injustices they face in their own lives. In this way the production of *Un modelo de vida, un estado de homicida* is a continuation of the life of Carlos Fuentealba indeed a model and support to the struggle that formed such a large part of his life.

**CONCLUSION AND SIGNIFIGANCE OF THE STUDY:**

In recent decades neoliberal policies have proliferated throughout the world, subjecting all to the laws of the market in order to promote competition and profit. Education is now considered part of the domain of neoliberalism. Under neoliberalism education has been converted into a regulatable commodity that is subject to the whims of the market. However, as evidenced by the resistance discussed in this paper, the influence of neoliberal politics has not been accepted throughout the world. In fact, it has been met with considerable resistance.

Analysis of cultural production surrounding the death of Carlos Fuentealba is scant because the event occurred so recently, but this study should serve as a preliminary examination of the significance of the event in the Argentine political and cultural imaginary. What I have written is a case study that examines the ways in which education has been added to the many domains in which those already marginalized suffer at the cause of neoliberal reform. The *Album para no Olvidar*, *Un modelo de vida, un estado homicida*, and the April 4<sup>th</sup> *piquete* help us to understand some of the ways in which it is possible to challenge neoliberalism. Not only do these cultural products reveal truths about resistance, they expose the nature of neoliberalism itself. As a case study, my analysis of teacher and student responses to the death of Fuentealba demonstrates the ways in which cultural dominance and resistance coexist. Though neoliberalism is marked so as to appear to be the universal global consensus, it is not so uncontested. In the gaps it leaves, the gaps “between the experience of living a normal life at this moment on the planet and the public narratives being offered to give a sense to that life” is where resistance lies

(Berger 176). This analysis illustrates the ways in which in a group of actors in a particular moment used those gaps to challenge neoliberal hegemony. The lessons taken from this study can help us understand the ways in which other movements throughout Latin America are resisting neoliberalism, but also how new forms of resistance can be imagined.

The challenge the cultural products I have analyzed pose to neoliberalism represents a small pocket of resistance. However, pockets of resistance like this one have been appearing now more and more frequently and seem to be gaining momentum. The *piqueteros*, the students who produced *Un modelo de vida, un estado homicida*, and ADPH are all supported by other groups within Argentina and they implicitly join forces with other movements internationally and within Latin America that have rejected neoliberalism as an economic and cultural model. They are bolstered by the struggles of their fellow teachers in Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico; they offer support to the landless people's movement in Brazil, and are vindicated by the administrations of Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales who have chosen as policy to reject neoliberalization. Though these movements of resistance do not all look the same, they share a distrust of neoliberalism's globalized spectacle of progress. What makes these movements effective is in fact their heterogeneity. We see in the cultural production related to Fuentealba's death that one of the most important ways this spectacle can be undermined is through engaging in a resistance that is born of Necessity and Experience, which necessarily vary across movements and nations.

The analysis that I have done would be complemented by an investigation of the success that other movements of teacher activism in Latin America have had in rejecting

neoliberalism and resulting in transformative education for their students. Initially, I planned to research resistance to neoliberalism in education in both Mexico and Argentina. However, I decided to limit my focus in order to more thoroughly treat the subject. Jill Friedberg's documentary *Granito de Arena* could provide a very useful point of departure for a study of the way teachers and students in Mexico have responded to neoliberal reforms in education.

My process of transformation and reflection on this research has been long. It began a little over a year ago on another continent and took many divergent turns before arriving here at the end. One of the most important things I learned during this process was about my own attitudes towards the possibilities of resistance to neoliberalism. I began this project more out of a sense of outrage at the ways in which I believed neoliberalism caused suffering throughout the world than out of a confidence in the movements of resistance that sought to reject its reforms. Though I was spending hours in the library researching and writing about the ways in which teachers and students in Argentina resist neoliberalism, there was a dissonance with the things that I was articulating out loud. I was not conscious of this difference at the outset, but I realized as I listened to myself discuss politics with my friends that like Sarlo, I had an incredibly narrow, gloomy, and hegemonic view of the world. However, as I conclude this analysis I find myself convinced of the possibilities of resistance. Small pockets of resistance that perforate neoliberalism's gilt packaging begin to undermine and can ultimately dismantle the structures of power that have allowed its global dominance.

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***Un Modelo de Resistencia, un Estado Neoliberal: Teacher and Student Responses to the Death of Carlos Fuentealba***

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of B.A. in Hispanic Studies from  
The College of William and Mary

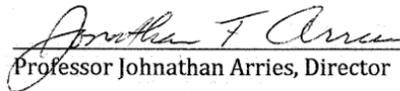
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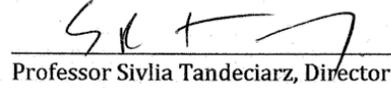
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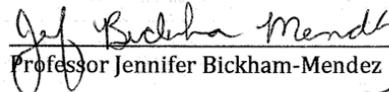
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