

**POLITICAL PROPAGANDA AND REPRESSION IN
AUTHORITARIAN ARGENTINA, 1976-1983**

by

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ABSTRACT

Political Propaganda and Repression in Authoritarian Argentina, 1976-1983

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the discursive means by which the military regime governing Argentina from 1976 to 1983, known as the “Process of National Reorganization,” articulated its hegemony and attempted to justify armed repression. The thesis is based on a corpus which presents two dynamics of the “Process”: authentic documents published during the regime which espouse the ideology of the military; and, a fictional critical representation of the era produced shortly after the regime’s collapse. The first part of the study focuses on two magazines, *Gente* and *Somos*, which the military used to disseminate its official voice, while the second examines the film entitled *La historia oficial (The Official Story)* as a criticism of the propaganda and censorship imposed by the regime.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first explores the use of medical discourse, examining the means by which the legitimacy and objectivity of science was appropriated by ideologues of the military junta, working in various fields, to “prescribe” political and social change. This study of medical discourse reveals the regime’s underlying concern with nationalism as a means of social and ideological control. The second chapter investigates the military’s claim of ushering in a “new historical cycle” for Argentina, another means of manipulating nationalism. The regime used a historicist discourse to accentuate their role in the formation of the Nation, and attempted to forge a philosophy of history to counteract what the military perceived as an antinational vision of history presented by Marxism. The final chapter analyses how *La historia oficial* subverts the ideology espoused by the military “Process” by revealing the various institutions that

supported it through their appurtenant discourses. The convergence of science and history was one of the forms of discursive censorship that ensured the secrecy of the *desaparecidos* (disappeared persons) phenomenon and the control of the collective imaginary.

The complex nature of this study, which explores the confluence of discourses of nationalism, history, science and medicine, demands an interdisciplinary approach to the subject. The principal tools I have used for this investigation into the political, social and historical circumstances that arose during the military “Process” in Argentina are those of discourse analysis and sociocriticism.

Dedication

Esta tesis está dedicada a Dr. Antonio Gómez-Moriana, Dr. Teresa Kirschner, Mercedes Cogan and Cristina Santaella, cuyo apoyo, interés y paciencia han hecho de mi estadía aquí una experiencia inspiradora y enriquecedora.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Merrick Amanda Kappel, for her aphoristic wisdom.

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Introduction

The “Process of National Reorganization,”¹ the project of the military regime that governed Argentina from 1976 to 1983, sought to complete three principal tasks: to eradicate the threat to “national security” posed by urban guerrilla terrorism; to stabilize the bankrupt economy through the implementation of liberal economic policies; and, to reform the deadlocked political system by disempowering labor (Hodges, 1988: 193). To achieve these ends the military implemented the “Doctrine of National Security,” a series of repressive mechanisms directed against Marxist “subversives” threatening the “Western, Christian” values upon which Argentine society was purportedly built. The Doctrine’s most notorious strategy was that of making people disappear. Special military units were deployed to abduct, interrogate and torture individuals considered to be potentially subversive. Throughout the detention of the victim, the police and military would deny any knowledge of the detainees; in the majority of cases, records were not kept. The symbol of this tragic era, which embodies the violence and terror through its perpetual absence, is the *desaparecido* (disappeared person).

The pandemic degree of the *desaparecidos* phenomenon remained largely unknown in Argentina until 1984, when President Raúl Alfonsín appointed the extra-parliamentary “National Commission on Disappeared Persons” (CONADEP). The Commission documented 8,960 disappearances. It concluded, however, that this figure

¹ This name came to represent the regime itself. I refer to it simply as the “Process” throughout the thesis.

was lower than the actual number of cases, as many witnesses “were still afraid to offer information” (CONADEP, 1986: xvi). Taking this self-censorship into account, CONADEP estimated the *desaparecidos* to number 20,000 (1986, xiv); others calculate a figure which approximates 30,000.² Besides this denial of the sociopolitical realities of the Process on the part of many Argentines, a campaign of censorship and propaganda obfuscated the reality of repression. CONADEP reports that during the investigation it became evident “to what extent covering up the truth and misinformation were essential to the most important acts of the military governments between 1976 and 1983” (1986, 52).

Censorship and propaganda were used to construct a spurious opposition between the anarchic violence of rampant terrorism and the stability of an “order” the military purported to represent (Corradi, 1985: 118). By coining the term “dirty war” to represent the guerrilla tactics of the terrorists, the regime punctuated the martial nature of Argentine society and created a tenuous legitimacy for military rule. The regime widely publicized the atrocities of terrorism to justify adopting any measures in eradicating it: “Argentines have had the opportunity of seeing an abundance of television programmes, of reading countless newspaper and magazine articles, as well as a full-length book published by the military government, in which those acts of terrorism were listed, described, and condemned in minute detail” (CONADEP, 1986: 6). As it was expedient to the regime’s legitimacy to preserve the memory of a chaotic and violent society, they continued to provide the media with “proof” of terrorist military activities such as mock battle scenes

² Donald Hodges claims that between 1976 and 1978, the Military Process was responsible for 30,000 *desaparecidos*, four times as many cases of torture, and an additional 10,000 assassinations (1988: 199).

littered with putative subversives who had died “in combat” (CONADEP, 1986: 215; Andersen, 3). The regime relied on various institutions (in addition to that of the media), such as the Church or the school, to either condone or deny the sociopolitical reality of the Process. The integrity of the institutions, as well as the constellation of discourses pertaining to those institutions, were fundamental to the hegemony³ of the regime. Propaganda and censorship, which were both instrumental to the regime, acted in a complementary fashion: the first ensured that nothing compromising the tenability of state-sanctioned information was disseminated; the second precluded adverse interpretations of a single event by saturating the collective memory with the official version.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the discursive means by which the Process of National Reorganization articulated its hegemony and attempted to justify armed repression. This thesis is based on a corpus which presents two dynamics of the Process: original publications that circulated during the military government and that espouse its ideology; and, a fictional critical representation of the era produced shortly after the regime’s collapse. The first part of the study focuses on two magazines, Gente and Somos, which the military used to disseminate its official voice, while the second examines the film entitled *La historia oficial (The Official Story)* as a criticism of the propaganda and censorship imposed by the regime. The magazines which constitute the corpus of the study were chosen by following the general lines that have traditionally

³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, using the work of Foucault and Gramsci, have developed the concept of hegemony in terms of discourse analysis. This is exemplified by their concept of a “hegemonic formation,” similar to Gramsci’s “historical bloc,” which is envisioned as a space unified by “nodal points” where privileged discourses intersect, and where meaning is partially fixed (136). See especially pp. 105-114 and 134-148.

defined the term: a means by which ideas that support one or several institutions, causes or groups, are disseminated. This does not mean that, because the focus of the study is military propaganda, all the materials in question were produced by that institution. Rather, the thesis focuses on the materials that, though not formally affiliated with the regime, coincided in its views, supported its politics, and, consciously or unconsciously, supported its ideology.

The principal criteria in selecting the corpus lay in the popular perception of the materials themselves. Interviews with various individuals in Argentina led me to Gente and Somos magazines, publications that were widely recognized as firm supporters of the regime as were all those of the Editorial Atlántida. One journalist, Federico García Lupo, claimed that military ideologues regularly published articles in the magazines which were unsigned or signed under a pseudonym. The latter part of the statement was readily confirmed, as I found various articles of interest to the focus of my study which were signed “An Argentine with Good Memory,” or simply “A Friend.” Further confirmation that the Editorial Atlántida was a means by which the military’s views were given voice came from Humor, a magazine that played an opposite role during the regime by defying censorship and openly criticizing the government. After the return to democracy Humor published a series of articles entitled “Miseria de la prensa del Proceso” (“Misery of the Press during the Process”) that highlight the propagandistic and supportive elements of various publications. Gente and Somos figure prominently here, as do the other magazines published by what the article calls the “Atlántida Empire.” The final decision to choose Gente and Somos as the corpus for the study was easily taken after having perused

the literature itself, which left little doubt as to its political orientation. To the best of my knowledge these materials have not been studied, nor has the propaganda of the regime in general been studied with methods of discourse analysis.

While this thesis is a study in which the entire era of the Process is represented, the corpus itself is drawn from the periods of transition between democratic and military regimes. Gente and Somos, the propaganda of the regime that supported it throughout, are studied for the first two years of the Process, 1976 and 1977. This is the period of genesis of the military ideology that would last for the Process in its entirety, and this is the period in which that ideology imposed itself most forcefully. The transitional period at the end of the regime is studied by way of *La historia oficial*, which was written in the waning days of the Process and released in 1984. The film is approached as a criticism of the military ideology, which manifested itself in the magazines of Editorial Atlántida. As these materials bracket the Process chronologically, and the same discourses (as well as the concerns they articulate) run through each, I have concluded that the sample is representative of the regime in its entirety.

The principal methods used in analyzing the propaganda of the Process, Gente and Somos, are discourse analysis and sociocriticism. Each of the materials is approached as it manifests itself materially, that is, as a verbal structure arranged in both a form of narrative discourse (White, 1973: ix) and argumentative discourse. The argumentative dimension assumes the following design for communication, which is an intrinsic aspect of the definition of discourse: "Enunciation implying a speaker and a listener and the former's intention to influence the latter in some manner" (Benveniste). Each of the materials is

treated as a “text” which is the locus, or dialogical space (Kristeva), where various discourses are interwoven. The discourses in each text affect each in a process of *interdiscursivity*, meaning that one discourse may be manipulated by, affect, or influence another, and ultimately subvert or support it (Gómez-Moriana, 1980). For the final chapter, which analyzes the subversion of the regime’s discursive propaganda by *La historia oficial*, film semiotics is also used.

“Discourse” refers to the regulated and concomitantly socialized use of language. This usage is based on the premise that all language, as the production of discourse, is circumscribed by exclusions and prohibitions of the objects of which are spoken, the subjects who speak of those objects, and the circumstances surrounding any such parlance (Foucault, 1972). The use of any discourse may reproduce its existing taboos and power relations faithfully, or it may expose and subvert them. Therefore, upon analyzing the discourses which intersect the propaganda produced during the Process particular emphasis is placed on “the text’s use and (ab)use of both the mark[s] specific to [those] discourses and of the ideology underlining [them]” (Gómez-Moriana, 1993: 33). To understand the interpretation that can potentially be derived from any given text, it is imperative that the analysis not only scrutinize the context under which the text was produced, or how it reads and is inscribed in history, but also the means by which the rhetoric of the text is oriented towards a specific audience.

Finally, every discursive strain that intersects each of the primary sources of the study exists outside of the text; in other words, discourses find their way into each text because they are prevalent in the society and era in which those texts are produced.

Therefore, the pursuit of a discursive strain necessarily leads to secondary texts which also articulate that discourse. These are not the focus of the study, but reveal the social context of the discourses under investigation as well as the dominant manifestation of each discourse; it is against this backdrop that each of the primary texts articulates discourses faithfully or subversively.

The first chapter investigates how medical discourse, which had proliferated after the military took power, is utilized by the regime and its propaganda. Starting with some observations made by other academics concerning the representation of guerrillas as a metaphoric illness, it proceeds to study the use of this discourse as a means whereby many other issues --corruption, demagoguery, sin, inflation or the national debt, and social chaos-- were articulated as “disease.” The use of this discourse, and its conflation with those of politics, economics and nationalism, presupposes the existence of an integral “social body.” This *ideologeme* was used to conflate medicine and nationalism, for instance, which served to alienate the state’s enemies by constituting them as “foreign” bodies threatening the health of the *ser argentino*.⁴ Finally, this study reveals that the medical discourse had itself borrowed from military discourse, by, for example, articulating antibodies as “infantry” and “heavy artillery” in an article on allergic reactions. This example, which is a reversal of the relationship between military and medical

⁴ The “*ser argentino*” translates roughly as “Argentine being.” I have not found that this translation adequately reproduces the term’s connotation of a national essence, which represents both its existence and its identity, and have therefore chosen to leave it in the Spanish.

discourse, demonstrates the extent to which the latter had been used to articulate the bellicose nature of Argentine society.

While the first chapter largely explores the consequences of the favored position of the medical discourse through an extraction and subsequent analysis of the material itself, the second chapter discusses the ideological implications of its use insofar as it is predominantly scientific. Its status as a science allowed it to provide a material basis to some of the other privileged discourses of the Process, as well as give each a semblance of objectivity and universality. Some of the discourses with which medical discourse was conflated include religious discourse, which indicates the mutual support between the Church and the military, and that of nationalism, to which the military appealed through the need to recuperate the evanescent *ser argentino*. Another example, which this chapter takes as its focus, is the military's proclamation of the arrival of a "new historical cycle" and the affirming role of science in the use of the discourse of history.

The study of the relationship between science and history is contextualized by Marxism, or rather, by the military's view of that thought. The presence of Marxism, which had proliferated worldwide with the Cold War and locally through the activities of the guerrilla and the political left, was such that the military faced a logical and strategic necessity to formulate a response. The stimulus that Marxism provided to the left was used as a justification for reaction from the right on the military front. The ideological response took shape in various ways, one of which was a form of "philosophy" of history, which sought to confront the purportedly "scientific" Marxist vision of history. Using "scientific" means to establish conclusions that were, ironically, religious, this philosophy

posited that a new era of history was about to commence. Another cycle that would come to a close with the Process, was that of modernity, implied by the concepts of “development” and “progress.” Finally, the prediction of a new historical era was also envisaged in the national political sphere, where a new cycle would signal the completion of two others: first, the end of the pendular governance of military and civilian regimes which had continuously destabilized the political system since the 1930s; second, the end of the cycle that had commenced with the founding of the Nation. The beginning of the military’s “new historical cycle,” which was intimately linked to a political program, was provided ideological justification by closure of so many cycles before it. Together, each of the cycles, all scientifically established, would provide a response to Marxism’s notion of historical change.

The chapter concludes by analyzing the roles of history and science as privileged discourses in both the discursive hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe) of the regime and the collective memory of the Nation. An application of Wlad Godzich’s concept of *memoria* demonstrates the favored status of these discourses in the formation of a collective memory: science, because it holds a hegemonic position among discourses; and history, because it can easily animate privileged places, *topoi*, of *memoria*. While science affects *memoria* through interdiscursive means, stimulating various of the discourses of which it is constituted, history, a more insular discourse, appeals continuously to the privileged *topoi* of “a new historical cycle,” merely repeating it under discrete guises. It is this repetition that eventually saturates the collective memory with an “official” history and

that must, in order to maintain its integrity in the face of myriad interpretations of past events, censor those other interpretations as “unscientific.”

The final chapter studies the film entitled *La historia oficial* as a response to the constellation of discourses that articulated the military’s hegemony and saturated the Argentine *memoria*. In particular, it focuses on the relationship between collective memory, the censorship of the regime and the violence it perpetrated. The analysis follows Alicia, the protagonist, in her efforts to discover the origins of her adoptive daughter Gaby, who could be the daughter of a *desaparecida*. Besides self-censorship, the protagonist of the film finds herself confronted by a complex of institutions including the Church, the school and the family, which impose censorship by means of their appurtenant discourses. A parallel is constructed between the history of the girl, Gaby, and the memory of the Nation, in which the first serves as a foil for the second. As Alicia overcomes the censorship imposed on the former, she discovers the latter to be equally defined by a proscriptive process that elides any contrary interpretation of past events; as Gaby’s story becomes clearer, the “official” history of the Process deteriorates.

The relationship between history and science, which is once again presented as the means by which an “official” history is imprinted on the collective memory, is here overturned. The use of discursive marks particular to science disarticulates the history of the girl, showing it to be a fiction, while simultaneously investing another fiction with its authority. Science, which as a part of the military propaganda had gone towards the forging of a singular history, is exposed as tendentious and ideological with the facility by which it endorses another unofficial history. The relationship between propaganda and

censorship, where the first, a form of censorship by imposition, is merely the manifestation of the second, is here revealed as the means by which such an “official” history is constructed. The dualistic means by which propaganda delimits discourse, ensuring the integrity of history through the authority of science, becomes evident when censorship is put into profile.

Chapter I

Science: Medical Discourse

The military regime espoused an ideology using discourses of science to confront the Marxist threat to the “Western, Christian” values that were purported to be the basis of Argentine social order. Discourses of science and technology, such as those connected to the development of energy resources, industrial facilities and engineering projects, as well as physiological and psychological medicine, became privileged means of articulating the military’s national project. The merit of the first, science and technology, lies in its emphasis of hard “science” in the “social science” of development economics, and the concomitant disguising of inextricable social and political issues. The second, medical science, has the qualities of being objective, altruistic and universal. Science’s fundamental role was to anchor in materialism the Process’ other privileged discourses, such as those of religious spirituality, the evanescent nationalist “*ser argentino*,” or a “new historical cycle” (*nuevo ciclo histórico*), and most importantly, to combat with an equal and opposite force, that other materialism of Marxist “science” that instructed the political practice of the guerrillas.

The military’s use of medical terminology to refer to subversion as a disease contaminating society, and to repression by the army as its cure, has been acknowledged by various researchers. Juan E. Corradi points out that the military believed society’s diseases, “social pathology” and “cancer,” came “from below” and should be treated by action, “surgery” and the “extirpation of diseased tissues,” from above. Corradi also indicates that illness as a political metaphor served not only the purposes of repression, but

also that of free market enterprise (1985: 117). Donald Hodges has also established the rhetorical manipulations of medical terminology in relation to the “subversives” threatening Argentine society. Note the presence of both medical and nationalist discourses:

First, subversion was likened to a highly contagious social disease that had to be eradicated. Second, those infected by the bug of subversion automatically lost their right to citizenship. Third, victims of the infection were considered incorrigible. Last, the accompanying ideas and feelings of resentment and social discontent were intolerable. For all these reasons those slated for extermination included the carriers of the germ and those directly exposed to it as well as those already infected (1991: 181).

Daniel Frontalini and Maria Cristina Caiati indicate that it was not necessarily terrorism that was likened to a disease, but specifically left-wing violence. Using medical terminology themselves, they claim that right wing terrorist groups such as the “Comando Libertadores de América” and the “Triple A” acted as “the ‘antibodies’ of any ‘healthy’ nation, compelled to ‘defend’ ‘healthy,’ crystallized social values, as opposed to the left-wing groups, which attempted to change those values” (21). Though they do not refer specifically to the use of medical terminology by the military, their repeated use of quotations calls to attention this rhetorical contrivance, highlighting the commonality of its usage. It is interesting to note that, besides a passing comment by Corradi about the economy, the above researchers discuss the military’s use of medical imagery primarily in reference to the guerrilla and their violent struggle against the armed forces and right wing terrorism.

The use of medical discourse was not limited to the military’s expression of subversion, but also provided the diagnosis for an equally contaminated democratic

system, economy and national spirit. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the proliferation of medical discourse during the Process, the means by which it was conflated with other discourses privileged by the military, and how each executed its rhetorical function. It also investigates the interdiscursive means by which institutions were able to be mutually supportive in their contribution to the military's project. Finally, it investigates how different discourses came to complement each other by focusing on the absorption of military and political language by medical discourse, a reversal of the examples cited above.

In their declaration shortly after the coup, the military junta explicitly signaled subversion, along with corruption, demagoguery, and the mishandling of the economy, as one of the principal reasons for military intervention in the government (reproduced in Gente, 24/3/76: 7). This "dirty war" against guerrilla terrorism was repeatedly presented with medical jargon, often in extreme life-threatening terms. The following statement by Admiral Emilio Massera, general commander of the Navy and a member of the governing junta, is exemplary: "The problem should be seen as an existential pathology. I have said it before: this is a fight between those of us who are in favor of life, and those who are in favor of death" ("Entrevista con Massera," Gente, 28/4/77: 6). Subversion is a social "pathology" which is here described as "existential," as a fight between life and death. The symptoms of this pathology are individuals forming a group, "*those* who are in favor of death." However, because the military antibodies, "we who are in favor of life" ("*los que estamos en favor de la vida*"), are also engaging in a death struggle, a "war," the metaphorical allusion must refer to the death threat posed to the social body. Those in

“favor of life,” who are in other statements referred to as “antibodies,” must preserve by the same means that which those in “favor of death” are trying to eradicate. It is the use of medical discourse that allows for a differentiation between two sets of individuals whose behavior has the common denominator of violence and death. The articulation of each group is defined as those who support the disease and those who are fighting to quell it. While here it is evident that the individuals “in favor of death” are the “disease,” they are not necessarily infected with disease themselves. Their verbal representation as disease is largely metaphorical, while the disease itself is an articulation of terrorist violence, coming from the left or right, that people have actually experienced or witnessed.

While above empirical violence is articulated by a medical discourse that represents the real violence as disease, and extends this metaphorically to *some* individuals who perpetrate that violence, in other circumstances this metaphor was made material. As the social agent (the guerrilla) was incorporated as a whole into medical discourse, individuals were necessarily affected by the same malady. In other words, the metaphorical sickness of a social group was presented as the actual medical diagnosis of several, or all, of its constituents. The reverse is also true: the “scientific” study of individuals would reveal a certain pathology, which would then serve to legitimize the extension of this diagnosis to a group as a whole. As the individuals cannot be said to be infected by the same diseases affecting the (social) body, infirmity is transposed to the mind; there is therefore a transition from a physical ailment to a psychological one. “The female guerrilla is a psychopath” (“*La guerrillera es una sicópata*”) (Somos, 10/12/76: 16), one article in a series on women’s history in the guerrilla, exemplifies the means by which this tautological

argument is structured. The article states that despite terrorism's novelty in Argentine society, which has meant that it has "not yet been able to be studied scientifically and exhaustively," consultation with psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists has nevertheless confirmed the veracity of its title:

It has been biologically proven that in the entire animal world the female is, by nature, passive, conservative and aggressive [sic.] only when she must defend her young. Woman does not escape this natural tendency, although cultural processes may lead her to adopt some traditionally male roles. But when we observe that some women reach the point of abandoning their children and their homes for the sake of the ideologies that sustain terrorism, we are evidently in the presence of psychopathic women whose sickness is stronger than their ancestral instinct.⁵

The sciences of biology and psychiatry are effectively manipulated to not only decry the corrosion of the traditional role of the woman within patriarchy, which is unnatural to the extent of being pathological, but also to de-naturalize the ideology which sustains terrorism. This ideology is of course inspired by Marxist thought, and repeatedly condemned by the military junta as such. Having "scientifically" established the malady inherent in the connection of women and terrorist ideology, the article closes with an extrapolation on the nexus between *all* subversion and psychopathy: "The dispassionate historical review of this Argentine era may demonstrate that we were confronting a

⁵ I have included the original texts in the notes for all blocked quotations, as well as for other terms or phrases that do not translate adequately. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. "Biológicamente, se ha demostrado que en toda la escala animal la hembra es, por naturaleza, pasiva, conservadora y agresiva [sic] solamente cuando se trata de defender sus crías. La mujer no escapa a esta tendencia natural, aunque los procesos culturales la lleven a equiparse con algunos roles tradicionalmente masculinos. Pero cuando observamos que algunas mujeres llegan a abandonar a sus hijos y sus hogares en aras de las ideologías que sostienen al terrorismo, evidentemente estamos en presencia de mujeres sicópatas cuya enfermedad es más fuerte que el instinto ancestral (Ibid.)."

traveling madhouse whose objectives, disguised as ideology, were murder and suicide” (Ibid.). Science, which always purports to be material, has been deployed to diagnose society’s illness by examining the individual, ultimately revealing ideology as both the cause of the ailment of the latter and the symptom of the former. This nefarious ideology is the nexus between individual psychopathy (material, because diagnosed by science) and (material) social violence. Here, it is important to note that besides a method of inquiry, the substance of science as an objective means of viewing the world is contrasted deliberately and forcefully with “ideologies” that sustain terrorism and result in death and suicide. In an ironic twist, these ideologies, which are inspired by Marxism, are here presented as a “false consciousness” which has misled women from their natural state, giving them an inverted perception of the world. It is important to differentiate between the use of the term “ideology” in the article, as it has been discussed heretofore, and the *ideological* use of the concept itself, which is both the means by which the “scientific” methods of the article and its objective position are sustained, as well as the veil which masks the article’s rhetoric.

Besides being directed against subversion, the medical discourse was the means by which other political problems were articulated, including both the Peronist government that the regime had ousted and the society which was both responsible for, and subjected to, its politics. The lead article of Gente on the day of the coup d’état illustrates the use of medical terms to legitimize the overthrowing of the government:

The diagnoses coincided: a power void, an outbreak of violence, generalized corruption, administrative disarray, economic derailment, social

chaos. No one wanted this to happen, but there are many responsible for this having had to happen.⁶

The “diagnosis” emphasizes the *need* for a state that can centralize power. Unlike the Peronist regime, which may have had a legitimate claim to power but suffered from an inability to exercise it, the military are legitimized from the moment they take the state and centralize power. A traditional definition of the state holds that one such expression of this power is the monopoly of legitimate violence.⁷ By establishing a monopoly of all violent acts, the military hoped to claim legitimacy in their control of the state. Nevertheless, right-wing violence which was independent of the state was justified in medical terms as a means of terminating the illness of rampant left-wing violence, confirming the observations of Frontalini and Caiati regarding the distinction between left and right wing terrorism:

This is a fight against an enemy that kills indiscriminately and with impunity: men, women, kids. That enemy generates antibodies. This is, at a given stage of the struggle, inevitable. Nevertheless, even the president of the country has declared himself to be against violent acts not exercised by the forces of security.⁸

⁶ “Los diagnósticos eran coincidentes: vacío de poder, desborde de la violencia, corrupción generalizada, desorden administrativo, descarrilamiento económico, caos social. Nadie quiso que esto ocurriera, pero hay muchos responsables de que haya tenido que ocurrir” (“Nuevo gobierno,” Gente, 24/3/76: 3).

⁷ While there are several contending definitions of the state in political science, the Weberian tradition defines it as an organism of the nation that has the right to exercise violence legitimately. Weber defined the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (cited in Chilcote, 98).

⁸ “Se lucha contra un enemigo que mata a mansalva y sin discriminación: hombres, mujeres, chicos. Ese enemigo genera anticuerpos. Es, en cierta etapa de la lucha, inevitable. Sin embargo el propio presidente de la Nación se ha pronunciado contra los actos violentos no ejercidos por las fuerzas de seguridad” (“El caso de la biblia cuestionada,” Gente, 28/10/76: 13).

The closing note in this statement (interestingly, in response to a religious issue) brings to the fore the preeminence of the state as the sole entity capable of exercising violence legitimately. The “antibodies” are condoned, as they play an instrumental role in the eradication of the wholesale and indiscriminate violence waged by the guerrillas. Ironically, the prescription for the “outbreak of violence” is violence, just as it was with Massera’s “existential pathology” discussed above. Violence is also a marker of authority and legitimacy for the state: it acts defensively, replacing an absence of legitimacy coming from traditional political and democratic institutions (political parties, Congress), while a propagandistic offensive discredits each of those political institutions that did not support the military.

The democratic system was itself fraught with maladies in desperate need of a cure. Upon taking over the government the junta claimed that, unlike the “Revolución Argentina” that brought the military to power in 1966, their intention was to safeguard democracy and reinstate it when it could function without the threat of subversion and corruption. Democracy would need to be cleansed of maladies which kept it from functioning as it should. A week after the coup Gente published an article (“Moralidad, idoneidad, eficiencia,” Gente, 1/4/76: 12-13) that gave the military history of the months leading up to the coup, and which both reflected the dire need for its intervention as well as its reluctance to interrupt democracy until it had completely “exhausted” itself. The military, reads the article, had started preparing to intervene as soon as “the initial symptoms of a power void indicated that a rectification via classic institutional channels would be unlikely: by the government, its party or Congress” (12). Though the armed

forces were vigilant of the pulse of democratic institutions, they would only take power were it absolutely necessary. After Videla had aborted a coup attempt by the Air Force at the end of 1975, he demanded “deep and patriotic solutions” of the government, patiently waiting for it to “make a last effort to ensure that the power void and the consequent danger of national chaos were resolved by the specifically political antibodies of the system” (12). To sum up in the medical jargon which runs throughout the article: the symptoms of disease had been diagnosed with anticipation, but until the patient was beyond possible recuperation by its own forces, by use of its own antibodies, the “doctor” did not opt to take action.

The prescription handed down by the military was justified by problems that democracy was unable to overcome. In an article that compared Argentina to Chile, these are pithily reiterated:

The Chilean junta, however, has announced the intention of promoting “*a sense of democracy*” without philosophically specifying its contents. Videla, on the other hand, is the spokesman of the military’s thought, which thus far has been unequivocal: more than an electoral method, democracy is a way of life. Its sicknesses are subversion, corruption and demagoguery, all of which must be eradicated precisely because they serve as banners for Marxism so that any totalitarian venture can be made more attractive.⁹

⁹ “La Junta chilena, en cambio, ha anunciado la intención de promover “*un nuevo sentido de democracia*” sin especificar filosóficamente en que consiste. Videla en cambio, es vocero de un pensamiento militar hasta ahora inequívoco: la democracia es una forma de vida más que un método electoral, y la subversión, la corrupción y la demagogia son sus enfermedades a ser erradicadas porque, precisamente, sirven al marxismo como bandera para que cualquier aventura totalitaria tenga más encantos. (“Despejando el camino,” *Somos*, 19/11/76: 9)”

The medical discourse is here metamorphosed into a philosophy of action that goes well beyond the eradication of “subversion.” As in their declaration, democracy itself is not the problem, but rather the way it was practiced by the Peronist government, and most importantly, by certain key individuals. After the coup, many were pursued for alleged corruption. Demagoguery, a charge more difficult to substantiate in material terms, was no less frequently implied. President Isabel Perón’s “consuming ambition” was the subject of a four week series of articles. Minister of Social Welfare, José López Rega, was followed to his hideaway in Spain and several articles were written about his attempts to conjure the spirit of Juan Perón’s first wife, Evita. Minister of the Economy under Isabel Perón, José Ber Gelbard, was divested of his Argentine nationality and pursued by authorities for fraud. All were subjects of biographies by either Gente or Somos. Each article accentuated the extent to which they had abused their positions within democratic institutions and led the nation to what the military perceived as an advanced state of decay. The repetition of the charge of corruption did not exclusively condemn the behavior of those individuals, which would have required relatively few legal proceedings, but was projected as a contagion onto society as a whole:

Corruption becomes a stable and progressive reality, self-generating and contagious. Corruption goes from the individual to his accomplices, from the accomplices to the general environment. That environment eventually becomes impassive before the reality of evil.¹⁰

¹⁰ “La corrupción se convierte en realidad estable y progresiva, genera y contagia. Corrupción pasa del individuo a sus cómplices, de los cómplices al ambiente general, y el ambiente acaba volviéndose impasible ante la realidad del mal” (“Quién es y qué piensa Monseñor Tortolo,” Gente, 8/1/76: 16).

While the disease of corruption starts with the individuals, such as those whose names were repeatedly convoked in relation to this subject, it is also a reality that is stable and a constant threat to the “general environment.” Rather than a few legal proceedings, what is implied is the need for a thorough cleansing of the social body that goes well beyond the infamous politicians who had led the government.

Completely purging the social body would require time. The medical discourse was the means by which the shortcomings of the previous administration, alleged corruption and demagoguery, were highlighted, as well as the means by which the junta projected its own governance into the indefinite future. Without repeating the illnesses, the quote below suggests the necessary prescription for recovering from the ailments:

After March 24, 1976, you felt relieved. You felt that order was being reestablished. That the entire sick social body was receiving a transfusion of saving blood (*sangre salvadora*). Good. But that optimism --at least in excess-- is also dangerous. Because every seriously sick body requires a lot of time to recuperate, and meanwhile the bacilli continue their work of destruction.¹¹

Given that the “seriously infirm body” would need a long time to recuperate, one could surmise from the above quote that many transfusions of “*sangre salvadora*” would be necessary. Besides the intended medical allusion, “blood,” an image with a rich allegorical tradition, is a mark of other discourses which were equally as important in the regime’s

¹¹ I have chosen to keep “*sangre salvadora*” in the Spanish, as “*salvadora*” has a double meaning which is at once religious, suggesting “redeeming,” and medical, suggesting “life-saving.” “Después del 24 de marzo de 1976, usted sintió un alivio. Sintió que retornaba el orden. Que todo el cuerpo social enfermo recibía una transfusión de sangre salvadora. Bien. Pero ese optimismo -por lo menos en exceso- también es peligroso. Porque un cuerpo gravemente enfermo necesita mucho tiempo para recuperarse, y mientras tanto los bacilos siguen su trabajo de destrucción” (“Carta abierta a los padres,” *Gente*, 16/12/76: 78).

articulation of hegemony. Discourses of nationalism and religion are two such examples. Representing Christ's martyrdom, "*sangre salvadora*" is perhaps the most powerful symbol of the Church. It was shed for our sins, and represents the possibility of forgiveness, redemption and the recuperation of lost souls by the Kingdom of God. The "*sangre salvadora*" in this use of religious discourse is that which will save the nation from the threat of atheistic Marxism. While this passage convokes the blood of the Savior, it also makes direct allusion to the shedding of other blood. In reference to the fight against "subversion," President Videla guaranteed the victory of the armed forces: "The generous blood of its heroes and martyrs affirms it thus" ("Carta abierta al señor presidente," *Gente*, 8/4/76:6). To aver the armed forces' devotion to their new institutional responsibility, the President used a phraseology that conflates religious discourse, referring to the blood of martyrs, with a nationalist discourse, referring to the blood of heroes. It is the reassertion of these discourses, represented as a transfusion of blood, that will save the "social body."

"Blood" also plays an instrumental role in the discourse of nationalism. Blood and kinship ties have long been underlined as defining characteristics of nationalism, having been present as an ideological bond from Ferdinand and Isabella's Spain to Hitler's Germany. Argentine nationalism shares this tendency. One of the first ideologues of nationalism, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento wrote a seminal work that would become the cornerstone of Argentine literature as well as a significant treatise on nation building. *Facundo: entre la civilización y la barbarie*, along with *Conflicto y armonía de las razas en América*, posits the opposition between European cultures, civilization, and those

indigenous to America, barbarism, as the force defining the trajectory of Latin American history. In the second of these works the parallel between “blood” and race is drawn repeatedly. For instance:

Colonies are established and nations are founded only by the people who possess all the social elements of modern life in its blood, in its institutions, in its industry, in its science, in its customs and its culture [...] The uninhabited world is colonized by privileged races that possess all those qualities.¹²

There is blood which builds nations, and there is blood “which ruins all that it touches” (1993: 409). The barbarism must be subjected to the blood of civilization if a modern nation is to be achieved. In specific reference to Argentina, Sarmiento writes:

Combined to our being as a nation are indigenous races, primitive, prehistoric and devoid of the rudiments of civilization and government; and only the school can take to the soul the seed that in adult years will develop social life; and introducing this vaccination, to extirpate the death that will befall us from the barbarism that runs in our veins, has been a lifelong dedication of he who writes these pages, though the political objective of his undertaking has not always been understood.¹³

The nation depends on its institutions, here the schools that would ensure that the seed of civilization will develop, and its individuals, who must be vaccinated to remove the death

¹² “No coloniza ni funda naciones sino el pueblo que posee en su sangre, en sus instituciones, en su industria, en su ciencia, en sus costumbres y cultura todos los elementos sociales de la vida moderna. [...] Colonizan el mundo deshabitado por las razas privilegiadas los que poseen todas aquellas dotes” (1993: 409).

¹³ “Están mezcladas a nuestro ser como nación, razas indígenas, primitivas, prehistóricas, destituidas de todo rudimento de civilización y gobierno; y sólo la escuela puede llevar al alma el germen que en la edad adulta desenvolverá la vida social; y a introducir esta vacunación, para extirpar la muerte que nos dará la barbarie insumida en nuestras venas, consagró el que esto escribe su vida entera, aunque no fuese siempre comprendido el objeto político de su empeño” (1993: 410).

of barbarism in their veins. The nation is one made up of many, but for the nation to function as it should, each individual must have the bad blood extirpated from his/her veins, an operation that can only be accomplished under the auspices of a national institution. The more an individual is within the institution, the less prolonged will be their turn under the surgical knife; those who have only bad blood do not belong to the nation. This institutional conception of the nation, as well as the blood that bonds them together, was articulated during the Process with a similar medical discourse. During the military regime, however, the democratic institutions that Sarmiento would have preferred were not present.

The notion that there is “good” blood which provides a cure when transfused into an ailing body overrun by “bad” or “contaminated” blood is not new. This legacy was exploited by the Process, which used it for nationalistic purposes to garner political capital *without* appealing to ethnic antagonisms.¹⁴ Instead, the military appealed immediately to nationalist sensibilities in order to separate those contaminated from those who were “Argentine.” As Frontalini and Caiati discuss, those who were “subversives” were not considered to be Argentine. Army commander, Agustín Feced, stated: “The subversive Marxist terrorist cannot and should not be recognized as a brother only because he was born in our Fatherland. Ideologically, he has lost the honor of calling himself Argentine” (cited in Frontalini and Caiati: 22). Ideology is the means by which brothers can be

¹⁴ Jacobo Timmerman’s *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* is a testimony of how religious and ethnic scapegoating was indeed a part of the regime, though it was not common currency in greater society.

recognized; those who subscribe to Marxism have broken the fraternal, consanguine bond that defines the nation and are therefore not Argentine. Donald Hodges' statement, quoted above, echoes this sentiment in medical terms: "those infected by the bug of subversion automatically lost their right to citizenship" (1991: 181).

The military's use of blood ties, in a society that is largely ethnically homogenous, is a means by which they could espouse nationalism without the support of civic and political institutions. In an essay on nationalism, Clifford Geertz argues that new states are simultaneously motivated by two tendencies: one, which is a desire to "matter," to be recognized as a responsible independent agent, and another which is a desire to build an efficient, modern state. These two aims are often in conflict, as the first, "identity," is often compromised in striving for the second, defined as a practical desire for a higher standard of living or a demand for progress. Geertz refers to them respectively as "primordial" and "civic" ties. Primordial attachments, "congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves" (31). However, Geertz goes on to say that to elevate these ties to the level of political supremacy in the modern state has come to be seen as pathological. Instead, "to an increasing degree national unity is maintained not by calls to blood and land, but by a vague, intermittent, and routine allegiance to a civil state, supplemented to a greater or lesser extent by government use of police powers and ideological exhortation" (31). Of these two characterizations, the second is surely a more apt description of Argentina's national profile, which is neither a "new" state as Geertz defines it, nor ethnically divided. Following Geertz, this implies that the congruity of blood, which only

has an ideological basis, is one of the “exhortations” by which the military appealed to an otherwise nonexistent “primordial” sense of nationalism. That this is a paradox in which the ideology of the Process presented Argentina as both modern and anti-modern has not gone unnoticed:

The ideas of those moral crusaders were reactive and antimodern -- yet Argentine culture is nothing but the product of modern enlightenment. In consequence, right-wing Argentina offered the spectacle of a young country defending mythical old values, of a modern melting pot worshipping traditions it never had, of conservatives with little to conserve (Corradi, 1985: 126).

This explains the use of a modern idea, nationalism, in an antimodern way. It also explains the mutual support between the military and the Catholic Church, an antimodern institution, and the deflection of attention away from the lack of support of other civic and political institutions, themselves quintessentially modern. Finally, it indicates a certain appeal to materialism: it not only confronts the ideology of nationalism against the ideology of Marxism, it counters Marxist materialist doctrine, seizure of the state, with a spurious claim to another materialism, “blood.”

The interdiscursive means by which institutions supported the Process is also evident in the use of the medical discourse by the Church. The official Catholic Church became a major player in the repression unleashed on Argentina during the “dirty war.” Catholic scholar Penny Lernoux states: “Because the Argentine experience so closely resembles the performance of the Church in Nazi Germany, it again raises the question of whether power is more important to the Church than the Gospel imperative to be a witness to the truth” (quoted in Andersen, 185). The Church is one of the institutions of central importance to the “cosmovision” of the military at the helm of the Process, as is

clearly evident in their reiterated claim that the “Western, Christian” values would prevail in the struggle against “atheistic subversion.” This discourse became part of the web of discourses condemning the infiltration of Marxism into Argentina, and was also conflated with medical discourse to decry society’s decay. Where in politics disease was subversion, corruption or demagoguery, and in economics it was inflation, in religion it would be sin. Monseñor Tortolo, vicar of the Armed Forces and personal confessor of General Videla, as well as the archbishop of Paraná and the president of the “Conferencia Episcopal Argentina,” stated in an interview with Gente:

Sin is a necrosis. The dead cells in the cancer proliferate, despite being dead. Sin is a necrosis that enters into the heart of man, in the mind of man, and proliferates. That necrosis finishes off the individual in a minute, and can also put an end to.¹⁵

The effect of this correlation is patent. Disease becomes the signifier by which the signified of sin can be equated with subversion, making religion comprehensible to the layman and politics accessible to the faithful. The use of medical discourse, however, differs from that used in spheres of politics and economics in that it does not relate to an issue of material consequence such as the violence perpetrated by the guerrilla or the diminished buying power of the currency. Instead, the materiality of science is deployed to aid the ecclesiastic discourse in its struggle against the atheism of Marxist ideology, which is always determined, according to its own discourse, by materialism.

¹⁵ “El pecado es una necrosis. Las células muertas en el cáncer proliferan a pesar de muertas. El pecado es una necrosis que entra en el corazón del hombre, en la mente del hombre, y prolifera. Esa necrosis acaba en un momento con el individuo y puede acabar también con la sociedad” (“Quién es y qué piensa Monseñor Tortolo,” Gente, 8/1/76: 16).

Following this paradox of a modern/antimodern Argentina leads to the realization that modernization, particularly of the economic system, was one of the goals of the military that could be implemented only after the ills of modernism, the “pathologies” of fascism, nazism and Marxism, were purged. These ailments are consistently articulated in terms of the Nation, as well as the prolonged nature of the prescribed treatment.

National authorities, which have emerged after an historic calamity, must find the appropriate medicine to cure in life the ailments of the Nation and, after a prudent convalescence, outline the paths of growth.¹⁶

The “growth” to which this citation refers is that of economic development and the path towards modernization. In the realm of economics, a medical discourse was utilized as it was in the political arena: to highlight the mishandling of the economy by the previous regime, again prescribing thorough and prolonged treatment. Martínez de Hoz stated:

Once and for all we must uncover the pot and see which are the country’s ailments so we can attempt to cure them. Trying to halt inflation by fixing maximum prices is to work on the effects of a problem and not its causes. Its like trying to cure a patient by giving him aspirin instead of injecting him with penicillin, which is what he really needs. It is the infection which must be attacked, and not the fever, which is only one of its effects [...] The infection is the deficit of the national budget.¹⁷

¹⁶ “[Las] autoridades nacionales, surgidas tras una calamidad histórica, deben encontrar la medicina apropiada para curar en vida los males de la Nación y, luego de una prudente convalecencia, trazar los caminos del crecimiento” (“Planeamiento: trabajar para el futuro,” *Somos*, 8/10/76: 10).

¹⁷ “De una vez por todas tenemos que destapar la olla y ver cuáles son los males del país para tratar de curarlos. Tratar de frenar la inflación fijando precios máximos es trabajar sobre los efectos de un problema y no sobre sus causas. Es como si uno quisiera curar un enfermo dándole simplemente aspirinas en lugar de inyectarle penicilina que es lo que realmente necesita. Hay que atacar la infección, no lo [sic] fiebre que es uno de sus efectos. [...] La infección es el déficit del presupuesto nacional” (“Dos horas con Martínez de Hoz,” *Gente*, 29/4/76: 7).

Gente underscored the length of the task, claiming that the population must “tolerate the inevitable rise in prices that will continue to be produced, inevitably, until the roots of the illness are cured radically. An endangered patient needs a long period to recuperate. The country --deeply unsettled-- as well. The people must know this first and understand it later” (“La inflación: un enemigo que exige acción corretadora [sic.] y esclarecedora,” Gente, 22/4/76: 3). The prolonged convalescence was placed in the hands of Dr. Martínez de Hoz, who was trusted with the Ministry of the Economy for five years where the average tenure of previous ministers over thirty two years had been eleven and a half months. His economic program was largely designed to be implemented under authoritarian rule (Corradi, 1985: 127).

To better understand the relationship between “subversion” and the medical language used to describe the illnesses, the economy of the era should be deciphered in political terms. Coupled with the elimination of inflation, Martínez de Hoz’s (neo-) liberal economic platform prescribed the opening of the marketplace; an end to all state intervention and a streamlining of government; the elimination of tariffs and the opening of the economy to international competition; an infusion of foreign capital from private investors, the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank; and, the prioritization of sectors in which Argentina would have a comparative advantage. Each of these implies the “flexibilization” of labor --the lowering of wages and the dismantling of union structures- which was accomplished by a two-pronged attack. First, the economy was used to undercut wages. With monetary policies and the “*tablita*,” the real wage was made to fall in relation to the inflation which persisted throughout the military regime. As

the markets had been opened to international competition through the nearly absolute elimination of tariffs, many enterprises went bankrupt, further reducing labor's share of the GDP. The result is that the

proportion of wages and salaries in the national income fell from 47.3 percent in 1974 to 30.8 percent in 1977 - a level roughly maintained through 1978. [...] These were the golden years of the Military Process. Thus labor's share was substantially below levels prior to the coup. This reduction was matched by an absolute fall in real wages. Real wages were reported as having fallen some 40 percent between March 1976 and the end of 1978. The real wage of an unskilled worker was reduced by 40 percent in 1976 alone (Hodges, 1991: 236).

Martínez de Hoz and the economic program of the military regime ensured that labor was disciplined through the rearranging of enterprises and legislation which would disenfranchise the traditional stronghold of Peronism (Corradi, 1985: 128). Charges of corruption and demagoguery were brought against the union brass. Knowing that resistance would be felt from this social agent, which had played a major, if not a lead, role in the previous three decades of Argentine politics, the military also resorted to repression to ensure that the economic program was followed. Ties between the workers, particularly those of the urban industrial sector, and "Marxist subversion" were easily drawn from the very discourse used by the guerrilla; directing the fight against the "dirty war" towards the workers was thus easily justified. The "Ministro de Trabajo," General Horacio Tomás Liendo, stated:

[With] regard to the *subversion* in manufacturing industry, we know that it is intent on developing an intense and active campaign of terrorism and intimidation in the labour sector. It is necessary to become familiar with the methods of operation of subversive activity in manufacturing industry in order to combat and destroy it. [...] But it is worth remembering that *those who deviate from the course taken by the 'Process' in search of individual or group benefit become accomplices of that subversion which must be*

destroyed, as do those who lack the courage to assume the responsibilities imposed by this situation (1986: 369).

This resulted in the disappearance of many workers and especially union members. In *Nunca más*, CONADEP reports that of the cases studied, 48.1 percent were union members, of which 30.2 were blue collar workers (1986: 348). The disappeared and the detained, the object of repression in the political sphere, carried the stigma of “subversion” as a popular refrain of the time, “he wasn’t arrested for nothing” (“*si lo detuvieron, no habrá sido por nada*”) attests.

As discussed above, this object, the “subversive,” was inscribed into political discourse with medical terminology. It was also articulated into economic discourse by the same conflation with medical discourse, though via an ellipsis that referred to the result rather than the cause against which economic, legal and repressive forces were directed. Amidst the medical imagery, surgical terms were particularly emphasized in the regime’s extended ideological metaphor (Corradi, 1985: 123). It is not surprising, therefore, that the specifically surgical terminology used in reference to the guerrilla in political discourse should also be found in that of economics. In an article on the “euphoric” reopening of the stock market (“Lunes 5 de abril: En marcha un nuevo plan,” *Gente*, 8/4/76: 72-75) one subtitle reads “We know what the disease is and the necessary remedy as well” (73), while another reads: “Martínez de Hoz: Diagnosis, operating room, scalpel” (74).¹⁸

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that surgical terminology has resurfaced in another wave of neo-liberal economics in which the real wage of the working class has been lowered significantly. In a speech on the urgency of economic problems President Carlos Menem declared that Argentines should be prepared for “major surgery, without anaesthetic.”

As discussed above, the “social body” has been evoked explicitly and eliptically, as the entity threatened by both “those who are in favor of death,” contagious corruption and sin. The parallel between the Nation and the social body, envisaged as an organic being made up of various parts which operate in tandem, was developed by José Ortega y Gasset in *España invertebrada*. His thought was widely circulated during the Process, due to Ortega’s own right wing leanings as well as his fame in Argentina.¹⁹ Ideologues of the Process exploited his writings, which provided a justification of the biological metaphors used by the military as well as the correction of disease by use of violence. His fame as thinker would allow his ideas to circulate more easily, as well as provide a certain mark of legitimacy for the regime. In *España invertebrada*, Ortega y Gasset uses the same medical terminology which marks the literature produced by the Process. The following quote is representative:

Every page of this rapid survey is intended to correct that myopia which sees social and historical phenomena as political disorders. It is true that the political manifestations form the show window, the outside skin of the social organism, and as such are the first to meet the eye. And it is also true that there are certain national ailments which are mere political disturbances -eruption or infections on the social skin. But when the only thing that is sick in a country is its political life, then the illness is not really serious. The social body will sooner or later recover from such passing ailment. [...] In Spain, unfortunately, this situation is reversed. The illness is not confined to the country’s political life. It is society itself which is sick. It is the head and the heart of almost every Spaniard which is ailing (63-64).

¹⁹ In the preface to the english edition (1937), Mildred Adams states: “Youth [in Spain] adored him with a fervor that amounted almost to worship. All over Spain, and particularly in university towns, young men quoted and copied him. His fame spread to other countries of Spanish speech. He went to the Argentine to lecture, and became as famous in Buenos Aires as he had been in Madrid” (11).

Each of the elements that have been discussed in reference to the Process are contained in this passage: the Nation as a social body; the infection of the organism; the depth of the ailment, which penetrates beyond the visible surface of the political sphere, and the implication of a prolonged treatment; and, the connection between the illness of the country and the ailments affecting its individual constituents. According to Ortega y Gasset, the “invertebration” of Spain has resulted because the masses have refused to be as they should, that is, they have ceased to follow the directing minority. This has resulted in the nation “going to pieces” and society “becoming dismembered” (63). The integrity of the Nation is under threat by various movements coming from below, including those of territorial secession such as regionalism, sectorialism and separatism (26), as well as “particularism” - a situation in which “each group ceases to feel itself part of a whole, and therefore ceases to share the feelings of the rest” (36) - between social classes (41). Force is a justifiable means, and sometimes a final recourse, to ensure the unification and preservation of the Nation (26).

Appealing to both the fame of the intellectual, as well as the heritage of ideas that had been adopted by the Process in the definition of its historic role, Gente resurrected Ortega y Gasset, who died in 1955, in a mock interview (“Así pensaba el hombre que dijo: ‘Argentinos, a las cosas,’” Gente, 28/4/77: 42-46). Posing questions to the late Ortega, the article used excerpts from his books, conferences or correspondence to formulate the responses. Several of the questions revolve around issues of violence and war, including subversion, revolution and the Third World War. The first in this series of questions is as follows: “In the present epoch, when violence seems to be a stigma worldwide, what is

your opinion regarding the use of force? What is its historic mission?" (43). The response is an excerpt from *España invertebrada*, to which has been added a concluding sentence from another source:

As for force, it is not difficult to determine its mission. As deeply as the historic need for the union of two nations may run, there will be opposing and particular interests, caprices, vile deeds, passions and above all else, collective prejudices that have settled themselves superficially on the popular soul (*alma popular*), which will appear as subjected. Force has been presented as the opposite of the spirit or, at least, a spiritual manifestation of an inferior character.²⁰

The removal of the citation from the original context, as well as the change of ending, makes it somewhat opaque. The last sentence, which seems a condemnation of violence and force, does not follow from those preceding it; it is unclear whether force is an example of the "particular interests" and "vile deeds," or if it is the means by which these detours should be rectified. It seems that both are correct, where one is the force of "subversion" and the other the force of order. In the last sentence, force is constructed in contraposition to "spirit," presenting it as one of the "passions" that imposes itself on the "*alma popular*." A juxtaposition of the phrases that accompanied the remainder of the first response in the source, *España invertebrada*, with that which replaced it highlights the other conception of "force" as the necessary means by which those "passions" should be removed. The original paragraph was completed as follows: "None of these is very deep,

²⁰ "En cuanto a la fuerza, no es difícil determinar su misión. Por muy profunda que sea la necesidad histórica de la unión entre dos pueblos, se oponen a ella intereses particulares, caprichos, vilezas, pasiones, y más que todo eso, prejuicios colectivos instalados en la superficie del alma popular que va a aparecer como sometida. Se ha hecho de la fuerza lo contrapuesto al espíritu o, cuando más, una manifestación espiritual de carácter inferior" (43-44).

either historically or humanly. They belong in the realm of human pathology, and are stumbling blocks for history. The only effective weapon against them is that form of political surgery, the power of force” (1937: 26-27). The medical imagery resonates and clearly justifies the use of force in the process of national unification and preservation, but the “pathologies” against which this force should be directed are lacking “depth,” both historically and humanly.

The lack of depth emphasizes the superficial nature of the “caprices” and “vile deeds,” and suggests that they may easily be removed. This does not coincide with the agenda of the Argentine Process, which intended to extirpate vices that had taken root over the previous three decades and which continuously presented this as a prolonged process. As the quote above attests, optimism should be held in check, as a seriously infirm body needs a long time to recuperate. To justify the imposition of martial law and rule, this prolongation would be emphasized: the military had to give the opposition depth and strength, constructing it as an enemy waging a “dirty war” against Argentine society. The juxtaposition of force and “spirit” does exactly this: instead of force becoming a “caprice,” it is endowed with a spirit, i.e. not only a “political eruption,” but rather something that penetrates beyond the superficiality of the organism’s skin. The force manifested by this “spirit” is one that must be met not only with an equal and opposite force, but also with an alternative “cosmovision.” Jorge L. García Venturini, a philosopher whose commentaries were often published in both Gente and Somos and who,

like Ortega y Gasset, provided intellectual depth to the ideology espoused by the Process, discusses this point:²¹

Marxism influences the youth because it presents itself as a cosmovision that pretends to give a response to all questions. We have no recourse but to confront this cosmovision with another. And I believe that we have it. The Western tradition has elements that are sufficiently rich, valuable and durable. They must be given shape, brought up to date. A cosmovision of liberty must confront a cosmovision of subjection. I call this cosmovision, with its Hebrew or Greek roots and its Christian synthesis, inspiration and later contributions, the **Spirit of Occident** (*Espíritu de Occidente*). And I call it spirit because it can become embodied (*encarnarse*) in other areas.²²

As his closing statement declares, he has chosen to call it “spirit” because it can manifest itself in various areas, leading the confrontation between the two “spirits” back to the means by which they materially confront each other. Against the forceful manifestations of the Marxist “spirit” which have imposed themselves on the “*alma popular*,” a counterforce, itself the manifestation of the “Espíritu de Occidente” must expunge those “caprices” and “passions” that are hampering national unity. Where Ortega y Gasset considered “pathologies” to be superficial whims that deviated from the national project, during the Process they were seen as a deeper expression of deviance from “Occidental culture.”

²¹ Venturini defines his own intellectual profile by listing some philosophers who have influence him. Besides Ortega y Gasset, he also mentions Heidegger, Sartre, Croce and Maritain as well as other thinkers such as Shakespeare, Whitman and, “por supuesto, los autores de los libros sagrados” (“Un filósofo que habla de cosas serias y también de ‘chantas,’” *Gente*, 18/11/76: 78).

²² “El marxismo tiene eco en la juventud porque se presenta como una cosmovisión que pretende dar respuesta a todas las preguntas. Frente a esa cosmovisión solamente nos queda levantar otra cosmovisión. Y creo que la tenemos. La tradición occidental tiene elementos suficientemente ricos, valiosos y todavía perdurables. Hay que darles forma, ponerlos a la altura de los tiempos. Levantar una cosmovisión de libertad frente a una cosmovisión de sometimiento. A esta cosmovisión, con sus raíces hebreas o griegas y su síntesis e inspiración cristianas y sus aportes posteriores, yo le llamo el **Espíritu de Occidente**. Y le llamo espíritu porque puede encarnarse en otras áreas” (“Un filósofo que habla de cosas serias y también de ‘chantas,’” *Gente*, 18/11/76: 79; emphasis in original).

It is evident that Karl Marx as a philosopher, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, nazi fascism, or Lenin and Joseph Stalin in the area of Soviet communism, are all products - nefarious, sickly, but very tangible - of Occidental culture. That is why García Venturini defines them as “*pathological*.”²³

A good part of the military’s propaganda was geared towards the construction of a “total war” which threatened the whole of Argentine society. The next question in the mock interview with Ortega y Gasset highlights the conception of force as the necessary means by which those “passions” should be removed. The following question reads: “That is, in part, the aim of pacifist groups. Incidentally, what is your opinion of pacifism and the war of the Occidental world against subversion?” (Ibid.: 44), to which the following response is contrived:

The pacifist sees war as a form of damage, a crime or a vice. But forgets that, both prior to that and beyond that, war is an extreme effort made by men to resolve certain conflicts. War is not an instinct, it is an invention. It led to one of the greatest contributions, the basis for all of civilization: the discovery of discipline. All other forms of discipline proceed from the original, which was military discipline. Pacifism is lost, and becomes useless bigotry, if it ignores that war is an outstanding and formidable technique of life and for life.²⁴

²³ “Es evidente que tanto Karl Marx como filósofo, o Adolf Hitler y Benito Mussolini por un lado, el nazi-facista, o Lenin y José Stalin en el ámbito del comunismo soviético, son todos productos -nefastos, enfermizos, pero bien tangibles - de la cultura occidental. Es por ello que García Venturini los define como ‘*patológicos*’” (“El espíritu de Occidente,” *Somos*, 19/11/76: 13; emphasis in original).

²⁴ “El pacifista ve en la guerra un daño, un crimen o un vicio. Pero olvida que, antes que eso y por encima de eso, la guerra es un enorme esfuerzo que hacen los hombres para resolver ciertos conflictos. La guerra no es un instinto, sino un invento. Ella llevó a uno de los mayores descubrimientos, base de toda civilización: al descubrimiento de la disciplina. Todas las demás formas de disciplina proceden de la primigenia, que fue la disciplina militar. Ese pacifismo está perdido y se convierte en nula beatería si no tiene presente que la guerra es una genial y formidable técnica de vida y para la vida” (Ibid.: 44).

The logical progression of the interview leads from the nation to the spirit, and from there to the material. This reveals a discursive exploitation of the vulgar conception of “ideology” similar to that of the “guerrillera sicópata.” By drawing a distinction between force and spirit, it highlights the confrontation of the ideology of Marxism and the “Espíritu del Occidente,” which it then itself decries as the aim of pacifists. The espousal of a base materialism thereafter highlights the idealism of the pacifist precisely because it has no material base, while simultaneously calling attention to the ideology of the military, which is stable insofar as there exists a logical congruence between its “spirit” and its discipline.

In Ortega y Gasset’s contrived response, war is presented as both necessary and fruitful. The technique of war has led to the formation of the basis of society: the discovery of discipline. To lose sight of this, as a pacifist, as one who does not believe in war as a means of solving social conflict, is to show a lack of appreciation for war as a technique of life and for life. Ortega y Gasset’s conception of war presents it as a means of ensuring the continuance of life, insofar as it is “for life.” This statement, which formulates struggle as a life-affirming process because it has provided one of the bases of society, is not dissimilar from Admiral Massera’s definition of struggle as a fight between those “in favor of life” and “those in favor of death.” Not only do both guarantee the continued life of the social body despite the death of certain individuals, but presents their demise as *requisite* to its survival. Both underline the necessity of armed struggle, Ortega y Gasset conceiving it in general terms as necessary to the health of society, and Admiral Massera

envisaging it as a practical historic necessity to ensure that “those in favor of death” do not prevail.

Michel Foucault’s conception of discipline is similar to that presented by Ortega y Gasset in this quote, sharing the opinion of its martial roots and subsequent dispersion through society. His treatise on this subject, *Discipline and Punish*, explores how this idea was adopted by various other institutions of society and the means by which these imposed it upon individuals. According to Foucault, institutions are responsible for molding “docile bodies” into a distributed, organized set of forces that are, to an extent, self-controlling. The prison, he claims, is the most severe institution imposing this discipline precisely because it serves to provide, by force if necessary, the discipline that other institutions have failed to guarantee. As such, Foucault’s study provides an opportune means of drawing the lines between a medical discipline, which he analyses alongside those of the schools, the barracks and the workshop, and the punishment of individuals who defy institutionalization. While punishment is certainly fitting to the present study of the Process, as is its orientation towards so many who had chosen a means of expression that fell outside the limits of institutional recognition and control, it is no less important to investigate how individuals discipline themselves under the influence of discourse.

Foucault sketches a definition of discipline as follows:

‘Discipline’ may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology. And it may be taken over either by ‘specialized’ institutions (the penitentiaries or ‘houses of correction’ of the nineteenth century), or by institutions that use

it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals) (1995: 215).

Institutions, such as those affiliated with medicine, use discipline in the formation of a power-knowledge through an investigation of the objectified individual, a process that Foucault traces to the Inquisition, claiming this to be a persistent element intrinsic to the disciplines (1995: 226). It is necessary to understand that the various 'techniques' that constitute discipline are combined in a complex web that places power and knowledge in a relationship of mutual reinforcement. This link, which led to the transformation of the hospital and the school into "apparatuses such that any mechanism of objectification could be used in them as an instrument of subjection, and any growth of power could give rise in them to possible branches of knowledge," would ultimately make possible "within the disciplinary element the formation of clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, the rationalization of labour" (1995: 224). The individual, which is both the object of discipline and constructed by it, is the nexus of this web of techniques so fundamental to the composition of power and knowledge.

The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'. We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (1995: 194).

Writing, along with the production of discourse, was, and continues to be, one of the "fundamental conditions of a good medical 'discipline', in both senses of the word" (1995: 190). The second sense of "discipline" to which Foucault is referring, is discipline as a

means of controlling discourse through a series of accepted objects, methods, rules and definitions, techniques and tools that not only regiment the parameters between true and false statements internal to itself, but also prescribes, externally, a certain use of discourse that must first of all be “within the true” to be accepted (1972: 222-224). Medical discourse, then, falls within both senses of “discipline” and reveals that, when directed to the individual, it moves beyond metaphor to an expression of power that is the material basis by which this object is constructed.

While the medical discourse was used to express the necessary extirpation of disease from the social body, it was also materially present as the force that disciplined “diseased” individuals who found themselves outside a new hegemony of institutions. The testimonial accounts compiled in the CONADEP final report indicate the presence of medical discourse in the clandestine detention centers as well as in reference to torture.

One victim of torture testified:

Despite the bonds on the ‘grill’ (*parrilla*) one jumps, twists, moves about and tries to avoid contact with the burning, cutting iron bars. The electric prod (*picana*) was handled like a scalpel and the ‘specialist’ would be guided by a doctor who would tell him if I could take any more. After a seemingly endless session they untied me and resumed their questioning (1986: 30).²⁵

While another stated:

When I took off my blindfold, I could hardly recognize myself. I was black with marks, as if I’d been rolling in barbed wire, covered in burns from cigarettes and the electric scalpel; I was the picture of misfortune (*mapa*

²⁵ “Parrilla” refers to the springs of a bed through which electric current was channeled. The torture victim was lain atop the springs and tied to the legs. “Picana” is a prod which was used to apply electrical shocks directly to the victim.

de la desdicha). The 'electric scalpel' cuts, burns and cauterizes. [...] I still have scars from it on my back. Electrodes or scalpel? (1986: 32)

The chosen victims of torture were those individuals who were not only envisaged as having acted outside the limits of institutional control, and specifically of those that formed the hegemony of the Process, but also those who were believed to harbor information of other "subversion." Their disciplining was undertaken by various techniques, executed by the military with the aid of the medical, that placed the individual at the center of a complex web of power-knowledges. The medical would use knowledges it had garnered through its institutions, expressed through discourse and forged into a "discipline." The investigative process outlined by Foucault is here overseen by two "specialists," one military and one medical. The result of the application of knowledge from one strand of the web would result in the discovery of new knowledge which would at once reinforce the military institution, as it would construct the individual as "subversive." This construction of the individual had material consequences. Both military and medical marks were written on the body of its victims - the "picture of misfortune" (*mapa de la desdicha*) was engraved by the "electrodes" and the "scalpel."

While the material weight of science was used offensively against Marxist ideology and practice, it was also used to provide an anchor for the Process' own ideologies. The medical discourse was one of several that the Process used to articulate its hegemony, which as described by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe is a "nodal point" where various discourses intersect within the "field of discursivity." The ecclesiastical and nationalist discourses, as well as those surrounding the family, history and liberal economics, were others that constituted the nodal point supporting the military regime

upon its installation in power. The institutions controlling these discourses, honoring and disarming them (Foucault, 1972: 216), were equally responsible in sustaining the military. As these institutions form the pillars of society, and are united under a single ideology, that of the ruling class (Althusser), they sustain not only the regime, but the integrity of the complex of institutions to which they belong. The primary means by which this is done is through the deployment of discourse. In the political discourse of the military regime's propaganda the relationship of mutual reinforcement between medical science and the claim to power is patent. Thus far, this paper has exposed the extent to which medical discourse had been used to legitimize the military's economic, political and ideological projects by interdiscursive means (Gómez-Moriana, 1980). However, the conflation of medical discourse with those of economics and politics did not occur exclusively within the context of the latter, but medical discourse itself was also marked by military and political discourses.

The popularization of medicine proliferated in Gente and Somos after March 24, 1976. Articles covered the medical institution from various angles: distinguished doctors, issues of ethics, medical salaries, operations, clinics, and an assortment of diseases. The articles on disease are indicative of the infiltration of military language into the discourse of medicine: "A public enemy that must be eliminated" (Gente, 19/8/76), "Rabies: death on the loose"²⁶ (Somos, 26/11/76), "The worst endemic disease from which the country is

²⁶ This echoes the words from a speech by Admiral Massera: "No vamos a permitir que la muerte pueda andar suelta en la Argentina. Lentamente, casi como para que no nos diéramos cuenta, una máquina de horror fue desatando su iniquidad sobre los desprevenidos y los inocentes, en medio de la incredulidad de algunos, de la complicidad de otros y el estupor de muchos" ("Los muertos por la patria son también el hoy," Gente, 11/11/76: 4).

suffering” (Somos, 17/12/76). More exhaustive in its application of military terminology, an article on allergy is worth quoting at length:

The organism has at its disposal an immunological army: they are the antibodies that fight when there is an external aggression. They could be divided into, metaphorically speaking, the “infantry” which consists of the *circulantes* and the “heavy artillery” which are the lymphocytes. When a pollen enters the organism, for example, the antibodies take note of it, memorize its shape, integrate it into their information “archive” of enemy irritants and act against it by releasing defensive substances that isolate and eliminate it. That is how immunoglobulin behaves. Now, within this battalion, there may be a “misdirected” group, “soldiers who are incapable of defending, due to an error of information, and that instead of fighting against the intruder become its accomplices or attack it mistakenly” [sic.]. These are the **reagins**. That inept soldier provokes an exaggerated reaction, overly violent, not adjusted to the laws of equilibrium that regulate the process, not adjusted to an entire logistical structure of the organism. Hence, disequilibrium is produced.²⁷

Where the “social body” in economic, religious and political discourse was a representation of an entity under threat by various “illnesses,” such as individuals “in favor of death,” in medical discourse this relationship would be reconfigured as a threat to the individual in material terms. The social ills could potentially be internalized by every individual who does not follow prescriptions of sanctioned institutions. In another section, “What to do and what not to do,” the article warns against “neighborly advice,”

²⁷ “El organismo dispone de un ejército inmunológico: son los anticuerpos que salen a luchar cuando hay una agresión externa. Podrían dividirse, metafóricamente, en la “infantería” integrada por los circulantes y la “artillería pesada” que son los linfocitos. Cuando entra en el organismo un polen, por ejemplo, los anticuerpos toman nota de él, memorizan su forma, lo integran a su “archivo” de información sobre los enemigos irritantes y actúan contra él liberando sustancias de defensa que lo aíslan y lo eliminan. Así actúan las inmunoglobulinas. Ahora bien, dentro de ese batallón, puede haber un grupo “descarriado”, especie de “soldados que no son capaces de defender, por error de información, y que en vez de luchar contra el intruso se hacen cómplices o lo atacan equivocadamente”. Son las **reaginas**. Ese soldado inepto provoca una reacción exagerada, demasiado violenta, no ajustada a las leyes de equilibrio que regulan el proceso, no ajustada a toda una estructura logística que tiene el organismo. Entonces se produce el desequilibrio” (“Todo lo que hay que saber sobre la alergia,” Gente, 4/11/76: 16; emphases in original).

“self medication” and false fears from the street, and insists only on that which can be demonstrated scientifically and objectively. It also asserts that this physical ailment can manifest itself psychologically, echoing the article “La guerrillera sicópata,” discussed above. By re-presenting the individual as a microcosm of the “social body,” the politico-military jargon that runs throughout the article materializes the metaphoric context in which medical discourse was presented in political discourse. The repetition of the conflated discourses is not only necessary, but inexorable.

In the article, the soldiers are divided between those who are fighting for the preservation of the organism and those that have joined the intruders in their fight against the organism. This reemphasizes the bellicose nature of the struggle “of and for life,” to quote Ortega y Gasset, or citing Massera, “between those in favor of death” and those who are “in favor of life.” It differentiates between these by qualifying those who have aligned themselves with the intruder as soldiers who are incapable of defending due to an “error of information.” This underlines the orientation of these soldiers as one which is contingent on knowledge; the consequence is a violent reaction which goes against the “laws of equilibrium” or the organism’s “logistic structure.” Their *ideological* misguidance provokes a subversion of laws, which because of the interdiscursive use of language are at once natural and social, and logistic structure, which is at once natural and rational.

The repeated use of medical discourse to articulate issues of an economic, social, political and religious nature led to its preeminence in Argentine society during the Process. Medical discourse was used to formulate each aspect of society that the military

would attempt to change while in control of the government. These proposed changes were largely implemented by force, which was justified as a consequence of the “war” being waged between the military and terrorists. Each of society’s “illnesses,” whether economic, social or religious, were articulated as a threat to the social body by a medical discourse, while the “cure” that this discourse articulated was administered by the military, which directed repression against specific individuals. The repressive component of this conflation of discourses is most apparent in the testimonies from the CONADEP report, censored to maintain both the secrecy of the torture camps and the integrity of the privileged medical discourse.

The privileged nexus between the military and the medical is also clearly evident in the use of military terms to describe allergies. The medical use of “antibodies” is itself a combative image, in which two entities confront one another, which in part explains the aptitude of this discourse to military undertakings. The readoption of this and other militaristic terms indicates a certain saturation of language in which the military discourse at once adopts and is adopted by the medical, for lack of another means of expression. It also attests the extent to which this confluence of discourses prevailed in society, and the shared “horizon of expectations” of individuals who could understand the terminologies of one in the discourse of the other. Insofar as the receivers of this saturated language rely on a certain exercise of memory (an “archive of information”) of previously learned epistemological categories, values and social hierarchies, themselves learned through language (Gómez-Moriana, 1993: 87), to decipher the messages of any given text, it follows that the collective memory is itself saturated with these conflated discourses.

Chapter II

History

The first chapter demonstrated how the military Process, their ideologues and the propaganda that disseminated their official voice used a discourse of science, and specifically that of medicine, to articulate a vision of society that coincided with and supported their agenda of political, social and economic change. The use of that discourse was largely metaphoric, that is, it drew comparisons between two different things in order to highlight their similarity as a pejorative element that had to be expunged from society. Given that such a comparative construction could express the regime's goals and targeted objects (and as discussed above, individual subjects) as anything that can be sustained by metaphor, a trope that literature has proven to be virtually inexhaustible, the extensive use of a scientific discourse presents several questions. The query of "why science?," which is certainly the first that must be addressed, raises others that necessarily lead back to the first chapter. For instance, how can a discourse of modern biology be reconciled with the discursive hegemony of a regime that appealed to the Church and its antimodern ecclesiastical discourse as a means of justification for what the military itself defined as an effort to refurbish a neglected morality? Or, if there is a clear distinction between science and fiction, which is precisely the means by which the first is marked as "true," then how can a metaphorical use of scientific discourse maintain the same integrity and claim to immanent truth? Finally, why deploy scientific discourse in the struggle against Marxism, which is largely perceived as a philosophy, an interpretation of history, or an "ideology," but shares little with the contemporary notion of science in its methodology, subject matter or application?

The purpose of this chapter is to hazard an answer to each of the above questions by juxtaposing the regime's use of science with another of their favored discourses: **History**. The continuous appeal to "history," either in the limited sense of individual

events, the greater context of the professed “new historical cycle” declared by the regime, or within the philosophical framework of Argentina’s purported place within a “Western, Christian” culture and tradition, reveals it to have been a central preoccupation of the military. Finally, this chapter analyzes the complementary uses of historicism and a philosophy of history, as well as the discursive means by which the regime conflated history and nationalism with science to validate their vision of an “official history.”

The military claimed to have intervened in the government because of what they perceived to be a Marxist threat on several fronts: rampant “subversive” terrorism which took ideological direction from Marxism; the socialist inspired government of Cámpora which was “antithetical” to democracy itself, having been inaugurated in the presence of Chilean president Salvador Allende, who “ruined” democracy in his country,²⁸ and Cuban president Osvaldo Dorticós, special envoy of that communist regime; and, Marxist “infiltration” in universities and the Church. While the first of these, armed guerrilla warfare, was the most evident, it would be understood as a mere manifestation of a Marxist ideology that had rooted itself deeply in society. This point, often repeated, was pithily phrased by General Guillermo Suárez Masón: “Faced with the advance of Marxism's *total* operations it is absurd to think that we have won the war against subversion just because we have eliminated the armed threat”²⁹ (cited in Hodges, 1991: 183). A total advance of Marxism implies, as the general has pointed out, an ideological

²⁸ This image was also produced by Chilean propaganda, undoubtedly for the same ideological reasons. In a study of “El Mercurio” newspaper, Claudio Durán describes its portrayal of the Allende government as follows: “La Unidad Popular, dominada por el marxismo, es incapaz de hacer que el país funcione y ha creado una crisis económica. Ha generado también una terrible ola de violencia por extremistas, criminales y en verdad de todo tipo, que amenaza la libertad, el orden y la democracia tradicionales” (31). Note the parallels between the Chilean and Argentine propaganda.

²⁹ Hodges’ translation was based on the following text, cited in Frontalini and Caiati (19): “Ante el avance de una acción total por parte del marxismo es preciso tener una respuesta integral del Estado. Sería absurdo suponer que hemos ganado la guerra contra la subversión porque hemos eliminado su peligro armado.”

front which inspired individuals, guerrillas and others, to believe that Marxism prescribed a mode of action to incite revolution, and of course, historical change.

While the military could purge university faculties and banish books, both of which it did, it was impossible to proscribe Marxist discourse from society, which had proliferated worldwide with Cold War paranoia and the events in Paris in May 1968. While this is not the place, a study of the Manichean discourse of the Cold War disseminating from the United States as a principle factor in the spread of Marxist discourse might reveal this proliferation as a means by which Marxism could be manipulated and controlled. As discussed above, it has both stimulated the left and been used as justification for reaction from the right. Its presence was amplified dramatically, in the Latin American context, with the Cuban revolution, the activities of Che Guevara in Bolivia and the election of a socialist party in Chile. In Argentina, the two principal means by which Marxist discourse spread were the Cámpora government, which reestablished international ties with Cuba and the Eastern European block, and the guerrilla movement. Marxism was present in a discourse that, rather than being censored, was appropriated and subverted in the discursive hegemony established by the military.

The military's use of historical events, discourses and philosophies must be understood in the context of the Marxist discursive presence in Argentine society at the time of the Process. Of interest to us here is the problematic of a three way distinction that has been made between Marxist philosophy, history and science. Hayden White, a scholar of nineteenth century historiography and the "historical imagination" has indicated that Marx himself purported to have justified the tenets of his ideology on *scientific* grounds through the theory of historical materialism (1978, 68). A distinction must here be drawn between Marx's historical materialism, which is a part of a philosophy of history, and historicist texts. White points out, following a suggestion from Marx himself, "that every historical account of any scope or profundity presupposes a specific set of ideological commitments in the very notions of 'science,' 'objectivity,' and 'explanation'"

which inform it” (68). That Marx should not apply this criteria to his own work can partially be accounted for by the nineteenth century antagonism between philosophy of history, of which he considered his own variation to be scientific, and historicism, which Marx interpreted as always being ideological.³⁰ Whether Marx had successfully accomplished this claim is less important than the fact that he had *considered* himself to have reached an Archimedean scientific point from which to interpret history. This conception of science has had as much resonance within Marxist theories as his notions of historical or dialectical materialism,³¹ not because it has continually provided a justification for his ideology, but precisely because it has become a staple in the vulgar interpretations of that ideology. Science has been transformed from an objective justification, granted because Marx had adhered to its methodological rigors, to a part of a Marxist *doxa* that uses it, consciously or not, to *present* revolution as both a logical and historical necessity because it has been proven scientifically.

This transition in science’s role from a justification for ideology to a part of ideology itself can be explained by the different notions of “science” in the last and present centuries. In the nineteenth century, science did not occupy the hegemonic position that it holds today in the learned disciplines, which it has achieved due to a clearer vision of the nature of scientific explanations held by contemporary philosophers of science, as well as the mastery scientists have gained over the physical world. In the words of Hayden White:

Thus, in our time, a statement such as that made by the late Ernst Cassirer, that “there is no second power in our modern world which may be compared with scientific thought,” can be accepted as a simple fact; it

³⁰ See White’s “The Burden of History” and “Interpretation in History” in *Tropics of Discourse*, as well as his *Metahistory*.

³¹ While Marx coined the term “historical materialism,” the term “dialectical materialism” was used to describe that concept, fundamental to his work, posthumously.

cannot be dismissed as mere rhetoric in the dispute for primacy among the learned disciplines, as it might have been in the nineteenth century (29-30).

A distinction between the human and natural sciences hardened by mid-century (Williams, 278). Eventually, this led to the usage of a new term, "scientism," in the late nineteenth century to refer to the inappropriate "transfer of methods of inquiry [as well as the claim to objectivity] from the 'natural' to the 'human' sciences" (Williams, 280). This in turn marks a distinction, still contemporary, between the notion of science, which refers to the natural sciences, and other forms of study. Marx's own conception of what it meant to write an historical account (be this philosophical or otherwise) justifiable "on scientific grounds" obviously does not coincide with our generalized, contemporary notion of that term. That Marx's work should still be considered "scientific" in the second half of this century should be understood not as an anachronistic misinterpretation of his claim to objectivity, but rather, as an ideological strategy. As White suggests, following Lucien Goldmann, the human sciences differ from the natural sciences in that they are "impelled towards the adoption of ideological positions by the epistemological wagers that their practitioners are forced to make among contending theories of what an 'objective' human science might look like" (69).

Science's prestige, value and purported objectivity, which supposes that it is immune to ideological influences, is what made it a preferred discursive tool for the military regime of the Process of National Reorganization. The ideological struggle over the claim to science, rather than the desire to be scientifically objective, was a part of the Marxist ideology as interpreted by the Argentine military Process. As such, it would be a component of that ideology's "total operations" against Argentine culture to which a

response must be formulated. Before analyzing the means by which they countered this aspect of Marxism it is worthwhile to outline an example of the ideological and political use of “science” by the left.

Louis Althusser’s essay entitled “Lenin et la philosophie” was originally submitted to the Société Française de Philosophie on February 24, 1968. His discussion of Lenin at a time when social tensions in France were on the rise was surely an audacious ideological affront to the academic institution to which his speech was directed. It is this ideological use of Lenin, who Althusser credited with having taken the final step in the consolidation of Marxism as a new philosophy and as a science, as well as the ideological use of science itself, that are of particular relevance to the present study. At the outset of his presentation, Althusser establishes the necessarily ideological nature of science in the anecdotal recounting of an invitation extended by Gorky to Lenin to “talk about philosophy.” The French philosopher interprets Lenin’s refusal to debate as a tactical attitude to ensure Bolshevik unity, claiming that “If science unites, and if it unites without dividing, philosophy divides, and it can only unite by dividing” (26). Herein lies the distinction that Althusser draws between science and ideology, as well as the foundation for an argument that will be fundamentally ideological. To claim that science unites, from a self-declared Marxist perspective which necessarily envisages society as plural and conflictual, is to admit that it is a form of false consciousness. To further distinguish it from ideology is a parodic gesture that at once acknowledges the “scientific” means by

which truth is institutionalized, and having done that, abuse that very discourse by manipulating “science” towards political ends.³²

While Althusser’s ironic use of “science” clearly demonstrates its ideological charge, his essay is also useful in elucidating the inextricability of science from Marx’s notion of history, and more specifically, from “historical materialism.” Althusser posits this link when he says that in the composition of that term “the word materialism registers both the initial rupture with the idealism of philosophies of history and the installation of scientificity³³ with respect to history. Historical materialism thus means: science of history” (40). Althusser seeks to demonstrate that Lenin is responsible for a new practice of philosophy which, no longer a practice of denegation, knows what it does and can act according to what it is. “Philosophy,” he claims, “represents politics in the domain of theory, or to be more precise: *with the sciences* - and, *vice versa*, philosophy represents scientificity in politics, with the classes engaged in the class struggle” (65, emphases in original). It is this new philosophy that, because it *acts*, can assist the “masses” in making history and transforming of the world (68). The idea of “making history” is not particular

³² I would like to clarify that Althusser’s text is not here intended to represent the specific form of Marxism that the military regime of the Argentine Process purported to be fighting, but rather to highlight “science” as a concept in a constellation of ideas linked to Marx’s notion of history, as well as once again demonstrate how, from a political position opposite that discussed in the first chapter, it can be used ideologically.

³³ “Scientificity” does not here refer to “scientism,” a term used, especially in the late nineteenth century, to indicate that the human sciences were inappropriately borrowing methods from the natural sciences (see above). Rather, it is evidence of the difficult task of translating the argot that revolves around the subject. Raymond Williams states: “The specialization of science is perhaps more complete in English than in most comparable languages. This causes considerable problems in contemporary translation, notably from French” (279).

to Marx, but is rather, according to Hannah Arendt, a factor that is immanent to modern thought and the quest for knowledge in both the fields of history and natural science. The underlining nexus between these is the idea of process as stimulated by human action:

Against the despair modern man summoned up the full measure of his own capacities; despairing of ever finding truth through mere contemplation, he began to try out his capacities for action, and by doing so he could not help becoming aware that wherever man acts he starts processes. The notion of process does not denote an objective quality of either history or nature; it is the inevitable result of human action (62).

This “action” was informed by a use of reason, which directed modern man to intervene in nature with experimentation (55) and led to his vision of history as “man-made” (56). This intervention was itself inspired by a growing doubt in the reliability of the senses. According to Arendt, this makes Descartes the father of modern philosophy, as he became the first thinker “thoroughly trained in that ‘school of suspicion’ that, according to Nietzsche, constitutes modern philosophy” (55). What makes the Cartesian dictum *cogito ergo sum* “modern” is the conjunction between thought and being, the *ergo*, as it indicates a new logical mediation; it is a similarly new logical mediation and the way to a new knowledge that makes the telescope a herald of the modern age.³⁴ Following this rational mediation leads Arendt to conclude that what had distinguished nature from history early in the modern age is today a thing of the past: “We know today that though we cannot “make” nature in the sense of creation, we are quite capable of starting new natural processes, and that in a sense therefore we “make nature,” to the extent, that is, that we “make history” (58). What makes Marx unique to historiography, which has inherited this

³⁴ I would like to thank Dr. Gómez-Moriana for this point.

“activist” aspect of modernity, is his teleology. Following the action of the masses and their (scientific) intervention in history must, as Hannah Arendt points out, lead to a teleological conclusion.

What distinguishes Marx’s own theory from all others in which the notion of “making history” has found a place is only that he alone realized that if one takes history to be the object of a process of fabrication or making, there must come a moment when this object is completed and that if one imagines that one can “make history,” one cannot escape the consequence that there will be an end to history (78).

This discursive conflation of science, history and teleology, a characteristic unique to Marxism, had saturated the language in Argentine society. As with all Cold War discourse wielded by the right, there was logical and discursive necessity for the Process to thus use Marxism, and its singular conflation of discourses, in an effort of disarticulation. The military posited a teleological project that, scientifically grounded, could at once allow for human action and intervention while assuring that its outcome would be coherent with the laws of history. Meanwhile, it also endeavored to invalidate the scientific claims of the Marxist “cosmovision,” accentuating the lack of teleological finality that is one of its basic tenets. As discussed in Chapter I, Jorge García Venturini envisaged the struggle in Argentine society as one that must necessarily be fought on ideological terrain and that, while the force of the guerrilla should certainly be met with force from the military, Marxism must be confronted by an antagonistic “cosmovision” which he calls “Espíritu de Occidente.” An article in Somos that takes its title from this concept elaborates on the philosopher’s ruminations.

The philosopher affirms that despite its atheistic and materialistic character Marxism has, over time, succeeded in presenting itself to humanity as a cosmovision that includes the infallibility of historic cycles, the presentation of a communist world with clearly defined characteristics, and even a

“religiosity,” a mythical stratagem that neatly separates the *“paradise”* promised from the nihilism in vogue today, which is destruction and the road to nothingness.³⁵

The principal aim of the passage is to discredit the Marxist “cosmovision” or “ideology,” here understood, in its vulgar sense, as a set of ideas that are coherent with a philosophy or way of life, and expose its ideological self-presentation, that is, its presentation as something that it is not. Its “ideology” espouses the infallibility of historical cycles and a vision of a communist world that is not only lucid and clearly defined, but is also endowed with a “religiosity” that promises a “paradise.” In a word, its “ideology” is teleological - it is bound to the progress of history, has a clear vision of the past and to the future, and avers an utopian finality.

Marxism’s self-presentation is exposed by the article as false and ideological; a sharp contrast is drawn between what it holds as “ideology” and what it is shown to truly be. Teleology and the “mythical stratagem” are the principal methods by which this tergiversation is revealed. The articulation of teleology by means of a religious discourse has a double function. First, it exposes the Marxist “claim” to the discourse as a means by which it misrepresents itself, since at the outset of the article this is constructed as materialistic and atheistic. Second, and more importantly, it precludes the social and political content of Marxism by impregnating the teleological discourse with a religious

³⁵ “El filósofo afirma que el marxismo, pese a su carácter ateo y materialista, ha logrado con el tiempo presentarse a la humanidad como una cosmovisión que incluye la infalibilidad de los ciclos históricos, la presentación de un mundo comunista de características definidas e incluso una *“religiosidad”*, una estratagema mítica que logra separar nítidamente el *“paraíso”* prometido del nihilismo en boga hoy, o sea la destrucción y el camino hacia la nada” (“El Espíritu de Occidente,” *Somos*, 19/11/76: 13; emphases in original).

one, thus allowing the latter to establish the parameters that (literally) define the former. But, since Marxism is not religious and “paradise” is a teleological end, then Marxism cannot be truly teleological. The Marxist *claim* to teleology is also false in that it has no definite end or purpose. The destruction it espouses in its nihilism is akin to the “road to nothingness,” which lacks any final ideal or aim and can only envisage a society that has no “defined characteristics.”

While the concept of teleology that runs throughout the paragraph structures the argument, the “mythical stratagem” serves as a pivot whereby the two notions of Marxist “ideology” and “actual” Marxism are contrasted. It serves as a semantic tool which, as a term that encapsulates the concept of illusion, unveils the means by which Marxism (mis)represents itself ideologically. “Stratagem” is a military term that refers to an artifice or ruse in war used against the enemy, i.e.: a false strategy, a phantasm used to trick the opponent. It lends itself optimally to the purpose of the article, which is to expound a philosophy, “Espíritu de Occidente,” that can serve as a counterpart to the armed struggle against Marxism. Conjuring the martial impetus behind the article and Venturini’s thought, it occupies ground that exposes Marxism as materially destructive while simultaneously attributing to Marxism the characteristic of ideological fallacy. As the exact use of the word “stratagem” implies, the ideological ruse by which Marxism has *mis*represented itself is one which veils its bellicose nature; its materiality is one that is necessarily as warlike as both its “ideology” and its ideological self-representation. The qualification of this stratagem as “mythical” further emphasizes the fictitious and imaginary nature of the stratagem and its function, which is precisely that of mediating

between what Marxism is and what it purports to be. As the term “mythical stratagem” is the logical conjunction between what Marxism is and what it believes itself to be (being and thought), and, because it is itself grounded in imagination and not reason, it is essentially *antimodern*.

Undermining Marxism is, however, only half the battle. Besides presenting it as ascientific, because it is an ideology, and out of touch with the concept of history, because it lacks a vision of teleological finality and relies on myth, the ideologues of the Process must appropriate these discourses to articulate the hegemony of the regime. The response to Marxism uses those discourses in an oppositional way. That response should be:

That of the Spirit of Occident as an antagonistic cosmivision --says García Venturini-- in the style of the definitive fights between the giants of Greek mythology -- supporting itself on its fundamental values: monotheism, reason and science, liberty or the right to differ, the republic in the sense of the thing for everyone, and progress for all. Concepts that have been the principal targets of communism in its stage of advance against these notions.³⁶

³⁶ “La del Espíritu de Occidente como cosmivisión antagónica --dice García Venturini-- al estilo de las definitivas luchas entre gigantes de la mitología griega -- apoyada en sus valores fundamentales: el monoteísmo, la razón y la ciencia, la noción de persona, el tiempo lineal o el hombre como señor de la historia, la libertad o el derecho a discrepar, la república en el sentido de la cosa de todos, y el progreso para todos. Conceptos que, en definitiva son principalmente atacados por el comunismo en su etapa de avance contra estas nociones” (13).

The response to Marxism,³⁷ which has been presented as antimodern by the rational insight of the paragraph cited above, is itself presented as quintessentially modern. Reason and science are prominently set, of course, as is history, predictable insofar as it is lineal and controllable insofar as it is ruled by men rather than irrational destruction (*hacia la nada*). These two aspects of the philosophy under question are presented as rational and logically congruent in their distinction from an ascientific philosophy of history lacking that coherence; the “Espíritu” thus becomes the rational voice of history in its appropriation of science, the ultimate expression of reason.

While the discourse of science was certainly favored because of its prestige, universality, objectivity and altruism, it was just as important to the formulation of a response to Marx’s “scientific” philosophy of history. As this new vision of history would have to be equally scientific, García Venturini claims to have based his theory of the “acceleration of history” through an application of Einstein’s theory of relativity to history. The “acceleration” theory proposes two new approaches to history: that more happens in less time, and, that historic time must be measured qualitatively, not quantitatively. Venturini explains his use of Einstein as follows:

I take a series of coordinates, acceleration, compression of history, as well as increments in historic mass and energy, all of which provide marvelous ciphers towards understanding a bunch of things. All this leads me to

³⁷ The propaganda rarely distinguished between Marxism and communism. The article now being analysed proffers a good example of how these were continuously placed under the same rubric whereby Marxism could be associated to heinous communist regimes such as Stalin’s. After exposing Marxism’s espousal of destruction and violence on the “road to nothingness,” the article proceeds as follows: “Ello se demuestra observando que los partidos comunistas desapruban la vía violenta hacia el poder. Pero aun así, sin comprometerse legalmente con la subversión, se aprovechan de ella en tanto genera el caos suficiente como para hacer más apetecible la sociedad igualitarista” (Ibid.). For another example wherein this parallel is established, see the citation in note 36 below.

speak of the end of history. I am convinced that we are at the end of an historic era.³⁸

The appropriation of science is patent in the philosopher's methodology, hypothesis and theory, as well as the terminology borrowed from physics: acceleration, compression, mass, energy. As the interview with the pundit continues, he goes on to elaborate upon his conception that we have reached the end of history.

I am speaking of a new era. We are the last generation of an historic eon that began with Adam and is closing with our generation. [...] It is as if the Adamic cycle were concluding, overcoming those signs that started the biography of men. You can see that, for the first time since Cain went east of Eden, the human family is again constituted as a single unit, and for the first time, also since then, it can annihilate itself as a species with a single gesture.³⁹

The "end of history" marks the beginning of last historical cycle, a new era. The idea that Western culture, indeed the world, was at the threshold of a new historical era is one that resonated throughout the political and economic discourses of the Process, discussed below. The Adamic cycle, in which all of human history has unfolded, is guaranteed by the scientific and physical, i.e., from physics, methods and auguries detected by the philosopher. While the "ideology" of Marxism which the "Espíritu" must confront could

³⁸ "Saco una serie de coordenadas, aceleración, compresión de la historia, incremento de la masa y la energía histórica, de donde resultan claves formidables para entender un montón de cosas. Todo esto me lleva a hablar del fin de la historia. Estoy convencido de que estamos en el fin de una era histórica" ("Un filósofo que habla de cosas serias y también de 'chantas,'" *Gente*, 11/11/76: 78).

³⁹ "Hablo de una nueva era. Nosotros somos la última generación de un eón histórico que se inició con Adán y se cierra con nuestra generación. [...] Es como si se clausurara el ciclo adámico, venciendo aquellos signos que iniciaron la biografía de los hombres. Vea usted que, por primera vez, desde que Caín se fue al Este del paraíso, la familia humana constituye nuevamente una unidad y por primera vez, también desde entonces, puede autoextinguirse como especie con un solo gesto" (Ibid.: 79; emphasis in original).

only *claim* the infallibility of historical cycles, these are here guaranteed by scientific methods as applied to theology. The grotesque pastiche of the modern with the antimodern indicates that, while science has provided the means by which the philosopher could reach his apocalyptic conclusions, it has little to do with those realizations. Religious teleology, used to articulate a Hegelian philosophy of history, is given the trappings of modernity through the supposedly “scientific” logic and research that led to its formulation. The Cold War and its potential annihilation of all human life is here articulated within the parameters of a prophetic discourse. The nuclear holocaust, a horror reached by the domination of the physical world by science, is not only equated to, but is also subordinated to the Final Apocalypse. The conflation of these discourses is partially the result of a need to respond to both the scientific and teleological characteristics of Marx’s vision of history. It is also the means by which ecclesiastical discourse, threatened by atheistic and materialistic Marxism, was aided ideologically by science. The influence of this conflation is evident in the following passage from an article that criticizes the progressive wing of the Church.

So [that infected Marxists could penetrate a group of Catholic theologians] the objectives and methods of theology were changed. In the place of a “science of God” communicated to man by the truths revealed through the teachings of the Church, and organized scientifically with the help of natural truths and the aid of reason, it presented itself as a “new theology,” the objective of which was to “critically analyze praxis” --a concept of clearly Marxist origins-- that is, the communist revolutionary method.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ “Para [que los marxistas pudieran penetrar con su infección un grupo de teólogos católicos] ello se comenzó con cambiar el objetivo y los métodos de la teología, que, en lugar de “ciencia de Dios” comunicada al hombre por las verdades reveladas a través del Magisterio de la Iglesia y organizada científicamente con la ayuda de las verdades naturales y el concurso de la razón, se presentó como una “nueva teología”, cuyo objetivo era “analizar críticamente la praxis” --concepto de acuñación netamente marxista-- es decir, los métodos revolucionarios comunistas” (“El caso de la Biblia cuestionada,” *Gente*, 21/10/76: 14).

The “science of God” exemplifies the modern/antimodern trend that has resulted in the combination of science with teleology in the attempt to respond to Marx’s “historical materialism.” Returning to the “Espíritu de Occidente” (Somos, 19/11/76: 13) recalls this oppositional stance. Its reference to mythology, which does not constitute a part of the “Espíritu” itself but rather sets the stage upon which it will play its role, does not conform to what is otherwise a roster of the main characteristics of the modern age. This once again exemplifies the modern/antimodern ideology espoused by the Process, though the “antimodern” is neither a part of its “ideology” or a means by which it misrepresents itself ideologically, as it is in the article’s presentation of Marxism through its purported use of the “mythical stratagem.” As well as the connotations of ahistorical and imaginary discussed above, “myth” is also used to present Marxism as the culture of another people that shares different traditions and beliefs, i.e. as other than “Occident,” which is represented by a different spirit. Indeed, the entire purpose of the article is to construct this spurious opposition that envisages Marxism as neither modern nor Western. Nevertheless, to state that these two antagonistic worldviews are confronted “in the style of the definitive fights between the giants of Greek mythology” is to locate both within Western culture; they are placed in opposition within the same mythology and tradition, and not depicted as if they were cultural representations of different peoples. This ambivalent positioning of Marxism, which situates it both within and without Western culture, is explained by a product of modern science: medicine. As seen in the first chapter, Karl Marx is grouped with Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin as nefarious, sick and pathological products of Western culture (Ibid., 13). Marxism, while Western and

modern, is a part of the sickness that must be eradicated from society. It is this logic that makes it antimodern, just as it made “subversives” non-Argentine, bad blood that ran in the veins of a single social body.

Medical discourse, which in the first chapter was shown to play a fundamental role in the alienation of the state’s enemies, is revealed here as one among many *modern* discourses appropriated by the Process. The paradigm that linked it to other modern discourses, such as Marxism, history and nationalism relies in large part on the conception of the “social body” that can be found in the writings of Ortega y Gasset. This metaphor had its correlate in political discourse, in which “demagogues” such as José Ber Gelbard, formerly Minister of the Economy, was divested of his citizenship, and “subversives” were envisaged as “bad blood,” individuals who had lost the ideological right to be considered fellow “brother” Argentines. The use of the discourse of nationalism, itself an indispensable part of the regime’s discursive hegemony, was, like science, an inextricable part of the military’s presentation of history. Where science played a privileged discursive role in the forging of a “philosophy” of history, nationalism was essential to the ideological underlining of particular historic events. To be more precise, the combination of science and history which has been analyzed thus far took shape in a nationalist discourse that would be used to imprint the regime’s ideology on the collective imaginary as well as the collective memory.

Wlad Godzich has suggested that *memoria*, which is constituted of foundational myths and “explanatory regresses that provide the members of a particular collectivity with a hold on their lived experience and distinguish them from their neighbors” (Godzich,

xiv), is not only a repository of memory, but an animating force in itself. In other words, *memoria* is not solely a collection of stories to which a community appeals in commemoration, but also the correlative of material individuals who derive their sense of identity and purpose from it. While he initially discusses *memoria* in reference to oral societies, which have much more at stake as far as memory is concerned than literate societies, he goes on to phrase it in terms of discourse. Discourse, defined by Godzich as “a limited ordering of verbal and nonverbal behavior endowed with internal coherence and designed to achieve specifiable effects” (xv), is not particular to literate or oral societies, but is common to *all* societies. In discursive terms, *memoria*, a treasure trove of discourses, defines the community of persons, where each person is constructed through the occupation of various subject positions as the utterer of various discourses. Godzich states that there are a number of privileged *topoi* that are the loci of intersection of various discourses and that, when stimulated, can activate a sizable portion of *memoria*.⁴¹ Introducing the notion of *interdiscursivity*, whereby one discourse can be appropriated by, influence, or stimulate another (Gómez-Moriana, 1980),⁴² to this conception of *memoria* suggests that there are privileged discourses in the collective memory. Indeed, Godzich

⁴¹ The idea that *topoi* are privileged because they serve as points of convergence for several discourses, and can thus animate more of *memoria* when stimulated, is close to Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) conception of hegemony as a nodal point in the field of discursivity where various discourses intersect. Both the composition of *memoria* and discursive hegemony are coordinated by the state, suggesting some interesting parallels between the two concepts. Of interest to the present study is the historical contingency of the discourses that define hegemony or constitute the *memoria* of a given society.

⁴² Godzich coincides on this point, though he does not use the same terminology, when he states that: “Words as well as other linguistic features - and the problem is even greater with other semiotic systems - are not easily confined to one discourse; they tend to cross boundaries and to render them fuzzy, thereby rendering the operations of logic [in presiding over other discourses] difficult” (xvii).

claims that there exists a hierarchy of discourses in the edifice of *memoria*, situating the discourse of logic, that which identifies itself with reason, as the controller and organizer of all others. The discursive economy of modernity is that in which “logical discourse, patterned on universal and abstract reason, seeks to assume this agential burden [of animating discourses] by positing that the universe, by which it means nature, is itself rationally organized” (xviii). The project of modernization, according to Godzich, is one in which the human order, like the natural order, is coerced to comply to the rational one by either persuasion or collective death, with “the agency of modernization, that is, the state, as the embodiment of ultimately rational conviviality” (xviii).

In the formation of *memoria* are the same modern principles to which Hannah Arendt refers when discussing the notions of “making nature” and “making history,” in the sense that each of these is “man-made” insofar as they are rationally organized constructs. This, coupled with Godzich’s discussion, suggests that two privileged discourses are history and science. Science, because as suggested by Hayden White, it occupies a hegemonic position in the hierarchy of discourses and, though it is not logic, it shares logic’s identification with reason in its objectivity and universality. History, because it is “made” by the state in its project of modernization and subjection of the human order to the rational one, because it is “made” through the rational historiographer who puts order on a chaotic past, and, quite simply, because it is each of these that constitutes the memory of the modern age and the modern nation.

The relationship between history and memory is explored by Benedict Anderson in his study on the origins and spread of nationalism, entitled *Imagined Communities*. He

states that while language, as expressed through a nation's literature or national anthem, was instrumental in molding European nationalisms, in Latin America this became problematic:

any attempt to give historical depth to nationality via linguistic means faced insuperable obstacles [...] Any excessive emphasis on linguistic lineages threatened to blur precisely that 'memory of independence' which it was essential to retain. The solution, eventually applicable in both the New and Old Worlds, was found in *History*, or rather History emplotted in particular ways (Anderson, 197; my emphases).

The way history is "emplotted" refers to a term coined by Hayden White that relates to historiography, and the narrative means by which past events are concatenated. As Anderson suggests, this other notion of "making history" is largely determined by how the dead are spoken "for," a method by which any desire of the historian can be exhumed. It is important to note that independence, the foundational moment of the Latin American nations that had been Spanish colonies, was achieved militarily. This has strengthened ties between the military and the sense of nationalism as the Argentine military slogan, "Born with the Fatherland" (*Nació con la Patria*), attests.

During the Process these ties were reinforced. The fight against subversion which started in 1975 in Tucumán, "the cradle of independence," was referred to as *Operación Independencia*. Upon Videla's return to Tucumán, after having been president for six months, Somos exploited the heritage of Argentina's sovereignty in an article entitled "El escenario de los héroes" (1/10/76: 13-16). "Tucumán is the theater of heroes," a citation from the liberator of the southern part of the continent, San Martín, starts the article, which continues as follows:

This phrase of San Martín was exhumed by lieutenant general Rafael Videla exactly 164 years after another general, Manuel Belgrano, would be

the protagonist to perform one of the most important patriotic deeds of our national emancipation in Tucumán [...] The motive of President Videla's harangue (*arenga*) was another war for Argentine freedom.⁴³

The words of San Martín and the heroic deed of Belgrano are exhumed to form a part of the justification of a "war" against "Marxist subversives." The article draws ties between the Nation, its history and the present "historical" moment, and seeks to form a continuum between the military and History, as in its description of a wounded conscript:

The face of the soldier Segura, serious and serene beneath his steel helmet, was not that of a twenty year old boy but rather that of an ageless soldier, a synthesis of all the nameless faces that, since 1810, have taken up arms to ensure that the Fatherland (*Patria*) continues to live.⁴⁴

The presentation of the fight against Marxism and "subversion" is thus projected into the past indefinitely. Once again the image of the "social body," the life of which must be ensured by the military is the operative metaphor for the conjuring of a discourse of history. Indeed, this contemporaneity of all the cyclical wars in the history of the Nation was used repeatedly to emphasize the military's role in the preservation of the "Patria."

The tutelage of the military in the cyclical progression of history is one that surpasses the confines of a national history. While the army was the midwife of the Nation, the protagonist of its independence, and was present at each of the rites of passage

⁴³ "La frase sanmartiniana fue exhumada por el teniente general Jorge Rafael Videla exactamente 164 años después de que otro general, don Manuel Belgrano, protagonizara en tierras tucumanas una de las más importantes gestas patrióticas de nuestra emancipación nacional [...] Otra guerra por la libertad argentina fue el motivo de la arenga del presidente Videla" (13).

⁴⁴ "Bajo el casco de acero, el rostro del soldado Segura, serio y sereno, no era el de un muchacho de veinte años sino el de un guerrero sin edad, la síntesis de todos los rostros sin nombre que desde 1810 cíclicamente deben empuñar armas para que la Patria siga viviendo" (13).

that ensured the integrity of the “Patria,” the Process envisaged itself as the harbinger of a cycle of history of much greater depth. One brief example is provided by a Somos article that, discussing Videla’s trip to Bolivia and the treaties towards greater economic integration signed with the president of that country, states: “[Videla] gave a resolute step [...] towards the integration of the former Viceroyal territory, and its economic, cultural and strategic unity” (“Para provecho de todos,” Somos, 5/11/76: 17). It concludes by stating that the intention is not to foster the creation of a new viceroyalty led by Argentina, but rather unification for a shared development. The vision of the past alludes to the two main stages in the history of Latin America - the colonial era, the viceroyalty, and that of the modern independent nations. That it should appeal to these two seminal moments does not imply that there is a will to return to the past, but rather that the unification of Argentina with other modern nations into an economic and cultural whole *like* that of the Viceroyalty indicates that Latin America is on the threshold of a new cycle of history. The new era, which will result in “development,” is postulated as a syncretism of two historical moments, ensuring progress for Argentina without threatening its national sovereignty.

“Development” is a discourse that, according to Arturo Escobar, came into being after World War II when “Western experts and politicians started to see certain conditions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as a problem - mostly what was perceived as poverty and backwardness;” it was “a new domain of thought and experience” that “resulted in a new strategy for dealing with the alleged problems” (6). This discourse is written into the modern project, of course, in that it presupposes the possibility of “making history,” of

redeeming countries that are (historically) "backward." Insofar as that development is a technological, and therefore scientific, means of exploiting natural resources, it is a way of "making nature." It is also inscribed within the Hegelian notion of the "Spirit" that, emanating from the West, will determine the course of history. While Escobar analyzes how a new relationship of power and knowledge resulted in the dependency and "underdevelopment" of the Third World, it is of use here in its inextricability from the concepts of teleology and history. The Process claimed that it should not be included under the rubric of "Third World," depicting itself as modern and decrying the stagnant view of the so-called "tercermundistas" who espoused alternatives to the Western conception of "development." An article reviewing the first six months of the Process discussed the place of Argentina in the world:

It is somewhat hard to explain that Argentina continues to be in the block of Non-Aligned nations when, in reality, the majority of this block is ideologically aligned with Marxist powers. Some with Russia, others with China. On the other hand, the esoteric and exhausted Third Position - which allowed for historic blunders by Perón and De Gaulle- no longer makes sense, because it has turned towards a "Third World" which is nothing less than the underdeveloped version of advancing Marxism.⁴⁵

It thus divorced itself from the underdeveloped world while simultaneously divorcing Marxism from development and, therefore, from science. The Process promoted Argentina under its governance to the world, and to its own inhabitants, as a "developed"

⁴⁵ "Resulta algo inexplicable que la Argentina continúe en el bloque de los Países No Alineados, que en realidad, en su gran mayoría, están ideológicamente alineados con las potencias marxistas. Algunos con Rusia, otros con China Continental. Por otra parte, la trillada y esotérica Tercera Posición -que sirvió para históricos dislates de Perón y De Gaulle- ahora no tiene sentido, porque ha virado hacia un "Tercer Mundo" que no es más que la versión subdesarrollada del marxismo en avance" ("6 Meses: memoria y balance," *Gente*, 23/9/76: 76).

country, highlighting its economic progress with an ad in the New York Times (“Argentina: a Year of Progress,” 6/4/77: A21) and an article in Gente published in French, Spanish and English (“Argentina mañana,” 28/10/76: 24-43).

On the national front, the focus of this study, development became part of the (cyclical) history of the country, as essential an element as the military tutelage. “El escenario de los héroes” compares the struggle for development to the struggle against Marxist subversion. After awarding medals to the wounded conscripts in Tucumán, Videla inaugurated a new industrial site at a ceremony where, like the soldiers, the “protagonists also used steel helmets because they too are engaging in an historic fight for national development” (Somos, 1/10/76: 13). The two ceremonies were, as the article states, closely associated:

The two acts are intimately linked: they are two moments in a persistent fight against the endemic diseases of Argentina: political alienation and economic anemia. The president’s message to the Nation is to be found between the military ceremony in Tucumán and the industrial inauguration in Jujuy (Ibid.).⁴⁶

The medical discourse is, once again, the means by which economic and political discourses are conflated, where science is used to “make” both nature and history. It is also the juncture of two visions of history: one related to the modern project, in which “development” represents the Hegelian “Spirit;” another which is particular to Argentina’s past. All the conceptions of history envisage the present as a moment in which

⁴⁶ “Los dos actos están íntimamente vinculados: son dos momentos de una tenaz lucha contra las enfermedades endémicas de la Argentina: la alienación política y la anemia económica. Entre la ceremonia castrense de Tucumán y la inauguración industrial de Jujuy, se ubica el mensaje del presidente de la Nación” (Ibid.).

its forces are about to initiate a new cycle: the nation is about to embark on a “new historic cycle,” the President’s “message” to which the citation is referring, discussed earlier in the article; the cyclical intervention of the “ageless” soldier since 1810; the arrival of the “Spirit” and the modern project that it represents; the closure of the “Adamic cycle,” an antimodern vision made evident by the stark realities of the Cold War.⁴⁷ The first, the “new historic cycle,” is the self-proclaimed political project of the regime; it is in the context of this project that the last three must be interpreted.

The “new historic cycle” was declared by President Videla six months into the Process of National Reorganization, and represents both the historical and ideological depth of the military’s political program. Somos commented on this proclamation as follows:

If the President of the Nation and the governing military junta have coincided in that the 24th of March of 1976 concluded an historic cycle, it is licit to affirm that a new one has indeed commenced, not “**as an arbitrary decision taken by the Armed Forces,**” but rather as a palpable reality evident to any of the country’s inhabitants.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Another “new historical moment” was covered in an article by Gente. Though it diverges from this study’s focus on nationalism and science, the declaration of “La llegada de la era posnihilista” (“Una nota para leer dos veces,” 7/10/76: 82-4) marks the same concern with the arrival of a new historical moment. A sample: “Sí se quiere notar la llegada de la era. No es que uno pueda empezar de golpe a darse cuenta de cómo es el tiempo en que se vive. Eso sería lo mismo que suponer que aquellos que vivieron en el Renacimiento sabían que estaban viviendo una época llamada “Renacimiento”. Pero sí sabían --y sentían, es seguro-- que vientos raros soplaban sus cabezas. Del mismo modo en que ahora se nota en la piel y en el alma que el posnihilismo está ya entre nosotros, después de haber soportado el huracán demoníaco que nos envolviera” (84)

⁴⁸ “Si el Presidente de la Nación y la Junta Militar de Gobierno han coincidido en que el 24 de marzo de 1976 concluyó un ciclo histórico, es lícito asegurar que se ha iniciado uno nuevo, no “**como decisión arbitraria de las Fuerzas Armadas**”, sino como el reconocimiento de una realidad palpable para cualquier habitante del país” (“La segunda organización nacional”, Somos, 26/11/76: 10; emphasis in original).

“Palpably evident,” the “new historic cycle” was meant to signal an end to the political instability that, since 1930, had resulted in a pendular governance of alternating military and civilian regimes, with each new government being more extreme than the last. The military of the Process envisioned itself as the last *de facto* regime, proposing to revitalize the institutional system so as to ensure the stability of a republican democracy “adequate to the reality of the evolution and progress of the Argentine people” (“Hacia un nuevo país,” *Somos*, 1/10/76: 11). The ushering in of the historical cycle was to be overseen by the “Ministerio de Planeamiento,” a new institution that would be able to withstand the debilitating forces that had become evident in the last regime such as “historic acceleration” or “the disintegration of the national being (*ser nacional*)” (“La segunda organización nacional,” *Somos*, 26/11/76: 10). The new ministry was established to oversee the direction of the country and the recuperation of its national identity (*el ser nacional*) in the “new historical cycle,” a cycle that evolved from the history of the Nation as envisaged *by the military*. The founding of the institution was one of the means by which this conception of the country’s history, and therefore of the Nation itself, was consolidated. This interpretation, given by the new Minister General Díaz Bessone, was affirmed as nothing less than “real” by *Somos*, which commented:

In 1810, the protagonists of the historic deed of May had a clear vision of a viable project for a communal life which became legally material in the surprisingly “**modern**” “Asamblea del Año 13.” The men of the “Generación del 80,” with their ideas-force (*ideas-fuerza*) -- “**to Govern is**

to Populate,” “to Govern is to Educate,” “Europe in America” - had a lucid conception of the destiny of the Nation.⁴⁹

This vision of those men, Argentina’s founders, was similar to the use of physics in the “Adamic cycle” or the use of technology to “develop” the nation insofar as it was “scientific.” In discussing the “Organización Nacional” and the debates between Mitre and Alberdi, one article reads:

[Mitre], in any case, knew how to structure a National Organization which put an end to civil war. And Alberdi’s thought was useful to him insofar as it gave a scientific sheen to the applied national project.⁵⁰

The historical cycles that converge during the Process of National Reorganization, those conceived nationally since the 1930s or since its founding, as well as those that situate Argentina within “Western” culture and modernity at the end of an immense “Christian” biblical era, are equally presented as “scientific.” The historical movements, proved by “science” to be at the point of closure, endorse both the claim of the Process for historical renovation and guarantee that “real” interpretation of history, made “palpably evident.” The “new historic cycle” is thus made the *logical* outcome of not only the Nation’s history, over the last five decades or even since its inception, but of the modern project and, ironically, of premodern Christianity. These various modulations of the conception of

⁴⁹ “En 1810, los hombres que protagonizaron la gesta de Mayo tenían en claro un proyecto sugestivo de la vida en común, que se materializó legalmente en la asombrosamente “moderna” Asamblea del Año 13. Los hombres de la Generación del 80, con sus ideas-fuerza - “Gobernar es poblar”, “Gobernar es educar”, “Europa en América” -, tenían una concepción clara de un destino de Nación” (Ibid.: 11; emphases in original).

⁵⁰ “[Mitre], de todas formas, supo estructurar una Organización Nacional que puso fin a la guerra civil. Y el pensamiento de Alberdi le sirvió para dar, por lo menos, un cariz científico al proyecto nacional aplicado” (“Prepararse para un nuevo ciclo histórico,” *Soinos*, 1/10/76: 12).

history, which indicate the use of the discourse of history by the Process, are conceived as coming to the fore in the *present*, justifying the military's political project.

The interdiscursive means of depicting the present of the Nation as saturated with history and science is most evident in the following statement made by García Venturini:

History is not what others did, but rather what we do every day. History is not something that once happened and that we now study in books. History [...] is always contemporary. That is why Plato and Aristotle are our age and not, as some people believe, old museum pieces. History is our biography. It is our medical record. There is no remedy for today's ills if we don't know our past.⁵¹

That history is always contemporary insofar as it depends on interpretation and discursive representation, which stimulate *memoria*, is not novel. A myriad of events must always be represented before they resonate throughout society and, in this sense, those events are a part of the present. What differs from this accepted notion of the contemporaneity of history is that during the Process, not only were the events and personages of the past brought to the present, but the epochs and eras of History were seen as converging on the present to consummate their teleological finality. This vision towards the future was posed in nationalistic terms, by both the name of the military project as well as its propaganda, as the forging of a new republic that was inscribed into History as the crossroads of various historical cycles. The first step in each of the new cycles, the Process of National Reorganization would reinsert Argentina within "Western, Christian" culture by choosing

⁵¹ "La historia no es lo que hicieron los otros sino lo que hacemos nosotros todos los días. La historia no es algo que sucedió y se estudia en los libros. La historia [...] es siempre contemporánea. Por eso Platón y Aristóteles tienen nuestra edad y no son viejos de museos como creen algunos. La historia es nuestra propia biografía. Es nuestra ficha clínica. No hay remedio para los males de hoy si no conocemos nuestro pasado" ("Un filósofo que habla de cosas serias y también de 'chantas,'" *Gente*, 11/11/76: 79).

a direction that indicated its origins as such. Each cycle was made to represent the “official version” of national history, and each supported the other; it is this convergence that would lead to the bizarre coupling of the modern and the antimodern, where modernity and the “Adamic cycle” could together forge a syncretic “science of God.”

There is here a distinction that must be drawn more clearly between the role of history and that of science. Their inextricability, elaborated upon above, can be interpreted as an ideological use of “science” as a hegemonic discipline and discourse, as well as a necessary appeal made by the military in its response to Marxism, purportedly “scientific.” While another binding characteristic is their privileged status in *memoria*, it is precisely here where they function differently. Venturini’s articulation of the contemporaneity of history is represented by means of a medical discourse, making reference to the medical record (*ficha clínica*) of the present social body. As discussed in the first chapter, the medical discourse is one that occupied a position of privilege in the hegemony of the Process, having been conflated with various others - economic, religious, political - largely because of its value as a science. Scientific discourse stimulated the *memoria* of Argentina during the Process by interdiscursive means, saturating the language through the metaphor of the infirm “social body.” Organizing other discourses, science not only provides them with cohesion, but functions ideologically by making the representative metaphor a “natural” method of explanation for social or political conflict.

The discourse of history, as used by the Process, functioned hermetically. Where science coordinated the discursive hegemony and *memoria* through conflation with other discourses, history only feigned plurality. Foucault (1972) has analyzed the function of

rarefaction of discourse. Briefly, it is a means by which the power immanent to discourse is reserved for the use by certain subjects in reference to certain objects under specific circumstances. The discourse of science, which requires the use of a highly specialized idiom guided by rigors of language unknown to the layman, is a highly rarefied discourse. This exclusiveness is both a result and a cause of that discipline's hegemony among the knowledges, as well as what invests that discourse with authority; these are the qualities that the laicization of scientific discourse attempts to maintain. History, a less rarefied discourse, imposes its authority on a given series of interpreted "facts" and marks them as "objective" by very discrete means. The difference between the natural sciences and history is not in the essence of the approach but rather, as Hannah Arendt suggests, the degree of accessibility of each:

Within the natural sciences things are not essentially different, but they appear more convincing because they are so far removed from the competence of the layman and his healthy, stubborn common sense, which refuses to see what it cannot understand (88).

Because every history is partial and requires interpretation, there exist a virtually inexhaustible array of explanations for a series of events, as each historian, like the layman, follows his/her common sense in the search for "objective" meaning. The process is largely the opposite in the two disciplines: where the laicization of medical discourse maintains the authority of a highly rarefied discourse, the discourse of history must be invested with authority through the rarefaction of myriad interpretations; whereas the authority of science is evident in the ease by which medical discourse could become conflated with others, that of history is evident in the singularity of its voice - the "official" history. Terry Cochran suggests that, as a plurality of histories is not only

threatening to the established order, that the consequent imposition of an “official” history, which is always representational, is “by definition oppressive to those whose point of view is not represented” (xi). To ensure that the integrity of the history marked as “objective,” the sanctioned history must be repeated continuously by propaganda to saturate the collective memory, while those that diverge from that version must be censored.

Scientific discourse, then, stimulates *memoria* through interdiscursive means, causing various other discourses to resonate with its authority. Historical discourse, far more insular, animates *memoria* through the privileged objects, the *topoi*, where various discourses intersect. In Argentina during the Process those privileged loci were nationalistic emblems, especially those that related to the army’s “cyclical” role in defending the Nation, and teleology. The plurality of the historical discourse during the Process existed in the various cycles, which, culminating in the present, brought the conflictual past to a close and made the future imminent. Planning the future and the construction of a new republic relied on a vision of the past as interpreted by the state. Thus, history was “made” by the “agency of modernization,” the state, which had rationally established the closure of History and coerced the human order to comply with its vision of the future; this was done, as Godzich suggests, by force of persuasion and collective death (xviii) - an imposition of ideas and a censoring of subjects. Similarly, Arendt concludes her ruminations on history by stating that: “The assumption which underlies consistent action can be as mad as it pleases; it will always end in producing facts that are ‘objectively’ true” (87). This is the relationship between History and science

that forged the official history of the Process, which by coercion, propaganda and censorship was presented as objective, rational and modern.

Chapter III

La historia oficial*

The first two chapters attempt to establish the means by which the military Process imposed its hegemony through the discourse of science, which stimulated others interdiscursively by means of the medical discourse, and the discourse of history, which was made “official” through a process of rarefaction that gave it a singular voice. The privileged nexus of each of these with *memoria* suggests that they acted on the collective memory in a dual fashion: first, the propaganda of the Process endowed the military vision of Argentine (and global) history with the authority of science and, through a repetition of that history as well as the “new historical cycle,” saturated the collective memory; second, censorship precluded any other versions of history which would necessarily compromise the integrity of the “official” version by divesting them of the authority of science. This series of interconnected relationships, between the official and the unofficial, propaganda and censorship, history and science forged an image of the Nation which represented the Process’ political agenda.

A further analysis of censorship reveals the institutional and discursive means by which it was implemented, as well as its role as the counterpart to the propaganda espousing the “official” history. CONADEP states, in reference to more conventional forms of censorship (of information, press) that in their investigation it became evident “to what extent covering up the truth and misinformation were essential to the most important acts

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of the military governments between 1976 and 1983” (1986: 52). The juntas’ aim was to contain, repress and finally extirpate all ideas, and actions informed by those ideas, which impeded the progress towards its goals. The regime exercised absolute control over the media, using it in its campaign of misinformation and otherwise imposing a mechanistic, stifling silence; many journalists were made to disappear. Activities which articulated solidarity in opposition to the regime were repressed; freedom of assembly was permitted only in celebration of the World Cup victory of 1978 and in support of the regime’s initially successful military campaign in the Malvinas/Falklands war of 1982. An elaborate apparatus of surveillance and security was developed to enforce the military’s prohibitive decrees. Censorship played the role of expunging from the collective memory the violence which did not legitimize the regime, while propaganda publicized that which did. Through censorship, the Process strove to establish a monopoly of ideas, actions and discourses to articulate its own “world view” and maintain its hegemony.

This chapter investigates the relationship between the various forms of censorship imposed by the military regime, the violence it perpetrated and collective memory. The text upon which this study is based is the film entitled *La historia oficial*, which presents the dynamic between these three variables in several ways: it explores the underside of Argentina’s recent and historic past;⁵² it exposes the collective memory as one saturated with violence; and, most importantly, it depicts how the medical, educational, Church and

⁵² On the violence and terror of Argentina’s collective memory and the need to reassess its history see Tulio Halperín Donghi: “one cannot deny that to incorporate the recent episode of terror into the body of Argentine history requires modifying some of the basic assumptions on which the historical image of the country has been built” (4). On violence as a cyclical phenomenon in the history of Argentina see John M. Richardson Jr.

family institutions, as well as their appurtenant discourses, were used in the Process' campaign of censorship. The film is approached in two interrelated ways. The first examines the text as the product of a particular social dynamic at the end of the Process, when the action is set and the script was written. The second analyzes the film as an independent social agent that enters into dialogue with various discourses, articulating them in new ways. Discourse analysis and semiotics are the methods used to investigate how *La historia oficial* echoes the cultural practices and discourses prevalent in Argentine society during the Process.

La historia oficial tells the story of a middle-class history teacher, Alicia, whose husband, Roberto, is a businessman with connections to the regime. Alicia seems comfortable in her marriage until she begins to suspect that her adoptive daughter, Gaby, is the child of a *desaparecida*. This suspicion is sparked when Alicia spends an evening with Ana, a friend returned from a seven year exile. Ana recounts the story of her abduction, torture and subsequent escape from the country; she also tells the story of babies who, born in captivity, were given or sold to supporters of the regime. Alicia's suspicions are compounded by incidents in her classroom, through conversations with a colleague, Benítez, and as a consequence of a partial lifting of state censorship. Alicia initiates a quest to discover the truth about Gaby, to trace the girl's memory. Her search leads to the ecclesiastical and medical institutions. In the latter she meets a member of the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo who works in an office that locates *desaparecidos*; this office puts her into contact with Sara, who could possibly be Gaby's grandmother.

Finally, the search leads her back to the institution of the family where, in a final confrontation with Roberto, her suspicions are brutally confirmed.

Alicia's odyssey is a transgression of various forms of censorship, each of which represents a barrier between Ana's story and Alicia's final realization of Gaby's true origin. Self-censorship is the first obstacle which Alicia must overcome, which is intentionally presented as a deliberate self-imposition. Aida Bortnik, the scriptwriter, stated in an interview with *Cineaste*:

I do believe that there were some people who were really unaware of *almost* everything. I do not believe that Alicia, the protagonist of the film, belongs in this category. She did not *want* to know and therefore it was easy for her not to find out. In this sense she belongs to the immense majority of the Argentine middle class, almost the largest social stratum in the country, and she thus assumes increasing importance and significance as its representative (Meson, 31; emphases included).

A survey conducted by Guillermo O'Donnell and Cecilia Galli found that during the worst repression Argentines "tended to deny what was going on around them. Most said they preferred the 'peace' established by the military to the chaos of the Peronist regime. Reports of massive rights violations were chalked up as an unsubstantiated rumor" (quoted in Andersen, 218).

It can be readily acknowledged that the *intended* audience for *La historia oficial* is the Argentine middle class, as the film's bland international style, thematic focus on the middle class family (Barnard, 61) and Christian Dior aesthetic clearly indicate. The film's goal is to enlighten those members belonging to the middle class who "did not *want* to know" about the nature of the military regime's repression; the scriptwriter seeks to recount an alternative history to precisely those who have *chosen* to believe the official

version of the Process. This creates a paradox within the communication situation which must be circumvented if the text is to be received by the intended addressee.⁵³ In seeking to achieve this inconsonant goal, tension is further compounded by the film's attempt to disarticulate the official history while being a work of fiction. This tension, manifest as the cleavage between science and fiction, is present in both the content and form of the film.

According to Luiz Costa Lima, this pejorative dimension attached to the fictional in favor of the rational finds its roots in the Italian *Cinquecento's* (4) deliberately restricted translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. By translating "mimesis" as "imitatio," he claims, the classical theorist could at once legitimize as well as tame and delimit the poet's discourse.⁵⁴ While Aristotelian mimesis related to the possible, with its "limits [being] those of conceivability alone," in the Renaissance "the possible came to be occupied by the category of the verisimilar" (22), which would ultimately be confused with the "true." Poetry, feigned and mendacious, could at most approach the "true" through verisimilitude, but never possess it. While during the *Cinquecento*, verisimilitude was instrumental in avoiding a conflict with religion, this eventually gave way, in the times of national centrism, to concerns of a political nature:

⁵³ See the design for communication, an intrinsic aspect of the definition of discourse in Benveniste (241). See also the introduction to this thesis.

⁵⁴ "Mimesis presupposed adequation not with the powerful, sensible appearance of things by rather with their internal potentialities. Its product, *mimema*, was not understood as the copy or imitation of something previously given, for, conversely, it presumed the actualization of the *dynamis* of a cosmos harmonic because ordered by laws. Even though that concept of a dynamic yet ordered universe was lost with the end of the ancient world, understanding mimesis as *imitatio* implies turning the former into a grotesque caricature of what it was" (vii-viii).

[V]erisimilitude was accepted in relation of the allegiance between the *cour et la ville* - that is, in relation to the upper estate of absolutist society - because nobles and wealthy bourgeois saw in the exercise of the imaginary [...] both the presence of a barbarous, undisciplined mentality and a defiance of their own "arrogant rationalism"⁵⁵ (33).

This censorship was thus imposed not because the fictional, "a critical use of the imaginary," contains the choice between truth and falsity, but rather because it functions as a "game that does not so much expand or apply truths as interrogate them" (ix). After the vicissitudes of centuries this stigma continues:

[There exists] a direct link between normative aesthetics and political interests. That normativeness [...] endured - and continues to endure - much beyond the ambiance of the French Restoration. Its survival is achieved through the veto of fiction, a prohibition carried out in the name of common sense [...] To deal with the survival of the normativeness implicit in that [arrogant] rationalism, I must add that by the second half of the seventeenth century it had transformed its arrogance into a defense of mean, common reality [...] it [thus] became possible for the veto of the fictional to be transmitted down to our own time, under the name of realism (43-44).

This veto of the fictional is a means by which the imaginary is controlled and by which political ends are met; the scientific is thus always favored over the fictional to ensure that the imaginary is not unleashed and those political ends are not jeopardized. This is exactly the case with history, which "has lost sight of its origins in the literary imagination. In the interest of *appearing* scientific and objective it has repressed and denied to itself its own greatest source of strength and renewal" (White cited in Costa Lima, 146, emphasis included). History has come to be written as a scientific discourse from which fictional

⁵⁵ "Arrogant rationalism" refers to a statement by Auerbach that Costa Lima had cited previously: "This notion of *vraisemblance* is typical of cultivated society. It combines the arrogant rationalism that refuses to be taken in by imaginative illusion with contempt for the *indocte et stupide vulgaire* which is perfectly willing to be taken in" (32).

discourse is excluded and stigmatized. The cleavage between history and fiction is one of the means by which the latter is effectively censored; the role of the censor thus becomes one of ensuring that the fictional is congruent with the dominant principle of truth.

Before Alicia recognizes the (self-) censored perspective of her position, she herself acts as a censor towards readings of history which question the official version. Her students engage in revisionism throughout the film, particularly in reference to two historical characters who played key roles in the founding of the nation. The first, Mariano Moreno, wrote extensively on censorship and decried the junta that established itself in power in 1810 (Rock, 1985: 81). The students, who find his anti-censorship essays, claim that he was murdered, thrown into the sea. They claim that a second historical personage, Juan José Castelli, did not lose his tongue to cancer but to a regime that wished to silence him. Alicia's reaction to this is extremely rigid, claiming "that there is no *proof*"⁵⁶ (my emphasis). She thus effectively vitiates and censors the alternative interpretation with a scientific discourse. One student, Costa, responds by saying "that there is no proof because history is written by assassins."⁵⁷ The classroom scene establishes an immediate, patent link between censorship, violence and collective memory. The force of the latter is especially evident in Alicia's introductory speech at the outset of

⁵⁶ "[...] que no hay *pruebas*." All translations are mine. All original quotes, provided in the notes, of characters' dialogue are taken directly from my notes on the film.

⁵⁷ "...no hay pruebas porque la historia la escriben los asesinos."

the scene: "To understand history is to prepare oneself to understand the world. No people could survive without memory, and history is the memory of nations."⁵⁸

The role Alicia initially plays is that of institutional censor, guardian of the official history and of the nation's integrity. As if to emphasize the poignant irony of Alicia's ignorance, her statement is immediately juxtaposed with a song about the loss of collective memory. The scene in the classroom is followed by María Elena Walsh's "En el País de Nomeacuerdo,"⁵⁹ heard first as it is sung by Gaby, and, continued seamlessly into the next scene, heard again on the radio:

En el país de Nomeacuerdo,
doy tres pasitos y me pierdo.
Un pasito para allí,
No recuerdo si lo di.
Un pasito para allá,
Ay, qué miedo que me da.
Un pasito para atrás,
Y no doy ninguno más,
Porque ya yo me olvidé
Dónde puse el otro pie.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "Comprender a la historia es prepararse para comprender al mundo. Ningún pueblo podría sobrevivir sin la memoria, y la historia es la memoria de los pueblos."

⁵⁹ The lyrics represent the threat El Process poses to the collective memory, repeating a concern that María Elena Walsh stated previously: "Cuando el censor desaparezca [...] estaremos decrépidos y sin ya saber qué decir. Habremos olvidado el cómo, el dónde y el cuándo, y nos sentaremos en una plaza como la pareja de viejitos del dibujo de Quino que se preguntaban: '¿Nosotros, qué éramos?'" (Avellaneda, 184).

⁶⁰ "In the country of 'I Don't Remember,' I take three little steps and lose myself/ One little step over here/ I can't remember whether I took it/ One little step of there/ Oh, what fear it gives me/ One little step backwards/ And I don't take anymore/ Because I've already forgotten/ Where I put my other foot."

This song is an aural motif inextricable from Gaby's character, an anthem of her lost memory. As Alicia overcomes the censorship that prohibits the truth of Gaby's origin, she effectively discovers the child's history. Alicia's quest becomes one of returning to Gaby the memory the child has lost. The juxtaposition of the classroom and home scenes establishes the dual, parallel course by which Alicia's odyssey is expressed. As she discovers more about Gaby's provenance, Alicia becomes more tolerant of her students' undocumented, unofficial and revisionary interpretations of historical events. As Alicia recognizes and transgresses the barriers imposed by censorship, her own role as censor of taboo ideas deteriorates. The parallel between the memory of the nation and the history of the child is reflected throughout the film; as the latter surfaces, the former becomes increasingly disarticulated.

The image of the nation, which figures prominently at the outset of the film, serves several functions: first, as a means of overcoming the cleavage between science and fiction which may alienate the intended addressee; second, as the official ideal which is gradually corrupted throughout the film; and finally, as a foil for Gaby's memory. The opening scene of *La historia oficial* addresses nationalist sensibilities. The first shot tightly frames the three loud speakers and various Argentine flags which are set on a pillar. This shot is held while we hear the first bars of the national anthem. The camera then rotates to reveal an assembly in a school courtyard; the students stand around the periphery and face the center, where the teachers are gathered. As the camera descends to better reveal the assembly, which has now begun to sing the anthem in unison, many of the students are eclipsed by the pillars. Despite this, the camera does not initially lose sight of

the speakers or the flags. Finally, during the last refrain of the anthem, the camera pans the crowd. The framing is extremely tight, allowing for only two faces at once; the Argentine flag is ubiquitous, with always some fraction showing. Before arriving to Benítez and Alicia, with whom the sequence ends, the camera captures the faces of each of the students that will question the historical interpretations in Alicia's class. The mood of the scene is unquestionably solemn and dignified.

In his study of the origins and spread of nationalism, Benedict Anderson pithily defines the nation as an "imagined community:"⁶¹ *imagined* because the congregation of this community, at which all members meet and know each other, is impossible (6); and a "*community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7, emphasis included).⁶² The process by which the nation is imagined is the operative function in the forging of nationalism. Various tools are instrumental in imagining the nation's community, the most important of which has been print capitalism. Other methods or

⁶¹ Anderson largely agrees with Gellner, who states that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist" (6, emphasis included), differing only in the opinion that "invent" should be correlated with "create" or "imagine," rather than "fabricate" or "falsify." Where Anderson views the invention of nations as a mere function of the imaginary, Gellner's perspective contends that such invention is pejorative, as it truncates "true" communities. The latter opinion, however invalid (Anderson explains that virtually any community larger than a village is imagined), is particularly interesting here as it attaches a stigma to the fictional and insists on communities grounded in realism.

⁶² It is exactly this conception that led Argentines to celebrate alongside the junta that had brutally repressed their society for the previous six years. As noted above, freedom of assembly was permitted only twice during El Proceso. Each of these demonstrated a nationalist spirit which, in the case of the Malvinas/Falklands war, figured prominently into the goals and strategies of the military junta (Corradi, 1985: 137).

devices that Anderson considers are language and, particularly interesting here, memory and history.

The singing of the anthem in unison evokes the imagined community. “No matter how banal the lyrics and mediocre the tunes, there is in the singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance” (Anderson, 145). The same could as easily be said regarding the image of the flag, which graces every school and public building in the country. The importance of the loud speakers in the forging of nationalism is also acknowledged by Anderson: “radio made it possible to bypass print and summon into being and aural representation of the imagined community where the printed page scarcely penetrated. Its role in the [...] mid-twentieth-century nationalisms has been much underestimated” (54). The aural, mechanical means of communication was instrumental in the fomenting of nationalism in Argentina by, for instance, Juan Domingo Perón. The importance of the speakers, the national anthem, and the flag in the forging of the imagined community is accentuated by their position in the foreground of the frame, eclipsing a large segment of the people in the school. The symbols which aid in the imagining of the nation supersede the community itself.

The language, as expressed through its literature or its national anthem, of a nation was instrumental in molding European nationalisms. As discussed briefly in Chapter II, this became problematic in Spanish Latin America, as any undue emphasis threatened to blur the *memory* of independence from Spain. Instead, states Anderson, the emphasis was placed on *History*, or particular emplotments and representations of history. The

imagining of the nation and the preservation of its memory become essentially contingent upon how history is interpreted, how the dead are spoken “for” (198). Anderson’s use of the concept of emplotment is instructive to his notion of the “imagining” of history. Emplotment, an idea conceived by Hayden White, describes the means by which a linear text is written. Various moments in the plot are concatenated, with each event or theme precipitating the following in a sequential manner. However, each event has its own dynamic which must be developed before motivating the subsequent event. The threat lies in the possibility of one theme being developed to the degree that it undermines the edifice which structures the emplotment itself. It is this very consideration that leads to the variety of avenues by which the same events may be linked sequentially in a fundamentally different way. “This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation” (White, 1978: 99). As Benítez says to Alicia: “Literature always meets with history.”⁶³

The integrity of the nation is contingent upon the control of conflictive imaginings of history; the school is the means by which its (official) history is maintained by the teachers who act as censors for the state. The dominant vision of history, or the Nation, is not only disseminated through the educational system, but through virtually every institution. Louis Althusser refers to these institutions as the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), which ensure the reproduction of the relations of production in capitalist societies. He further states that “what unifies [these various ISAs’] diversity is precisely this functioning [by ideology], insofar as the ideology by which they function is

⁶³ “La literatura siempre se encuentra con la historia.”

always in fact unified, despite its diversity and contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of the 'ruling class'" (146, emphasis included). While he considers the school to be the dominant ISA (152), others which exert influence include: the Church, the family, and communications (press, radio, television, etc.) (143).⁶⁴ Each institution is designed to control discourse, to keep it within the established order of things, to both honor and disarm it (Foucault, 1972: 216). The discourses associated with each institution are subject to manipulation by that group or "class" which controls the state apparatuses. The control such groups may exercise is never complete, however, as "the Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the *stake*, but also the *site* class struggle" (147, emphases included). The use or (ab)use of the marks specific to institutional discourses are the tools in such a struggle.

La historia oficial is the site for struggles taking place within various ISAs, as the discourses of those institutions are interwoven into the text.⁶⁵ As Alicia overcomes self-censorship, and the disarticulation of her own role as censor becomes evident, censorship from other institutions under the Process becomes more imposing. Alicia's encounters

⁶⁴ These he distinguishes from the (Repressive) State Apparatuses such as the police or the army, and which function predominantly by repression.

⁶⁵ It is important to note that *La Historia Oficial* is itself a product of the cultural ISA which is, at the film's release, under the control of a democratic regime. Nevertheless, Althusser notes that the class (or class alliance) in power cannot fully control the ISAs, as the former ruling class continues to exert influence there, and the exploited classes are on occasion able to express resistance in these institutions (147). While I have explored the role of the text in surmounting the censorship which was implemented by the former regime, and as a site for struggles against the vestiges of this regime's power, it would be interesting to investigate the text as a tool which excludes the working class reality of the "dirty war." As discussed in Chapter I, CONADEP reports that 48.1 per cent of the disappeared were union members, of which 30.2 were blue collar workers (1986: 368).

with the ecclesiastical, family and medical institutions each present a different form of censorship which attempts to impede the official history of Gaby's origins from becoming untenable. Alicia turns to the Church in the hope of learning the truth about the girl. In the confessional, she remembers the day her parents died, and how she awaited their return while seated in a rocking chair; it is a memory such as her own that Alicia believes she must retrieve for Gaby. Alicia tells the priest that she can no longer believe what she has been told about Gaby, and questions the decision to not tell the child she is adopted. In an admonishing tone, he tells Alicia that she should not question the Lord, whose Divine will placed Gaby in her hands. In doing so, the priest claims, she has damaged her covenant with God. She has not committed any sin, however, and he readily absolves her. To this she responds forcefully: "I don't need you to absolve me, I need the truth!"⁶⁶ She then confronts the priest with a barrage of questions, asking about his participation in Gaby's adoption and his knowledge of the girl's provenance. He does not answer, but bows his head and begins to mumble a litany. Both proceed, one beseeching, the other ignoring, until Alicia desists. The priest has reached the litany's end, and Alicia dutifully joins. He stands, tells her to leave, and leaves himself; Alicia comes away with nothing resolved. In the confrontation of Alicia's questioning and the priest's litany, the institutionalized discourse of faith (absolution, litany) finally emerges victorious, censoring and silencing the discourse of doubt.

⁶⁶ "No necesito que me absuelva, necesito la verdad."

The obvious reluctance of the priest to help Alicia, or even discuss her problems, reflects the ambiguous role of the Church during the Process. Indeed, the unwillingness to help a morally unassailable cause decries the Church's complicity with the regime. Its power of absolution and ritual shields its inability to tell the truth. In Chapter I, the role of the Church in supporting the regime was shown to be comparable to that of the Church in Nazi Germany, as was its privileged position within the ideology of the Process. The censorship imposed by the Church mirrors its own decision to keep "silent, out of fear or complicity" (Andersen, 185). *La historia oficial* exposes the censorship of memory that this institution imposes, and the discursive means of its implementation.

In stating that the "values of Christian morality would prevail" (quoted in Rock, 1993: 224), the Process adopted a religious discourse to legitimize its mission. Chapter I explores the extent to which the medical discourse, besides likening the subversion in society to a malady, would also be used to stimulate a number of discourses that would articulate the Process' hegemony. A statement by then Captain Horacio Mayorga, which demonstrates the interplay of the medical with the religious, moral and political discourses, is a useful reminder of the interdiscursive role of this discourse:

Ours is a healthy institution. It is not contaminated by the ulcer of extremism, nor by a Third World adulteration which does not recognize the true Christ, nor by the tortuous and demagogic attitudes of hypocritical politicians who adopt an attitude one day and forget it the next (quoted in CONADEP, 1986: 445).

Amidst the medical imagery, surgical terms were particularly emphasized in the regime's extended ideological metaphor (Corradi, 1985: 123). Surgical terms seem especially fitting to describe the precision with which pain was exacted on the victims of torture;

those who were infected were operated upon by torturers aiming to extirpate information on other contamination. This macabre conflation of discourses is also present in *La historia oficial*, where its association with the violence of the regime is accentuated.

Alicia's search for Dr. Jaifer, the doctor who presumably brought Gaby to Roberto, is her first encounter with this institution. Once Alicia becomes aware of both the socio-political reality of the *desaparecidos*, her tacit complicity with the regime and her role as censor, she looks at the birth certificate and clothes that accompanied Gaby upon her first arrival, seeking clues to the girl's origin. In an emotionally charged scene, she fully realizes the horrible possibility that Gaby may be the daughter of a *desaparecida*. The end of the sequence leaves her holding Gaby's sweater to her face, kneeling on the floor crying; gentle music softens the scene, the camera is motionless. A series of quick cuts produces a sharp contrast as it introduces the next scene. The first shot shows a door with a sign reading "Waiting Room." The camera approaches it in slow motion. As the door swings open violently the reverse shot reveals Alicia striding into a dimly lit, large, empty room and stopping. The music from the previous scene is recognizable, though it now has an eerie quality, as if it were playing at a slower, irregular speed. A cacophony of unintelligible voices has the same quality; they are hollow and disjointed, without any regularity in tone. The only consistent sound, which also has an echoey quality, is that of a woman's scream. Alicia stares paralyzed at an operating room. A woman is on a table giving birth while four figures dressed in white surround her. The woman supports her upper body on her elbows and leans her head back so it almost touches the table. A nurse then walks into the frame, eclipsing Alicia's (and the spectator's) view of the birth. She

looks at Alicia (and the camera) reproachfully, walks into the room and swings the door shut. As it swings back and forth, the screaming woman's head can be seen twice more. Alicia leaves, walking down a dark corridor. In the next scene Alicia is speaking with a nurse in a well-lit room bustling with activity, asking her about Dr. Jaifer.

The scene of the film is aberrant in its aesthetic and content. While the majority of the film corresponds to the seamless, realistic Hollywood style, this scene is more expressionistic in its use of lighting, sound and technique (acknowledgment of the camera). In regard to content, it seems bizarre that her search for Dr. Jaifer would lead her to witness an open-door birth before taking her to the hospital's administration. The lack of verisimilitude and the scene's incongruity with the temporal diegesis⁶⁷ of the film endows it with a synchronic quality that both echoes and foreshadows other events. The scene is a metaphor for the memories of torture described by Ana to Alicia: the naked woman on the table, the innumerable voices of ambiguous origin united by the scream, the birth in captivity. The image of the nurse hindering the view of the birth presages the censorship Alicia will experience in the institutions the nurse's uniform represents. These include the Church and the hospital in La Plata, where Alicia's search for Gaby's record of birth is thwarted by bureaucracy. The scene is more important, however, in its intimation of the relationship between violence and censorship.

⁶⁷ "Diegesis" is a term used in the field of film studies, borrowed from narratology. Typically, it refers to the logically sequential flow of events in the film's chronology. I have used it here to refer to the logical composition of the film as a whole. For example, "diegetic" music refers to that which has a logical source in the film, such as that which emanates from the radio in Alicia's kitchen. Contrarily, "nondiegetic" music refers to that which emanates from a source not readily discernible in the film, i.e.: soundtrack music.

The birth/torture scene conflates the object of Alicia's search, Gaby's origin, with the violence of the regime. The nurse and swinging hospital door censor the birth as well as the metaphoric violence in the scene. Once closed, the momentum of the door reopens it to expose only the woman's head in a forced unnatural position, screaming. The violence becomes more prominent just as the censorship becomes more explicit. As the film progresses and Alicia converges on her goal, she also approaches the violence inextricable from that goal; the knowledge she seeks necessarily includes violence. Censorship of this knowledge is not only a violation of individual (and collective) freedoms (of information, press, assembly), but also a censorship of violence itself. To overcome this censorship, then, is to arrive at violence.

To better understand the dynamic of the family institution, the locus for Alicia's final transgression of censorship, it is important to further explore the relationship between censorship, collective memory, terror and violence during the Process. Relentless fear, which amounts to terror, is most consuming when its cause is either ambiguous or unknown. Thus, the most effective way for the military to perpetrate political violence was to make people disappear, claim no knowledge of their whereabouts and disassociate themselves from the seemingly arbitrary and random selection of victims. The strategy was a means of

paralyzing public protest, of ensuring the silence of the relatives. By giving people hope that their loved ones might be alive, in the nebulous category of missing persons, an ambiguity was created which forced the relatives into isolation, frightened to do anything which might annoy the government. They were terrified by the mere idea that their own actions might decide whether their son, daughter, father or brother joined the lists of the dead (CONADEP, 1986: 234).

Terror generated a form of self-censorship which ensured the impregnability of the regime. As mentioned above, fear was internalized to such a degree that many refused to come forth and testify to the Commission after the return to democracy. At the root of this terror was an abstract violence which has come to be symbolized by the *desaparecidos*.

The pervasive terror was also a consequence of another, more profound link between censorship and violence. The junta that overthrew the Peronist regime in 1976 constructed a spurious opposition between the anarchic violence of rampant terrorism and the stability of an "order" they purported to represent (Corradi, 1985: 118). The struggle between the military and the subversives, baptized the "dirty war," punctuated the martial nature of society and created a tenuous legitimacy for military rule.⁶⁸ As the regime's only valid claim to power was this "war," they sought to continue it through ever broader interpretations of "subversion." As discussed in Chapter II, Gen. Carlos Suárez Masón stated that Argentina was confronted by Marxism's *total* operations, and must therefore pursue it beyond the military field. It was thus expedient to the regime's legitimacy to preserve the memory of a chaotic and violent society. The regime widely publicized the atrocities of terrorism to justify adopting any measures in eradicating it: "Argentini-ans

⁶⁸ This legitimacy was never fully established. There was, however, a feeling that the military could put a much needed stop to the escalating violence. The "war" against terrorism had already been legalized by the Peronist regime before the coup: "In early 1975, the government of Isabel Perón authorized the army to adopt any measures it wished to wipe out the guerrillas led by the Marxist ERP [Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo] in the province of Tucumán and in September of 1975 extended this authority to the rest of the country" (Rock 1993: 224). The economic and political instability of the Peronist regime was such that "never before in the history of the Republic had so many grounds existed for justifying military intervention. It is understandable, therefore, that the military coup was initially welcomed by much of the population, including most of the middle sectors and the opposition Radical Party" (Hodges 1988: 197). After the coup a continuation and escalation of the "dirty war" was the most expedient answer to the military's wish to ensure political "stability."

have had the opportunity of seeing an abundance of television programmes, of reading countless newspaper and magazine articles, as well as a full-length book published by the military government, in which those acts of terrorism were listed, described, and condemned in minute detail” (CONADEP, 1986: 6). The memory was also preserved by an apocryphal continuance of the struggle, “proof” of which was presented to/in the media.

First, all the media received verbal instructions

prohibiting whatever reference, information or comment about subversive episodes, the finding of bodies, kidnappings, disappearances, the death of seditious elements and the assassinations of military men, police or security agents, unless such acts are confirmed in official communiqués (Andersen, 216).

Subsequently, the press were invited to report on “battle” scenes, sites of faked clashes between the military and the guerrilla forces. People “who had already been taken prisoner or held for some time under the absolute control of the authorities later appeared to have died ‘in combat’” (CONADEP, 1986: 215). This travesty was such that, in cases when the detainees were already dead, the military would splash “chickens’ blood around the locale before admitting local reporters and photographers” (Andersen, 3). The *desaparecidos*, dressed in the trappings of subversion, were thus used to legitimize a continuance of the “dirty war” and, by extension, the regime. Just as the arbitrary and clandestine nature of abductions led to a self-censorship of fear, so did the “legitimate” violence against the *desaparecidos*, presented as terrorists by a censored press, result in the validation of (a violent) order. Thus, the conditions of violence depended on *desaparecidos* and an elaborate censorship of press and information to be valid. These conditions produced a further censorship of ideas as the definition of subversion

necessarily continued to expand; this in turn led to the apprehension of more “subversives.” A chain of violence was thus created, affecting an ever-wider segment of the population. As there was an umbilical link between violence and censorship, Alicia’s transgression of the latter in the quest for Gaby’s memory would logically lead to the former.

There are three main events which are pertinent to the discussion of the family institution and its relationship with memory and censorship: first, the lunch at Roberto’s parents’ home; second, the encounter between Alicia and Sara at the restaurant; and finally, the scene in which Roberto brutally beats Alicia. The lunch scene establishes the family as the repository of memory, and Roberto, representing the regime, as the loss of memory. The focus of the scene is the inexorable argument between Roberto and his father. Roberto’s father, a Spanish immigrant who had come to Argentina after the war against fascism, says: “This whole country went down except the sons of bitches, and my son, who went up.”⁶⁹ Roberto responds:

You’ll never admit how shitty it was for you, for those who are like you. You’ve had the same machines for the last forty years. The world keeps moving, understand? This house is full of the same words that don’t mean anything. You keep repeating the same anarchist idiocies of all your life. The war of Spain ended, and you lost... You lost.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ “El país entero se fue para abajo menos los hijos de puta, y mi hijo, que se fueron para arriba.”

⁷⁰ “Nunca vas a admitir que a Uds. les fue como la mierda, a los que son como Uds. Pero si tienen las mismas máquinas desde hace cuarenta años. El mundo sigue andando, ¿entendés? Recién esta casa se empacha sobretodo con las mismas palabras que no quieren decir nada. Siguen repitiendo las mismas boludeces anarquistas de toda la vida. La guerra de España se terminó y Uds. la perdieron... Perdieron.”

Roberto's brother, however, has the last word: "And this other war, who lost it? You know who, brother? Kids like mine, because they're going to pay all the dollars that were ripped off. And they're going to pay for them by not eating and not studying."⁷¹

Roberto's father speaks of the past, perhaps romantically, but nevertheless with a lucid awareness of the mechanism of history: how Argentina was and how it has changed;⁷² how Spain might have been. His memory is alive with the ideas that influenced past events. Roberto, on the other hand, does not see beyond the material present: things that are not modern are of little value, regardless of whether they work; ideas that are not contemporary are virtually unintelligible. His limited vision of the past is equally material and ephemeral: if anarchism lost on the battleground, then the idea itself is without value. Unlike his father, he does not contextualize the present by its historical antecedents; he has only disdain for the past. Enrique, in contrast to his brother, has a vision of the future which accounts for the present. While Roberto has only a synchronic notion of history, Enrique and his father understand it diachronically; it is this recognition of the dynamic of history that informs memory. "Memory only counts - for individuals, collectivities, civilizations - if it contains both the imprint of the past and the project of the future [...] if it allows to become without ceasing to be, and to be without ceasing to become" (Calvino, 23).

⁷¹ "Y esta otra guerra, ¿quién la perdió? ¿Sabés quién, hermano? Los pibes como los míos, porque ellos van a pagar los dólares que se afanaron. Y se los van a pagar no comiendo y no pudiendo estudiar."

⁷² It is interesting to note that the role of the father is played by Guillermo Battaglia, an icon of the golden age of Argentine cinema which took place, significantly, during some of Argentina's most prosperous times.

The family institution is thus the site for a subversion of the censorship of memory and a surmounting of the cleavage between scientific and fictional discourse. As Alicia's quest is to retrieve the memory that Gaby had lost, one of the most poignant moments of the film is therefore when she discovers the correspondent to that loss. In a meeting with Sara, Alicia hears the story of how the Abuela's child, that child's partner and her unborn grandchild disappeared from the working class neighborhood. Upon finishing, Sara states that all that is left to her family are "these four photographs of them and our memory [...] and you can see by the photo that the girl you have could very well be our granddaughter."⁷³ Where Gaby has lost her memory, Sara has only memories. By the time Alicia hears Sara's story in the restaurant, she has been confronted with, and surmounted, barriers of censorship obfuscating the truth of Gaby's origins. Sara claims that Gaby could be her granddaughter, and the latter's moderate resemblance with a faded photo suffices to convince Alicia that Sara's memory is the key to Gaby's history. The proof of a photo that looks like Gaby and represents the putative mother of her imagined family is more valid than the innumerable photos of Gaby herself with Roberto and Alicia. The family of Sara's (fictional) story is given precedence over the family which is palpably evident and empirically visible to the viewer. The fictional thus appropriates a mark specific to scientific discourse (proof) to end its subservience to that discourse; fiction borrows from and thus subverts the censorship imposed by scientific discourse. There is a

⁷³ "estas cuatro fotos de ellos y nuestra memoria [...] y puede ver por la foto que esa nena que tiene bien podría ser nuestra nieta."

marked contrast between this scene and that in which Alicia uses “proof” to censor her students.

Realizing that Sara could be Gaby’s grandmother, Alicia takes her home to meet Roberto. In so doing, Alicia transgresses the same censorship of assembly that earned the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo world recognition during the Process. “The [Abuelas’] civic ritual of marching regularly in the most public of Argentine spaces is a statement of outrage” (Frazier, 14) in direct defiance of the regime’s restrictions on public assembly. Alicia’s invitation to Sara is, by association, itself a transgression. This is most evident in Roberto’s reaction: “A trap, in my house? Get this crazy woman (*loca*) out of my house.”⁷⁴ His emphasis of the possessive pronoun “my” indicates Alicia’s exclusion from what had been her space; in her association with the Abuela, Alicia too becomes a transgressor.⁷⁵ Also significant is Roberto’s use of the word “loca,” the “most prominent of the derogatory terms for the Madres” (Foster, 48). This pejorative refers to the Abuelas’ direct defiance of the government’s denial and censorship of any information regarding the *desaparecidos*, and more importantly, their insistence on the truth of their “stories.” In response to the denial of the regime, the Abuelas would “attach to their bodies photographs of the missing, *proving* that their children existed” (Agosín quoted in Frazier, 14; my emphasis).

⁷⁴ “Una trampa, ¿en mi casa?... Sacáme esta loca de mi casa.”

⁷⁵ David Foster refers to Roberto’s wrath at the “invasion of *his* hearth through Alicia’s bringing Sara home with her” (emphasis included) on page 48.

Alicia's association with the Abuelas is of paramount importance in her final confrontation with Roberto. Having left Gaby with Roberto's mother, Alicia demands to know about the girl's origin. "I want to know... Why did they give her to you? What did they do to the mother?" To this Roberto responds: "How should I know what they did to her? What am I, a torturer?"⁷⁶ Suddenly realizing that Gaby is missing, Roberto hastens to her room to find only the doll he had bought for her birthday. Emotions become heightened in the ensuing exchange, which culminates in Roberto's violent outbreak:

Roberto: Where is Gaby? Where is she?

Alicia: It's terrible, isn't it?

Roberto: What? What is terrible?

Alicia: It's terrible to not know where your daughter is.⁷⁷

Roberto brutally beats Alicia. He forces her up the hallway towards the bathroom; the camera moves behind the bathroom door, which has a large pane of translucent glass. Taking hold of Alicia's left hand, he directs it to the doorjamb; having placed it there, he grabs the door and pulls it firmly closed. The window pane breaks, revealing Alicia collapsing to the floor, screaming in pain and clutching her hand; the door of censorship foreshadowed in the birth/torture scene is shattered, exposing the raw violence behind it.

Alicia's final statement before the violence repeats the rhetorical slogan of the Abuelas, echoing their perennial question concerning the fate of the *desaparecidos*. Ironically, it is now Alicia who, despite the use of this slogan, has information that

⁷⁶ Alicia: "¿Quiero saber... Por qué te la entregaron a vos? ¿Qué la hicieron con la madre?" Roberto: "¿Qué sé yo qué la hicieron? Pero ¿qué soy yo, un torturador ahora?"

⁷⁷ Roberto: "¿Dónde está Gaby, ¿dónde está?" Alicia: "Es terrible, ¿no?" Roberto: "¿Qué? Pero ¿qué es terrible?" Alicia: "Es terrible no saber dónde está su hija."

Roberto lacks. It is he who now asks where his daughter is; it is Alicia who now possesses knowledge about a “missing” Gaby. This inversion of knowledge, and power, is especially significant in Alicia’s use of her privileged information. The statement she utters has been continually defeated by censorship; Alicia subverts this relationship, using it to censor information that would answer another question. Her relationship with Roberto becomes one of secrecy in which the common denominator is measured by the withholding of knowledge about a “disappearance.” The censorship which has circumscribed Alicia’s search has now been inverted; she has overcome the censorship imposed on her by imposing another on her husband. Roberto, understanding the relationship between violence and censorship, reacts in the manner articulated by that relationship; his response, in its deliberate and calculated brutality, confirms his familiarity with the mechanism of violence.

Alicia has come to the end of her odyssey. The final transgression of censorship reveals the underlying violence of Gaby’s origin. The placing of Roberto in the role of the torturer establishes his involvement with the *desaparecidos*.⁷⁸ It confirms the illicit manner in which he acquired the child and the violence both Gaby and her biological mother sustained at being forcefully separated. In her quiet, unquestioning acceptance of the child, Alicia has played the role of Roberto’s accomplice, necessarily positioning her as

⁷⁸ I believe that Roberto’s depiction as a torturer is intended to extinguish all doubt regarding the question of whether Gaby’s mother had been a *desaparecida*. The beating without the calculated and precise brutality would not have closed the issue with the same finality. It is actually unlikely that Roberto, a businessman connected to generals, would have participated in torture sessions, as most torturers were low ranking officers in the Army. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility of his involvement. However, I believe the torture to be largely metaphoric. I interpret Roberto’s knowledge of, and possible involvement with, the *desaparecidos* through the same metaphoric filter.

the victimizer of Gaby and Gaby's mother. This dual identity is aptly illustrated after the beating, when Alicia looks in the bathroom mirror. Alicia becomes a link in the chain of violence that has affected so much of society: she is at once a victim, accomplice and victimizer. Appropriately, the institution of the family is the locus for Alicia's final transgression of censorship: "Everyone became security conscious, reproducing in the microcosm of the job or in the intimacy of the family the brutal thrust coming from above" (Corradi, 1985: 125). During this period the family institution became authoritarian, a "miniregime of terror" (Andersen, 218).

The last shot of the film has Gaby sitting in her rocking chair, singing her anthem, and looking at the camera. The scene echoes Alicia's story, told in the confessional, about waiting for her parents in a rocking chair, not knowing they had died. It is a final plea to the audience to recognize her story, to let her know her parents have died, to engrave their story on the collective memory. This final scene also stands in contrast to the first scene in which the school is singing the national anthem. The official, institutional nation depicted in that scene has been divested of the authority it had initially commanded: each of the institutions supporting the regime, and their appurtenant discourses, have been disarticulated. In re-presenting the family, school, ecclesiastical and medical institutions, the film provides an understanding of how each of these was manipulated by the government to meet its ends. By rearticulating these discourses, *La historia oficial* forces open the doors of censorship, ensuring that the political terrorism that consumed a society is acknowledged, and its atrocities engraved on the collective memory. The community has been re-imagined to include the memory of the *desaparecidos*.

The interdiscursive analysis of *La historia oficial* reveals the tensions between a variety of discourses, and how these are re-articulated and (ab)used by this film to achieve its ends. The rhetoric of the text effectively utilizes various discourses (e.g., nationalism), and marks of discourses (e.g., proof, in the discourse of science) to subvert taboos that may or may not be held by the receiving addressees. The collective memory is re-articulated vis-à-vis its relationship with the discourse of history in an effort to reconcile them as well as circumvent the subjection of the first to a censorship imposed by the second. Finally, the cleavage between history and fiction and the veto of the former over the latter is surmounted by the interplay of discourses in the text.

Conclusion

In analyzing the propaganda of the military regime known as the Process of National Reorganization and a film that responded to its ideology, this thesis has attempted to determine the discursive means by which the regime articulated its hegemony. Working from observations of historians and sociologists regarding the military's use of medical terminology to describe the guerrilla movements, this study first examines the use of medical discourse in articulating various other issues --economic, political, religious-- in Argentine society. The conflation of this scientific discourse with those of national history, identity or politics, for instance, indicates that it was widely used by the military. I have posited that the reason for this proliferation of medical discourse is due to its status as a science, which in turn holds a hegemonic position within the learned disciplines as well as in the discursive economy of modernity. This status makes it an organizing force within the edifice of *memoria*, animating it by bringing forth certain discourses. History also has a privileged status within *memoria*, as it can stimulate *topoi* where various discourses intersect. The dynamic between these two discourses, science and history, would constitute the "official" history of the Process (and perhaps of any official history); this would in turn be implemented by the state, which "makes history" by coercion, propaganda and censorship.

This conclusion regarding the making of an official history was derived from my analysis of Gente and Somos, the magazines that served as a forum for the hegemonic voice in the first years of the regime. The propaganda of the Process was largely formulated in response to the previous democratic regime in an effort to both discredit the Peronist government and justify military intervention. It is in the context of that historical moment that the propaganda is operating, which partially explains the repeated references to Marxism. *La historia oficial* is responding to a distinct historical juncture, that of the regime's demise. In my analysis of the film, I chose to focus on those aspects that were

present in the propaganda disseminated at the beginning of the regime in an effort to discern the ideological characteristics present throughout the Process. As the film responds to a constellation of discourses at the end of the regime, and as those are also present in the propaganda at its outset, this thesis brackets the ideology of the Process in its study of the two historical junctures. The interplay between the discourses of history and science, present in the texts from both historical moments, provides the basis for a comparative study between the ideology of the regime and the response to that ideology.

Wlad Godzich's concept of *memoria* as well as the considerations of Hannah Arendt, however, suggest that the privileged nature of history and science is not particular to the Argentine Process, but can be seen as integral to the definition of modernity. My study's contribution lies in the addition of a third component, nationalism, and to the subsequent analysis of the particular expressions of the dynamic between history and science. This thesis also contributes to the scholarship of the Process insofar as its propaganda has not yet been studied, to the best of my knowledge. However, as with any other work, what makes it unique is also the indicator of its limits. If nothing else, this work has made me aware of a myriad of possible avenues for future investigation. Following the idea of "official" history, one could attempt to ascertain that of the Peronist regime anterior to the Process, placing the military's propaganda in the position of *La historia oficial*. Similarly, one could situate *La historia oficial* in the place of Gente and Somos, and study the omissions that make it a tool for the rarefaction of historical interpretations, that is, a form of censor. It would also be fruitful to research the complexity of discourses that circulated in Argentine society at the time of the Process. While much has been done on the politicization of those spaces marginal to the hegemony of the Process, I believe new light can be shed on that research when those spaces, or texts, are analyzed in the context of propaganda. As propaganda functions by repetition and the consequent saturation of language, it is likely that the regime's privileged discourses are present in such "transgressive" texts. The research would focus on the

specifically distinct articulation of those same discourses which, unlike *La historia oficial*, functioned within the hegemony of the still extant military regime.

While these potential areas of research would certainly add historical and critical depth to the study at hand, each presupposes a working theory (or several) that will inform the investigation. Within those theoretical parameters, which are the same that define the approach in this thesis, they are all valid areas of research. However, the limitations in the corpus and the time period studied in my thesis are accompanied by a series of theoretical conundrums that also deserve to be addressed. For instance, in analyzing the dynamic between history and science in the magazines of Editorial Atlántida and *La historia oficial* within a national context, the thesis is only scratching the surface of an Argentine “identity.” And as with any other historiographical text, this thesis presents a vision of history that is no less rigid than those it criticizes -- were any formulation of a *ser argentino* to arise from these pages, it too would be tendentious and ideological. Finally, the investigation I have undertaken here was guided by (critical) theory which, if I may take a degree of ironic distance, Althusser describes as something that anticipates a science (27): I too have endeavored to “make” history by use of science.

Like this thesis, none of those areas for future research *seem* to respond to the limitations regarding identity, history and science. However, insofar as this thesis (and the potential work in related areas) is an interpretation of the Process, and insofar as it is in conflict with others that envisage a different history, it is itself inscribed within that history which is always representational. In this sense, it does not attempt to only describe the Argentine *ser nacional*, but becomes one of the texts that constitutes that “identity.” The struggle over historical representation is the means by which this identity is defined, and those with the greatest claim to science contribute most to its formation.

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