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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Gendering the State of Exception: The Politics of Gender and the Production of Language in Latin American Carceral Narratives

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Viviana Beatriz MacManus

Committee in charge:

Professor Luis Martín-Cabrera, Co-Chair
Professor Max Parra, Co-Chair
Professor Jaime Concha
Professor Rosemary George
Professor David Gutiérrez
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2011

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University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

For my parents, Eduardo Carlos MacManus and Susanna Guerrero Robertson.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to thank for providing me endless support and love throughout the years of my graduate studies at UCSD. First, I would like to express gratitude for my parents, Eduardo and Susanna MacManus, for being so wonderfully supportive during the years of my doctoral program and throughout the years of my formative education. Without their love, friendship, patience and support, I would not have been able to accomplish all that I have so far. They not only instilled in me the value of an education, but they also shaped my political consciousness and I know this emerges throughout the pages of this dissertation. Mamá y papá, gracias por todo el amor y apoyo – esta tesis está hecha con todo el cariño y amor que ustedes me han dado: ¡los quiero tanto!

I also want to thank my grandparents, Luis Iglesias Robertson and Ana Guerrero: the memory of their unconditional love and political conviction is what sustained me during the more trying times of graduate school, and they have always served as a constant source of inspiration and love for me. As a child, they would tell stories of growing up in rural Zacatecas, Mexico and Batista-era Cuba and this greatly impacted me, and I know that my political consciousness was greatly influenced by their narratives. They also inspired me to choose a dissertation topic that is political in nature, and I know they would be proud of the end result. Because of their love, support and sacrifices as immigrants to this country, I was able to pursue a career that I loved and for that, I am eternally grateful. I also want to acknowledge the love and support of my grandparents Beatriz Gavidia and Carlos Eduardo MacManus; although they lived in

Mexico and passed away when I was young, I know that they too would be proud and happy that I have been able to complete this degree.

To my tía Betty MacKune-Karrer, I am so thankful for your endless love and support, and I am so grateful that you have been such an involved part of my life despite living in Chicago! I am happy to be closer to you now in Baltimore – I love you very much. To my beautiful cousin Melina Valenzuela González, the sister I never had—thank you for being such a perfect friend, cousin, and confidant. Whenever I would come home to visit LA, you were always there for me, offering love, stress relief, and constant support, but most importantly, your sense of humor is what sustained me over the years. I cannot express to you just how much I love you – thank you! My cousin and role model, Jacqueline Goodman – you are so beautiful and inspirational, and I thank you deeply for being so committed politically yet still maintain such grace, poise and humor. I look to you for encouragement and strength – I adore you!

To my lovely, beautiful, wonderful UCSD friends, my chosen family: Yumi Pak, Jodi A. Eisenberg, Caralyn Bialo, Sean Dinces, Lauren Heintz, Ashvin Kini, and Jessica Cordova. I cannot express enough how much you all mean to me and there are truly no words to describe how much I love you all. I cannot even begin to imagine how I would have survived grad school without you all here helping me along the way. The countless hours at coffee shops, the late nights working, the editing of multiple drafts, the support, the ridiculous jokes, the constant laughter, the de-stressing nights out -- all this made it possible to successfully complete this dissertation and you all are such a significant part of the finished product.

Yumi, my roommate and dear friend for more than 5 years, you know that I cannot express to you enough how much I adore you and there really are no words to capture how much I cherish your years of love, support and absurd yet hilarious jokes that kept us sane throughout grad school. Jodi A. Eisenberg, what can I possible write here that would best articulate the profound love and admiration I have for you? Since our friendship started and intensified in Sevilla in 2008 during the *Spanish Civil War Project*, I knew that you would be such a central, critical part of my life forever – I cannot thank you enough for everything and I am so happy we are a part of each other's chosen families for life. Caralyn Bialo, my first friend at UCSD, I cannot tell you enough how much I love you and would have been lost without having had you as such a close, beautiful friend – thank you!! Sean Matthew Dinces, one of my closest friends since the beginning of my studies at UCSD, how can I thank you enough for providing me endless support and comic relief over the years? I love you and thank you for being so supportive, reading and editing countless drafts of my work -- thank you! I am certain I would not have been able to complete this degree without the years of love and hours of laughter and ridiculous, ridiculous jokes that we all shared together, my chosen family: I love you all so much!

My lovely friends from childhood, high school and college: Angela Patriarca, Megha Shah, Leila Roumani, and Susan Ayoob. You are all my family and I am so fortunate to have had you in my life over these years. You have known me for years and you are all such important parts of why and how this dissertation was successfully completed – thank you all for listening to me vent and talk to you about the ups and

downs of this process and just for providing me your unconditional love and endless support. I adore you all so very, very much.

To my mentor, dissertation advisor and dear friend, Luis Martín-Cabrera: You have gone above and beyond the call of duty as an advisor, and by combining academic rigor with friendship, support and humor, you have inspired me to become an academic and mentor just like you. I am so grateful for your guidance and the years of investment and faith in me and my project. I would not have been able to have finished this dissertation without your patience, support, and friendship; the passion and commitment you have shown for this research topic greatly impacted me and I sincerely thank you for everything you have done for me. A sincere thank you to the members of my dissertation committee, Max Parra, Jaime Concha, Rosaura Sánchez, Rosemary George and David Gutiérrez, and to Lisa Lowe, whose friendship and mentorship during my last year of graduate studies has meant so very much to me.

I would also like to acknowledge the various departments at UCSD who made it possible for me to successfully complete the research necessary for my dissertation. UCSD's Department of Literature generously awarded me a summer research grant and a year-long fellowship, which greatly assisted me in the final stages of my dissertation-writing process. I am also eternally grateful for having been a part of the UCSD library's *Audiovisual Archive of the Spanish Civil War*, a project founded by Luis Martín-Cabrera: this inspired me to pursue interview research in Latin America and I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all the wonderful compañeros we had the pleasure and fortune of meeting in Southern Spain. I would like to thank the Center for Iberian and Latin

American Studies for awarding me the Tinker Pre-Dissertation Research grant which allowed me to conduct research in Mexico and the Southern Cone. Additionally, I would like to thank UCSD's Institute for International, Area, and Comparative Studies for awarding me a Travel Grant in 2009 which also assisted me in completing the fieldwork necessary in Latin America. I would also like to thank UCSD's Institute for International, Area, and Comparative Studies and UC Berkeley for awarding me the Human Rights Fellowship in 2009, which allowed me to conduct dissertation research with the *Association of Ex-Detained Disappeared* (AEDD) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. To the compañeros of the AEDD in Argentina, the Comité '68 in Mexico City, and *Villa Grimaldi Park for Peace* in Santiago, Chile, your fervent commitment to justice and in constructing a more just world has been incredibly inspiring and I thank you for warmly receiving me and assisting me during my research process. A sincere thank you to the compañeros I had the great fortune of meeting and interviewing, especially Nilda Eloy, Margarita Cruz, Ana Ignacia Rodríguez, Lelia Ferrarese and Amelia Negrón: this project truly would not exist without your narratives of survival, resistance and inspiration, ¡gracias mil!

To everyone who has been a significant part of my life and who has provided me with unconditional love and support, I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate, love, and admire you all so much: thank you!

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Gendering the State of Exception: The Politics of Gender and the Production of Language in Latin American Carceral Narratives

by

Viviana Beatriz MacManus

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Luis Martín-Cabrera, Co-Chair

Professor Max Parra, Co-Chair

This dissertation investigates representations of gendered violence in prison narratives produced during three moments of Latin American state violence: the Argentine dictatorship (1976-83), the Chilean military regime (1973-90) and the 1968

Mexico City massacre. This project analyzes the normalization of state violence in democratic and dictatorial governments as part of a hemispheric plan to eradicate political activism during the Cold War. Neoliberal states in Mexico and the Southern Cone violently repressed and incarcerated politically-active women who challenged the rise of free market economics. These states systematically perpetuated normative ideals of gender in prisons in order to sustain neoliberal economic and political agendas, as men and women were seen to be transgressing gender norms. While the state violently repressed male and female political prisoners, this dissertation explores how processes of dehumanization in the prison were gendered in a way that reflects these nations' normative, patriarchal, and hegemonic social practices.

This project examines the gendered nature of this structured repression and extermination of political dissension in a range of cultural texts: personal testimonies, human rights reports, and testimonial literature. It offers new insight into the gendered processes involved in the organized repression and dehumanization of dissidents and these states' subsequent cataloguing of survivor testimonies. The dissertation examines previous scholarship's assessment of political prisoners' testimonies, concluding that existing analytical frameworks – universal human rights, Western feminism, or biopolitics -- have adopted gender-neutral or gender-normative approaches. This dissertation considers how state power and dominant theoretical models have worked in the construction of gender normative historical memories, divesting survivors of their political subjectivity and erasing the history of political genocide.

Gendering the State of Exception calls for a new framework of understanding these testimonies, one that recognizes the transnational nature of these histories of survival and of resistance to a heteropatriacharchal, genocidal past that bears greatly upon the present. A Third World feminist lens facilitates a new critical understanding of cultural texts produced by Latin American political prisoners as it contests the dominant paradigm that depoliticizes women's narratives and relegates them to a gender-normative framework.

INTRODUCTION

"Feminist analysis has always recognized the centrality of rewriting and remembering history, a process that is significant not merely as a corrective to the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings of hegemonic masculinist history but because the very practice of remembering and rewriting leads to the formation of politicized consciousness and self-identity." -- Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle."

"Para mis compañeros muertos, que no se olvide que de que pasó. De que no se olvide que en este país que esas cosas sí pasan, que no son casualidad, que es una política y obedece a un grupo económico que está en el poder. … Hay que mantener viva la memoria de alguna manera, creo que es muy importante." – Amelia Negrón, survivor of the Villa Grimaldi concentration camp during the Chilean dictatorship.[1]

"Queremos reiterar que en la medida en que la cultura de la violencia política es una realidad prevaleciente, la divisa del Comité '68 de luchar por la verdad y la justicia y contra la impunidad seguirá siendo vigente y motivo central de nuestros afanes. Es esas condiciones no podemos sino reafirmar que como dijera nuestro camarada Efrén Capiz: 'La lucha sigue, sigue, sigue…y sigue." – Comité '68.[2]

[1] "For my deceased compañeros, so that no one forgets what happened. So that it is not forgotten that in this country those things do happen, and they did not just happen, that it is politics and it obeys to those in power… it is necessary to keep memory alive in some way, because I think it is very important." All translations here are mine, unless otherwise noted.

[2] "We want to reiterate that in the height of the culture of the political violence that is a prevalent reality, the motto of the Comité '68 is to fight for truth and justice and against impunity will continue to be valid and a central motive of our efforts. In those conditions we cannot but reaffirm what our comrade Efrén Capiz said: 'The struggle goes on, and on and on…and on."

A few days after commencing my internship with the *Association of the Ex-Detained Disappeared* (AEDD) in the summer of 2009, I am invited by several members to attend the criminal trial against three former military officers of the Argentine dictatorship: Olivera Róvere, Humberto Lobaiza, and Jorge Alespeite.[3] On the morning of July 6, 2009, I meet members of the AEDD at the courthouse in downtown Buenos Aires, where we attend the trial to show support for AEDD founding member Adriana Calvo's testimony for the prosecution.[4] Calvo is the ninth witness to take the stand, following other witnesses' harrowing narratives of abduction, repression and survival during the Argentine dictatorship. The witnesses present the succession of events leading to their or their family members' disappearance, relaying the facts surrounding the privation of liberty, torture, and detention in various clandestine centers where these three former officers were seen or heard. One of the most remarkable parts of the trial was the defense attorneys' cross examination of the witnesses' testimonies. After each witness finished their testimony, the defense asked them if he or she – or the disappeared victim—was politically-active at the time of their abduction, implying in this way a logical justification for being targeted by the junta officers.

[3] With the generosity of the UC Human Rights Fellowship, I was able to work with the Association of the Ex-Detained Disappeared, a civic organization based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The association is comprised mostly of survivors of the more than 500 clandestine centers established during the dictatorship and one of their primary projects is to compile survivor testimony of these centers in order to denounce and provide evidence against the thousands of perpetrators of genocide currently awaiting or undergoing trial across the nation.

[4] Trials against military officials of the Argentine dictatorship (1976-83) had commenced in 1985 during President Raúl Alfonsín's term and resulted in the life sentencing of various ex-officers of the regime. However, President Carlos Menem overturned these sentences and enacted various amnesty laws, impeding future prosecutions of officials. It was not until 2003, when President Néstor Kirchner overturned these amnesty laws, allowing for the trials against ex-military officials to resume.

As Calvo commences her oral testimony, she posits her personal narrative of abduction, torture, and the birth of her daughter in captivity within the larger context of the Argentine dictatorship's structured system of state-sponsored violence. Calvo explicates how various circuits of clandestine prisons functioned as torture and extermination centers during "The Process for National Reorganization"; detainees were circulated throughout various camps in order to disorient the prisoners so that survivors would not be able to describe the detention centers upon their release, and many times the centers were demolished in order to erase any physical evidence which would make subsequent prosecution proceedings difficult. As Calvo begins to explain the regime's system of organized violence and the concentration camp circuit through which she was passed as a *desaparecida,* the "Circuito Camps", the defense attorneys crassly object, stating that this particular moment of her testimony is irrelevant to the case. Upon the judge's overruling of the objection, Calvo resumes her testimony and relates how the "Circuito Camps" and other circuits were symptomatic of the regime's intent to commit political genocide during the dictatorship; however, she is interrupted a second time by the defense team who – in a condescending manner-- again cite irrelevancy. Calvo resumes her testimony again and explains that after giving birth in captivity, she feared that the officers would take her baby from her and place in her the home of a military family but the compañeras in her prison cell formed a human barricade between Calvo, her baby, and the guards which ultimately impeded them from taking Calvo's baby away; as Calvo recounts this incredible moment of defiance and solidarity, the defense lawyers whisper to each other loudly, shaking their heads in a patronizing gesture. Throughout the

remainder of her testimony, the defense is disdainful and arrogant, objecting many times throughout her account, snickering and being audibly disrespectful.

I have been deeply disturbed by this memory, as I recall feeling incensed and stunned that such a blatant display of disrespect was permissible in a court of law during Argentina's human rights trials. What was remarkable to me in this instant was the attorneys' reaction to Calvo's political testimony; while other witnesses refrained from situating their narratives within the context of political genocide, Calvo could not excise her narrative of forced disappearance and incarceration from Argentina's history of organized state violence.[5] The defense's patronizing tone and disruptive interjections during Calvo's very personalized, politicized narrative marks a symbolic form of post-dictatorship violence and apathy; as Calvo recounts her harrowing moments of physical and psychic trauma, she is continuously silenced by the defense as her testimony is deemed "irrelevant" – i.e., too political -- to the case. Calvo's intent to expose the genocidal structure of the regime is depicted as extraneous to the case, and the condescension to which she is subjected by the all-male defense team alludes to a gendered politics where politically-active women were castigated for their activism during the military regime.

This discursive violence that presented itself in the courtroom is symptomatic of a generalized response to Latin American political prisoners who "reappeared" after being disappeared or detained by their authoritarian governments. Adriana Calvo not only represented a disruptive reminder of Argentina's dictatorship, she represented a remnant

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[5] I will be referring to the concept of "political genocide" throughout the dissertation. Please turn to page 31 of the introduction for a detailed explication of how I utilize the concept.

of the past who refused to be a silent, apolitical victim of human rights abuse; moreover, as a woman, her politically-imbued narrative noticeably unsettles the defense team, resulting in their attempt to derail and silence her testimony. This particularly tense scenario that unfolded in the courtroom is a salient example of mainstreamed apathy directed towards survivors of Latin American state violence in the latter half of the twentieth century, a firmly-entrenched apathy that has elided the political subjectivities of many women ex-political prisoners.

I mention this particular memory as it signaled to me the importance of investigating the intersection of gender politics, organized violence and the politics of memory in three moments of state-sponsored terror in Latin America: the 1968 Mexico City massacre, the Argentine dictatorship (1976-83), and Chile's military regime (1973-1990). This moment in the Buenos Aires courtroom maps out the various intersecting analytical models upon which I rely in my project on gendered forms of repression in Mexican and Southern Cone prison narratives. In one respect, this project seeks to explore the politics of memory and justice in moments of Latin American state violence, examining how former political prisoners are situated in the present moment, serving as uncomfortable memories of a genocidal past. In a related way, I center on the diverse ways in which Mexico and the Southern Cone rely on a human rights-based model in order to reconcile – or abnegate -- their violent histories, which obscures the historical-political contexts upon which these incidents of state terrorism are based. Yet most crucial to my project's aim is the interrogating the politics of gender that emerge in the dominant discourses on these historical traumas. The existing analytical frameworks –

based on universal human rights, Western feminism, or biopolitics -- have either adopted a gender-neutral or a gender-normative approach, which have posed vexing limitations in assessing the gender dynamics in the carceral experiences of former political prisoners. The gender politics evident in the Buenos Aires courthouse prompted me to examine how the testimonies of militant activist women contest social categories of gender and heteropatriarchal structures upheld in these neoliberal Latin American nations.

Gendering the State of Exception: the Politics of Gender and the Production of Language in Latin American Carceral Narratives navigates these queries on the representations of gendered violence in Latin American prison testimonies, where I turn to a variety of cultural texts – human rights reports, testimonial literature, and oral histories -- produced under the Argentine and Chilean military dictatorships and the Mexico City massacre of 1968. This introductory chapter outlines the historical context of these episodes of Latin American state violence, linking the violent events of democratic Mexico to the military regimes of the Southern Cone to reveal the mechanisms of terror that were instituted transnationally. I will explicate how this transnational repression is attributed in large part to U.S. political and economic interventionism in Latin America and the intent to force a neoliberal economic system upon these nations. I will then turn to Giorgio Agamben's biopolitical theories to explicate the implementation of states of exception that suspended fundamental rights in Mexico and the Southern Cone and provided juridical justification for the use of illimitable violence. Thirdly, I examine the testimonial practices of the survivors of these states of exception, and the tension exhibited between the collective subject of testimony

and the gender-based experiences of these narratives. And finally, I conclude the introduction with an examination of the culture of impunity and apathy in post-Tlatelolco and post-dictatorship Argentina and Chile, centering on the critical importance of these testimonies that brush a dominant, masculinist history against the grain and posit Latin America's genocidal past within the present.

Transnational Historical Context of Latin America's "Dirty Wars": The State of Exception as the Norm

"We didn't want to be in the situation to have to make certain measures that we would have to take if it was required; whatever we were required to do, we would do; we would do whatever was required of us."– President of the Mexican Republic, Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz, September 1968, one month prior to the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City.

"We are aware of the enormous responsibility that we carry on our shoulders, but we are certain, absolutely certain that the great majority of the Chilean people are with us, willing to fight against Marxism, willing to eradicate it to the last." – General Gustavo Leigh, Head of the Chilean Air Force, September 1973 (Huneeus 47).

"First, we will kill all the subversives; afterwards, their collaborators; then their sympathizers, and then those who are indifferent, and finally, those who are timid" -- Governor of the district of Buenos Aires, General Ibérico Saint Jean, May 1977 (Duhalde 62).

On October 2, 1968, Mexican paramilitary forces entered the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City, opening fire on the peaceful demonstration of thousands of students and civilians ten days before the Olympic Games were to be held in the nation's capital. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of demonstrators were killed-- their bodies transported to unknown locales-- and many more were illegally incarcerated in Mexico City prisons where they were held without due process. On September 11, 1973, Chilean Armed Forces staged a violent coup d'état, which subsequently deposed democratically-elect Socialist President Salvador Allende from his presidency. During his reign as the

military Commander-in-chief of Chile from 1973 to 1990, Augusto Pinochet executed and approved the abduction, torture, disappearance, and murder of thousands of political dissidents in his military regime. Between the years 1976 and 1983, the military regime was able to detain and disappear an estimated 30,000 people who were considered subversive threats to national security, referred to by military officials as "The Process for National Reorganization." These three episodes of state-sanctioned terrorism occurred within years of each other and have been historically contextualized as the "Dirty Wars" of Latin America.

I include these passages from three former heads of state from Mexico, Chile and Argentina in order to anchor the historical-political transnational approach to my project, demonstrating the similar wars these nations waged against political dissension. While there are extensive historical, political, theoretical and sociological works on the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre and the military regimes of the Southern Cone, there exists little scholarship that links the use of systemic violence during the democratic term of President Díaz-Ordaz to the state-sponsored terror instituted in the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. I am cognizant of the different scales of repression that occurred in Mexico and the Southern Cone, but I have found that their parallel methods of abduction, torture, illegal detainment, incarceration and forced disappearance warrants critical academic inquiry. In this section, I will briefly consider the political and economic histories that resulted in this transnational institutionalization of violence and criminalization of political dissension during the Cold War era, serving as my project's historical, political framework.

Firstly, however, I would like to expand on my project's transnational approach in considering the Tlatelolco massacre alongside the military Juntas of the Southern Cone. It is critical to distinguish between the sociopolitical histories of the Southern Cone and Mexico as this resulted in distinctive histories of repression and prison experiences, which I will subsequently assess. While there exist parallel methods of kidnapping, torture, and criminalization of political activists, Mexico did not pursue this repression to the same violent extent as the Southern Cone military regimes. During the "democratic" term of former President Díaz Ordaz, the government responded to student activism with brute force in the months leading up to the October 2nd massacre, the Mexican military occupying the National Polytechnic Institute and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico.[6] The presence of the Mexican military in the universities merely exacerbated tensions, impelling students to organize more demonstrations, strikes, and garnering the support of others (such as medical professionals, railroad workers, and electrical workers). Such cross-alliance mobilizations threatened the long-standing PRI's political stronghold, and thus a national narrative was invented in order to justify the extreme forms of state violence, culminating in the Tlatelolco massacre (and the 1971 the "Corpus Christi massacre" where Mexican authorities violently quelled a student protest): this narrative proclaimed that Communist insurgents were going to subvert and dismantle Díaz Ordaz's Mexican democracy and thus a campaign against leftist "agitators" commenced, Mexico's "Dirty War".

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[6] On July 26, 1968, a group of student activists gathered to commemorate the victory of the Cuban revolution; however, the students were met with police violence before the march reached the Zocalo, Mexico City's main central plaza. Many students were injured and more were illegally detained, portrayed as "Communist" agitators.

The violence sanctioned during the Pinochet dictatorship was more methodically-constructed, and the bloody, traumatic coup d'état on September 11, 1973 was portrayed as the commencement of the war against the Marxist "cancer" infecting the Chilean national body. In the first years after ousting democratically-elect Salvador Allende and his Popular Unity government from power, Augusto Pinochet spear-headed an extremely bloody and systematic plan to extricate "subversive" bodies from the nation. With the military and fiscal assistance of the U.S. government and the creation of the DINA secret police, Pinochet's military regime institutionalized a reign of terror in order to ratify the neoliberal policies endorsed by the U.S. – the infamous "Chicago Boys" -- that had been threatened during Allende's government. The first years of the regime were considered to be the most violent and within the first few months, tens of thousands were illegally detained without due cause and thousands more were executed. Chile's Pinochet regime contrasts with that of Argentina's history of violence, as the 1973 coup d'état was a literal assault on the socialist government of Salvador Allende, a violence that shocked the relatively conflict-less nation at the time (Klein 92).

Argentina's 1976 coup d'état, however, was preceded by a succession of state-sponsored violent episodes and the military coup of 1976 was the apex of the previous military coup d'états.[7] General Rafael Videla's military dictatorship implemented the

[7] Increasing social tensions between the militarized sector of the Peronists (the Montoneros) and the Onganía government erupt in "el Cordobazo" in May of 1969 where the army violently repressed demonstrations held by workers unions in the town of Córdoba, resulting in the murders of fourteen people and the incarceration of union leaders (Duhalde 38). The normalization of state-run, system violence culminates in the massacre at the Ezeiza airport in 1973. The Triple A (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance) opened fire on throngs of Peronist supporters who awaited Perón's return from exile. This attack on the left-wing Peronist supporters prompted Perón to publicly denounce this section of Peronism (more specifically, the militarized Montoneros) which created a division within Peronism and marked the beginning of Peronism without Perón.

systemic dissolution of all political dissidence, commencing with the obliteration of the militarized Peronist wing, the Montoneros.[8] What demarcates this military regime as particularly unique in the history of Argentina was its extremely well-organized and coordinated repression and eradication of all political dissenters. General Videla's regime was cognizant of previous leader Onganía's inability to successfully suppress all elements of dissidence and therefore adopted an extreme yet organized system of repression which included absolute control over individual and social Argentinean bodies. "The Process" initiated a war on terror whereby all political opponents to the regime were considered enemies of the state. Thus, this assault on political dissidence was received with public support as the dictatorship promised an end to the political chaos of the preceding years and promised a national makeover based on order and political stability.[9]

Having outlined the geopolitical and historical divergences between these regions, I argue for a transnational consideration of the operations of terror and state-sponsored violence that occurred in both democratic and dictatorial governments; it is important to consider these violences alongside one another as it suggests that these similar modalities of repression were part of a hemispheric plan to stymie and eradicate political activism

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[8] As Carlos Huneeus points out in *The Pinochet Regime*, this differed from the Chilean case as "there was no climate of armed confrontation between guerrilla organizations and the military…In Chile there was no organization comparable to the powerful groups like Argentina's Montoneros and the ERP [People's Revolutionary Army]" (43). Chile's MIR, or Revolutionary Left movement, was a left-wing, armed militant group that was founded in 1965; it demonstrated considerable support for Allende's Popular Unity government and was violently targeted and repressed in the first years of the dictatorship. Pinochet declared MIR members as subversive enemies of the state and thus many members were arrested and held without due cause, many more murdered or disappeared.

[9] What is also important to note here is that the military dictatorship was supported by Argentina's bourgeois elite as their personal interests had been previously threatened by the burgeoning working-class movements and thus the dictatorship promised to protect their private interests (Pigna 57).

and mobilization. I believe it is critical to center on these overlaps, as each of these nations waged wars on so-called Marxist subversion. Referring again to the statements of Díaz Ordaz, Leigh, and Saint Jean, Mexico and the Southern Cone utilized bellicose vernacular to justify the criminalization, incarceration and suspension of legal rights against perceived enemies of the state; these epochs of state-sanctioned violence have been commonly referred to as the "Dirty Wars" of Mexico and the Southern Cone. I do believe it is critical to clarify here, however, that the term "Dirty War" erroneously suggests that the violence that ensued was committed by two camps of equal power and numbers; in addition, by terming these histories as "Dirty Wars", it assumes that those who were detained by the state were participating in an armed struggle against the government, when in reality the majority of those disappeared and detained by the state were unarmed political activists (and in some cases, not affiliated to any political group).[10] As I will explain shortly, this misnomer has been etched into these nations' consciousnesses, perpetuating the theory of the "Two Devils" that places equal culpability on both military officials who sanctioned the violence and those who were targets of said violence.

It is important to note here that these incidences of statewide repression were met with political resistance and mobilization by various sectors of the population. By the 1960s in Latin America, the *concientización* --movements of political awareness-- led to various demonstrations against U.S. involvement in Latin American affairs and the ruling class' compliance with U.S. policies in Latin America; the success of the Cuban

[10] This is not to say that the violence committed against the armed militant groups – such as the Montoneros or ERP– was justified, nor that the minimal acts of violence committed by these militant groups came close to the amount of violence committed by the state (Vezzetti 77).

Revolution in 1959 and the U.S.' thwarted attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro served as a model of inspiration for activists and catapulted a fervent anti-Communist campaign in Latin America. With the financial and military aid of the U.S., these Latin American governments developed elaborate schemas to obliterate dissenting bodies who intervened in the creation of a Communist-free Latin America and who threatened their economic interests. During the Cold War, this transnational repression in the Western Hemisphere was justified through the rhetoric of national security and defense against Soviet infiltration.

It is critical to examine the economic rationale of the U.S.' interventionism in Latin American affairs and the threat that communism posed to their economic investments during the height of the Cold War. The origins of Latin American state-sanctioned violence have roots in neoliberal economic policies, as these political dissenters challenged U.S.-endorsed free market economics in Mexico and the Southern Cone. Former political advisor to Salvador Allende, Joán Garcés, provides an extensive presentation of U.S. economic and political interventionism in Chile during the Cold War in *Soberanos e intervenidos*. According to Garcés, the U.S.' involvement in Latin America was a preventative measure as he recounts that the Cold War in Latin America was "not to confront real adversaries but rather to monitor the progress of those who could eventually oppose the international politics of the U.S." (17). U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere during the Cold War is evident in the creation of the Cold War Coalition; Garcés states that Latin American nations joined the coalition under duress, not having the option to declare a neutral political stance as U.S. officials declared that

such neutrality was commensurate to an offence to the U.S. (Garcés 18).[11] The creation of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance allowed for U.S. military intervention in various Latin American military sectors, including its infiltration into the Armed Forces, which later had a fundamental role in the disappearances and murders of political dissenters in Chile and Argentina (Garcés 28).

I trace the economic and political histories of these violent moments in order to demonstrate that this suspension of fundamental rights did not occur sporadically nor under the maniacal rule of despotic dictators; rather, it is critical to reveal that the criminalization of political dissenters and the implementation of states of exception are primarily economically and politically motivated.[12] Here, then, it is evident that Cold War politics played a critical role in the fomenting of anti-Communist movements in Latin America, which subsequently facilitated the illegal incarceration, disappearance, and murders of suspected leftist activists.[13] As I will later discuss in the introduction, the reality of these politically-motivated violences is often obfuscated by a human rights

[11] The economic motivations for interventionist policies is further evident in the U.S.' interest in Chile's copper industry; once Chile was pressured to join the Cold War Coalition, it was made to sell its copper to the U.S. at very low prices (Garcés 21). The U.S. was cognizant of the Chilean Communist Party's criticism of U.S. economic exploitation of its natural resources and in response, U.S. foreign policy officials devised strategies to minimize Latin American Communist movements and to maintain political and economic hegemony in the region.

[12] What's more, in the case of both Mexico and Argentina, this state-sanctioned violence did not occur during the massacre of 1968 and the Argentine dictatorship of 1976-83; in the Argentine case, this systemic form of violence was instituted before the 1976 coup d'etat during the constitutional government, evidenced in my interview with Margarita Cruz, survivor of Escuelita Famailla and member of the AEDD. She recounts that she was abducted in May 1975 and taken to the nearby center known as "La Escuelita", which functioned as a torture school for military officials. In Mexico, the violent repression of political dissidents occurred before and after the massacre, and after Tlatelolco, many activists decided to join the armed movement – the guerrilla movement – which resulted in the disappearance and torture of many guerrilleros and non-armed activists during the 1970s and 1980s.

[13] The repressive tactics utilized by the democratic Mexican government and the military regimes of the Southern Cone nations further denotes the common framework of repression; for instance, the famous "death flights" used in the Southern Cone to rid the nation of physical bodies was also used in Mexico as bodies were disposed into the Gulf of Mexico.

discourse, which erases the extremely organized, structured manner that these nations implemented repressive state apparatuses, such as clandestine centers, counter-intelligence agencies, and the use of torture.

Mexico and the Southern Cone justified the implementation of the state of exception which allowed these governments to exercise its authority without reprieve. It is essential to mention that Mexico and the Southern Cone during the 1960s and 1970s relied upon a heteropatriarchal system whereby hyper-masculine methods of governance was normalized; these societies touted patriarchal, Western, and Christian values and those who critiqued these norms were perceived as threats to the national order. Ultimately what is critical to note is that the authoritative Mexican, Argentine and Chilean states were premised on conservative ideals that promoted Western, Christian patriarchal values based on Cold War politics. Mexico's President Díaz-Ordaz, Argentina's Videla, and Chile's Pinochet functioned as the patriarchal figures of the nation state, reinforcing the long-standing Catholic, capitalist and heteropatriarchal paradigms reinforced during the Cold War's fight against Communist "infiltration" in the Western Hemisphere. In essence, I am invested in the ways patriarchal modes of power perpetuate gender norms in the carceral spaces, where the bodies of the prisoners are dehumanized in a gender-specific manner.

The State of Exception – Gender-neutral Biopolitical Theory

In *Homo Sacer,* political philosopher Giorgio Agamben claims that the sovereign state's control over an individual's life is constitutive of the state of exception, which is

founded on the suspension of political and civil rights. He states, "The camp is thus the structure in which the state of exception – the possibility of deciding on which founds sovereign power—is realized *normally*" and this creates a "new juridico-political paradigm in which the norm becomes indistinguishable from the exception" (170). Agamben sets forth that the suspension of law in modern democratic states and the institution of concentration camps (and clandestine prisons) are not the exception but rather they form the basis of these democracies. In my transnational consideration of the creation of states of exception, it is essential to examine these nations' concept of "the citizen" vis-à-vis Agamben's biopolitical theories as this rhetoric of citizenship evokes questions of personal and political subjectivities.[14] What I would like to suggest, however, is that these critical biopolitical concepts refer to a gender-less being, where the state of exception does not distinguish the gender of its subjects, yet I argue that it is essential to complicate this gender-neutral framework as the cultural texts I examine refer to gender-specific forms of dehumanization.

I would like to explore Agamben's principal arguments, however, in order to theoretically anchor the processes of dehumanization that occurred in the Mexican and Southern Cone states of exception. The suspension of law leading to the massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Mexico City and the torture and disappearance of thousands of Argentineans and Chileans elucidates Agamben's biopolitical theories, demonstrating how both democratic and dictatorial governments justified extreme modes of violence to

[14] By referring to Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics, Agamben sets forth that this term depicts the relationship between bare life of an individual and the sovereign state's mechanisms of power. In his text, Agamben alludes to the Hobbesian theory that the individual's natural body is essentially a political body of the city (125).

eradicate political dissension with no threat of retribution. Agamben centers on the relationship between the sovereign state and the individual and defines the concept of "bare life" as "life [that] ceases to be politically relevant…and can as such be eliminated without punishment" (139). This biopolitical concept is central to the modern state's political organization as he contends that the state ultimately has autonomy over the biological life of each individual citizen of the nation.[15] The basis of the sovereign state lies in the concept of what Agamben terms "life unworthy of being lived" where this "life --which with the declarations of rights, had as such been invested with the principle of sovereignty- now itself becomes the place of a sovereign decision"; essentially the leader of the sovereign state holds this decision of determining the value of an individual's life (142). If we are to consider these nations as biological entities, this illuminates the sovereign state's need to eliminate any potential malignant entities—in this case, leftist political dissenters—which may pose a threat to the national body.

In Mexico and the Southern Cone, the men and women who critiqued these governments' modes of repression and institutionalization of state violence were systematically degraded and eliminated. In an Agambian sense, these Mexican and Southern Cone political dissidents were transformed into lives without any political relevance and deemed lives unworthy of being lived, or *homo sacer*, sacred men. The *homo sacer* in this particular context are political subjects that are not relevant to Mexican, Argentine or Chilean society and therefore must and can be sacrificed and exterminated without fear of retribution (Agamben 139). The sovereign states of Mexico

[15] The Agambian notion of "bare life" is a biopolitical term that refers to a body at the moment of birth and the implicit connection to the sovereign state as a political subject: "birth immediately becomes nation such that there can be no interval of separation between the two terms" (128).

and the Southern Cone's incorporation of the concentration camps reflects the nation's command over the individual's body and control over life and death.

It bears noting again the distinction between the state of exception established in Mexico and those created in the Southern Cone dictatorships; while the democratic terms of Díaz Ordaz (and subsequent presidents) indeed sanctioned the use of clandestine prisons in order to torture and disappear suspected "subversives", the Argentine and Chilean regimes institutionalized a more widespread reign of terror where thousands of people were detained in hundreds of concentration camps and clandestine centers across the nations. In my discussion of state of exception in Mexico, I am referring to the clandestine prisons and "regular" prisons where political dissidents were illegally detained, held without due process, and tortured (and many murdered and disappeared). In the Southern Cone instances, the regimes relied on the concentration camps to detain and exterminate all individuals who could potentially "metastasize the cancer" within the nations' bodies. Although a culture of fear was primarily established during the Southern Cone dictatorships and to a lesser degree in Mexico, these authoritarian governments viewed the nations as social bodies that necessitated emergency medical attention to excise the Marxist cancerous cells that would harm the corporeal whole, each nation declaring a state of emergency.

I have found the biopolitical work of Agamben to be theoretically essential to my project's assessment of transnational modes of repression and dehumanization of political dissidents and these authoritarian governments' absolute control over life and death. Dehumanization and torture was implemented to either transform or exterminate the

prisoners and in this manner, both male and female inmates were equally subjected to forms of degradation, transformed into *homo sacer*. However, in my research on Latin American carceral narratives, there exists a more nuanced gendered dynamics in the state of exception, where men and women were dehumanized in specific gendered and sexualized manners. While Agamben's biopolitical concepts anchor my theoretical discussion on the processes of dehumanization within the carceral setting of these cultural texts, I argue that this gender-neutral theory must be complicated in order to sufficiently engage with the gender politics present in the prison setting. Indeed, we must question whether Agamben's articulations of the *homo sacer* are truly gender-neutral, as the "sacred man" seemingly embodies, by default, a masculinized subjectivity, a masculine subjectivity that is subsequently stripped away during the processes of degradation and dehumanization. My intent here is not to critique this gender-absent framework, but rather, what I would like to articulate here is the biopolitical theory here does not account for the critical distinction between the way men and women political prisoners were maligned, degraded, tortured, and dehumanized in the state of exception.

A critical aim of my project, then, is to utilize gender as an analytic category of inquiry in my engagement with Mexican and Southern Cone carceral narratives; specifically, I intend to investigate how entrenched gendered norms are sadistically replicated in the prison space, the state of exception. Within the prison experience, I argue that the reproductions of heteronormativized gender roles– either by assessing the prisoners' testimonies or the guards' interactions with the prisoners-- complicate the state's dehumanization of these incarcerated bodies. In many of these texts I will

examine, female prisoners were seen by the guards as simultaneous objects of repulsion and desire whereas male prisoners were often emasculated and labeled as homosexual. The regulation of the prisoners' hetero masculinity and femininity results in the following aporia: how is it possible to reduce the prisoners to desubjectivized entities, yet simultaneously ascribe specific gendered and sexual attributes to these bare lives? The policing of stringent heteropatriarchal norms was constitutive of the political prisoner experience, and I investigate to what extent it inflects the oral and narratival forms of survivor testimony. As my project is primarily concerned with the Mexican and Southern Cone carceral narratives, it will be imperative to expand on the gender politics inherent in testimonial practices.

Survivor Testimony - The Collective vs. the Gendered Subject

In my 2009 interview with Lelia Ferrarese of Rosario, Argentina's *Museo de la Memoria*, she describes her release from Villa Devoto where she was detained as a political prisoner and the difficulty she encountered in using the singular speaking subject: "A mí al principio me costaba mucho el hablar…nosotras allá [en Villa Devoto] cuando nos pedíamos algo…era en el plural, nosotras. Acá, volver ser individual. Entonces era un poco como me hacía falta la palabra, nosotras […] Me faltaba el amparo de las compañeras alrededor."[16] Ferrarese alludes to her past desubjectivized status as a *homo sacer* in the Villa Devoto political prison, propelling her and other prisoners to create alliances and sources of solidarity which was essential in surviving these forms of

[16] "For me in the beginning, it took a lot for me to speak…we women there [in Villa Devoto] when we asked for something…it was in the plural, the [feminine] we. Here, it is the return to the individual self. So I was lacking the word, the [feminine] we… I lacked the protection of the compañeras around me."

abjection and degradation in the prison. This in turn resulted in the formation of a collective speaking subject, "nosotras", aligning the various subjectivities (or desubjectivities) of fellow political prisoners.

In his essay on the Latin American *testimonio*, George Yúdice claims that providing testimony is "an act of identity-formation that is simultaneously personal and collective" (42). Indeed, as I will explicate in further detail in the second and third chapters, survivors of Latin American state violence often refer to a plural subject of testimony, invoking the subjectivities of those who did not survive the violent repressions in Mexico and the Southern Cone. While chapter one investigates the state's framing of survivor testimony in human rights reports, the second and third chapters center on the written and oral processes of providing testimony. As *Gendering the State of Exception* is primarily concerned with examining the various testimonial practices that have emerged from these episodes of state violence in Mexico and the Southern Cone, it will be important to remark briefly on some of the postulations on the role of testimonial narratives and the collective subject of testimony.

There exist a myriad of debates in correlation to the function and genre of *testimonio* that surfaced with the 1983 publication of *I, Rigoberta Menchú,* thus impacting the role of the testimony within Latin American Studies.[17] While the genre of *testimonio* literature, especially works by political prisoners, often reflect the collective oppression of a specific social group, oftentimes these survivors relate his or her

[17] While Menchú's testimony refers to the experience of a specific gendered and racialized subject within a particular historical moment, it is critical to denote the parallels between the indigenous movements mentioned in her text and the political movements referenced in the testimonial texts of the Southern Cone and Mexico; what ultimately connects these works is the criminalization of political dissenters and the need to document the multivarianced experiences that were ignored by their governments.

experiences of trauma in quite divergent ways; furthermore, the gender-based forms of marginalization and repression also impacts the narrative form of the testimonies.[18] My intent here is not to provide a genealogy of the *testimonio* as genre and the intersectionality of racialized, class and gendered subjecthood in Latin American literary studies, but rather I center on this particularity of the "collective" subject of *testimonio* as a springboard for my discussion on the function gender assumes in these narratives. As I argue in chapter two, there exists a critical gap between the collective subjectivity of the gender-neutral testimonial subject and the gender-normative subjectivity allotted to women's testimonial narratives by Western feminist scholars.

Here I will briefly turn to the arguments regarding the subjectivity of testimonial literature that will be pertinent to my project. Various critics, such as Barbara Harlow, refer to testimonial literature as "resistance literature" as they contend that the purpose of these works is to provide a counterhegemonic account of a historical moment and a criticism of the systems of repression. John Beverly, who has produced an ample body of work on Latin American testimonial literature, further adds that these works are inherently political as the discourse utilized by writers is meant to captivate the reader and command a response and political action; more importantly, Beverly claims that these texts refer to a social group and the first-person narrator is speaking for a subaltern population whose voices have been silenced by state powers, and often the narrator is a survivor of organized violence committed by the state. Many survivors have produced a variety of testimonial forms, offering multiperspectival accounts of state violence in a

[18] In this context, I am referring to the narratives of personal traumas situated within the collective trauma that these nations experienced as a whole during these political moments. See, for example, Barbara Misztal's "Theories of Social Remembering" for a detailed explication.

diversity of cultural forms –first-person *testimonios,* oral testimonies, testimonial fiction -- but what is evident in many of these works is this invocation of those who did not survive, the collective, plural subject of testimony.

This formation of the plural subject of testimony and the compulsion to provide testimony for the disappeared and those executed by the state alludes to what Agamben terms in *Remnants of Auschwitz* the "impossibility of bearing witness." Agamben posits that survivor testimony cannot fully relate all intricate details of a traumatic event as only those who did not survive are considered the complete witness and they are the only ones who can bear witness to the most extreme forms of abjection; yet those who did not survive, as desubjectivized entities, are unable to bear witness as they are no longer possess the consciousness necessary to assert their subjectivity. The survivor, then, indicates the responsibility of not only relating their personal experiences of trauma, but also he or she is indelibly connected to those who did not live to tell his or her experiences.[19] Therefore, many survivor narratives express their inextricable connection to those who did not survive, and this "impossibility of bearing witness" is the perplexing task they undertake whereby they are compelled to retell and remember the narratives of those who did not survive.

In almost all of my conversations with former political prisoners of Mexico and the Southern Cone, what I did indeed notice is this reliance on the collective subject of testimony, evident in Ferrarese's statement above. They would also indicate that what is

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[19] In many instances, these testimonial narratives serve as the main means of pursuing judicial action against former heads of state and ex-officials – most successfully in Argentina and to lesser degrees in Mexico and Chile – as survivor testimony is often the only existing form of evidence that can be utilized in bringing ex-officers to a court of law.

fundamental to their political subjectivities is this solidarity formed with other prisoners during their incarceration and with other survivors upon their release; many times they would state that they do not center on question of gender as they do not want to splinter their solidarity groups. Yet again, I believe it is crucial to uncover the gender politics present in survivor testimony in the process of articulating, disseminating, documenting, analyzing, and categorizing testimony. Referring again to John Beverly's essay on Latin American *testimonio*, he mentions the gender dynamics in testimonies and contends that women do not "produce textually an essentialized 'woman's experience'" as the narratives, by definition, refer to a collective struggle.[20] Here, then, the question of gender is subsumed under the rubric of the "collective struggle" of the marginalized community; while it is clear that survivors often refer to their social collective and invoke the testimonies of their disappeared compañeros, it is also evident that male and female writers experienced gender-specific forms of subjugation and torture. In an interview I conducted with Margarita Cruz, survivor of the Escuelita Faimallá in Tucumán, Argentina, she states, "No hacemos diferencia entre varón y mujeres entre centro clandestino. Pero, sí creo que la subjetividad de las mujeres, que la represión tuvo otras formas por un lado y otras consecuencias. En eso sí, que no es lo mismo, del punto de vista del género."[21] As Cruz and others denote, it is critical to retain the collective, politicized subject of testimony and to not separate the experiences of repression based

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[20] See John Beverly's "On the Margins of Literature" (41).

[21] "We don't distinguish between men and women who were in the clandestine centers. But, yes I believe that the subjectivity of women, that the repression manifested differently and had different consequences. For that reason yes, it wasn't the same, from the perspective of gender."

on gender, as they are speaking from within a community of solidarity seeking justice for the crimes committed by state.

Yet Cruz simultaneously expresses that women and men were indeed treated differently by agents of the state, as she continues:

> Las mujeres en esa década hacen una ruptura muy fuerte con el sistema dominante acerca de lo que se pretendía acerca de las mujeres, como debían ser…rompe una serie de mandatos y hasta tal punto que toman las armas. Decir que no soy la madre clásica, pero voy a ser la madre que va a formar a mis hijos de esta manera, de esta concepción, y bueno, va a participar en un compromiso social, que rompe la estructura más de una sociedad capitalista, individualista…Eso se plantea en los 70, mucho más antes, se plantea una mujer con mucho más compromiso.[22]

This politically-active woman was perceived as a threat to the heteropatriarchal, neoliberal values firmly entrenched in Mexico and the Southern Cone and was condemned by these authoritarian regimes and castigated accordingly for transgressing these norms. Women's resistance and political subjectivity is subsequently targeted by these state authorities and their ridicule of their political activism exhibited the state powers' attempt to reify the heteropatriarchal, capitalist structure. In the testimonial texts with which I engage in my project, women who appear in these works violated the state powers' codes of conduct befitting for a proper, ideal woman; the legitimization and justification of gender-based torture and ridicule of women's activism is not unique to only dictatorial states in Latin America. These narratives are representative of transnational modes of patriarchal, capitalist domination whereby women must remain

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[22] "The women in that decade make a strong break with the dominant system according to the norms, of what women should be like…they break with a series of norms and some even take up arms. To say that I won't be the traditional mother, but I will be a mother who will raise my children a certain way, with a certain conception, and well, to participate in social, political commitments, and to break with the structure of a capitalist society, individualistic society…that is set forth in the 70s, and even before, women involved in political commitments.

within the appropriate domestic space and men and women must be adherent to the economic, political and social hegemonic order. In this manner, then, I argue that it is absolutely critical we be cognizant the ways in which organized forms of violence were directed against politically-active women, paying attention to the ways in which women's testimonial narratives allude to these gender-based repressions, and how these mechanisms of repression served to perpetuate value systems set in place by the heteropatriarchal nation-states of Mexico and the Southern Cone.

It is worth stating here that when I invoke the term "patriarchal" in my dissertation, I am cognizant that heteropatriarchal structures operated in diverse manners in each nation and that I am careful to not essentialize these distinct realities under a singular experience of Latin American patriarchal repression. In tracing the theoretical debates and foundations of French feminist criticism, Judith Butler refers to the limitations of Luce Irigaray's reliance on a universal category of patriarchy and maintains that this "risks a repetition of the self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism, colonizing under the sign of the same those differences that might otherwise call that totalizing concept into question" (18). Utilizing a Western, universal category of patriarchy is indeed problematic and as Butler denotes, it merely reinforces these binarisms that feminist scholars attempt to dismantle, however, this is not to say that Third World patriarchies are not worth assessing or critiquing; in this context, however, I will be careful to approach the discussions of "patriarchy" and gendered processes of degradation from their respective cultural, political, and geohistorical contexts.

In a related way, I also contend that this "self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism" that Butler describes is evident in many of the ways in which women's testimonial narratives are analyzed and categorized. Thus, while I maintain that is critical to center on the gender dynamics of the processes of state-organized violence, it is also imperative not to essentialize women's narratives of resistance to reductive frameworks of analysis; as I will argue in chapter one, politically-active women's testimonies are depoliticized and decontextualized in the Southern Cone human rights reports, highlighting mainly their experiences as sexual victims of torture, and chapter three centers on Western feminists' tendency to reduce Third World women's oral testimonies to a gender-normative framework, erasing their histories of political activism. As I will develop in the next section, this elision of the political agencies and historical contexts of these testimonies not only re-traumatizes the survivors of state violence, but it in effect dangerously evades assessing the technologies of repression that were institutionalized in Mexico and the Southern Cone and the history of political genocide.

"Remanentes molestos de un mundo ya desaparecido" ("Irritating remnants of a world that has disappeared") – Political Genocide, the Limitations of Universal Human Rights Discourse and the Gendering of Historical Memory

I would like to return to the moment of Calvo's testimony during the July 2009 trial, as this scene in the Buenos Aires courtroom presents the limitations of the culture of human rights and its intersection with a gender politics in post-violent societies that is foundational to my project. As previously mentioned, Calvo's testimony exposes the mechanisms of repression and that indeed a political genocide occurred in Argentina, yet this critical component of her testimony is deemed irrelevant to the case. She is clear to

mention that she was not a random victim of the dictatorship, but rather, she was carefully targeted due to her political activism that the regime considered an impediment in the establishment of free market economic policies. Calvo and other Dirty War survivors are the “aparecidos” (“the re-appeared ones”), testaments to the violent origins of free market economics and the genocidal past of Latin America. During this moment in the courtroom, however, there is only an interest in Calvo’s narrative insofar as she adheres to an identity as victimized woman of the dictatorship’s mechanisms of cruelty, a common trope in this culture of human rights. The harsh silencing of her narrative in the courtroom is a violent act of re-traumatization and presents a key component in the genocidal histories of Latin America. This moment points to a trend in human rights discourse, state-sponsored truth commissions, and Western feminist scholars’ elision of women’s testimonies of resistance, ignoring or infantilizing critical histories of activism.

Post-Tlatelolco Mexico and post-dictatorship Chile and Argentina have a nuanced relationship with their histories of violence and each state officially responded and archived these historical traumas in divergent manners. I will briefly attend to these critical differences as these historical-political contexts serve as an important foundation for my analysis on the limitations of universal human rights discourse and gender politics that emerge in political prisoner testimonies. What is clear is that these states are invested in uncovering human rights abuses of the past insofar as the findings do not diverge from carefully constructed official memories of the Tlatelolco massacre and the Southern Cone dictatorships; these dominant historical narratives are predicated on the theory of “Two Devils” which fosters a culture of impunity and oblivion that has been firmly entrenched

in these societies for decades. These carefully managed human rights investigations have stripped the survivors of these epochs of state violence of their politicized subjectivities and rendered them passive victims of random moments of human rights violations.

Following October 2nd, Mexican authorities denied instigating the violence, contending that armed protestors commenced the massacre and that the Mexican army was merely responding to the violence; in addition, no official state-sanctioned investigation was carried out, resulting in a 31-year silence surrounding the events of the Tlatelolco massacre. In 2001, newly-elected President Vicente Fox responded to internal and international pressure from human rights organizations demanding that official government archives be declassified in order to shed light on the state's involvement of the massacre and the subsequent Dirty War where thousands of dissidents were tortured, murdered or disappeared. Despite President Fox's promise to establish a special commission whereby the government would commence official investigations and trials against former officers responsible for the crimes committed during the Dirty War, former student activist and founder of Comité '68 Raúl Álvarez Garín noted in 2008 that no state-sponsored judicial actions have been taken. In addition, the conviction of former President Luis Echeverría in 2006 for his involvement in the massacre on October 2nd – where he was ordered to serve his sentence under house arrest – was organized and set in motion by the civic organization, Comité '68, with no support of any kind offered by the state.

Argentina's case differed significantly, as President Alfonsín took immediate action by creating the National Committee on the Disappeared and commencing the

Trials of the Juntas in 1984, investigating the crimes committed during the dictatorship. There existed international and national condemnation of the violations of human rights that were sanctioned during the years of the dictatorship, and with the testimonies of survivors and family members of the disappeared, former leaders of the dictatorship Jorge Videla and Emilio Massera were sentenced to life in prison for their crimes against humanity. These convictions were the first of its kind in Latin America, signaling as such the possibilities of taking judicial action against former military officers of authoritative regimes; this, however, was short-lived as Alfonsín enacted the amnesty laws of Full Stop and Due Obedience in 1986 and 1987, respectively, which impeded any future judicial action against other ex-officers still living in amnesty. In another setback, President Carlos Menem overturned the guilty convictions of the Trials of the Juntas, releasing Videla, Massera and others from prison. These laws were in effect until they were repealed during President Nestor Kirchner's term in 2003, where the trials against former officers were subsequently resumed.

In Chile, however, Pinochet's legacy and presence remained years after the demise of the dictatorship in 1990; Chile's transition to the democratic term of President Patricio Aylwin did not usher in significant political changes, evident in Pinochet's title as Head of the Chilean Army until 1998. Furthermore, an amnesty law enacted during the Pinochet dictatorship thwarted any possibilities for bringing former military officials to justice. But perhaps just as significant as these legal barriers is the cultural influence of the Pinochet regime on the national consciousness; while generally speaking, the Argentine public condemns the crimes committed during the dictatorship and view the

years as a bleak moment in Argentine history, many Chileans supported and still to this day justify the use of violence against “Marxist subversives” during the Pinochet dictatorship. These popular sentiments coupled with the amnesty laws have in effect made judicial proceedings very difficult in post-dictatorship Chile. While President Aylwin headed a Truth Commission and a published formal report on the crimes committed during the dictatorship, it only investigated individuals who were killed by the state and ignored the thousands of testimonies of survivors of the regime. These vestiges of the traumatic past remained present and Pinochet, including his supporters and former officials, contended that silence, apathy and oblivion were critical in fomenting a future Chile. This emphasis on oblivion has fostered and propagated an amnestic culture that has invalidated and ignored the thousands of narratives that have emerged denouncing the crimes of the Pinochet regime.

Despite the critical differences between post-Tlatelolco Mexico, post-dictatorship Argentina, and post-dictatorship Chile, it is essential to focus on the similar ways these nations granted amnesty to former officers and perpetuated the theory of the “Two Devils”. Official government narratives espouse this theory, whereby survivors of state-sponsored violence are depicted as subversive agitators whose violent suppression was merited by their “terrorist” actions against the government. In Mexico, former presidents Díaz-Ordaz and Luis Echeverría maintained that the force utilized by the state during the Dirty War was to combat Communist subversion and that violence was equally committed by both political dissenters and state authorities. Mexican authorities centered on the actions of the armed guerilla movements and declared these groups responsible for

provoking the violent response of the Armed Forces. This narrative is similarly entrenched in the Southern Cone, where armed militant groups such as Chile's MIR and Argentina's Montoneros were blamed for the violence that ensued during their dictatorships. In his essay on post-World War II Germany, "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?", Theodor Adorno posits the dangers of such a narrative and claims, "The enormity of what was perpetrated is the very cause for a self-justifying attack: such things, so a lazy consciousness comforts itself, could not have occurred if the victims had not presented some kind of provocation; and this vague 'some kind of' can flourish wildly" (116).

It is indeed evident in Mexico and the Southern Cone just how this discourse has "flourish[ed] wildly", placing blame on the survivors of violence. Margarita Cruz remarks that many Argentines accept this theory, assuming that those who were targeted by the regime warranted such violence committed against them; she states that many believed "por algo será" ("for some reason"), implying that for some legitimate reason she was detained, tortured, degraded and released by state authorities. Despite the international awareness of the human rights abuses committed during these authoritative Latin American regimes, this theory is ingrained in the cultural and social imagination of these nations; additionally, the rhetoric of universal human rights that is integral in the formal investigations in Mexico and the Southern Cone for crimes committed against humanity effectively *reiterate* this theory (evident in the human rights reports *Nunca Más* and *The Rettig Report*) in order to refrain from investigating the economic and political motivating factors of these past crimes.

The confluence of the theory of the "Two Devils" with the ratification of amnesty laws has effectively sustained a culture of apathy and impunity in Mexico and the Southern Cone. For decades, survivors have struggled against this constructed narrative and have sought to recover a historical memory that validates their experiences of trauma and illegal repression; a critical mode of combating this obfuscation of history is assertion of their political subjectivities through the dissemination of their testimonies. However, in post-dictatorship Argentina and Chile and post-Tlatelolco Mexico, those who seek to recuperate the historical memory of violence are portrayed as irritating subjects from the past, consumed by their past traumas. In her essay "Recordar el olvido", Nelly Richard denotes that Latin American post-dictatorship, free market societies are predicated on the construction of an apathetic relationship to the recent genocidal past, and she states:

> El mercado se valió de la *pulsión de novedad* con la que se propaga la excitación neoliberal de lo diverso y de lo cambiante, para que historia y memoria fueran parte de lo que el barrido consumista debía dejar atrás, como remanentes molestos de un mundo ya desaparecido: el mundo explosivo de las luchas populares, de los enfrentamientos ideológicos, de las rebeliones sociales, de la crítica utópica, de la intelectualidad disidente – un mundo que se desemantizó la falta de contenidos de la ley de abstracción y mercado del capitalismo intensivo" (16).[23]

Politically-active survivors of state violence are incongruous with the present-day neoliberal economic project in Latin America and according to those who have

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[23] "The market benefitted from the thriving innovation that is propagated by neoliberal stimulations of all that is diverse and changing, so that history and memory become part of what consumer society should leave behind, like irritating remnants of a world that has disappeared: a world of popular struggles, of ideological clashes, of social rebellions, of utopian criticism, of intellectual dissidents – a world that took apart the lack of validity of the law and took apart an intensive capitalist market."

uncritically accepted this culture of oblivion, they are “remanentes molestos de un mundo ya desaparecido.”

Having survived the extermination of political resistance to the nascent neoliberal economic model in various Latin American nations, these survivor testimonies I assess in my project are living testaments to the political genocide of 1960s and 1970s Latin America, inconvenient reminders of the past. Testimonial narratives provide those of us invested in Latin American Cultural Studies with a unique opportunity to engage with sources that seek to recuperate marginalized voices that grate against their nations’ official histories. Cultural studies has created a discursive space with which to engage with distinctive cultural texts that contest the dominant modes of historiography. In her critical work on the recuperation of historical memory in post-atomic societal Japan, Lisa Yoneyama explores the power dynamics involved in the construction of official historiographies and questions the “objective” nature of official history; Yoneyama maintains that we must constantly question which particular events are included and subsequently excluded from official historical documentation and that this reveals how “power operated in the production of historical knowledge, wielded both in domination and as resistance, and allows us to ask what exactly is at stake in remembering and forgetting past events in certain ways and not in others” (28).

These official discourses on human rights and memory in Chile, Argentina, and Mexico are indeed reflective of the existent power structures as the national narratives emphasize a teleological historical progression and various crimes of the state are elided or diminished. According to Yoneyama and other cultural historians, official histories are

"product[s] of power" written by the dominant classes, and are typically perceived as scientific, objective, and rational documents (27). Unofficial historical documents – such as personal narratives, popular memories, and oral or written testimonies – are considered unreliable and subjective historical sources and are portrayed as myopic and centered on the melancholic past. I echo Yoneyama's refutation of these assumptions and instead she claims that the Benjaminian dialectics of memory assists in a better understanding of the past's relation to the present; these unofficial historical sources are critical modes of comprehending existent power structures and also irrupt the teleological narratives of history and progress.

The testimonies I analyze in this project provide critical narratives that decenter and contravene their respective nations' official historiographies predicated upon oblivion and the theory of "Two Devils", and furthermore expose the limitations of human rights discourse's elision of the politically-motivated origins of these violent histories. Although many survivors of these repressions acknowledge the symbolic importance of human rights awareness and trials for crimes against humanity– which mainly occurred due to the organization of survivor groups and human rights organizations, such as the AEDD and the Comité '68 in Mexico – they clearly state that these trials do not achieve *absolute* justice for the crimes committed in the past. One significant contention is that these trials ignore the context within which these violations of human rights occurred: the intent to commit political genocide in a transnational sense. Here I wish to broach this subject briefly, as I will be referring to these historical traumas of Latin America throughout my project as the political genocide of Latin America. My

intention is to not only corroborate the narratives of the testimonial narratives which I will be engaging in my project, but to also be respectful of the claims of the survivors of these repressions, to allow a space of validation that has been refuted in a juridical, historical and cultural sense.

Survivors of these authoritarian regimes have condemned this violence as a form of political genocide, whereby these nations methodically sought to exterminate a portion of the population based on political identity. However, there has been much resistance in Mexico and the Southern Cone to consider these histories of violence as constituting genocide; one argument is that those who were targeted by the regimes did not belong to a specific ethnic, religious or racial group, therefore not adhering to the UN resolution's strict definition of "genocide." Moreover – and this is more evident in Mexico's case – state officials and international law deny that genocide occurred in these regions, claiming that the number of violent losses did not amount numerically to officially count as genocide. According to Raúl Álvarez Garín, Echeverría's defense team, in conjunction with the various forms of Mexican media and the Mexican legal system, deny that genocide occurred in Mexico and "afirman que solo se trató de 'lamentables acontecimientos'" ("they affirm that it was merely 'lamentable occurrences").[24] This not only diminishes the gravity of the genocidal repression that occurred in Latin America, but also significantly affects the judicial proceedings as former officials of these regimes cannot be tried as perpetrators of genocide, which is the ultimate goal of many survivor

[24] This is taken from the prologue to the ten-volume series on Mexico's Dirty War, entitled *Mexico: Genocidio y delitos de lesa humanidad 1968-2008*, a volume I graciously acquired from Alvarez Garín during my meetings with the Comité '68. This exhaustive volume is a collaboration with various legal experts, human rights activists, survivors of the Dirty War, and other activists who are involved in the recuperation of Mexico's historical memory (1950s- present).

groups in Latin America.[25] The theory of the "two devils" that has been culturally and historically ingrained in the national consciousnesses of Mexico and the Southern Cone also impedes the possibility of reconceptualizing these historical traumas as histories of genocide.

It is important to contest these main arguments posited by the state – and by many human rights scholars and international legal experts– in their claim that these acts of violence do not constitute "genocide." In Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine,* she traces the genealogy of the term "genocide" within the human rights framework and provides the history of the term in the *UN Convention on Genocide;* initially, the 1946 UN resolution included the term "political" in its definition of the term genocide when "'racial, religious, political and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part'" but subsequently was omitted from the resolution in 1948 (Klein 147).[26] In an international human rights juridical context, this has posed legal setbacks for survivors and families of those affected by these genocidal acts of repression as they contend that they were part of a portion of society that the authoritarian state had attempted to systematically eliminate. And while it is important to be cognizant of the difference of in the magnitude of the repression that occurred between various nations that have attempted to eradicate a specific population of their society, I believe that quantifying loss is not only counterproductive for a transnational analysis, but more significantly it is a callous

[25] In the Argentina, however, one landmark case against former military official, Miguel Etchecolatz, was convicted of committing crimes against humanity within the context of genocide.
[26] As Klein indicates, the term "political" was removed from the resolution as it was directly related to Stalin's actions in an international context.

manner of conceptualizing human loss and trauma. Adorno eloquently articulates this quantification of loss in different historical moments of state violence: “There is already something inhuman in making such calculations, or in the haste to dispense with self reflection through counter-accusations.”

I believe this is critical for the basis of the transnational approach of my project, as I compare the genocidal histories of Mexico and the Southern Cone; as Adorno reflects, there is indeed “something inhuman” in attempting to compare and quantify whose loss is more egregious and grave, and effectively, this has been a common response in recent human rights juridical processes. Returning to the case against Luis Echeverría, human rights legal experts consulting with the Comité ’68 and other plaintiffs advised against referring to the term “genocide” and suggested utilizing instead “crime”, “massacre” or “homicide” in the charges against Echeverría. As Álvarez Garín explains, they justified this in the following manner:

> Si se le procesara por un delito distinto, sería más fácil que prospera la demanda; también han dicho que…para avanzar en el conocimiento de la verdad histórica, tendríamos que dejar de lado la lucha por rigurosa aplicación de la justicia y dirigir nuestros esfuerzos a que el gobierno constituya una comisión de la verdad. Lo que no han dicho es ¿por qué suponen que para que si reconozca la verdad histórica es necesario que se les garantice la impunidad de los responsables de los delitos de lesa humanidad?[27]

Álvarez Garín alludes to the polemical issues of contemporary universal human rights discourse, mainly the culture of impunity that it perpetuates and the depoliticization of

[27] “If they were to charge him with a different crime, then it would be more likely to convict him; they also said that…in order to make known the historical truth, we would have to leave aside the most rigorous application of justice and we would have to focus our efforts on the government so that they would create a truth commission. What they have not said is, why do they assume that in order to know the historical truth it is necessary to grant impunity to those responsible for crimes against humanity?”

these histories of violence. Álvarez Garín also exposes the contradictory nature of many human rights legal cases – most notable in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission – that grants impunity or a minimal castigation for those responsible for these crimes in exchange for the recuperation of the events of these violent pasts. Moreover, what we need to bear in mind when referring to universal human rights in the Latin American context is the manner in which the human rights rhetoric has been applied in contemporary discussions on the past radical, Marxist subtexts of the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The human rights discourse regarding the Southern Cone military dictatorships and Mexico City massacre relies on the notion that those affected by these episodes of state violence were merely victims of human rights abuses, which effectively occludes their inherently activist, politicized backgrounds. This depoliticization of these leftist movements is succinctly explicated in Naomi Klein's assessment of the apolitical nature of universal human rights:

> Scrubbed clean of references to the rich and the poor, the weak and the strong, the North and the South, this way of explaining the world, so popular in North America and Europe, simply asserted that everyone has the right to a fair trial and to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment…a way of engaging in politics without mentioning politics (121).

Despite this recent vested interest in human rights and historical memory in Mexico and the Southern Cone, there is a disavowal of the political and economic histories of these violent epochs. This is evident in the Buenos Aires trial against the former officers, where only one of the three defendants – Olivera Róvere – was condemned to life in prison, whereas the other two defendants were found not guilty. The dominant human rights narrative has instead centered on these violent epochs as precisely that, epochs that are

decontextualized from any bearing they may have on Mexico and the Southern Cone's present-day economic, political and cultural realities. Thus, the mere presence of militant survivors of these violent histories in contemporary national discourse brush history against the grain in the Benjaminian sense, proffering narratives that destabilize the dominant historical narratives of their nations constructed on oblivion and historical inaccuracy.

Additionally, I argue that these dominant histories and human rights discourse ignore the rigid structure of heteropatriarchy that underpinned the Mexican and Southern Cone regimes, which is alluded to in many survivor narratives. In Fiona Ross' *Bearing Witness,* she investigates the politics of gender involved in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and concludes that female survivors of state violence and apartheid were portrayed as mere victims of sexual violence; their politicized narratives were often obfuscated and minimized in order to reconfigure their testimonies to center on their experiences as sexual-abuse victims, mothers, and partners. Ross includes the testimony of Thenjiwe Mtintso from the 1997 South African Women's hearing in Johannesburg: "This consistency of drawing you away from your own activism, from your own commitment as an actor, was perhaps worse than torture, was worse than physical assault" (65). This moment parallels the defense team's constant silencing of Calvo's testimony, patronizing her intent to expose the genocidal practices of the Argentine state. As Mtintso and survivors of Latin American state violence contend, this elision of women's political agency re-traumatizes the women by negating their political subjectivities and erasing a history of activism.

My project seeks to expose the hegemonic forces that systematically and violently perpetuated normative ideals of gender and sexuality in order to sustain their neoliberal economic and political agenda; women who critiqued the economic and political agendas of their state were perceived as non-normative beings, transgressing their gender roles and deserving of castigation. This is a particularly critical thread of my project, as I argue that there exists a discursive silence in relation to the gender politics of the political prisoner experience in Mexico and the Southern Cone; the existing biopolitical and human rights theoretical frameworks either incorporate a gender-neutral analytic or erase the political subjectivities of militant women. Much of the feminist scholarship that does engage with activist women's narratives of incarceration and political resistance utilizes a problematic gender-normative framework when assessing Third World women's narratives.[28] However, my aim is not to be completely dismissive of existing scholarship on universal human rights, Latin American *testimonio* and Western feminism's assessment of these Latin American prison narratives and I believe that these distinct theoretical frameworks have importantly made these histories and narratives visible in their respective fields. For the purposes of my project, I have found that the feminist scholarship of postcolonial scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty and social anthropologist Fiona C. Ross to be the most informative in my project's theoretical approach; in

[28] When I refer to "Third World" throughout my dissertation, I would like to echo Mohanty's justification of employing such a polemical term; although cognizant of the highly problematic notion of First and Third Worlds, the use of "Third World" in this context refers specifically to the history of colonization and neocolonization in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As Mohanty et al. claim in the preface to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,* this term "intentionally foregrounds a history of colonization and contemporary relationships of structural dominance between first and third world peoples" (x). It is also worth recapitulating Mohanty's cautioning against homogenizing a heterogeneous group of Third World women, and throughout this project I will be careful to not ignore the various subjectivities these narratives reveal.

considering the testimonial works by survivors of the Mexican and Southern Cone genocidal repressions, Mohanty and Ross' theoretical postulations have served as essential tools in exposing the nuances of gender-based repression while maintaining the political subjectivities of these testimonies.

Gendering the State of Exception navigates these discursive absences and theoretical limitations by turning to a variety of cultural texts produced during the Southern Cone dictatorships and the Mexico City massacre. I utilize a critical Third World feminist framework in order to expose the possibilities of weaving together threads of opposition to systemic forms of symbolic and literal violence that these survivors encountered –and still encounter today-- in Mexico and the Southern Cone. Thus, each chapter considers the ways in which state power and dominant theoretical models have worked in the construction of a gender normative historical memory, divesting survivors of their political subjectivity and erasing the history of political genocide. I suggest that we complicate these frameworks and adopt a new manner of conceptualizing testimonies that expose the transnational histories of survival and resistance to a heteropatriarchal, genocidal past, still bearing on the present.

In chapter one, I analyze the gender dynamics involved in the state's framing of survivor testimony in the official Southern Cone truth commission reports, *Nunca Más* (1984) and *The Rettig Report* (1991), and Elena Poniatowksa's unofficial report on the Tlatelolco massacre, *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1971). I specifically examine the mainstreaming of universal human rights discourse in light of the Southern Cone military dictatorships and the state's response to these violations of human rights. While these

reports critically expose the human rights abuses committed during these regimes, I argue that they are detached from the historical-political contexts that impelled these human rights violations and reflect the state's manner of "dealing with" their histories of violence by cataloguing it and swiftly looking to the "democratic" future. Moreover, this chapter will also examine this process of cataloguing survivor testimony and I claim that there exists a specific gendering of human rights in the Southern Cone reports that frames women's testimonies according to a gender-normative standard, positing them as passive and depoliticized, sexually-victimized targets of human rights abuse. Poniatowska's unofficial report on the Mexico City massacre diverges from these official state reports on the Southern Cone dictatorships, as *Tlatelolco* incorporates testimonies that recuperate the political and social realities of the Mexican student movement and the political subjectivities of the activists. *Tlatelolco* furthermore is clear to denounce and indict the hegemonic powers of the Mexican state for their premeditated intent to eradicate political dissenters from society. Ultimately, the first chapter considers the politics of (gender) justice that is present – or absent – in these official and unofficial human rights reports.

The second chapter investigates the gendered processes of dehumanization in the written testimonies of former political prisoners from Mexico and the Southern Cone: Hernán Valdés' *Tejas verdes* (1974), Nora Strejilevich's *A Single, Numberless Death* (2001) and Roberta Avendaño Martínez's *De la libertad y el encierro (About Freedom and Confinement)* (1998). In this chapter, I argue that the violent policing of the prisoners' heteronormativity reflects how these authoritarian regimes inculcated heteropatriarchal gender norms inside and outside the carceral space. I maintain that the

violent processes of gendered and sexualized dehumanization reduce the prisoner to the materiality of his or her body, resulting in lexical complications in the discursive production of these narratives. I focus on the disjuncture between the abject, dehumanized prisoner and the sexually reviled prisoner and the effect it has on the cultural production of these written testimonies. I am also concerned with the existing scholarship on gender and testimony that conceptualizes the gendered experiences of trauma and violence through a phallogocentric lens, privileging masculinist discourses as the locus of truth and logic and reducing women's narratives to emotional, depoliticized accounts of a certain historical moment. I point to these three texts as modes of critically destabilizing this gender-normative framework and ultimately, they reflect a need to investigate the intricate relationship between dehumanization, sexual abjection and gendered forms of carceral repression.

The final chapter engages with the oral testimonies of three women ex-political prisoners I interviewed in Mexico and the Southern Cone in 2009 and 2010: Nilda Eloy, activist and survivor of six Buenos Aires concentration camps, Amelia Negrón, survivor of the Villa Grimaldi concentration camp in Santiago, Chile, and Ana Ignacia Rodríguez, activist and survivor of the 1968 Mexico City massacre. These women's interviews expose the systematic forms of violent repression in Latin America that were instituted during the height of the Cold War and reveal the very gendered experiences of subjugation and incarceration. I argue that existing feminist scholarship relegates women's testimonies to a heteronormative framework that depoliticizes their histories of activism. I maintain that there exists an absence of critical focus on Latin American

women's participation in these movements as significant historical-political moments have predominately been narrated by male protagonists of said movements. I will discuss how Western feminist scholarship has, to borrow from postcolonial feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty, "discursively colonize[d]" these Latin American women's histories by depoliticizing their narratives and relegating them to a gender-normative framework. I argue that the testimonies serve as critical cultural texts that challenge this discursive colonization of Third World women's narratives by Western feminist scholarship. I contend that while these interviews reflect the plurality of experiences of women involved in resistance struggles in Latin America, the narratives are ultimately testament to what Mohanty terms the politics of solidarity and the radical possibilities of Third World feminism.

In essence, I intend for *Gendering the State of Exception* to open up new discursive spaces of interpretation that posit these gendered processes of repression as symptomatic of an enduring violent, heteropatriarchal neoliberal politics in Latin America. I argue that we cannot separate the political and economic history of violence from the history of gender violence that is exhibited in these testimonies, and as Margarita Cruz eloquently states, she and her companeros "hacen una ruptura muy fuerte con el sistema dominante acerca de lo que se pretendía acerca de las mujeres…rompe la estructura mas de una sociedad capitalista, individualista" ("The women in that decade make a strong break with the dominant system according to the norms of what women should be like…they break with a structure of a capitalist, individualistic society"). Referring to Mohanty's epigraph, it is important to retain a critical Third World feminist

lens if we are to remain faithful to the original intent of these testimonies as this mode of interpretation not only contests “the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings of hegemonic masculinist history” but it additionally “leads to the formation of politicized consciousness.” If we do so successfully, then we become implicated in the struggle against a culture of impunity that has attempted to erase the history of gender violence and political genocide in Latin America; we furthermore become involved in articulating the theory of justice that these survivors of political genocide promote, or as the 2001 publication of the AEDD periodical expresses, it was and is a movement that aspires to achieve “más vida, más libertad, más justicia, más dignidad” (“a life with more freedom, more justice and more dignity”).

CHAPTER ONE: The Politics of Human Rights and the Construction of a Gendered Victimhood in the Official and Unofficial Truth Commission Reports: *La noche de Tlatelolco, Nunca Más,* and *The Rettig Report*

"No somos víctimas, somos protagonistas de esta historia" ("We are not victims, we are the protagonists of this history"). – Margarita Cruz, AEDD member and survivor of the Escuelita Faimallá Torture Center in Tucumán, Argentina.

In the aftermath of World War II, the international community sought to establish a political forum whereby international crimes against humanity could be monitored. Nearly sixty years ago, the General Assembly of the United Nations set forth the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and member nations were encouraged to "promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance" (*25+ Human Rights Documents* 5). The UDHR's thirty articles and preamble fomented contemporary understandings of the universal rights of man and its applicability to every human subject in the UN's member nations. I refer to this seminal moment in the declaration of universal human rights in order to recognize the Nuremberg Trials as the first international tribunal to prosecute war crimes committed during World War II and the global impact it had thereafter, particularly in my discussions on Latin American state violence. I believe it is critical to set forth the post-World War II debates on universal human rights in order to provide a historical, sociopolitical context for this chapter's critical examination of the Mexican and Southern Cone official and unofficial truth commission reports and the official responses to these historical traumas.

Despite the United Nations' intent to define and uphold universal human rights in an international context, egregious violations of human rights continued to occur

following the proclamation of the UDHR, oftentimes in member nations of the United Nations.[29] The concept of the inalienable rights of man and universal notions of freedom and liberty defended by the UDHR is called into question as only twenty years after the ratification of the UDHR, thousands of political dissidents in Mexico, Chile, and Argentina were denied "the right to life, liberty and security of person" (*25+ HR* 5). Clearly, then, there is a tenuous, shifting definition of the universal human subject as these fundamental rights set forth by the UDHR in 1948 did not translate nor transfer to thousands of Latin Americans. While the purpose of this section is not to provide a critique of the UDHR nor the limitations in enforcing international human rights, I refer to these fundamental rights in order to deconstruct the universally-accepted claims of inalienable human rights as unwavering and applicable to all subjects. Perhaps what is most important here is to consider how the universality of human rights problematically obfuscates the inherent political and gendered realities of that individual's experience during distinct episodes of state-sponsored violence.

In the following section, I provide a brief genealogy of the current debates on the concept of a universal human subject, a particular subject that is clearly defined in the UDHR and a definition that is now universally accepted in the international human rights community. This polemical topic is frequently discussed among political theorists and while the debates are not particularly new, it is imperative to present the current debates

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[29] For an extensive exploration of the impact of the Nuremberg Trials in the formal creation of international human rights tribunals, see Gary Jonathan Bass' *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000. Bass notes the irony of the lasting impact of these trials as they are perceived as prosecuting former Nazi war criminals for their abuses against humanity; Bass contends that the U.S. and Britain centered more on the "German instigation of World War II" and that the Allied powers "had been largely passive as the Holocaust went on", thus debunking the notion that the Nuremberg Trials were predominately concerned with human rights abuses and genocide (173).

on universal human rights as a theoretical framework for my analysis of Latin American unofficial and official truth commission reports. These discussions denote that the human subject is allotted with certain inalienable, natural, and fundamental human rights which subsequently detach the subject from his or her sociopolitical, gendered and geohistorical contexts. While I do believe there is a need for international human rights in order to limit the use of excessive force and violence in various instances, this reliance on a decontextualized, genderless universal human subject calls into question the fundamental definitions of subjecthood, inalienable rights, and power relations between the sovereign state and its citizens. Indeed, it seems inconceivable that universal human rights can achieve what it purports to maintain –as the thirty articles of the UDHR suggests to uphold—yet as Wendy Brown aptly notes, if human rights successfully "abate the grievous suffering of targeted individuals and groups, stanching the flow of human blood…[then] there is no quarrel to be had" ("Fatalism" 452).

What I argue here is that the universalisms utilized in human rights discourse divorce the acts of human rights abuse from the historical-political contexts within which they occurred, centering instead on the victimization of those targeted by these acts of violence. This in turn elides the political agency of those affected by these episodes of violence by defending the notion of abstract life and the universal subjecthood for victims of human rights abuse. This creation of universal dignity sustains international human rights and this particular rhetoric is utilized in the official Southern Cone truth commission (TC) reports. However, I argue that by relying on this discourse of universal human rights, we are left without a critical understanding of the geohistorical and

political realities which prompted these human rights abuses, and moreover there is no examination of the existent power relations and gender dynamics that are at stake in these reports. In this chapter, I will be centering on this universal rights discourse in order to assess the critical role of the state in the official Southern Cone TC reports and the gender politics that underpin these state-sponsored human rights texts. In essence, I maintain that this human rights discourse in the official TC reports evades articulating any notion of justice and no one is held accountable for these violent acts. This theory of justice, however, serves as the narratival impetus of Elena Poniatowska's unofficial TC report on the Mexico City massacre, *La noche de Tlatelolco*. Poniatowska's work is invested in recuperating the political and social context of the Mexican student movement and clearly condemns the state agents who sanctioned the violence on October 2nd. Here, then, it will be necessary to articulate the key features of universal rights discourse as they appear in the UDHR and in the Southern Cone TC reports.

The ratification of the UDHR in 1948 sought to deter future acts of human atrocity and violence on a mass scale and within the UDHR, the universal human subject was created; as the first article proclaims, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (*25+ HR* 5). Since then, political philosophers and theorists have argued in favor of the defense of universal human rights in the international arena, adhering to the belief that every human being upon birth is bequeathed with "dignity and rights." Human rights, according to Jack Donnelly, are "*equal* rights: one either is or is not a human being, and therefore has the same human rights as everyone else (or none at all)" (10). This universal standard is thus accepted by human rights advocates as the basis

for contemporary rights-based rhetoric, and as Donnelly notes, “rights are actually put to use, and thus important enough to talk about, only when they are at issue, when their enjoyment is questioned, threatened or denied” (8).

Here then we are presented with a critical facet in the contemporary discourse on human rights and an issue that many scholars critique: human rights are rights that are constructed within negative parameters as they are protected only when the rights are “questioned, threatened or denied.” In *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, Michael Ignatieff further notes that “rights are universal because they define the universal interests of the powerless, namely, that power be exercised over them in ways that respect their autonomy as agents” (68). In Ignatieff’s defense of a universal rights discourse, human rights and victimhood are mutually constitutive concepts; in his definition of universal rights, Ignatieff suggests that human rights are aimed at “empowering the powerless… [and] giving voice to the voiceless” (70). Generally speaking, Ignatieff’s argument attempts to take into account the pluralism of various societies, cultures, political and religious realities in the international sphere of human rights, however his discourse relies on an abstract, depoliticized, and victimized universal subject.

This notion of the victimized universal subject is critiqued by many contemporary political and cultural theorists, such as Alain Badiou and Wendy Brown. In Alain Badiou’s *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil,* he problematizes this normative, universal human subject and notes, “we are supposed to assume the existence of a universally recognizable human subject possessing ‘rights’ that are in some sense natural: the right to live, to avoid abusive treatment, to enjoy ‘fundamental’

liberties…'Ethics' is a matter of busying ourselves with these rights, of making sure that they are respected" (4). This "we" is thus the privileged, critical subject from a decidedly Western context, a "we" whose job it is to monitor and police these fundamental rights abroad (i.e. the Third World). In this manner, Badiou refers to the Western hegemonic powers that define and defend the concept of ethical human rights. Here the abstract, universal human subject is thus under the domain of a particular political, Western agenda, "perceived from the heights of our apparent civil peace" (13).[30]

In a similar vein, Wendy Brown suggests the following: "Human rights activism is a moral-political project and if it displaces, competes with, refuses, or rejects other political projects…then it is not merely a tactic but a particular form of political power carrying a particular image of justice, and it will behoove us to inspect, evaluate, and judge it as such" ("Fatalism" 453). This is most evident in the Argentinean and Chilean postdictatorship movements towards truth and reconciliation. While these nations had distinct histories and contexts, they both reflected the political agenda of the state and its role in the creation of truth and reconciliation commissions. In a later section of this chapter, I will address these questions and center on the official role and politicized nature of these texts, despite their ostensible apolitical stances.

In this chapter, I also demonstrate how the state's reliance on the victimized subject of TC reports results in the infantilization of survivor testimony. Badiou refers to this culture of victimhood in the following manner: "We have seen that ethics

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[30] Consider for example the Nuremberg Trials, as Bass notes that they were enacted by the victors of WWII, the Allied Powers. Badiou also contends that there exist binarisms in this ethics of human rights as this victim of human rights abuse is perceived as the helpless, victimized "other" who is in need of Western subjects who will come to their defense.

subordinates the identification of this subject to the universal recognition of the evil that is done to him. Ethics thus defines man as a victim…man is the being who is capable of recognizing himself as a victim" (10). In this constant state of victimhood, the human subject is thus perpetually maintained as the other, passive, voiceless and powerless to enact change. This portrayal furthermore reinscribes the very binarisms -- victimized and savior, us and them – that universal human rights seeks to deconstruct. This constant victimization of the voiceless Other prevails in these discussions yet despite what Brown notes as the "antipolitical" nature of universal human rights, many of these modern, Western, "democratic" states imbue their human rights causes with distinct political and economic agendas. Furthermore, Brown denotes that an antipolitical, pragmatic, moral stance is not the most effective manner in engaging with human rights abuses as these cases are always already political.

I refer to these criticisms of the ethics of universal human rights in order to expose how the official reportage of the Cold War era of human rights abuses against Latin American political dissidents depoliticizes the histories of these abuses; moreover, official narratives seek to disengage the historical and political realities from which political dissidents were embedded, and also to detract the critical gaze away from further detailed, political scrutiny. As Brown claims, "the question of the liberatory or egalitarian force of rights is always historically and culturally circumscribed", denoting as such that these presupposed inalienable, universal rights allotted to each human being are unable to -- nor should they -- be decontextualized from his or her specific gendered, historical, economic and sociopolitical realities (*States* 97). This antipolitical discourse predicated

on the passive, victimized subject of human rights abuse strips him or her of political agency and merely reinforces the power structures that allowed for such abuses to take place. Brown importantly notes, "human rights take their shape as a moral discourse centered on pain and suffering rather than political discourse of comprehensive justice" ("Fatalism" 453).

In this manner, many human rights organizations appear to veer away from this "political discourse of comprehensive justice" and this is apparent in the creation of truth commissions and the depoliticized rhetoric used in the reports. The question of justice and political agency is the focal point for many critics of universal human rights and TC reports. Many survivors of state violence advocate the search for justice for these moments of historical traumas and eschew this discourse predicated on victimhood. In this chapter's epigraph, Margarita Cruz posits herself and other survivors of state terror as protagonists of these historical traumas and reject the victim-status assigned to them in the official TC reports. Cruz challenges this notion of victimhood by centering on her political agency, her statement indicating that there is no place for the universal human subject who is always already inhabiting this space of the passive, voiceless human rights victim. Here, then, I will briefly explore the TC reports' construction of a passive, victimized subject of human rights abuse as this effectively evades centering on notions of culpability, justice and progressive politics.

Official and Unofficial Truth Commission Reports

In post-Tlatelolco and post-dictatorship Argentina and Chile, there has been a vested interest in the recuperation of historical memory and many social organizations have underscored the critical importance in officially recognizing past atrocities and the need to achieve justice for crimes against humanity.[31] In Argentina and Chile, the transition to democracy meant assessing the histories of trauma and violence that defined the military regimes, and thus truth commissions were established in order to seek the truth of what occurred during those years with the intent of impeding future violations of human rights. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I analyze the ways in which the Argentinean and Chilean governments officiated these commissions and the formal reports that were published, turning specifically to the official structuring of the reports and the depoliticization of the survivors' testimonies vis-à-vis the reports' discourse of ethical human rights.

I center on the state's construction of a collective memory after these moments of state violence by specifically examining the state's role in the framing of these testimonies and the organization of these texts. The Argentine and Chilean TC reports rely upon the binarism of victim/victimizer, which effectively portrays the heterogenous social and political groups affected by state violence as mere victims of cruel, sadistic regimes. If we are to consider these historical moments in such a way, this then simplifies the discourse of these historical traumas to abstract, dichotomous concepts of good and evil. As Badiou contends, "if our only agenda is an ethical engagement against an Evil we recognize a priori, how are we to envisage any transformation of the way things are?"

[31] This is not to say that these historical memory projects are not met with resistance by various sectors of the population; in the case with each of the three nations, the ruling classes in support of Videla, Pinochet, and Díaz Ordaz were instrumental in maintaining and propagating a culture of impunity and oblivion.

(13-14). Here are the limitations of ethical human rights and a lack of progressive politics that can aim for justice for these past traumas. Moreover, it will be critical to assess the gender politics in the framing of male and female testimonies of survivors in this construction of a collective memory and documentation of human rights abuses. The rhetoric used in the contextualization and categorization of these testimonies clearly depoliticizes the gendered experiences of former political prisoners and at times utilizes a discourse predicated on the infantilization of these political activists. Before turning to the Mexican and Southern Cone official and unofficial TC reports, I will briefly address the establishment of truth commissions and their relevance in the Latin American context.

In light of recent examples of human rights abuses in various nations in the latter half of the twentieth century – such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Africa, and the Southern Cone-- the international community turned to a distinctive form of judicial action to address transgressions of the UDHR's basic tenets; this thus resulted in the creation of truth commissions as well as publications of the formal reports that investigated crimes against humanity. Each national community approached their histories of violence in divergent manners and the truth commissions were each unique in their objectives, whether they sought redress, reconciliation, the truth and/or judicial action for the violent crimes committed. Despite these distinctions, truth commissions are similar in that they are, according to Teresa Godwin Phelps, "designed to investigate the human rights violations committed in the recent past, are usually temporary in nature, and are charged with giving an official report of their findings…[and] their role is not to

judge but to gather information and make it known" (78). Truth commissions, in this sense, rely on the universal rights rhetoric advocated by human rights organizations and likewise remain depoliticized as "their role is not to judge but to gather information and make it known." Here the emphasis is placed on the acquisition of truth and the reports rely on the survivors' testimonies, and in some cases – as in the case of South Africa's Truth Commission-- the testimonies of the perpetrators to seek a comprehensive understanding of the events that occurred during the episodes of state repression. However, it is precisely the state's involvement in the formation of the truth commissions that have oftentimes proved polemical in their depiction of the historical trauma and in the construction of an official narrative.

In Martha Minow's *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, she denotes that the goal of truth commissions "is to express government acknowledgement of the past, to enhance the legitimacy of the current regime, and to promote a climate conducive to human rights and democratic processes" (57). Minow favors the South African truth commission model of as it "illustrates an innovative and promising effort to combine an investigation into what happened, a forum for victim testimony, a process for developing reparations, and a mechanism for granting amnesty for perpetrators who honestly tell of their role in politically motivated violence" (3). Again, there is an emphasis on truth for these commissions, yet the goal of justice appears to be a tenuous path for many nations who experienced historical traumas. The problematic feature of the TC reports for many survivors of violent regimes is the conciliatory rhetoric and evasion of the task of assuming future justice projects. Furthermore, ensuring the "legitimacy of the current

regime" to many survivors and family members of those assassinated by the state can be an impossible and polemical task, as Donna Pankhurst notes in *Gendered Peace*, "all too often many of the perpetrators of human rights abuses…are still at large [and] they can even be members of the government, the police, or armed forces" (8).[32]

Thus, truth and reconciliation commissions – as in the South African case-- that advocate the granting of amnesty to former perpetrators occlude the possibility of justice for the crimes committed. Another problematic feature of the truth commissions and the reports produced is that they have temporal constraints and oftentimes limit their investigations to quite specific types of human rights abuses -- as in the Chilean report which only investigated the human rights abuses that resulted in death -- thereby ignoring the thousands of cases of those who survived state violence. Furthermore, the use of universal rights discourse is not conducive for collective strategies and efforts to deliberate on politics as Brown contends that they "refer it to the courts, submit it to creeds of tolerance, or secure an escape from it into private lives" ("Fatalism" 458). While the criticisms of the truth commissions and the subsequent official reports are valid and upheld by many survivors of state violence, it is critical to mention the importance of various truth commissions as in certain instances – Argentina's *Nunca Más* being one example—these reports have had legalistic impact in proffering evidence to be utilized in trials against former state officials and perpetrators complicit in these state crimes; thus I am not dismissing universal human rights or truth commissions, but rather my aim here is

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[32] I will turn to this feature of the TC reports in more detail as they pertain to the Southern Cone's state response to the human rights violations and Mexico's abnegation of the massacre.

to center on the limitations these commissions have in attaining what Brown terms a "comprehensive justice."

Before turning to each text, it will be important to briefly assess the historical contexts within which these official and unofficial TC reports emerged in Mexico and the Southern Cone. In the Mexican case, it has been well documented that President Díaz Ordaz denies that the state utilized excessive violence against demonstrators on October 2nd and as a result, no official state investigation was conducted nor was any report produced surrounding the events. However, Mexican writer and literary critic Elena Poniatowska published an unofficial report in 1971 documenting the state repression and massacre of hundreds of peaceful demonstrators. In the Southern Cone, the post-dictatorship presidential figures mandated official investigations into human rights crimes committed by military officials against thousands of political dissidents. It is worth noting that although the Chilean and Argentinean dictatorships were both military, fascist regimes economically and militarily supported by the U.S., each nation managed in their own right the transitional period into democracy and the proceedings with their reports and subsequent trials against former officials. The Argentinean and Chilean reports utilize universal human rights vernacular in order to detail human rights abuses, yet both nations differed in their movements towards judicial (non) action.

Nunca Más was published one year after the end of Argentina's military dictatorship in 1983; the National Commission of Disappeared Persons (CONADEP), established by President Raúl Alfonsín in 1983, compiled thousands of testimonies of survivors and relatives of the disappeared and selected various testimonies to be included

in the publication. The intent of *Nunca Más* and CONADEP was not to explicitly bring the military junta leaders to justice, but rather to produce a report that included the testimonies of survivors and family members of the disappeared that would shed light on the details of their abuses suffered by the military regime officials. An admirable feat of the report is that the testimonial evidence would be utilized in future prosecutions against former military leaders of the regime, a critical detail that distinguishes this report from Chile's *Rettig Report*. In the sixth section of *Nunca Más* titled "Recomendaciones" ("Recommendations"), the contributors note:

> Los hechos, por demás elocuentes, que han sido denunciados o testimoniados ante esta Comisión, nos llevan a recomendar algunas iniciativas ante los distintos poderes del Estado Nacional, con la finalidad de prevenir, reparar y finalmente evitar la repetición de conculcaciones a los derechos humanos en nuestro país. Por otra parte, estas recomendaciones tienden a que no se pierda de vista la necesidad de una profunda investigación judicial de los hechos que nos fueron denunciados (477).[33]

While the report was a key component in the judicial actions taken against former military leaders of the dictatorship, in this chapter I argue that the formal structuring of the text and use of human rights rhetoric depersonalizes first-hand accounts of state violence and deprives women ex-political prisoners of their agency.

Similarly, Chilean President Patricio Aylwin decreed the formal investigation into violations of human rights during the Pinochet regime, resulting in the 1991 publication of the *Rettig Report.* Like its Argentinean counterpart, the *Rettig Report*'s main objective sought clarification of state-sponsored violence against political dissidents during the

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[33] "The facts presented to this Commission in the depositions and testimonies speak for themselves. They lead us to recommend to the various State authorities certain measures which will help to ensure that this curtailment of human rights is never repeated in Argentina. The aim of these recommendations is also to press for a judicial investigation into the facts denounced to us" (446).

seventeen-year reign of terror; this official document was state-decreed in order to promote a conciliatory dialogic relationship among Chileans who had been previously divided by the internal politics and violence of this era. This tri-part report includes a detailed explication of the commissions' methodology and the state's role in the creation of this text, yet perhaps the most contentious aspect of the formal report is the evasion of investigation into all violent crimes committed by the state. The *Rettig Report* assumed the task of investigating only the human rights abuses that resulted in either the death or disappearance of the victim, excluding in this manner the testimonies and human rights abuses of those who survived state terror.[34]

The *Rettig Report* departs from the Argentine model of the truth commission report as it encompasses a select portion of those individuals affected by state-sponsored violence, indicating in this manner the distinction between post-dictatorship Argentina and post-dictatorship Chile.[35] It is apparent that the state here functions as an active subject in the framing and construction of official documentation of human rights violations and it will be pertinent to explore the politics of the truth commission reports. The limitations of these TC reports are evident in the manner in which both rely on this discourse of human rights, relegating former political activists to inhabit a silent,

[34] In 2003, Bishop Sergio Valech headed the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture, which resulted in the compilation of more than 30,000 testimonies of survivors of the Chilean dictatorship in the 2004 *Valech Report.* Although the report includes testimonies of those affected by state-sanctioned violence and torture, the state decreed that this report would remain classified for 50 years and would not make the information on former torturers and military officials public knowledge. This 50-year mandate underscores the power of the Chilean hegemonic state and its active role in the creation of a culture of impunity and oblivion.

[35] As I will indicate in more depth later in this chapter, this distinction is most apparent in the manner in which both military regimes formally ended. The Argentinean military regime collapsed whereas the Pinochet military regime ended by a formal election, yet his influence in the armed forces and popular support for Pinochet was still evident.

depoliticized subjecthood; despite these limitations, however, there is something to be said of the state's acknowledgement of state violence and repression in the Southern Cone's publications of these official reports.

The Mexican government, however, did not lead any official investigation of the 1968 massacre nor did it sponsor a TC report on the disappearance and murder of hundreds of demonstrators. However, in 1971 Elena Poniatowska published *La noche de Tlatelolco*, an unofficial truth commissions report that documents the events leading up to the 1968 massacre and includes excerpts and testimonies of witnesses and survivors of that night. Poniatowska's text differs from the former two reports in that the Mexican state is absent – in all contexts—in the formal documentation of the atrocities committed. This absolute negation by the Mexican government of the events that transpired that evening prompted Poniatowska and others to collaborate and utilize their positionality as activists to speak out against this institutionalized form of oblivion and silence and to furthermore provide an alternate form of the history of that moment. In this manner, it is imperative to assess *Tlatelolco* as the singular unofficial truth commission report of the October 2nd massacre, but more critically, to assess the political discourse of Poniatowska's text, which attributes it with a more personalized and politicized context. Moreover, it is important to remark here that truth commissions were not in existence yet, nor was there an emphasis on universal human rights discourse; as I will explain subsequently, contemporary works by some of the former activists of the 68 movement have reconceptualized the movement as a human rights issue.

In this chapter, I investigate the relationship between historical traumas of Argentina, Chile, and Mexico and how these events are portrayed in these three texts. It is important to consider the emergence of an international human rights discourse in a more globalized context in the latter half of the twentieth century and how this impacted the production of these unofficial and official TC reports. A chronological and geopolitical assessment of the texts reflect the abatement of a politicized subjectivity of the survivors and the histories of activism of these survivors in the truth commission reports; Poniatowska's *Tlatelolco* -- published in 1971 -- is the unofficial yet radical text that recaptures the political atmosphere and socialist context of the Mexican student movement, whereas Argentina's *Nunca Más* (1983) reflects an attempt to seek justice through the documentation of the oral histories of the survivors (which ultimately is counteracted with amnesty laws). And lastly, Chile's 1991 *Rettig Report* centers apolitically on the post-dictatorship moment and only officiates investigations during the Pinochet regime of those who were disappeared or were murdered. What does this trajectory indicate about contemporary understandings of human rights discourse and the construction of inalienable universal rights that seeks to defend abstract life in a globalized context? How can these cultural texts serve to critically assess the legitimizing force of universal rights and its collusion in the creation of cultures of impunity and oblivion? In examining the state's framing of testimonial accounts, what does this indicate about the state's normative assumptions of gender and erasure of political activism?

In *Tlatelolco,* Poniatowska imbues the text with personalized accounts of the student movement and night of the massacre, clearly positing her role as an activist partaking in the sentiment of political movements in Mexico during the 1960s that included men and women in the struggle for social and economic change. In effect, she utilizes this text as a means to denounce the state's abnegation of state-sponsored violence and to officially record the voices of the silenced survivors, relying in this manner on a platform of justice based on progressive politics. Argentina's report became a national bestseller, reflecting in this manner the nation's vested interest in the search for truth and justice for those targeted by the dictatorship's reign of terror; despite the reliance on the human rights rhetoric and the depoliticization of the testimonies, the report prompted juridical action against former perpetrators (which, as it is imperative to note, does not imply formal justice as these leaders were later pardoned and thousands of other officers lived in amnesty). The *Rettig Report* best reflects the international human rights model's interest in the defense of abstract life as it only reports on those who were tortured to death and disappeared during the Pinochet regime; by ignoring those survivors who are still living with the histories of personal and national traumas, the report reflects this human rights' rhetoric preoccupation with abstract life and less on the political struggles and quality of life of those who survived.

The official Latin American TC reports sponsored by the state set forth a universal subject of human rights abuse, in need of protection and defense from despotic, tyrannical agents who deprive them from their fundamental, inalienable rights. This universal subject, however, is divested of his or her political agency; as I will develop in

the subsequent portion of this chapter, this process of depoliticization evident in these TC reports not only decontextualizes the geopolitical, historical moment of these episodes of violence, but it relegates testimonies according to gender-normative models of suffering and victimization that censor histories of political activism. In the following section, I argue that Poniatowska's unofficial TC report incorporates survivor testimony in order to encompass the collective, polyphonous experiences of Mexican political movement of the 60s; in so doing, she situates the survivors as protagonists of this history, centering on the historical-political events that led to this epoch of organized state repression and indicting the Mexican authorities as perpetrators of this violence.

Mexico's Silence and Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco* – the "Victim" as a Political Agent

Towards the end of *Tlatelolco,* Poniatowska includes the testimony of Celia Espinoza de Valle, schoolteacher and mother of a political prisoner who relates the harrowing experiences of trying to locate her son after the massacre on October 2nd. She weaves poetic verses into her testimony, a scathing political criticism of the Mexican state's excessive use of violence and President Díaz Ordaz's role in the massacre. De Valle's denunciation of Díaz Ordaz's murderous regime is noted in the following lines when she receives news that Díaz Ordaz is to undergo an eye operation: "Los doctores se preocupan / de dar luz al que la quita. /¿No sería más conveniente/ darle tantita cicuta?" (252).[36] De Valle's condemnation of the Mexican authorities alludes to a political agency

[36] "The doctors are concerned / with giving sight to he who takes light away. /Would it not be better / to

that is absent in the official TC reports' inclusion of women's testimonies (*Tlatelolco* 252). In *Tlatelolco*, the women's narratives are not reduced to a depoliticized rubric of the figure of the grieving, weeping mother/spouse searching for her missing child/partner, a common trope of official TC reports. Rather, *Tlatelolco* reinscribes women's subjecthood within a locus of political activism; this is critical because the Mexican movement of the 1960s signaled an important historical moment in women's active political participation. The political agency Poniatowska attributes to the testimonies of the women is a critical component of her text; as I will subsequently develop in this chapter, the voices of the women's testimonies in the official TC reports are often edited to center solely on their gender-based experiences, relating their experiences of sexualized torture or conveying their grief over their lost children and/or partners.[37]

Poniatowska acknowledges the critical importance of the women who contributed their testimonies as a form of political activism and serve as counternarratives to the state's dominant narrative that denied the events of the massacre. She recalls a moment when a woman she met one day, "de repente, como animal herido—un animal a quien le extraen las entrañas—dejó salir del centro de su vida…un ronco, un desgarrado grito" (164). This cry, as Poniatowska mentions, is transformed into a cry for political action in the search for truth and justice, as Poniatowska notes in one of the text's few personalized editorials: "Aquí está el eco del grito de los que murieron y el grito de los que quedaron. Aquí está su indignación y su protesta. Es el grito mudo que se atoró en miles de

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give him a bit of hemlock?"

[37] As Alessandra Del Sacco notes in her article "Truth And Reconciliation Commissions and Gender Justice", women's testimonies in many of these official state reports are deprived of their inherent political contexts and this "run[s] the risk of narrowing the issue of women's human rights to violations against their bodies and sexuality" (67).

gargantas, en miles de ojos desorbitados por el espanto el 2 de octubre de 1968, en la noche de Tlatelolco" (164).[38] As indicated from the text's subtitle --"Testimonies of Oral History"— Poniatowska is clear to establish the premise of this text is to allow the voices of those marginalized and silenced by state violence to emerge through her text with minimal interference, yet she is also clear to set forth her politicized role in the production of this cultural text.

Throughout the text, Poniatowska maintains her positionality and her role as an activist, effectively recapturing the solidarity of the student movement and the importance of the collective voice of the political activists who were violently silenced by state authorities. Poniatowska is clear to define the political context of these testimonies and she reiterates the importance of their role in her own political consciousness surrounding the events of 1968. In this manner, the formal structuring of *Tlatelolco* recaptures the trajectory of the movement of the 1950s and 1960s and its subsequent demise on October 2nd. Her text – the first oral history on the 1968 massacre—is a critical compilation of various cultural texts, including poetry, photography, media excerpts, and the testimonies of survivors, political prisoners and family members. Cognizant of the governments' authoritative regime and ability to manipulate and erase the history of the massacre, there is an urgency in Poniatowska's narrative as she reproduces the first public version of this historical trauma, relying on the collective voices of the activists.

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[38] "And then suddenly, like a wounded animal – an animal whose belly is being ripped apart – she let out a hoarse, heart-rending cry, from the very center of her life…a terrible cry, a cry of terror" … "In these pages there echo the cries of those who died and the cries of those who lived on after them. These pages express their outrage and their protest: the mute cry that stuck in thousands of throats, the blind grief in thousands of horror-stricken eyes on October 2, 1968, the night of Tlatelolco" (Lane 199).

From the commencement of the text, Poniatowska is careful to not separate the political context from the historical trauma, clearly setting forth the inherent activist tone of the movement in the text's polyphonous character and the diversity of experiences that is reflected in the testimonies. Poniatowska introduces the events of the massacre with a 33-page photographic essay; within the first few pages of the text, we are immersed visually into the atmosphere of movement, and the images reveal the impressive mass mobilization of the various sectors of Mexican society that participated in the 1960s movement. These initial photographs and captions relate the enthusiasm and idealism that galvanized the movements which lead to the events of October 2nd. The caption for an aerial shot of a demonstration of hundreds of demonstrators reads, "¡Nunca se habían visto en México manifestaciones espontáneas de esta envergadura! ¡La época de oro, la más Hermosa del Movimiento Estudiantil se dio entre agosto y septiembre!" (2).[39] The images included in these first few pages that visually encapsulate the movement and underscore the sense of solidarity and the importance of the collective force in the unification of the various segments of Mexican society – the middle and upper middle classes, the students, the working class, etc.—and Poniatowska sets the tone in her photographic essay that is to be developed in the text: "Nunca creímos que se nos unieran espontáneamente tantos y tantos…" ("We never believed that thousands and thousands of people would turn out to support us" (3) (Lane 174). The use of the first-person plural is critical as it situates Poniatowska within the historical memory of the movement and this statement is reflective of the united student movement; moreover, Poniatowska's

[39] "Such spontaneous mass demonstrations as this were unprecedented in Mexico. The Golden Age, the high point of the Student Movement, were the months of August and September 1968" (Lane 173).

collective narrative voice breaks from individual human rights discourse, which seeks to document violent moments as isolated and depoliticized episodes and centers on the individuals' victimization.

The inclusion of the photographic essay at the outset of the text furthermore serves as a visual index, aesthetically presenting the political momentum of the movement prior to the massacre and the subsequent violent repression of the demonstrators in the final photographs. In so doing, Poniatowska is clear to indict those responsible – the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Díaz Ordaz, Echeverría et al.— and in so doing, deconstructs the theory of the "Two Devils" as the photographs explicitly reveal the rigid power relations where Mexican authorities wielded their repressive regime over civilian demonstrators. In this sense, there is a dialogic relationship between the photographic essay, the fragmented testimonies of the survivors/witnesses, Poniatowska as the journalist/activist, and the readers. The photographs complement Poniatowska's first written introduction to the text, exposing the optimism and idealism of those involved in the movement. The photographic essay literally shows the massive number of individuals who sought social reform and attempted to engage in a public dialogue with Mexican authorities. Poniatowska begins the first section with an epigraph of a chant utilized in many of the demonstrations prior to October 2nd: "Únete pueblo, no nos abandones, únete pueblo, pueblo, no nos abandones, únete pueblo" ("People, don't abandon us – people, unite!") (Lane 9).Here Poniatowska sets the tone for the first section which seeks to recapture the solidarity efforts of the various facets of the society – the middle class university students, the

working class, university professors, union leaders, medical students – and attempts to recreate the political platform that was predicated on social change.

The impressive aerial shots of the demonstrations across the capital correlate with Poniatowska's politically charged captions, which is indicative of the ideology of the movement that was predicated on social reforms, education for the masses, and whose impetus was based on the coalescence of the various factions of Mexican society.[40] This was a movement based on the struggle for a more egalitarian and democratic Mexican government, and as former student activist Sergio Zermeño writes ten years after the massacre, "El movimiento estudiantil-popular de 1968 buscaba una sociedad más justa…[y] predominó la concepción democratico-liberal, [y] la crítica al Estado fuerte proveniente de los sectores mejor integrados al desarrollo capitalista moderno" (1-2).[41] This ideological message was clearly shared among the various activists, united in the quest for a more just Mexico that centered on the exploitative capitalist system of that era. Zermeño denotes that these political alliances included not only the working classes and bourgeois, but also middle class students who conjoined political forces to "exigir para sí el poder antes concentrado en la esfera estatal" (2).[42] The Mexican government was fearful of the political power and potentiality for political, social and economic

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[40] Throughout *Tlatelolco,* Poniatowska interweaves various chants among the testimonies to reflect the sentiment and the idealism of the movement: "unete pueblo" ("Community, Unite"), "libros sí, bayonetas no" ("Books yes, Bayonets no"), "los profesores reprobamos al gobierno por su política de terror" ("We professors condemn the government for their political terror") (32-33).

[41] "The popular student movement of 1968 sought a more just society…[and] the concept of liberal-democracy predominated, [and] the criticism of the state came most strongly from the sectors who were most integrated into the modern developed capitalist system."

[42] "To demand for themselves power that had previously been concentrated in the realm of the state."

change these popular mobilizations represented, and thus, the government responded with violence and repression.[43]

Poniatowska's depiction of the students prior to the demonstration epitomizes the youth and optimism of university-age activists: "Son muchos…caminan seguros, pisando fuerte, obstinados…vienen con esa loca alegría que se siente al caminar juntos en esta calle, nuestra calle, rumbo al Zócalo, nuestro Zócalo…Me-xi-co, Li-ber-tad…" (14).[44] This passage is in direct conversation with the first half of the photographic images, whereby the images center on the student activists and demonstrators reclaiming public political spaces of the nation's capital – the Zócalo, the Angel of Independence monument— as acts of defiance and protest against the government's use of violent measures and corruption. In one caption beneath a photograph which depicts thousands of protestors in the Zócalo, Poniatowska writes, "Había que desacralizar el Zócalo y lo logramos tres veces…por primera vez después de cuarenta años una multitud indignada se hacía oír frente al balcón presidencial, en la Plaza de la Constitución" (12).[45] The activists' reclamation of this public, government site recaptures the sentiment of the "multitud indignada" who sought to establish a formal dialogue with the government.[46] Former leader of the National Strike Council Raúl Álvarez Garín recalls that the first

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[43] As Carlos Monsiváis declares, "Reprimir es gobernar" ("to govern is to repress") in order to maintain a Mexican political system based on "exigencias del capitalismo extranjero y nacional: necesidades del autoritarismo centralizador: caciquismos regionales y locales que van a dar a la mar que es el poder" ("demands of foreign and domestic capitalism: the needs of a centralizing authoritarianism: regional and local bosses that facilitate the powers that be.") (Zermeño xii).
[44] "There are many…they march confidently, assuredly…they come with intense optimism that one feels marching together in the streets, our streets, heading to the Zócalo, our Zócalo…Me-xi-co, Free-dom…"
[45] "We had to 'deconsecrate' the Zócalo – and we did, three times. For the first time in forty years, an indignant crowd of Mexican citizens aware of their constitutional rights made its voice heard beneath the Presidential Balcony in the Plaza de la Constitución" (Lane 179).
[46] Garín stipulates in his text, *La estela de Tlatelolco,* "De cualquier manera, como veremos, la exigencia del diálogo público se transformó en una verdadera pesadilla para el gobierno" (54).

public march to the Zócalo in August of 1968 occurred without requesting government authorization: "El acto de pedir permiso para realizar la marcha significaría el sometimiento del Movimiento a…cualquier…condición caprichosa que quisiera imponer el gobierno… [y que] de todas maneras los estudiantes saldríamos a la calle, a pesar del despliegue de las fuerzas armadas" (Poniatowska 49).[47] Here the activists' valor in the face of state repression and their emphasis on solidarity is encapsulated in the opening pages as Poniatowska photographically documents the thousands of political dissidents who congregated in these public, politically significant spheres.

Moreover, in the photographic captions and the textual introduction, Poniatowska's voice emerges as one that is intertwined with the narrative of the movement, reiterating this critical importance of the movement based on public acts of resistance predicated on the movement's emphasis on solidarity. The student movement of 1968 was critically contingent on this platform of solidarity and while there existed a variegated element to the movement in the unification of distinct groups, Garín claims that fundamentally there was a cohesive - albeit heterogeneous -- "nosotros" of the student movement (140). Coinciding with this statement, Poniatowska's editorials alongside the photographs in one sense is ostensibly echoing this "nosotros" of those who participated in these public demonstrations –e.g. "!Entramos al Zócalo!" ("We've reached the Zócalo!")—yet this ambiguous referent to Poniatowska as a participant in the movement is indicative of her critical positionality as an activist.

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[47] "The act of requesting permission to proceed with the demonstration would signify submitting the movement to whichever whim the government would impose…[and that] in any case we students would take to the streets, in spite of the deployment of the Armed Forces."

In this manner, the narrative voice of *Tlatelolco* is clearly that of Poniatowska as a journalist and activist. While Poniatowska for the most part refrains from inserting her perspective of the massacre and allows for the testimonies to recreate the history of the movement, there are critical moments when her narrative voice reflects her positionality of an invested activist in order to condemn those responsible for this organized violence. After visually recapturing the sentiment prior to the massacre – the sense of optimism and hope for social reform and paradigm shift in their country – the latter half of the photographic essay includes images of assaulted students and activists, underscoring the excessive use of violence vis-à-vis the contrasting images of the unarmed students being subjugated by the heavily armed militia and soldiers.[48] This visual juxtaposition of pre and post-massacre atmosphere textually emerges in Poniatowska's introduction to the text:

> Son muchos…vienen riendo…jóvenes despreocupados que no saben que mañana, dentro de dos días, dentro de cuatro, estarán allí hinchándose bajo la lluvia, después de una feria en donde el centro del tiro al blanco lo serán ellos, niños-blanco, niños que todo lo maravillan…[y] el dueño de la barraca de tiro al blanco les dijo que se formaran así el uno al otro…[y] ¡Apunten, fuego!, y se doblan para atrás rozando la cortina de satín rojo (13).[49]

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[48] By social reform and paradigm shift, I am referring to the explicit political platform upon which the diverse student activist groups relied, based on a more just Mexican state that would dismantle the rigid socioeconomic and political hierarchies. Additionally, the foundation of various brigades and student groups in Mexico united around a common sense of denouncing the hegemonic powers of the Mexican state and sought to disseminate this information to more rural areas of Mexico. And while the Mexican authorities responded to these political movements with extreme forms of violence and repression on the university campuses and intimidation and violence against student activists, the students galvanized around these events in order to officially form the National Strike Council and proclaimed the six grievances against the Mexican government. See Zermeño's *Mexico: Una democracia utópica* and Garín's *La estela de Tlatelolco* for an extensive historical contextualization of the student movement and subsequent massacre.

[49] "There are many…they come laughing…carefree boys and girls who do not know that tomorrow, and the day after, their dead bodies will be lying swollen in the rain, after a fair where the guns in the shooting gallery are aimed at them, children-targets, wonder-struck children… [and then] the owner of the shooting gallery tells them to form a line…[and] 'Ready, aim, fire!', and they tumble backward, touching the red

The movement characterized by optimism, idealism, and youth is contrasted with foreshadowed images of the massacre, and Poniatowska assumes her role as an activist investigator, offering an alternative version of the official truth set forth by the Mexican government.

Poniatowska is clear to indict the Mexican state for orchestrating the violence before and after October 2nd. Beneath a photograph of the body a young boy with a visible bullet-wound in his chest, the caption reads: "¿Quién ordenó esto? ¿Quién pudo ordenar esto? Esto es un crimen."[50] This haunting image coupled with the denunciation of the Mexican state violence is meant to incense and provoke the reader into further critical interrogation; it is this particular line of questioning – why did this happen? Who officiated these acts of violence?—that distinguishes *Tlatelolco* from *Nunca Más* and *The Rettig Report* in its preoccupation with the causality of the episode of violence and the search for the truth and accountability. In this manner, then, *Tlatelolco* also departs from these official state-sponsored TC reports in the inclusion of the photographic essay which cannot occlude the violent reality of the massacre and a condemnation of those culpable in the acts of violence. Poniatowska is firm in her indictment of the Mexican government and utilizes the witnesses' testimonies to portray them as criminals and repressive authoritative figures: "En vez de meter a los bandidos explotadores a la cárcel, México mete a su juventud."[51]

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satin backdrop" (Lane 3).

[50] "Who ordered this? Who could have ordered this? This is a crime."

[51] "Instead of putting the exploitative thieves in prison, Mexico jails its youth."

Mexico, although officially considered a democracy, was run by various leaders from the same political party –the PRI-- who mirrored each predecessor's policies and did not enact any reform or social change; thus, as Professor M. Mayagoitia's testimony reveals in *Tlatelolco*, "¿Puede hablarse de sólidas tradiciones democráticas cuando de hecho no hay más de un partido político? ¿Cuando en las cámaras no se admiten candidatos de otro partido o solo se aceptan algunos para dar la engañosa apariencia de una oposición?" (20).[52] Poniatowska is reflective of "democratic" Mexico's authoritative governance, which parallels Southern Cone military regimes in the institutionalization of violence and political corruption and in the PRI's criminalization of political activists. The lack of political diversity is only one particular criticism of the Mexican notion of "democracy"; student activists centered on this questionable notion of "democracy" by critiquing the Mexican state's economic and political exploitative policies.

Poniatowska's text pointedly contradicts the Mexican authorities' official response to the massacre –who claimed that the students were armed and initiated the violence on October 2nd— by inserting testimonial accounts that denotes that the massacre was premeditated and organized by the Mexican government. Towards the start of the text's second section, "La noche de Tlatelolco" ("The Night of Tlatelolco"), Poniatowska includes headlines from principal Mexico City press the day after the massacre; the majority of the headlines utilize bellicose vernacular to depict the night of October 2nd thereby justifying the presence of the Armed Forces in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas. This theory of the "Two Devils" indicates that there were two equally-armed

[52] "Can we really talk about solid democratic traditions when in fact there is only one political party? When the candidates of any other party are not seated in either house of the legislature or only a few are seated to give the appearance of an opposition?" (Lane 11).

sides – the army and the political activists—and that the shooting that ensued was a reaction to quell the student-initiated violence as the army merely reacted to the participants of the demonstration.[53] *Tlatelolco* serves as a counternarrative to the Mexican authorities' official narrative of the "Two Devils" which depicted that night as site of a battleground between two opposing sides. Poniatowska includes a five-page introduction to the massacre which provides critical facts that deconstruct the rhetoric of the two warring factions; again, Poniatowska allows the testimonies to emerge as principal narrators as she states, "Todos los testimonios coinciden en que la repentina aparición de luces de bengala en el cielo de la Plaza de las Tres Culturas…desencadenó la balacera que convirtió el mitin estudiantil del 2 de octubre en la tragedia de Tlatelolco" (166).[54] This work is critical as the "Two Devil" narrative is a carefully constructed myth that facilitated the creation of a culture of impunity in post-Tlatelolco Mexico.

In this manner, Poniatowska articulates that there are no conflicting accounts of how the massacre actually commenced and the reference to the green flare lights that were launched signaled to the armed forces to commence the attack the crowd. Further indication of the government's premeditated assault on the demonstrators is the testimonies, stipulating that the military closed off all exits to the plaza and enclosed the demonstrators within the plaza; this action connotes the armed forces' intent to slaughter

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[53] The various popular press, such as *Excelsior, La prensa, El universal*, utilize a rhetoric that convey that the Plaza was a battleground where two bands were in combat and those who died were mere casualties of war; included in such bellicose vernacular are phrases such as "campo de batalla" ("battleground"), "balacera entre francotiradores y el ejército" ("shoot-out between snipers and the army") and "sangriento tiroteo" ("bloody shooting") (165).

[54] "All witnesses agree that the sudden appearance of flares in the sky above the Plaza de las Tres Culturas…was the signal that unleased the hail of bullets which turned the student meeting of October 2 into the Tlatelolco tragedy" (Lane 202).

and exterminate this faction of Mexican society.[55] *Tlatelolco* discursively challenges the official narrative constructed by the state by clearly denoting the Mexican state's intent to dissemble and obliterate the student movement and all political dissension. Poniatowska's unofficial TC report is politically invested in counteracting the officials' criminalization of the students, activists, and general political dissidents, and, most significantly, the text reflects the broader context of the Cold War politics and U.S. interventionism in Latin American politics.

Throughout the testimonial collage of the text, various voices of students and witnesses politically contextualize the historical trauma and depict the Mexican authorities as the actual criminals culpable for the massacre. Poniatowska includes relevant testimonies that demarcate the conspiracy behind the massacre and the foreign agents who infiltrated the movement in an attempt to sabotage the movement. Furthermore, the testimonies implicitly condemn the U.S. government for aiding in the repression of the movement as Luis Tomás Cervantes Cabeza de Vaca recalls police agents threatening him while being tortured in custody: "'¡Ni se hagan ilusiones! ¡Cerdos comunistas! Si fallamos nosotros, aquí cerquita tenemos a los gringos'" (115).[56] Cabeza de Vaca's testimony reflects the national rhetoric whereby Mexican authorities believed they were saving the nation from communism, which aligned with U.S. political and economic hegemony in the Western hemisphere at the height of the Cold War. U.S.

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[55] In the text's photographic essay, Poniatowska includes a caption reading: "Los tanques permanecieron muchos días en Tlatelolco…Aquello parecía campo de batalla…" ("The tanks remained many days in Tlatelolco…it seemed like a battleground…") The presence of the tanks and military officials days after the massacre underscores the authoritarian nature of the Mexican government as the massacre served as an example of what the government can do to those who betray "la patria" ("the nation").

[56] "'Don't kid yourself, you Communist swine! If you won't talk, we have *gringos* here who'll take over'" (Lane 115).

interventionism in Latin America and its sponsorship of repression of leftist activism is evident in a testimony which recounts the interrogation of a member of the Young Communists with an American agent present at the interrogation, reflecting the political and economic implications the U.S. had at stake if the student movement were to be successful (52).[57]

In addition, there was no access to official documentation of the government's orchestration of the violent repression due to their methodic cover-up and destruction of evidence and disappearance of bodies. It was not until the thirtieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre that *The National Security Archive* released previously classified documentation surrounding the U.S.' involvement in the eradication of the student movement in its quest to stem further socialist or communist activism in Mexico and other Latin American nations.[58] Indeed, the PRI's legacy and continuous monopolization of the Mexican political sphere propagated further silence and abnegation of the Mexican government's systematic obliteration of internal political dissidence. And while there has been pressure on recent Mexican presidents to release classified documents that would provide critical information on the clandestine operations prior and subsequent to the massacre, the records submitted to the public proved inefficient to instigate formal investigations into these crimes of the past. It has become the task of several activist groups comprised of former student members of the movement to compile testimonial

[57] Felix Goded Andreu of the Young Communists recalls being interrogated by an American agent and two Mexican officials; he states that his case was not atypical, and other student activists state that they were questioned by American intelligence agents (Poniatowska 52).
[58] In 1998, *The National Security Archive,* under the Freedom of Information, has made public previously classified documents that reveal the correspondence between the CIA, FBI, the Defense Department, the U.S. embassy in Mexico City and the White House [http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/].

accounts and evidence that could be utilized in a court of law against former perpetrators of the massacre.[59]

In *Tlatelolco,* Poniatowska does not edit the politicized statements within the testimonies but rather allows for these testimonies to expose the radical politics of the movement and the subsequent violent repression of leftist activism in Mexico City. The denunciation of state-sponsored violence and brutal repression of the student movement is evoked in the distinctive testimonies, poetry, and leftist publications and Poniatowska creates a discursive spatial setting allowing for the emergence of the politicized positionalities of the witnesses and survivors of the massacre. In the week after the massacre, Leonardo Femat of *Siempre!,* a leftist, alternative publication, depicts the violent repression in the following manner: "Esta es la representación del genocidio, en su justa, dolorosa dimensión. Sesenta y dos minutes de fuego nutrido hasta que los soldados no soportan el calor de los aceros enrojecidos" (Poniatowska 177-78).[60] This publication is not one of the mainstream Mexican news sources whose reportage justified the use of state force as a response to student-initiated violence; thus, Poniatowska's inclusion of this media excerpt references the Mexican government's intention to eradicate the politicized, dissenting segment of society, likening the PRI presidential terms to a fascist, authoritative regime.[61] Femat's categorization of the massacre as that

[59] As mentioned in the introduction, Garín and the members of the Comité '68 were responsible for charging former president Echeverría for committing crimes against humanity in his role in the Tlatelolco massacre.

[60] "This was genocide, in the most absolute, most tragic meaning of the word. Sixty-two minutes of round after round of gunfire, until the soldiers' weapons were so red-hot they could no longer hold them" (Lane 216).

[61] In a critical section of the text, Poniatowska includes excerpts from various media outlets that documented the events of October 2nd in order to condemn the media for their complicit actions and distortion of the truth. These passages denote the media's corroboration with the dominant narrative of the

of a “genocidio” corroborates the various testimonies that recall the army’s use of bayonets at close range, which implies the close proximity of the soldiers to their targets and their intent to kill and many of those injured or murdered demonstrated wounds that were inflicted from behind as they sought refuge (Poniatowska 225). The polyphonous aspect of *Tlatelolco* converges in its condemnation of the Mexican and U.S. authorities for the orchestration of the massacre and obfuscation of the truth.

While *Tlatelolco* certainly appears to align with Femat’s depiction of the massacre as genocide, there is much resistance to reference this historical trauma and others – such as the repressive regimes of the Southern Cone—as instances of genocide. Survivors of the Tlatelolco massacre and former political prisoners of the Southern Cone contend that the extermination of a certain sector of the population for political reasons should be considered genocide, yet as Garín contends, recognition of the violence sanctioned by the Mexican state during the 1960s has recently been portrayed as a human rights violation. In this manner, then, we see the emergence of human rights discourse as that which relies on a depoliticization of episodes of state-sponsored violence. As I will subsequently demonstrate, the 1968 student movement and its violent demise has recently been subsumed under the rubric of human rights discourse, conveying a shift in the political conceptualization of the Mexican student movement.

In 2008, Carlos Monsiváis published *El 68: La tradición de la resistencia* in the fortieth anniversary of the Mexico City massacre. Monsiváis’ text best exemplifies the abatement of the movement’s inherent politically-leftist context by re-constructing the

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massacre that rely on the theory of the “Two Devils” and justified the Mexican state’s use of excessive violence that night.

movement as one that was primarily preoccupied with human rights issues. In the prologue to the text, Monsiváis claims: "Con *el 68* da comienzo, y en forma multitudinaria, la defensa de los derechos humanos en México…Pero, a la distancia, lo innegable a lo largo de esos meses y el mensaje esencial del Movimiento es la defensa de los derechos humanos" (11).[62] Monisváis' reconceptualization of the students' demands for social reform and change as a human rights issue parallels the legitimization of rights discourse; as Naomi Klein indicates, many traditional leftist organizations – and in this instance, scholars and activists-- in Latin America had to abandon their leftist, Marxist rhetoric and adopt the universal rights rhetoric so that their claims could be included within the international forum and be internationally recognized as such. This depoliticization of these leftist movements, to echo Klein, alludes to the apolitical nature of universal human rights as she claims that it is "a way of engaging in politics without mentioning politics" (Klein 121).

While Monsiváis' text does not completely abdicate the leftist origins of the student movement, it is still critical to assess the reliance on universal rights discourse as his mode of re-framing the state-sponsored obliteration of the student movement and the massacre within the confines of rights and moralistic rhetoric. This departs from Monsiváis' prologue to Zermeño's 1978 text on the Mexican student movement and massacre that clearly indicts the Mexican state for the "absence of democratic traditions" and a political criticism of the "local and foreign capitalist demands" against which the movement had been mobilized (Zermeño xii). There is a clear shift away from a

[62] "With *68* it begins, and in a multitudinous form, the defense of human rights in Mexico…but, from a distance, what is undeniable throughout those months and the essential message of the Movement is the defense of human rights."

politicized condemnation of the Mexican hegemonic state and the political aims of the movement towards a human rights-centered perspective of the Tlatelolco historical trauma.

In relation to the contemporary discussions on the Tlatelolco massacre as a human rights concern, there exists the danger of depoliticizing the victimized subject and, as Slajov Zizek asserts, “denying to the victimized other political subjectivization” (Zizek 6). He further contends that, “the moment Human Rights are thus depoliticized, the discourse dealing with them has to change to ethics: reference to the pre-political opposition of Good and Evil has to be mobilized” (5-6). Recent conceptualization of the Tlatelolco massacre as a human rights concern is further evident in recent publications on the thirtieth and fortieth anniversaries of the violent episode. Kate Doyle, Senior Analyst for the National Security Archive in Washington D.C., has investigated previously classified materials on the Tlatelolco massacre and her exhaustive reportage has—not surprisingly—resulted in scant information and documents on the events surrounding the massacre. Her publications on her investigations – while critical of the Mexican and U.S. repressive state apparatuses-- are also subsumed under the discourse of human rights, diminishing in this sense the political agency of the students and activists involved in the movement and ignoring the motivation behind the movement and its subsequent repression.

Despite this shift in the depoliticized conceptualization of the Tlatelolco massacre, Elena Poniatowska’s recent discussions on the events of October 2nd appear to be firmly rooted in the political context of the student movement. In a 1998 interview

with National Public Radio's *Democracy Now!,* Elena Poniatowska discusses with journalist Amy Goodman the impact of her work, *Tlatelolco,* and the thirty years since the massacre. In the interview, she clearly defines her positionality as an activist and journalist and relates the corruption of the Mexican government and their extermination of political dissenters during the 1960s to contemporary issues concerning the Zapatista movement and their subjugated status and quest for social reform. In addition, Poniatowska critiques NAFTA's neoliberal policies in conjunction with the exploitation of Mexico's indigenous population and other instances of corruption, such as election fraud. In a sense, then, Poniatowska's unofficial TC report on the Tlatelolco massacre is one that evades the depoliticized rhetoric of human rights discourse and instead, the text indicts the Mexican government as culpable in the continuation of an exploitative and authoritative regime.

Shortly after the publication of *Tlatelolco,* Poniatowska was awarded the National Book Prize for her investigative journalism on the massacre; Poniatowska recounts to Goodman why she rejected the prize and claims that Luis Echeverría-- Interior Secretary and head of the Armed forces during the massacre— was to present her with the award, which signaled a strategic move on the government's part: "If the government took everything in, then there would be no more guilt. They wouldn't be guilty anymore…" (*Democracy Now!*). This attempt of the Mexican government to exonerate itself from having committed the crimes of the past is evident in recent proceedings enacted by current Mexican presidents, such as Vicente Fox, to officiate investigations into the role of the state in the massacre of 1968. Poniatowska's statement to Amy Goodman and the

entirety of *La noche de Tlatelolco* disavows Mexican officials' problematic attempt of appropriating the Tlatelolco history as she notes that this would expunge them from culpability. Poniatowska explicitly denotes that the state was and remains complicit in the methodical cover-up of Tlatelolco's historical events and in the perpetuation of a culture of impunity that has denied survivors of this violence their main goal: to seek justice and accountability for the crimes committed by the state on October 2nd. This sense of culpability and theory of justice is absent in the 1983 Argentinean TC report and instead frames the survivor testimonies to center on gender-normative experiences of suffering and victimization.

Nunca Más - The Role of the State and the Construction of the De-Politicized, Gender-Normative Subject

Argentina's *Nunca Más* departs from Poniatowska's *Tlatelolco* in that it is an official, state-mandated report that is informed by a human rights framework in order to present the military junta's organized system of repression and the crimes against humanity committed between 1976 and 1983. It is critical to mention the origins of the National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP) and its subsequent publication of *Nunca Más* in order to assess this rhetorical shift from Poniatowska's *Tlatelolco* – embedded within the politicized, activist origins of the 1968 movement—and *Nunca Más'* reliance on a universal human rights discourse that elides the political agencies of the testimonies included in the report. While the historical and sociopolitical context of Argentina are distinct from that of the Mexican case, my emphasis here will be on the construction of a human rights discourse in post-dictatorship Argentina and the state's

limited attempt to seek accountability for this structured, violent regime. What is at stake here is the state's investment in the cooptation of previous acts of state violence incurred by the military regime; here I argue that by reconfiguring the state as the one who acts on behalf of the human rights victims, the state simultaneously disassociates itself from the egregious crimes committed by the junta and expunges itself from culpability.

It is pertinent to briefly contextualize the collapse of Argentina's military regime in 1983 as this plays in integral factor in the formation of CONADEP and the subsequent publication of *Nunca Más.* In order to reclaim national legitimacy and popular support, Leopoldo Galtieri-- president of the junta in 1982-- mandated the invasion of the British-occupied Falkland Islands, a move which sought to revive Argentinean nationalism. However, a crushing defeat by the British forces resulted in a weakened Argentine military and this humiliating loss further exacerbated Argentina's fragile economic state. The Falkland War fiasco merely underscored Galtieri's inefficacy as a ruler to the Argentine public and the war coupled with the economic crisis swiftly led to Galtieri's resignation. In 1983, Raúl Alfonsín of the Radical Party won the elections and this marked the successful overthrow of the tenuous, faltering regime. President Alfonsín was thus able to initiate investigations into the human rights violations committed during the dictatorship, which commenced with the government-mandated formation of CONADEP.

Despite the creation of this state-mandated commission, Argentina's post-dictatorship era faced a multitude of impediments that prevented holding former military officials accountable for the innumerable crimes committed. The military regime was cognizant of the international influence of human rights organizations and before its

disintegration in 1983, the heads of state enacted various laws of amnesty – including "Ley de Pacificación-- which would essentially preclude former junta officials from being indicted in a court of law and which would exonerate them from their participation in violent crimes as they were enacted during the "anti-subversive war" between 1973 and 1982 (Cuevas 30). And while President Alfonsín relayed to the Argentinean public his intention to counteract these laws of amnesty and initiate judicial action against former military officials, during the latter part of his presidency he approved two amnesty laws that would impede future trials against former officials.[63] Despite these impediments, Alfonsín swiftly headed the creation of CONADEP and oversaw official investigations into the crimes committed by the military regime and within nine months, the commission's exhaustive investigations resulted in the official truth report, *Nunca Más*.

Published in 1984, *Nunca Más* is among the first state-sponsored official truth reports to emerge in Latin America, demarcating in this manner the increasing legitimacy of human rights discourse in the Western hemisphere. In this section of the chapter, I argue that this state-led report on the crimes committed against thousands of people engages with a distinctive discourse predicated on the depoliticization of the narratives included in the report. Furthermore, I assess the role of the Argentinean state in the construction of the official TC report and the ideological framework upon which it relies, signifying as such its positing of the testimonies within a broader, international project preoccupied with the documentation of human rights abuses without engaging in the

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[63] Due to the instatement of these two amnesty laws, former junta leaders Rafael Videla and Emilio Massera were pardoned in 1990 during the subsequent presidential term of Carlos Menem.

quest for "comprehensive justice." In so doing, I argue that Argentina's *Nunca Más*--while significant in its recapitulation of the various modes of state repression that ultimately lead to subsequent trials against former junta officials-- effectively elides the political subjectivities of the testimonies vis-à-vis the report's formal structure and inclusion of the theory of the "Two Devils."

In the ordered structuring of *Nunca Más*, the testimonies are methodically inserted within the discursive parameters of universal, inalienable rights, which results in the infantilization and depoliticization of the survivors; the voice of the survivor, former political prisoner, and activist permutates into the voice of a victim, devoid of his or her political history and agency; this discursive maneuver works to reaffirm the apolitical position of universal human rights documentation. This strategic discursive maneuver is most evident when assessing former political prisoner Adriana Calvo's testimony of abduction, incarceration and survival in two publications: *Nunca Más* and *Ni el flaco perdón de dios* different publication organized by H.I.J.O.S.[64] In my analysis of Adriana Calvo's testimony in *Nunca Más* and in*,* I argue that the official report calibrates her testimony in order to center on her victimized experience as a pregnant woman while *Ni el flaco…* reasserts Calvo's subjectivity as a militant, political activist which articulates that her incarceration was due to her involvement in her university's union and a target of Argentina's political genocide.

[64] This publication includes the many testimonies of children of the disappeared and victims of state terrorism who have formed the group, H.I.J.O.S. (*Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Oblivion and Silence).* H.I.J.O.S. was formed in 1995 and this organization is concerned with various political and economic issues in present-day Argentina, but particularly they center on the recuperation of Argentina's historical memory and combating the culture of impunity and oblivion that has been established in the post-dictatorship era.

Nunca Más purports to be a text that is primarily preoccupied with the elucidation of the past and the search for the truth, and in essence, it adheres to the basic principles of a basic truth commission report. CONADEP subscribes to an idea of a universal truth that it sets forth in the "Prologue" and "Author's Note" and the critical importance in the recuperation of this truth as a means of legitimizing the return to democracy and Alfonsín's presidential term. In its reliance on a decidedly rights-based rhetoric, the text maintains throughout its intent to merely illuminate the crimes of the past in order for these actions to never again be committed. *Nunca Más* proclaims in the "Author's Note" that the twelve-member commission selected a diversity of testimonies "con la sola intención de fundamentar y ejemplificar la exposición" (13).[65] There is thus the intent on behalf of the commission to utilize the testimonies in a manner befitting to their projected aims, which, in this case, the commission declares is to: "recuperar para sí la verdad de lo acontecido, 're-encontrar' su pasado inmediato y someterlo al juicio de la comunidad, reestablecidas ya sus instituciones fundamentales" (443).[66]

CONADEP then situates *Nunca Más* within a human rights framework intended to condemn past egregious basic rights violations in order to legitimate post-dictatorship Argentina's transition into democracy. CONADEP was discursively constructed upon a human rights foundation, as it states in the first clause of Decree 187, "'la cuestión de los Derechos Humanos trasciende a los poderes públicos y concierne a la sociedad civil y a

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[65] "They have been selected solely in order to substantiate and illustrate our main arguments" (*Never Again* 7).

[66] "The first indispensable reparation demanded by society after fundamental institutions had been restored was to ascertain the truth of what had happened, to 'face up' to the immediate past and let the country judge."

la comunidad internacional'" (443).[67] The Argentine state here relinquishes their political influence by thereby declaring that individual rights are a universal concern, ostensibly offering us a depoliticized account of the events transpired during the military regime. A brief examination of the text's prologue by writer and CONADEP President Ernesto Sábato contradicts this depoliticized stance as he places equal culpability on two warring factions prior to and during the military junta; in so doing, there is a clear political aim of *Nunca Más* as it obfuscates historical veracity of the dictatorship and refrains from providing a comprehensive account of the events prior to and during the regime. The theory of the "Two Devils" set forth by Sábato in the prologue disseminates a falsified account and historically skewed version of military junta's reign of terror, which is indicative of the state's investment in perpetuating a dominant narrative that would "tend to" this question of Argentina's human rights violations without emphasizing a search for accountability and justice.

Nunca Más' commences with a prologue by Ernesto Sábato, contextualizing the historical and political moment of 1970s Argentina and the formation of CONADEP and their assumed tasks.[68] Firstly, it will be important to assess Sábato's relationship to the military junta as this further questions the apolitical intent of *Nunca Más.* Sábato, a physicist-turned-writer, was a celebrated intellectual figure during the Argentine dictatorship, and as Osvaldo Bayer notes, Sábato was decorated by the French Embassy

[67] "The National Executive recognized this when it stated that 'the question of human rights transcends governments, it is the concern of civil society and the international community'" (*Never Again* 428).
[68] For the purposes of my analysis here, I will be turning to the original publication 1984 of *Nunca Más* which included Sabato's original prologue. Recent publications of the text have confronted the polemical nature of Sabato's use of the theory of the "Two Devils" yet I will not be addressing this 2006 editorial change.

in Buenos Aires, a ceremony that was transmitted live on the junta's official news channel. Bayer furthermore relates that during the International Human Rights Commission's visit to Argentina in 1979, Sábato publicly maintained a position of neutrality, condemning extreme forms of violence by both leftist and right-wing factions in Argentina (Bayer). Clearly then, his positionality during the years of the dictatorship and his implicit support of the Junta warrants critical inquiry and we must be cognizant of how he reflects the hegemonic power of the state during and after the Argentina's dictatorship.[69]

Sábato presents his presumed "neutral" stance by relying upon the theory of the "Two Devils" for being the cause of the dictatorship's use of extreme violence. In the prologue's very first lines, he proclaims: "Durante la década del 70 de la Argentina fue convulsionada por un terror que provenía tanto desde la extrema derecha como de la extrema izquierda, fenómeno que ha ocurrido en muchos otros países" (7).[70] This theory of the "Two Devils", as Sábato explains, is the belief that two opposing factions, from both left and right wings, were equally responsible for the violence and reign of terror that was institutionalized in Argentine society during the dictatorship. Nick Caistor's foreward to the 1986 English translation of *Nunca Más* reinforces this problematic notion of the theory of the "Two Devils" by alluding to the violence instigated by the militant Montoneros group, erroneously labeling them as "terrorist[s]." What Caistor and Sábato neglect to include in their essays is accurate, empirical data which would numerically

[69] Please see Osvaldo Bayer's "Pequeño recordatorio para un país sin memoria" for more on Sábato's polemical relationship with the military Junta.
[70] "During the 1970s, Argentina was torn by terror from both the extreme right and the far left. This phenomenon was not unique to our country" (*Never Again* 1).

disprove this claim that equal amounts of violence was incurred from both left wing militant groups (the Montoneros) and the right wing (the military junta of Videla). Historian Hugo Vezzetti provides us with the data which effectively discredits the information published in *Nunca Más* and notes that the armed members of the Montoneros never exceed 800 and further claims: "There did not exist…neither before nor after March of 1976, the minute possibility of a successful revolutionary revolt against the authorities" (Vezzetti 77). Vezzetti notes that the element of subversion in Argentina was the sole focus of the military regime's annihilation of political dissidence; but what we must note here is that even in their height of activism, the Montoneros never exceeded 800 armed combatants and the regime's justification for the disappearance of 30,000 people far surpassed the actually numerical "threat" of under 1,000 armed dissenters (Vezzetti 77).

The inclusion of the theory of the "Two Devils" in *Nunca Más'* opening statement provides the text's critical socio-political framework and tonality. This theory, furthermore, sets forth the legitimized and accepted political explication regarding the years of terror that defined the military dictatorship. The legitimization of this theory is best explicated by María Laura, whose father was disappeared by the junta and whose mother survived torture and illegal incarceration: "La teoría de los dos demonios cayó bien parada en Argentina. Mis amigos de infancia…piensan que los militares hicieron algo horrible y que los terroristas subversivos también. Y por suerte hoy se vive en

democracia. Es un sentimiento generalizado" (Gelman et al. 31).[71] María Laura's assessment of this generalized sentiment is indicative of *Nunca Más'* legacy on the collective memory of Argentine community. By equating the militarized faction of the left – in its maximum of 800 members which were quickly eradicated within the first years of the regime—with the methodical, institutionalized and normalized violence incurred by the military regime, there is little possibility of condemning those responsible for the years of state repression and state violence. As Sábato states in the prologue, "Nuestra Comisión no fue instituida para juzgar, pues para eso están los jueces constitucionales, sino para indagar la suerte de los desaparecidos en el curso de estos años aciagos de la vida nacional" (7).[72] The task of the Commission was thus to remain politically neutral which effectively depoliticizes the history of the dictatorship and refrains from alluding to those military officials who were indubitably involved in organized forms of violence.

Despite the apolitical, neutral intent of the commission, Sábato's use of the theory of "Two Devils" alludes to the political bias and misrepresentation of historical facts. While Sábato indeed acknowledges the distinction in magnitude of the left-wing militants and the Armed Forces, Triple A, and the military regime's repressive state apparatuses, he denounces the use of "los delitos de los terroristas" ("the crimes by the terrorists") by both factions. Sábato's depiction of the actions of leftist activists as "delitos de los

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[71] The theory of the "Two Devils" fell soundly in Argentina. My friends from childhood…think that the military officials did something horrible, and so did the subversive terrorists. And that thankfully today there is democracy. It is a common sentiment."

[72] "Our Commission was set up not to sit in judgment, because that is the task of the constitutionally appointed judges, but to investigate the fate of the people who disappeared during those ill-omened years of our nation's life" (*Never Again* 1).

terroristas" infuriated many family members of former political prisoners and those disappeared during the regime. Hebe de Bonafini, president of the *Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, lambasts Sábato's prologue and proclaims: "'Nuestros hijos no eran demonios. Eran revolucionarios, guerrilleros, maravillosos y únicos que defendieron a la Patria.'"[73] Bonafini rejects Sábato's conflation of leftist activism with terrorism and reinscribes their political agency that is explicitly elided in *Nunca Más.* Indeed, Bonafini's statement and political activism within the *Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* deconstructs the passivized status of the despondent mothers of the disappeared that is propagated textually in *Nunca Más.*

The prologue furthermore depicts the violence committed during the military regime through a human rights lens which implies that all violence enacted prior and during the dictatorship violated the UDHR's basic tenets. This human rights framework presented in the prologue is adherent to the universal, inalienable rights that are allotted to every living individual, the universal subject. *Nunca Más* is predicated on the very tenets of universal human rights which-- to reference Badiou again—are ethical rights to "non-Evil" and the right to be free from inhumane and cruel treatment (Badiou 4, 9). Badiou's discussion of the universal subject that is protected under the rubric of the UDHR's articles is critical in this discussion of CONADEP's promulgation of these inalienable rights, as Badiou contends that ethics is preoccupied with perceiving individuals as a victim (Badiou 10). This culture of victimhood is reified in the basic structuring of *Nunca Más* whereby the testimonies of the survivors of torture and the

[73] "Our children were not demons. They were revolutionaries, guerrilla fighters, they were marvelous and unique individuals who defended the Nation."

concentration camps, their family members, their children, and all those affected by the military junta's organized forms of violence are represented as voices of the victims. The section entitled "The Victims" relies heavily on an apolitical discourse and visual aids to present the empirical data of those repressed during the regime. It furthermore contains subcategories which neatly divide the victims into the following: "Niños desaparecidos y embarazadas", "Adolescentes", "La familia como víctima", "La represión no respetó inválidos ni lisiados", "Religiosos", "Conscriptos", "Desaparición de periodistas", and "Gremialistas" (488-89).[74] This methodical organization of the testimonies effectively homogenizes them and are subsequently reconceived as depoliticized victims of a sadistic, evil regime; as Badiou contends, this reliance on quantitative analysis factors into the constant state of victimization that obscure the inherently politicized subtexts of the testimonies.

Each of these subdivisions of the "Victim" chapter effectively relates CONADEP's emphasis on the experiences of innocent, politically neutral sectors of Argentine society (the exception here being the "Gremialistas" ("Labour representatives"), which does portray the regime's intent to exterminate working-class and union activists, and even this is a problematic maneuver because this separates union activists from other sectors of the population). What is ironic in the chapter's introductory note is the statistical data which states that the vast majority of those disappeared and killed during the regime were young adults –16 to 35 years old—implying as such that this large percentage of the disappeared were student activists, yet there is no section

[74] "Children and pregnant women who disappeared", "The family as victim", "Families who disappeared", "The sick and disabled", "Members of the clergy and religious orders", "Conscripts", "Journalists", "Trade unionists", and "Agrarian labour representatives" (*Never Again* v-vi).

analyzing the junta's explicit ideological repression.[75] This methodology presents us with an official truth commission text that effectively evades the larger political and economic underpinnings of that historical moment, evident in this example of the index processing of the report and in the editing processes involved in the actual testimonies themselves.

Social anthropologist Fiona C. Ross assesses the limitations of the vernacular utilized in state-sanctioned reports covering violent traumas and explains, "The categories used to understand violence, the transformation of experience to data, and the collation of these has the effect of homogenising complex social relations" (5). This homogenizing effect is best exemplified in the empirical analysis of the victims of military state's repression and in the formal structuring of the text. Throughout the various subdivisions of *Nunca Más*, distinctive voices and testimonies are inserted to illustrate a particular theme – such as "torturas" ("tortures"), "el secuestro" ("the abduction"), or "Centros clandestinos de detención" ("clandestine detention centers")– which necessitates the introduction, the summation and the elimination of sections of an individual's testimony. For brevity's sake, it is not possible to include thousands of testimonies in their entireties, however, this process of selecting particular passages of testimonies and framing them in relation to the text's ordered progression results in the depoliticization and infantilization of the heterogeneous testimonies. Specific politicized

[75] In the "Gremialistas" section, CONADEP presents information surrounding the targeted union members and leaders, which resulted in approximately 30% of the disappeared and *Nunca Más* does refer to the military regime's violent, successful intent to eliminate trade and agrarian unionists sector of society; while *Nunca Más* does include this pertinent information on activist union members, the testimonies framed in the report center primarily on their experiences of abduction and incarceration and less on the regime's repressive modalities that targeted historically Marxist unionists.

accounts of survivors' testimonies are either edited out and/or recalibrated to adhere to general categories that the Commission has declared as most vulnerable and victimized.

By re-examining the subcategories of the "Victims" chapter, it is evident here that *Nunca Más* reinscribes former political, leftist activists within this culture of victimhood and reshapes their testimonies to be included under a rubric of passivized identification. By centering on society's ostensibly most innocent, fragile, and defenseless members – "niños" ("children), "lisiados" ("cripples") and "inválidos" ("disabled")—the text indicates the following: firstly, it alludes to the regime's sadistic, abhorrent modalities of repression in that it extended to include physically handicapped individuals and secondly, it reinforces the discursive binarism of victim/victimizer that is at the core of this human rights-based report. The subcategory, "Niños desaparecidos y embarazadas" ("Children and pregnant women who disappeared"), is demonstrative of this rhetorical infantilization and speaks generally to the gendered politics of *Nunca Más.* The collation of disappeared children and pregnant women limits the women's experiences to their physical state and, more significantly, implicates CONADEP's infantilization of the pregnant women in equating their experiences to those of the children. Here we must consider the politics of gender and the state's role in the construction of this official TC report by turning to the testimony of former political prisoner Adriana Calvo in *Nunca Más* and her testimony subsequently published in the 1997 *Ni el flaco perdón de Dios.* I argue that Calvo's political voice in *Ni el flaco…* destabilizes the official report's reliance on the victim/victimizer binarism whereby the survivor's identity is circumscribed within a

victimized subject-identity and Calvo thus subverts this victim-identity by reaffirming her political subjecthood and emphasizing the search for justice.

Adriana Calvo de Laborde was a physicist working as a research assistant at the University of La Plata when she was abducted from her home on February 4, 1977 and illegally held at a Buenos Aires concentration camp, Pozo de Banfield. At the time she was seven months pregnant and a mother of two young sons. She recounts that her husband, a chemistry professor at the same university, was also detained by military officials and later released. Calvo had been a prolific figure since her release from the concentration camps and contributed her testimony to a diversity of sources, media outlets, human rights organizations, and to the 1984 commission, which resulted in the publication of edited portions of her experience. *Nunca Más'* insertion of Calvo's testimony under the rubric of "Niños desaparecidos y embarazadas" connotes the state's adherence to the passivization of female, militant activists and furthermore occludes the gender politics that underpin the carceral existence in the testimonies of the survivors. Despite this categorical effect and circumscription of female activists within the bounds of the domestic sphere, it must be noted that the commission importantly denotes the systemic processes of dehumanization that were constitutive of incarcerated pregnant women.

Calvo's narrative evokes the sheer horrors of her abduction, torture and the subsequent birth of her daughter Teresa while in captivity. Her harrowing experiences are related to the commission who then edit the testimony to be included in one subset of the category, "Nacimientos en cautivero" ("Births in captivity"). We first encounter Calvo's

voice towards the beginning of *Nunca Más*, where an excerpt of her testimony is used in "Descripción de los centros clandestinos de detención" ("Description of the clandestine detention centers"), which briefly depicts the squalid, dire living conditions of the camp, the Pozo de Bánfield. Her lengthier passages included in "Nacimientos" contextualize the realities of hundreds of pregnant women who delivered their babies in horrendous conditions in the camps and other secret detention centers. Her testimony included in the report recounts that taunting, jeering, and insults took place while she and other pregnant women gave birth in captivity; the commission qualifies her testimony in the following manner: "En el sobrecogedor testimonio de Adriana Calvo de Laborde, veremos cómo vivían las mujeres embarazadas el crucial momento de dar a luz en cautiverio" (304).[76] While it is indeed critical to officially document the distinct processes of the dehumanization of the prisoners -- in this manner by relating the horrific brutalities committed against pregnant women—the commission's deliberate editing of Calvo's testimony signifies the state's preoccupation with the most vulnerable, fragile conditions of the detainees. CONADEP tethers Calvo's experience to the universal human rights model, preoccupied with delving into the most egregious instances of rights abuse, which in turn reifies this model's defense of society's most vulnerable subjects. To recall Wendy Brown, human rights discourse is predicated upon "a pure defense of the innocent and the powerless against power, a pure defense of the individual against immense and potentially cruel or despotic machineries" (453). The commission omits passages of Calvo's testimony in order to reconstruct the spectacle of childbirth under horrendous,

[76] "In a harrowing statement by Adriana Calvo de Laborde, we learn what pregnant women endured at the critical time of giving birth in prison" (*Never Again* 290).

unhygienic conditions of the camps, yet her testimony alludes to entrenched power structures and the hypermasculine ideology touted by the military regime. I argue that this is suggestive of the potential processes of political mobilization that are diminished by CONADEP's reliance on the human rights model.

Despite *Nunca Más'* efforts to reduce Calvo's carceral experiences to the empirical, factual accounts of a victimized, fragile expectant mother and the probable elision of segments of her testimony, there is an evocation of condemnation and resistance which brims under the surface. Calvo recounts the day she gives birth to her child on the floor of a car in transit to another detention center; after delivering her baby while restrained and blindfolded, she was tended to by one of the junta's doctors:

> Allí estaba el mismo médico que había atendido a Inés Ortega de Fossatti. En el auto cortó el cordón y me subieron uno o dos pisos hasta un lugar donde me sacaron la placenta. Me hicieron desnudar y frente al oficial de guardia tuve que lavar la camilla, el piso, mi vestido, recoger la placenta y, por fin, me dejaron lavar a mi beba, todo en medio de insultos y amenazas. Al entrar el edificio me sacaron la venda de los ojos diciendo que 'ya no hacía falta', por lo que todo lo demás fui viéndoles las caras… (305).[77]

Calvo's meticulous description of the succession of events reveals the regime's systemic mode of repression and humiliation of the prisoners; the act of childbirth, as well as other bodily functions such as menstruation, is perceived as filthy and that worthy of ridicule. The act of forcing her to undress in order to humiliate Calvo after just giving birth, as well as having to clean up after her "mess", displays the hypermasculine military powers

[77] "In the car the doctor cut the umbilical cord and they took me up one or two floors in another place where they got rid of the placenta. They made me disrobe and in front of the guard they made me wash the bed, the floor, my dress, and made me clean up the placenta and finally they let me wash my baby, all the while they were insulting and threatening me. Upon entering the building they took off my blindfold and said, 'This isn't necessary anymore', and so then I saw their faces…"

equating childbirth and maternity of leftist "subversives" as something shameful and subhuman. Despite this intent on behalf of the junta, Calvo's summation of her experiences of bodily degradation allows her to reinscribe her experiences within a site of resistance through the act of re-telling.

While the commission centers on the bodily shaming techniques of the junta, there exists a distinct subtext in Calvo's narrative which alludes to a larger questions of retribution and recuperation of the self, or what Fiona Ross terms, "sustaining a sense of self" (70). Upon removing the blindfold, Calvo declares, "…por lo que todo lo demás fui viéndoles las caras…"; this proclamation is critical as it is presumably the first time that Calvo regains her sight while she is detained.[78] This re-visibility and small act of defiance also connote her will to persevere and study the faces of those who are culpable, in this manner, suggesting the possibility for seeking justice and retribution for the crimes committed against her and others. The ellipses inserted immediately after her statement suggest that further, more explicit politicized accounts of Calvo's carceral experience are most likely omitted in order to adhere to the commission's intent to frame her testimony so that it neatly complies with the general experience of childbirth in captivity. Dal Sacco considers the politics of gender in truth commission reports and warns that the reports "run the risk of narrowing the issue of women's human rights to violations against their bodies and sexuality" (67). More significantly, by reducing Calvo's experience to depictions of bodily harm and violence, the commission does not offer alternative modes of comprehending these political forms of violence other than through the lens of

[78] While she also expresses fear at the indication that this act of removing her blindfold would signify her extermination by the regime (as she has now visibly identified them), she nonetheless looks her captors in the eye, symbolizing here an act of resistance.

victim/victimizer. The political, resistant nature of Calvo's testimony is in tension with the commission's depoliticization of her narrative and her experiences related in *Ni el flaco…* situate her within this locus of political activism and subjectivity.

Adriana Calvo's testimony is posited in the collective narratival project of *Ni el flaco perdón de dios* whose intent is the following: "Este libro quiere mostrar, no demostrar" ("This book wants to present [mostrar] rather than represent [demostrar].") The text then abstains from actively framing or editing the narratives to adhere to a particular episteme of the Argentine dictatorship, but rather, it presents the testimonies in a manner which would "mostrar" these distinctive experiences and the legacy of that epoch of violence. Calvo's contribution to this text echoes the harrowing experiences she recounts to the commission and relays the processes of dehumanization and humiliation that were institutionalized during the regime, yet in this version, Calvo's account is not delimited to her corporeal experiences of torture filed under the rubric of "pregnant women." This tension that exists between the state-imposed framework and Calvo's testimony -- evident in *Nunca Más* – subsequently gives way in *Ni el flaco…* to present her politicized identification as a union activist, alluding to the regime's systematic elimination of all modes of possible dissent. What's more, the narration of the childbirth in captivity is reconstructed as an act of subversion and defiance—rather than the regime's intent to shame-- and Calvo reclaims this state's abuse of power by inserting agency in her positionality as a mother and political prisoner.

Calvo's carceral narrative departs from the human rights discourse of *Nunca Más* by deconstructing the modus operandi of the repressive regime and imbuing her

testimony with a politicized tonality that is nearly absent in the commission's account. As a member of the University of La Plata's Union *la Asociación de Docentes e Investigadores de la Facultad de Ciencias Exactas*, Calvo explicates the reason why the junta sought her detainment: "El gremio nuestra tenía una historia de lucha…Creo que éste es el motivo central de mi secuestro. Había que terminar con este tipo de organizaciones… [y] tenían un objetivo preciso, evitar la actividad estudiantil y gremial en la facultad" (99, 101).[79] The history of union activism in Calvo's account is silenced in *Nunca Más* and Calvo's testimony here attests to the junta's criminalization of political dissidents (students, activists, union members) and their methodical, systematic eradication of the dictatorship's undesirable, dissident portion of the population. Her account furthermore destabilizes *Nunca Más'* reliance on the human rights' culture of victimhood as she reasserts her collective subjectivity as an activist in her faculty's union, not merely relating her carceral experience as a pregnant woman who gave birth in captivity. Calvo effectively deconstructs this victim/victimizer dichotomy and suggests that the modes of repression sponsored by the regime sought to passivize and terrorize the public into acquiescence and political apathy so that no one would counteract the regime's firmly entrenched political, social, and economic structures. In addition, her testimony reproaches the hegemonic discourse of the theory of the "Two Devils" propagated by CONADEP and the general Argentine public. While detained, Calvo remembers others being tortured and interrogated and remarks, "No escuché un solo interrogatorio vinculado a un hecho armado, una bomba, un arsenal, nada. Eran

[79] "Our union represented a history of struggle…I think this is the main reason behind my abduction. They had to finish with these kinds of organizations… [and] they had a clear objective, to dissuade student activism and union activity in the department."

claramente cosas relacionadas con la política, los gremios, los centros de estudiantes" (104).[80] She recalls only overhearing one tortured prisoner confess to being a member of the Montoneros and her testimony effectively abrogates Sábato's defense of the "Two Devils" theory by isolating the regime's politically-motivated annihilation of predominately unarmed activists. And while her testimony in both texts is centered largely on the gender-specific forms of torture and repression administered by the state, this latter account does not divorce her political activism from her carceral experience.

In a revelatory passage on the gendered dynamics of torture and representation of the military regime's display of hypermasculine, patriarchal ideals, Calvo states:

> Los hombres estaban en peores condiciones, pero en la tortura solían ensañarse más con las mujeres. No podían soportar la idea de que una mujer se resistiera. 'Hija de puta, cuidá a tus hijos, andá a lavar los platos', nos decían, y mucho, mucho más. Una mujer que se resistía era para ellos mucho peor que un hombre que lo hiciera. El valor de la mujer los volvía locos (107).[81]

Calvo's carceral experience addresses the gender politics that were a quotidian reality for many female political prisoners of the regime and, in effect, is indicative of institutionalized forms of gender repression instituted by repressive, patriarchal authoritarian regimes. CONADEP evades mention of the intricate systems of repressive power – in this case, gender-based repression-- that functioned during the military regime and this is most apparent in the depoliticization of the testimonies of the female former

[80] "I did not hear one question relating to anything about arms, a bomb, an arsenal, nothing. They were all things related to politics, to the unions, to student centers and groups."
[81] "The male prisoners were in worse conditions, but the guards would take sadistic delight in the torture of the women. They couldn't stand the idea that a woman could resist. 'Bitch, take care of your kids, go and wash the dishes', they would tell us, and much, much more. To them, a woman who resisted was much worse than a man who resisted. The valor of the women drove them crazy."

political prisoners. Rather, CONADEP centralizes its discourse on the physical and psychic damage inflicted on the women without probing extensively into the regime's rationale for instituting such gender-specific abuse.

Ross' interviews with South African political prisoners during the apartheid-era reveal the gendering process of dehumanization and many of the former detainees recall similar gender-based verbal abuse and taunts as they transgressed the state authorities' notions of femininity. Ross addresses this state-sanctioned trope of femininity and womanhood and states, "Implicitly, an ideal woman was one who was acquiescent to the state, a woman who remained in the confines of the domestic realm" (65). In Pilar Calveiro's theoretical assessment of the Argentine military regime's modalities of repression, *Power and Disappearance,* she deconstructs the regime's operating powers in order to elucidate the junta's justification of using extreme forms of violence against the political dissidents, the subhuman "other." Calvo's presentation of the regime's vilification of the female prisoners is echoed in Ross' text and Calveiro's work and explains that according to the police guards and officials: "the women displayed extreme sexual liberation, they were bad homemakers, bad mothers, bad wives and they were particularly cruel" (94). Female resistance and political subjectivity is subsequently and targeted by these state authorities and their ridicule of their political activism exhibited the state powers' attempt to reify the heteropatriarchal structure. Referring again to the testimony of Thenjiwe Mtintso from the 1997 South African Women's hearing in Johannesburg, she iterates that the state-sponsored commissions on human rights abuses tended to diminish political activism, and Mtintso claims that this was "was worse than

physical assault" (Ross 65). In each instance, these women violated the state powers' codes of conduct befitting for a proper, ideal woman; the legitimization and justification of gender-based torture and ridicule of women's activism is not unique to military states in Latin America. These narratives are representative of transnational modes of heteropatriarchal structuring whereby women must remain within the appropriate domestic space and men and women must be adherent to the economic, political and social hegemonic order. And while male political dissidents were subject to equally dehumanizing tactics of torture and repression, as Calvo notes, the women who resisted was worse than the men, and according to the military officials, "los volvía locos."

While CONADEP and other truth commission reports veer away from the politicized contexts of their subjects of study, there are oftentimes sections dedicated to gender-based violence, albeit depoliticized accounts of repression. In CONADEP's case there is minimal assessment of the gendered politics of the regime's repression, however, Calvo's testimony is limited to her experience giving birth in captivity, in essence, reinforcing the binarism of state/victimizer versus prisoners/victims. In *Ni el flaco…,* Calvo's retelling of giving birth in captivity is suggestive of her continuous commitment to resistance and the search for justice and furthermore posits motherhood as a site of resistance and solidarity with other detainees. After giving birth to Teresa, Calvo was acutely aware of the possibility of the guards taking the baby away from her as this occurred to many other mothers who gave birth in the concentration camps. A few days after giving birth, the guards entered the Pozo de Banfield where Calvo was detained

with other female prisoners and attempted to take Teresa from Calvo. She recounts the following:

> Las compañeras hicieron una barrera humana, gritando y peleando como leonas aun en esa situación de inferioridad absoluta. Detrás de la reja gritaban: 'No se la llevan, no se la llevan, no se la llevan.' Yo me metí en el fondo de la celda con Teresa, contra la pared, y todas cubriéndome y gritando como locas. Las tendrían que haber matado para sacarnos a Teresa. No me la sacaron (110).[82]

The women's daring display of valor is suggestive of the possibilities of reinventing traditional models of femininity and motherhood as the women here demonstrate their resistance to state authority through this act of solidarity. *Nunca Más* infantilizes and depoliticizes the pregnant women who gave birth in captivity, disavowing the possibility of their political resistance vis-à-vis the emphasis on their traditional roles as mothers and caretakers. CONADEP's depiction of the women in essence adheres to the human rights framework whereby women are passive victims of state power, targeted by authorities for unclear motives. In Calvo's later account of her carceral experience, the women's audacious move against the guards and their formation of a "barrera humana" ("human barricade") is a physical manifestation of the potentiality for human interrelationships and acts of solidarity, in effect, a politicization of motherhood. Their actions proved successful as Calvo notes that the guards did not remove the baby from her care, suggestive of a momentary inversion of the power dynamic where the guards were intimidated by this enraged, politically-active "barerra humana" coming to the defense of

[82] "The compañeras made a human barricade, screaming and fighting like lionesses even in such a situation of utter and complete inferiority. Behind the bars of the cell they shouted: 'Don't take her away, don't take her away, don't take her away.' I hid in the back of the cell with Teresa, against the wall, and all of the women were protecting me and screaming like crazy. They would have had to have killed them in order to take Teresa away. And they didn't take her away."

a comrade. This politically-charged moment is evoked towards the conclusion of Calvo's testimony where she declares the following: "Nacieron juntas Teresa y una convicción: si Teresa vivía y yo vivía, iba a luchar toda mi vida por la justicia. Así siento ese momento, dando un paso del que no iba a poder volver atrás" (115).[83] The politicization of motherhood is recaptured in Calvo's personal narrative and her fervent commitment to social justice and political activism is effectively reinforced during her carceral experiences as a young mother and as a political prisoner.

It bears noting again that *Nunca Más* assisted in the Trial of the Juntas which led to injunction of military officers, even if these officers were later pardoned during Menem's presidency. There is a distinctive tonal difference between the two human rights reports published in the Southern Cone, as the Argentine report sought to condemn these atrocities, evident in its declarative title, *Nunca Más,* even if relying on a depolitical universal human rights discourse to do so. The *Rettig Report,* in contrast, seeks to venerate the ultimate abstract version of the human rights subject – the deceased and disappeared – and ignores the thousands of victims who survived the repression and refusing to acknowledge their cases as the most egregious forms of human rights violations.

The Discursive Violence of Chile's *Rettig Report* and the Defense of the Abstract, Gender-neutral Human Rights Victim

On April 25, 1990, Patricio Aylwin Azocar, President of the Chilean Republic, officiated the formation of Chile's National Truth and Reconciliation Commission. From

[83] "Teresa and a conviction were born together. If Teresa lived and I lived, I would fight my entire life for justice. That is how I recall that moment, as if I were taking a path of no return."

May 1990 to February 1991, the commission oversaw investigations into the Pinochet dictatorship's most egregious examples of human rights abuses and compiled testimonies of victims' family members and other relations. While both Chile and Argentina were controlled by powerful, monolithic military regimes during the 70s and 80s, the termination of the regimes' rule and the subsequent transitions to democracy are markedly distinct in each nation. Increasing public disapproval of the Argentinean military junta coupled with the faltering economy resulted in the successful election of President Alfonsín. However, Pinochet's stronghold and popular support did not dissipate upon President Aylwin's electoral win during the plebiscite.

Aylwin won the presidency in December 1989 as head of the Concertación de los Partidos para la Democracia, but his victory in the plebiscite did not signify a radical departure away from Pinochet's violent, authoritarian regime. As Mark Ensalaco reveals in *Chile under Pinochet,* "The outcome of the plebiscite only guaranteed that the regime would have to call general elections sometime the following year. There was no guarantee that Pinochet would not run for the presidency again, or that he would be defeated if he chose to run" (179). Additionally, Ensalaco states that the 1980 constitution allotted Pinochet with incredible influential power in Chile, stipulating that he remain senator for life and commander of the Armed Forces (which he did so until 1998). The constitution was difficult to amend or abrogate and Pinochet gave incentives to older magistrates, prompting them to retire sooner than had planned, thereby allowing him to appoint younger judges who would uphold the tenets of his constitution; as Ensalaco claims, this was done as Pinochet foresaw that "justice was to be one of the

most contentious issues after the transition" (180). Pinochet's permanence in the Chilean Armed Forces was meant to deter future prosecutions against former military officials of the dictatorship as these actions were completed under the war against Marxist "subversives" who threatened the economic, political, and social stability of the nation (Huneeus 60). This unique post-dictatorship moment in Chile, as Ensalaco and Huneeus explain, distinguish the Chilean passage to democracy from other transitional Latin American governments and effectively did not oust Pinochet from these various spheres of political influence.

Pinochet's political influence during this transitional government critically affected the trajectory of the TC report published and posed severe limitations in what would be included in the final report.[84] Ensalaco explains that Aylwin faced challenges in creating a transitional government that would respond to the demands of justice set forth by survivors' and families of the disappeared without upsetting the military, thereby making this transition to democracy virtually impossible (183). The National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, according to Ensalaco, had to appease both sides as best as possible, however these serious limitations included the following: the inability to subpoena witnesses, the inability to list the names of the perpetrators and officers, a limited time frame which impeded the ability identify victims and to search for

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[84] Huneeus stipulates that Pinochet's dictatorial influence saturated various factions of Chilean politics: "Fue la única de las dictaduras latinoamericanas surgidas en los anos '60 y '70, en la que el dictador era simultáneamente Comandante en jefe el Ejército, Jefe de Estado y de Gobierno durante todo el tiempo que duró el régimen y en el que la permanencia en la jefatura del Estado superó a la de todos los demás mandatorios de la Historia de Chile, incluyendo gobernadores coloniales" (59).

their remains, and the possibility that the Constitutional Court (comprised of mostly Pinochet supporters) could reject the report (Ensalaco 184).[85]

Thus, it is not surprising that half the representatives on the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation were supporters of the Pinochet regime, positing as such Pinochet's post-dictatorial permanence in the nascent democratic government. In the nine months allotted to the investigations of the crimes committed by the state – and crimes committed by against state officials-- between 1973 and 1990, the Rettig Commission produced the final report to the president in February 1991.[86] The constellation of factors that contributed to the publication of the *Rettig Report* connotes a paradigmatic shift in the discourse on international human rights where critical attention is placed on nations reeling from the trauma of years of violence, terror, and paralyzing fear. In the two-volume report, there exists a discursive emphasis on the inalienable rights of man and a propagation of the defense of international human rights, alluding to the increasing legitimacy of the universal human rights model. The legalistic tonality of the report departs from its predecessor, *Nunca Más,* in its complete abrogation of survivor testimonies by delimiting the investigations to cases which resulted in death.

In the final section of this chapter, I assess the active role of the post-dictatorship's "democratic" presidency in the documentation and framing of the human rights abuses committed during the Pinochet dictatorship and the dangerous elision of

[85] Because the report could not subpoena witnesses into disclosing relevant information into the investigations – which most importantly included former officers of the regime who had critical information regarding the disappearances and deaths of thousands of Chileans – the military was silent and not forthcoming at all in the investigations. Much of the physical evidence – files, documents – had been destroyed intentionally in order to impede such investigations.

[86] In their findings, they concluded that the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA) was accountable for a vast majority of the disappearance and deaths of 3,428 Chileans.

survivor testimonies from the final Chilean National Truth and Reconciliation Report. The aesthetically-intimidating two-volume report is laden with legalistic vernacular establishing as such a clinical, severe tonality to the text. What is interesting to note is the *Rettig Report* is saturated with rights discourse, adhering to a strict definition of "human rights violations" and examining each case accordingly; this is evident in the report's repetition of the term "human rights" and its rhetorical permutations throughout the text. Despite the commission's preoccupation with the defense of human rights, denying the inclusion of thousands of survivors of the dictatorship within the report points more broadly to the contradictory nature of the human rights model; in an extreme effort to retain impartiality, human rights investigations attenuate the underlying factors which contributed to various types of violent crimes and human rights abuses, including as such crimes against military officers and leftist political activists.

In my analysis of the *Rettig Report,* I argue that the text exemplifies the codification of universal rights discourse's defense of pure, abstract life and the international human rights discourse's evasion of the unique sociopolitical and economic realities that would accurately explicate the why and how these violations of human rights occur. Moreover, in centering their human rights discourse on the defense of pure, abstract life, the violence resulting in death examined in the *Rettig Report* include deaths of both political victims involved in leftist groups and the officers of the Chilean army. The commission's political decision to incorporate the deaths of officers as "human rights violations" was meant to assuage the Armed Forces and to emphasize the main goals of the report: forgiveness and reconciliation. Furthermore, this "impartial" stance utilized in

many of the official Latin American Truth and Reconciliation Reports dissuades critical examinations of the similar modalities of ideological repression that transpired transnationally, denoting as such that each instance of human rights abuse – the Pinochet dictatorship, the Argentine military regime, the massacre of Mexican civilians in 1968— are isolated events are merely representative of irregular, momentary instances of human rights violations.

We must be critical here of this abstract notion of "human rights violations" as it appears in the *Rettig Report* and the text's insistence on impartiality: how is it possible to equate the systematic and methodic forms of violence utilized by the state – forced disappearance, abduction, torture, rape, intimidation, assault, the institution of concentration camps, and so forth – to the actions of the armed Chilean groups (who, it is critical to acknowledge here, were systematically eradicated by the regime within the first years of the dictatorship)? Despite their emphasis on objectivity, we must call into question the commission's impartiality due to either the commission members' support of the Pinochet regime or intimidation by his lingering influence in politics. As I will argue, this significantly affected the commission's decision to only classify human rights victims as those resulting in death or disappearance and problematically excluded the gender-based experiences of repression and survival and their refusal to consider the crime of rape or torture a human rights violation. Furthermore, in a small section of the report, the commission includes the narratives of family members of the deceased and disappeared, which provides critical insight into the report's reliance on the silent, muted deceased victim and the commission's gender-normativizing of the survivors' voices.

The defense of abstract life is the focal point of the *Rettig Report*, evident primarily in the complete elision of survivors' testimonies from their formal investigations. The report's second chapter – "Normas, conceptos y criterios en que se han basado las deliberaciones y conclusiones de la Comisión" ("Norms, Concepts, and Criteria on which the Commission's Conclusions Have Been Based")– carefully explicates the methodological framework upon which the text is founded, defining as such the legal parameters and investigative limitations of the commission. As such, the commission presents its limited scope of investigation to the cases only resulting in death:

> El decreto que creó la Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación le fijó como objeto contribuir al esclarecimiento global de la verdad sobre las más graves violaciones a los derechos humanos cometidas en los últimos años. El decreto define como las 'más graves violaciones' las situaciones de detenidos desaparecidos, ejecutados y torturados con resultado de muerte, en que aparezca comprometida la responsabilidad moral del Estado por actos de sus agentes o de personas a su servicio, como asimismo los secuestros y los atentados contra la vida de personas cometidos por particulares bajo pretextos políticos (15).[87]

Thus, in accordance with the commission's investigations into the most egregious human rights violations, the *Rettig Report* was severely confined to these particular instances of rights abuse, justifying it as such based on the temporal restrictions mandated by the president's decree. The state's qualification of human rights abuses based on the severity of the crime reifies the state's positionality and ultimate influence in the determination of

[87] "The decree creating the Commission on Truth and Reconciliation state that its purpose should be to contribute to the overall clarification of the truth about the most serious violations of human rights committed in recent years. The decree defines those 'most serious violations' to be situations of those persons who disappeared after arrest, who were executed or who were tortured to death, in which the moral responsibility of the state is compromised by acts of its agents or persons in their service, as well as kidnappings and attempts on the life of persons committed by individuals for political reasons" (*Rettig Report* 27).

"las más graves violaciones a los derechos humanos." As such, this influence of the Chilean state is indicative of the inexorable power structures that were firmly entrenched during the Pinochet regime and the post-Pinochet presidency's intent to process and compartmentalize crimes of the past in an expedient manner. What's more, the state's dominant narrative voice is an attempt to re-legitimize Chile's placement within the international human rights community.

Furthermore, this strategic decision of the commission to exclude the testimonies of survivors of political repression during the Pinochet dictatorship is adherent to the report's goal of reconciliation. Through the discourse of reconciliation, the report states in the preamble the following: "la verdad podría rehabilitar en el concepto público la dignidad de las víctimas, facilitar a sus familiares y deudos la posibilidad de honrarlas debidamente y permitir reparar, en alguna medida, el daño causado" (iii).[88] As such, according to the commission's definition of "víctimas", the *Rettig Report* can thus not include personalized narratival accounts of repression, defining as such an atypical truth and reconciliation report. By precluding the accounts of thousands of survivors, the *Rettig Report* underscores the normalized public opinion on survivors of torture and political regimes of the Southern Cone. Adriana Calvo recounts the liminal place that the ex-disappeared inhabit in post-dictatorship societies and she notes the following:

> Recuerdo las palabras textuales de uno de mis hermanos cuando quise contarle lo que había pasado, al día siguiente de mi libertad: 'No cuentes, no cuentes, mirá, olvidáte, te hace mal.' Y esto hasta el día de hoy. No hay nadie que te pregunte…a todos les pasó lo mismo. No había orejas dispuestas a escuchar, no querían saber, no podían soportarlo. No querían

[88] "Only the truth will make it possible to restore the dignity of the victims in the public mind, allow their relatives and mourners to honor them properly, and in some measure make it possible to make amends for the damage done" (*Rettig* 1).

> sentirse responsables de lo que estaba pasando. Si no sabían, todo bien. Es una experiencia absolutamente común a todos los que fueron liberados, hasta con los familiares más cercanos, hermanos, padres… (111-12).[89]

This sentiment is echoed in the postulated goal of the *Rettig Report*, as the preamble explicitly states, "El Estado de Chile ha de volcarse hacia ellos y obtener su perdón para la sociedad que los hirió. Esta debe imbuirse de lo ocurrido para poder mirar limpiamente el futuro" (v).[90] It is significant to underscore that Calvo's testimony was officially recognized and included – albeit edited – in the state-sanctioned Argentine official TC report and despite this official step towards national recognition of the atrocities endured by the ex-detainees, there persists a discursively public silence and apathy in regards to the recent traumatic past. In the Argentine case, survivor narratives have a critical place in the TC report despite the problematic framing of these testimonies. However, there is a form of re-traumatization in the Chilean commission's decision to ignore the narratives of thousands of survivors and to disavow these experiences as not adherent to the most egregious examples of human rights violations.

In the Chilean post-dictatorship context, the commission's exclusion of survivor testimonies from the rubric of egregious human rights violations is reflective of the transitional government's intent to swiftly remedy the human rights abuses of the past in order to "mirar limpiamente el futuro" ("to look with a clear conscience to the future").

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[89] "I remember my brother's words when I wanted to tell him what had happened, the day after I was released: 'Don't tell me, don't tell me, look, forget it, it upsets you.' And until this day [he says this]. There isn't anyone to ask you…this has happened to everyone. There weren't people willing to listen, they didn't want to know, they couldn't handle it. They didn't want to feel responsible for what was happening. If they didn't know, then everything was fine. It's a common experience for all who were released, even with the closest family members, brothers, sisters, parents…"

[90] "The Chilean state must turn to them and urge them to forgive the society that injured them. Our society must ponder deeply what has happened if it is to look toward the future with a clear conscience" (*Rettig* 4).

Centering their investigations on those disappeared and deceased victims of the dictatorship would ostensibly accomplish this ability to clean the national conscience and focus on the future of the nation; without their lingering presence in post-dictatorship Chile, their narratives of torture, trauma, and other atrocities would not disturb the linear progression of dictatorship, transitional period, and democracy. This concluding remark denoted in the *Rettig Report's* preamble is a symptom of the institutionalization of the human rights framework as it effectively evades any sociopolitical or economic explications as to the rationale behind these acts of repression. Instead, this statement seeks forgiveness for these egregious rights violations and centers the discourse on reconciliation and the future.

The report, in essence, venerates the ultimate victim of the dictatorship, the deceased. There is no discursive forum created for the formerly detained and perhaps this deliberate move on behalf of the commission strategically meant to dissuade further dialogue with the ex-disappeared; Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* notes that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (V). In essence, this disappearance of the past historical trauma and the memories of the ex-disappeared from public conscience merely reify the power dynamics between the state and its citizens, as further, more detailed investigations into the ideology behind the repression was not state-sanctioned and deemed irrelevant in their investigations on human rights violations. Naomi Klein specifies that international human rights organizations propagate and endorse depoliticized investigations into instances of rights violations; in her assessment of

Amnesty International's 1976 report on the Argentine military regime, she claims the following:

> Without an examination of the larger plan to impose 'pure' capitalism on Latin America, and the powerful interests behind the project, the acts of sadism documented in the report made no sense at all – they were just random, free-floating bad events, drifting in the political ether, to be condemned by all people of conscience but impossible to understand (149).

In effect, Chile's official report similarly veers away from the political and economic underpinnings that resulted in the brutal repression and extermination of thousands of political dissenters. As Klein details in *The Shock Doctrine*, the organized form of violence instituted during the Pinochet regime was meant to eradicate and dissipate political activists and organizations that would thwart the free market economic policies developed by Milton Friedman's "Chicago Boys."[91] These political and economic motivating factors prompting the methodic forms of violence are clearly absent in the *Rettig Report*; this contextualization for the violence committed by the state would ostensibly appear in survivor testimony and this explicates the state's evasion of incorporating victims' accounts in the report.

Towards the end of the second volume of the *Rettig Report,* the commission includes a chapter that includes excerpts of testimonies provided by family members and relations of the disappeared or deceased. This chapter --"Impact of the Most Serious Human Rights violations on Families and Social Relations" – is the only section of the report that includes first-person, witness accounts of the repression and those affected by

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[91] Please see the chapter entitled "Blank is Beautiful" in Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* for a more detailed examination of Milton Friedman's involvement in the economic transformation in Chile and the Chicago School of Economics.

state violence. The commission explains their decision to include these brief excerpts of testimonies (often only a few sentences long): "Asimismo, aunque sin declarer que sus derechos humanos habían sido violados, la Comisión consider víctimas a las personas que cayeron o perecieron como consecuencia de la situación de contienda política en el país" (765).[92] Only 27 pages in length, this brief chapter on family testimony still evades centering on the narratives of those who survived torture and incarceration during the dictatorship and instead includes the narratives of army members' relations.

While the commission acknowledges the impossibility of including a comprehensive chapter on testimonial accounts of the family members, they claim to allow the survivors to speak for themselves and that they abstain from interpreting the narratives, yet this is clearly not the case in this chapter. I contend that the commission carefully selects certain narratives that adhere to their various subheadings, centering predominately on grief, suffering, and loss. The universal subject of human rights, to again reference Badiou, is thus the subject that recognizes himself or herself as a victim, paralyzed by their trauma. The editing of this chapter furthermore exposes the commission's political bias and the influence of the Pinochet regime on the classification of "human rights victim"; the politics involved in the report are most salient in this chapter in the commission's decision to include reports by perpetrators and families of the army members who were killed during the regime. In so doing, they equate the violent loss of thousands of Chileans, targets of political genocide, to the suffering felt by the families of the army officers killed during the dictatorship: "El dolor de los familiares

[92] "Without taking a stand on whether their human rights were violated, the Commission has regarded as victims those persons who were killed or who died as a result of the situation of political conflict in the country" (*Rettig* 777).

frente a pérdidas tan graves y actos tan injustos, es uno solo y merece igual respeto, sean quienes sean las víctimas" (766).[93] In an attempt to counteract any criticism that this decision would provoke from families of the disappeared and ex-detained disappeared and the fact that the overwhelming majority of the deaths and disappearances were killed by the state, the commission declares: "si en las citas que siguen son más numerosas las que provienen de familiars de víctimas de agentes del Estado que las familiares de víctimas de particulars que actuaron bajo pretextos politicos, no debe verse en ello una mayor sensibilidad hacia el dolor de unos que hacia el de otros. Antes, bien, la realidad es que el número de familias entrevistadas fue mucho mayor en un caso que en otro" (766).[94]

I argue that there is a discursive form of violence enacted in this inclusion of the testimonies provided by military officers' family members alongside the narratives of those who were affected by these officers' violence and dangerously erases the geopolitical history of the Pinochet regime's political genocide. It additionally reinforces existing power structures by negating the trauma inflicted on the survivors of the repression and families of the disappeared. In one particularly callous display of disregard for the families of the disappeared and the survivors of torture, the commission includes narratives of pregnant wives of men who were killed during the regime. One woman states, "Estaba embarazada de seis meses cuando mataron a mi marido. Mi

[93] "The suffering that such grave losses and such unjust actions have caused relatives is one and the same no matter who the victims might be, and is entitled to equal respect" (*Rettig* 777).
[94] "The fact that most of the quotes presented here are from relatives of those killed by government agents rather than from those killed by private citizens acting for political reasons should not be regarded as indicating greater sensitivity to the pain of some than to that of others. The fact is that more families interviewed fell into that group" (777-78).

guagüita no nació, no pude retenerla" ("I was six months pregnant when they killed my husband. My little baby was never born; I couldn't hold it back") (772) (*Rettig* 785). A few lines down, the wife of a lieutenant, also pregnant at the time of her husband's death, states that he had been in the army for six years at tand reflects, "al desactivar la bomba salvo muchas vidas, pero tuve que volver a la casa de mis padres" ("he saved many lives by deactivating the bomb, but I had to back home to my parents") (772) (*Rettig* 785). The sinister irony of this statement, "salvo muchas vidas" ("he saved many lives") is revealed when considering the other woman's narrative as the lieutenant was clearly part of the state apparatus responsible for the death of her husband. The first widow invokes the "they" -- the military officers-- responsible for her husband's death. She, in essence, is referring to the husband of the other woman, the lieutenant who had "saved many lives" by diverting a bomb attempt yet who had was implicitly responsible for the death of thousands of other Chileans.[95]

Moreover, this particular section reflects the gender politics of the *Rettig Report* as it reduces these women's identities to their experiences as grieving widows and it is unknown whether or not these women were also targeted by the military regime for their political activism. This gender dynamic is also apparent in the subsection entitled "La muerte como castigo: 'Mi esposo era…'" ("Death as Punishment: 'My husband was…'"). The introduction to this subsection explains that many deaths were the result of involvement in political organizations, although the commission is careful to refrain from

[95] Furthermore, the widow of the lieutenant ostensibly carried her baby to term, whereas the other widow miscarried due to the trauma of her husband's violent death, which offers another interesting perspective into the difference in power relations, which is contrary to the report's intent to equalize the loss between military families and families of the disappeared.

stating explicitly that these were leftist groups. It is critical to note that the commission here presupposes a masculine subject as the political victim of the violence committed during the dictatorship, as all of the deceased are fathers, sons, and/or husbands of the speaking subjects. This subsection, already problematic in only including seven fragmented testimonies, only refers to the voices of the wives and children of men who were killed for their political activism. Again, there is a critical absence in relation to women who were systematically targeted by the Pinochet regime for their political activism. The victim's voice here, then, is the voice of the weeping mother and/or wife and the commission relies upon this innocent status of the woman-as-grief-stricken and completely erases the women's agency. For example, there is no mention as to whether or not the wives or mothers were themselves involved in similar political organizations as were their husbands and/or sons. Furthermore, in the seven examples given of deaths resulting from politically-motivated violence, four of them refer to men who were killed while serving in the military, about which the commission states, "igual percepción de castigo manifiestan los familiares de miembros de instituciones militares y de servicios de seguridad muertos por la acción de grupos politicos" ("the relatives of the members of the armed forces and security forces who were killed by political groups have the same feeling of being punished" (766) (*Rettig* 778). Again, under the guise of universal human rights, the commission is equating the magnitude of deaths caused by the military state to the deaths of the officers involved in the repression, relying on a decontextualized, universal sentiment of loss.

This extremely problematic manner of framing survivor testimony does not only recalibrate the quantity of loss and violence, equating the violence committed by the state to the armed struggle of militant groups such as MIR, but it more significantly points to the commission's emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation. Despite drawing criticism for its limited investigative scope on crimes committed during the military regime from international human rights agencies, families of the disappeared, and survivors of the regime, the *Rettig Report's* purported central task is to seek the truth of past human rights crimes and to restore harmonious social relations among the divided Chilean community. In 1991, President Aylwin presented the report to the Chilean public, stressing that since the truth had been established in the report, reconciliation and forgiveness were essential in constructing a democratic Chile. Reconciliation thus serves as the impetus of the text and upon presenting the report, Aylwin stated that its intent was "'to request pardon from the families of the victims'" (Ensalaco 213). Not surprisingly, however, the army rejected the report's findings and did not admit guilt during the reign of terror.

This emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness is echoed throughout the report, centering on the harm and grief befallen to both victims of the state and members of the army, which they define as a violation of human rights. The commission iterates the importance of maintaining the ideals of democracy and that the identity of the nation is predicated upon the defense of inalienable human rights, furthermore claiming that the Chilean community is united by the same fundamental principal: "el respeto a la persona humana por el hecho de serlo y el de considerarla amparada por derechos inalienables que ninguna circunstancia adjetiva, nacionalidad, credo, raza o ideología, puede

válidamente autorizar que se conculquen" (*Informe Rettig* IV).[96] This transitional democracy, in essence, proclaims to defend the fundamental right as set forth in the UDHR; indeed, the *Rettig Report* cites directly from the UDHR stating the international legitimization of universal human rights and the report's intent to honor these universally-accepted ethical codes.

In the final portion of the family's testimonial accounts, the commission includes a subsection entitled "La necesidad de construir el futuro" ("The need to build the future"), which alludes to the report's preamble stating the need for Chile to look "limpiamente" ("with a clear conscience") to the future (800). It is important to reiterate here that this heading written by the commission reflects the state's reification of reconciliatory measures. The heading here is not derived from any of the seven fragmented narratives, and I would argue here that the narratives speak more to the importance of truth, justice and combating impunity than the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness. In the last testimony of this section, one person iterates that there can be reconciliation "only if there is justice" (800). It is apparent in the *Rettig Report* that reconciliation trumps justice, a political maneuver to placate the lingering presence of the armed forces and the entrenched political legacy of the Pinochet regime.

In Jacques Derrida's short essay "On Forgiveness", he addresses this compulsory pardon that has become a common reality in many post-genocidal states seeking to deal with their recent traumatic pasts. Derrida centers on this Christianization of international human rights discourse in the growing trend for many nation-states to demand

[96] "Respect for human persons simply because they are human persons – and because we believe that the person is protected by inalienable rights which cannot be violated on the grounds of any accidental condition, nationality, creed, race, or ideology" (*Rettig Report* 2).

forgiveness and repentance from their citizens afflicted by violence; this echoes the above imploration given by Aylwin "'request[ing] pardon from the families of the victims.'" The use of the term "request" connotes a compulsory action and, furthermore, is only appealing to the "families of the victims" and ignores the thousands of Chileans, the ex-detained disappeared and other survivors of the regime's institutionalized violence. This, as Derrida articulates, presents a particular discourse of forgiveness that reflects the state's powers: "The language of forgiveness, at the service of determined finalities, was anything but pure and disinterested. As always in the field of politics" (31). Here he depicts this as a type of economic exchange, a transaction between the state and the victims of the violence, which according to Derrida is not pure forgiveness and "it *should not be*, normal, normative, normalising" (32).

Moreover, this demand for forgiveness poses further concerns in relations to the Chilean case. Referencing Derrida again, how can one request forgiveness when the absolute victims, the dead and disappeared, are not able to grant this forgiveness to the perpetrators? And more importantly, how is it possible to forgive when the perpetrators themselves do not request forgiveness and do not acknowledge their identities as perpetrators? This, in essence, is the fundamental aporia that presents itself in the *Rettig Report*, as one family member claims, "Estoy dispuesta al perdón, pero necesito saber a quién tengo que perdonar. Si ellos hablaran, reconocieran lo que hicieron, nos darían la oportunidad de perdonar. Sería más noble si así lo hicieran. Sólo habrá reconciliación si hay justicia" (785).[97] Clearly then the perpetrators remain abusively silent and

[97] "I am ready to forgive, but I need to know who I have to forgive. If they would just speak up and

withholding, reinforcing the power relations that grant them comfortable amnesty and freedom from castigation. Justice is not a central element in the reconciliation efforts and in the defense of international human rights, and as many survivors of the dictatorship and families of the victims declare, this report ultimately made minimal advancements in establishing the truth of what occurred during the regime. In my interview with Lucrecia Brito --survivor of the Villa Grimaldi concentration camp in Santiago—she articulates that politics involved in the creation of the report and efforts for reconciliation were highly problematic, claiming "¿Por qué ellos [de la comisión] quisieron hacerlo así? Cuando Awylin toma el poder, Pinochet estaba vivo…varias veces amenazaron a volver, como media golpista…Yo lo miro en un contexto. *Rettig* nos pareció absolutamente insuficiente. Nos parece insuficiente *Valech*. Nos parece incluso insuficiente las reparaciones…siempre vuelve a un factor clasista. Nos falta mucho por hacer…"[98] The Chilean state's attempt to assuage the trauma of the past vis-à-vis this limited *Rettig Report,* the subsequent classified *Valech Report,* and the monetary reparations offered to victims reduce Chile's historical trauma to an economic, political transaction based on a demand for forgiveness, the construction of oblivion and looking to the future. This is evident in Chilean President Eduardo Frei's decision to participate in the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 to center on the nation's "bright economic future rather than on its dark authoritarian past" (Ensalaco 230). However, it is precisely the creation

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acknowledge what they have done, they would be giving us the opportunity to forgive. It would be more noble if they were to do that. There will be reconciliation only if there is justice" (*Rettig* 800).

[98] "Why did they [the commission] want to do it that way? When Aylwin comes into power, Pinochet was still alive…several times he threatened to come back…I see it within its context. *Rettig* seemed completely insufficient to us. The *Valech* [report] seems insufficient to us. Even the reparations seem insufficient…it always comes down to a class issue. We have a lot left to do…"

of a new economic framework modeled on the Chicago School's free market policies that created this "dark authoritarian past."

Despite the state-sponsored *Rettig Report's* omission of the narratival accounts of survivors, the testimonies recorded, disseminated and archived by said survivors in various mediums serve as critical cultural texts that document a history absented from this human rights report. It is apparent in Brito's account and in this final section on the brief chapter on first-person testimonial accounts, they push against the commission's intent to free Chile from their violent past and with a clear conscience, look towards the future, a future based on impunity, injustice and oblivion. Clearly then, in these Latin American official truth commissions and human rights reports, we are lacking a comprehensive account of those affected by state-sponsored violence and how these mechanisms of repression occurred in a transnational context. Moreover, through the depoliticization or omission of survivor testimony in these reports, we are left without a critical understanding of the manner in which state power operates in the reification of gender normativity within the political prison setting.

CHAPTER TWO: The Impossibility of Bearing Witness and the Gendered *Homo Sacer* in Latin American Testimonial Narratives

"Both direct experience and intuition suggest that women and men develop different abilities to remember…evidence suggests that women more often express feelings, while men convey their recollections within logical and rational frameworks." – Elizabeth Jelin, "Engendered Memories."

"The existence of Third World women's narratives in itself is not evidence of decentering hegemonic histories and subjectivities. It is the way in which they are read, understood, and located institutionally that is of paramount importance…the point is not just to record one's history of struggle or consciousness, but how they are recorded; the way we read, receive, and disseminate such imaginative records is immensely significant." – Chandra Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle."

In "Engendered Memories", sociologist and human rights scholar Elizabeth Jelin centers on the politics of memory and gender in testimonial accounts produced during the South American military regimes. In her analysis of survivor testimony, Jelin articulates that women's narratives demonstrate a proclivity towards the nurturing aspects and traditional notions of femininity – "often express[ing] feelings" -- and men's testimonies "narrated as precisely as possible, about the materiality of torture and political violence…within logical and rational frameworks", exhibiting less evidence of affect and emotion in their testimonies (83). In a similar vein, the editors of *Gender and Memory* -- a collection of essays on gender and transnational oral histories – adhere to a specific gendered framework in their examination of the discourses of memory and maintain that women's narratives refer to their experiences within the domestic sphere as nurturers and caretakers and men's testimonies reflect their experiences within the public sphere as leaders and political organizers (1-3). If we are to generally summarize these postulations, then we can infer here that men's testimonies are characterized as more precise, factual, and less emotive, whereas women tend to portray the more emotional,

personal qualities based on their connection to their maternal, domestic roles.[99] While chapter one centered on the state's framing of survivor testimonies in official human rights reports, this chapter is concerned with exposing the gender-normative, reductive framework utilized by Western feminist scholars that robs written testimonial accounts of their political subjectivity.

This recent research conducted on gender and testimony is indeed troubling as it reproduces stringent, hierarchical gender norms that privilege masculinist discourses as the locus of truth, logic, and veracity; these conclusions on gender and memory are problematically predicated on patriarchal epistemologies and Western notions of masculinity and femininity. Jelin's conclusions make gross generalizations of Latin American *testimonios,* reifying the gendered divisions that she purports to deconstruct in her research. I would argue that there exist many examples that challenge these problematic assumptions; consider Pilar Calveiro's *Power and Disappearance*, an example of an Argentine postdictatorial text which does not fall neatly under the rubric of "female" postdictatorial literature. Calveiro carefully refrains from inserting her personal narrative in order to avoid gendered expectations of her text and does not reveal an affinity towards expressive and emotional prose; instead, her theoretical work is centered on exposing the operations of repression and torture systematized throughout Argentina during the dictatorship. By assessing her analytical text devoid of personal testimony,

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[99] In their introduction, Leysdedorff et al. suggest that "it would seem common sense, given the sharply differentiated life experiences of men and women in most societies, and the very widespread tendencies for men to dominate in the public sphere and for women's lives to focus on family and household, that these experiences should be reflected in different qualities of memory" (1). Here, then, Leysdedorf et al. are already generalizing men and women's testimonies according to a rigid model according to gendered normativized experiences.

Calveiro deconstructs this binary between female and male testimonies as being either emotive or factual, respectively.[100]

In this chapter, I refer to three carceral narratives from Mexico and the Southern Cone that complicate these problematic gender-normative conceptualizations of testimony: Hernán Valdés' *Tejas verdes,* Nora Strejilevich's *A Single, Numberless Death* and Roberta Avendaño Martínez's *De la libertad y el encierro.* In my analysis of these *testimonios*, I am concerned with examining the intersection of gender and the processes of dehumanization that elucidate the parallel and diverse mechanisms of power operating within the Mexican and Southern Cone carceral spaces. I center on gendered forms of degradation and desubjectification in these three *testimonios* in order to assess the politics of gender in the experiences of subjugation and torture; what emerges is an existent tension between gender-specific experiences of violence and a gender-neutral, collective narrative. Specifically, I argue that the sexual and gender politics of the carceral experience assigns the desubjectivized, abject bodies with specific gendered and sexualized markings. This violent process of gendered and sexualized dehumanization reduces the prisoner to the materiality of his or her body, resulting in lexical complications in the discursive production of these *testimonios*.

The intent of this chapter is to challenge the limitations posed by scholarship on gender, political violence and Latin American *testimonios*, particularly centering on the manner in which this scholarship can reproduce problematic gender-normative

[100] While I appreciate Jelin's important academic contributions to the field of the politics of justice and memory in post-dictatorship Latin America, I believe her claims are suggestive of a dominant discourse that conceptualizes the gendered experiences of trauma and violence through a decidedly phallogocentric lens.

frameworks. In relation to women's testimonial accounts relating moments of political violence, Jelin denotes that "women's narratives emphasize their vulnerability as sexual beings and the affective and nurturing bonds that developed among them" (84). In this manner of conceptualizing survivor testimony, the women are relegated primarily to their experiences as passive victims of sexual abuse, which denies the women their political subjectivities and survivor testimonies of political possibilities; additionally, this claim problematically ignores sexual-based abuses to which male prisoners were subjected and what this signifies in the politics of sexuality within the carceral space. Indeed, Fiona Ross centers on this tendency for researchers, scholars, and human rights workers to archive women and men's testimonies according to a problematic, phallocentric schema: "Sexual violence was represented in hearings and in public discourse as a defining feature of women's experiences of gross violations of human rights" (24). While Ross is specifically referring to the South African hearings, there is a transnational trend in the manner in which there exists gender-specific expectations in precisely what topics testimonies will broach. Furthermore, Ross denotes that men were not questioned about their experiences of sexual assault, and this merely reinforces heteropatriarchal understandings of sexualized abjection and torture as that which was only inflicted on female inmates.

In order to expose the implicit phallogocentrism of this particular research on gender and the Latin American testimonial narrative, it is important to examine the hierarchies of power and the gender binarisms that are entrenched in conceptualizing *testimonios*. What is remarkable here is how these current debates on the politics of

gender in testimonial accounts reproduce this precise patriarchal, gender-biased schema that French feminist philosophers such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray set forth to deconstruct more than thirty years prior.[101] Cixous' criticism of the correlation of the category of "woman" to "passivity, nature, mother, pathos" in her essay "Sorties" is problematically reproduced in Jelin's claim that women's testimonies tend to be more emotive and based on their domestic experiences; by claiming this, Jelin is circumscribing these narratives within very specific, traditional, and patriarchal notions of femininity and masculinity. This gendered lens with which Jelin et al. problematically assess testimonies negates women's political agency and reduces these political activists to a status of sexualized victimhood. It furthermore reaffirms the hegemony of masculinist discourses and masculinist modes of narrating counterhistories.

Although I argue that it is important to destabilize these gender-normative categorizations of sexual-based violence in these testimonies, Agamben's gender-neutral postulations on the processes of desubjectification reveal a critical absence on the intersection of institutionalized forms of dehumanization and gendered violence in the state of exception. In each *testimonio*, Valdés, Strejilevich, and Avendaño were converted into bare lives in the state of exception, denied their fundamental rights and interned in

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[101] I want to clarify the problematic notion of applying Western Feminist theory to Latin American narratives. Indeed, several Latin American scholars have denoted that approaching Latin American literature from a distinctive European philosophical angle can reinforce a hierarchy between the formerly colonized and the metropole, favoring as such Western epistemological frameworks. Second-wave, Western feminist critical thought is often critiqued for relying on a heteronormative framework that essentialize categories such as patriarchy, woman, and man; such universal categorizations are not culturally specific and are not progressive ways of conceptualizing the historical relations between the West and the non-West and the particularities of power dynamics and gendered binarisms. In this particular context, however, I believe it is important to return to these fundamental criticisms posed by French feminist philosophers in order to denote the evident phallogocentricism presented in these discussions on gender and memory in Latin American testimony.

illegal, clandestine centers. Having experienced the mechanisms of torture and desubjectification within the prison, Valdés, Strejilevich, and Avendaño are faced with the complex task of writing and reproducing these moments of abjection and dehumanization. As I argue in my analysis of these testimonies, these processes of desubjectification are gender-inflected, which complicates this gender-neutral notion of desubjectification and the impossibility of bearing witness.

In *Remnants of Auschwitz,* Agamben claims that there exists a perpetual void, or a "lacuna", in survivor testimony as they "bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to", signifying that these testimonies cannot fully relate all intricate details of a traumatic event as only the *Muselmann* is considered the complete witness having acquiesced to his/her moribund status, inhabiting the liminal space between life and death, the human and the inhuman (13).[102] Thus, the *Muselmann*, having witnessed the inhuman and having inhabited that space, are the only ones who can bear witness to the most extreme forms of abjection, but as desubjectivized entities, are unable to bear witness as they are no longer possess the consciousness necessary to assert their subjectivity, no longer can they state "I". However, survivors who were converted into *homo sacer* in the past lived to speak of the atrocities they witnessed and/or experienced,

[102] It is worth mentioning here that *Remnants* is contextualized within a specific historical context – World War II and the Holocaust – and that Agamben's reference of the *Muselmann* would seem to only refer to the wholly desubjectivized entities that passed through the various Nazi concentration camps. I would like to suggest that this depiction of the *Muselmann* can also be applied to the Latin American context and perhaps we can even complicate this Agambian framework by introducing the concept of the "desaparecido"; the disappeared's identity diverges from the status of political prisoners as they are in between life and death, they are neither alive nor dead, and are deprived of all political and personal subjectivity within the camps. Political prisoners, on the other hand, while also dehumanized and converted into bare lives within the camps, maintain a semblance of subjectivity as the sovereign state recognizes their status as "political prisoners."

yet in the act of speaking, they are subjectivized beings.[103] Therefore, the "impossibility of bearing witness" is the perplexing task survivors undertake whereby they are compelled to retell and remember the narratives of those who did not survive, signifying as such their inextricable connection to the *Muselmann* (34). Agamben maintains that the true witnesses are those who are unable to speak for themselves and this gap, or lacuna, is one which survivors, or pseudo-witnesses, must contend with in their attempt to speak for the true witnesses.[104]

While Agamben's notion of the impossibililty of bearing witness has been essential in my analysis of these prison narratives, I argue that it is imperative to complicate these gender-neutral biopolitical discussions by turning specifically to the moments of gendered dehumanization in the *testimonios.* By referring to Agamben's notion of bare life within the concentration camps, it could be argued that gender differences do not exist in this state of exception as the both men and women are subjected to equal processes of dehumanization in their conversion into politically irrelevant lives. In these *testimonios*, each writer assumes the process of subjectification vis-à-vis their written testimony—what Agamben defines as "the production of consciousness in the event of discourse" -- and this act of writing is a critical component in the reclamation of the survivors' agency. Yet this act of providing testimony presents survivors with the following aporia: "the fragile text of consciousness incessantly

[103] The *Muselmann* is the most extreme form of bare life, or *homo sacer*, a human being reduced to a non-entity that has lost his/her will to live, who exists in a permanent moribund state. One cannot say "I AM a *Muselmann"* but only can state "I WAS a Muselmann", as by definition, a *Muselmann* is one who is wholly desubjectivized and by stating "I", thus marks his/her subjectivity.
[104] As Agamben writes, "It is thus necessary that the impossibility of bearing witness, the 'lacuna' that constitutes human language, collapses, giving way to a different impossibility of bearing witness – that which does not have language" (39).

crumbles and erases itself, bringing to light the disjunction on which it was erected: the constitutive desubjectification in every subjectification" (*Remnants* 123). However, what is absent here is how gender intersects with the the act of providing testimony and I am invested in investigating what is at stake in the gendered moments of desubjectification and subjectification.

I am aware, however, of the dangers of reducing these testimonies solely to their gender-based moments of subjugation, as this has resulted – in the case of Jelin et al. – in the perpetuation of phallogocentric epistemologies and privileging of masculinist discourses. I argue that it is critical to be cognizant of these gender-specific violences as they are revelatory of the connection between the state's systemic method of gender control and violent repression, yet I am also careful to avoid reducing the plurality of these carceral narratives to singular experiences of men's and women's testimonies of state repression. Within the Latin American genre of *testimonio* literature, there is an emphasis on the politicized, collective subject of testimony and John Beverly maintains that testimonial works refer to a collective struggle and command a political response. While I agree that inasmuch as the genre of *testimonio* is predicated on the collectivized subjectivity of a subaltern group, I believe that we must be cognizant of the discursive differences in these *testimonios* that expose gender-specific forms of subjugation in the carceral spaces. By solely centering on the collectivized struggle in these resistance narratives, we elide the pluralized experiences of gendered torture and degradation and what these particular gendered operations within the prison reveal. I believe it is critical to explore the processes of sexual, gendered abjection and desubjectification in the

prisons and how these experiences are discursively portrayed – or omitted—in these three *testimonios.*Here then we are presented with an absence between the collective subject of *testimonio* and the gender-normative findings of women's narratives of political repression, and these two categories are predicated on essentializing the subject of study as either gender-normative or a homogenous, collective subject of testimony.

Furthermore, I assess the ways gender-based degradation is discursively portrayed or absent in these three *testimonios*, specifically, rape and sexual-based torture and how this complicates the process of subjectification. It is well documented that rape and sexual abuse has been a fundamental tool systematically utilized in the torturing of political prisoners in these authoritative regimes; the subject of rape within the carceral space is one worth critical discussion as it represents the inmates as being both objects of sexual desire and repulsion. In addition, the specific gendered and sexualized abjection that men and women experienced in prison impacted survivor testimony as well as how their testimonies are archived and categorized. What's more, there exists among the detainees themselves – as I will discuss in Valdés portrayal of fellow female inmates – reification of patriarchal values within the interactions between the prisoners, which is essential to critically examine as it is suggestive of these authoritative regimes' inculcation of Christian, heteropatriarchal, and Western values. In my analysis of these testimonial narratives, I utilize a specific Third World feminist lens in order to analyze the extent to which the texts deconstruct or reify the heteropatriarchal ideologies upon which these nascent neoliberal states depended and how gender-specific forms of torture can complicate existing theories on gender, state violence, testimony and memory. The

state of exception is an essential component to the neoliberal order, and as I mentioned in the introduction, these political activists contested the implementation of free market policies; this, in turn, resulted in the incarceration and extermination of politically-dissenting bodies who posed a threat to these neoliberal order. I engage with these three distinctive carceral *testimonios* in order to elucidate the narratival forms of resistance and the possibility of constructing Third World cross-alliance feminist solidarities that seek to dismantle, subvert and deconstruct systemic forms of political, gendered, and economic forms of violent repression in a transnational Latin American context.

Thus, my chapter will address the following queries: Despite the distinct sociopolitical and historical contexts of the political repression that was institutionalized in the Southern Cone and Mexico, how are these parallel experiences of violent repression and desubjectification discursively portrayed in these literary productions? As survivors of political repression and state-sponsored terrorism, how do these writers navigate the aporia of what Agamben terms the impossibility of bearing witness and how is this narrated – or omitted-- in the *testimonios*? Specifically, while the processes of state-sanctioned torture resulted in desubjectivized entities within the carceral spaces, what do the gendered, sexualized forms of abjection indicate in terms of the politics of gender and heteronormativity and how do these three *testimonios* reflect these complex terms? If there are ostensibly two ways to engage with gender and *testimonio* – Jelin's phallogocentric reduction of women's *testimonios* to *pathos* and Beverly's claim that women's *testimonios* refer to the collective, gender-neutral struggles – how do we depart from these dichotomous frameworks in order to expose the nuances of gender-specific

violence and abjection? How do these three distinctive narratival forms expose the lexical complexities inherent in providing testimony and what does this implicate in relation to the gendered hierarchies of repression that operated in these carceral spaces?

With these questions in mind, I refer to three carceral narratives that represent distinct gendered and sexualized experiences of state repression in diverse geopolitical, historical Latin American contexts. These carceral narratives – despite their geopolitical, contextual and formal differences— critically destabilize Jelin et al.'s phallogocentric gender-normative framework and reflect a need to investigate the intricate relationship between dehumanization, sexual abjection and gendered forms of repression. I have found the works of transnational feminist theorists such as Fiona Ross and Chandra Mohanty to be the most theoretically useful in assessing these questions I have posed; as Mohanty articulates in the epigraph, we must be cognizant of the ways in which these testimonial narratives are "located institutionally" and how they are officially categorized by said institutions in order to evade replicating the hegemonic structures these narratives seek to destabilize.

I will first turn to Hernán Valdés' testimonial narrative, *Tejas verdes,* published in 1974, a few months after his release from a month-long incarceration in one of the Chilean dictatorship's first concentration camps.[105] Valdés relates his process of dehumanization in the camp in an ostensibly ordered narrative structure, yet this act of desubjectivizing the prisoner in these instances situates the abject, tortured body within a very specific gendered and politicized context, resulting in a fractured, disjointed form. I

[105] The first edition was published in Barcelona, Spain in 1974 and published for the first time in Chile in 1996.

subsequently turn to Nora Strejilevich's experimental novel, *A Single Numberless Death*, a testimonial narrative that reconstructs the Argentine modality of repression and displays the gender-specific forms of torture and repression that underpinned the regime. Lastly, I engage with Roberta Avendaño Martínez's *De la libertad y el encierro* which recounts her two-year incarceration as a political prisoner due to her involvement in the 1968 Mexico City student movement. Her *testimonio* ultimately invokes a feminist, collective subject of testimony in her recapitulation of the multitude of silenced narratives of gender and political repression. Essentially, I argue that rather than making problematic reductive arguments on men and women's carceral experiences, it will be critical to examine what these *testimonios* reflect in relation to dominant discourses on heteropatriarchal notions of gender. Morover, it is critical to examine the gender-specific forms of violence and abjection in order to assess how these narratives mirror the power relations and state violence that underpinned the authoritative regimes of Mexico and the Southern Cone.[106]

Tejas Verdes – Sexual Abjection, Dehumanized Spaces and Gendered Subjugation in "Una prisión intemporal" ("An Atemporal Prison")

[106] Furthermore, I believe it is critical to include a testimonial narrative by a former male "desaparecido" alongside my analysis of Nora Strejilevich and Avendaño Martínez's testimonies in order to fully inform my discussion on the gendered processes of dehumanization and sexual abjection within the carceral space as its fragmented narrative form contradicts the Jelin-model of male-produced *testimonios* being logical and precise. In my exposition of Valdés' acute awareness of his sexually abjected and dehumanized body and conception of women prisoners the specific moments of gendering the carceral space and Valdés' sexual torture and humiliation, I assert that the processes of gendered, sexualized dehumanization were constitutive of the regime's hypermasculine, heteropatriarchal mechanisms of power. This is not to malign Valdés problematic interpellation of the women prisoners as licentious traitors to the political resistance movement, but it serves as a salient example of the Chilean regime's inculcation of heteropatriarchal gender norms that were reproduced within the concentration camps.

Before his detention in February 1974, Valdés was an established literary figure and worked as an editor of *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional,* a publication associated with the Universidad Católica de Santiago. At the time of his abduction, the military Junta had recently commenced their brutal, methodic repression of thousands of political activists, sympathizers and other perceived internal "threats" to Chile's national security. *Tejas Verdes* was published in Spain during this historical moment and is one of the first testimonies that centers on Chile's genocidal repression and it is imperative to relate the text to the immediacy of the historical moment as it conveys the political urgency of this work.[107] Valdés, a survivor of Tejas Verdes concentration camp, fled this genocide and established himself in Barcelona where he commenced his testimonial narrative documenting his experience as a former "desaparecido" and survivor of state-sponsored violence. Written ''al calor de la memoria'" ("the heat of memory") in the months following his exile from Chile, Valdés' narrative follows a temporally progressive, ordered diary format and insists that it be read as a factual account of the quotidian realities of a Chilean concentration camp. Yet despite this concerted effort to produce a linear, organized text based on the lived experiences in the camps, *Tejas Verdes* recounts Valdés' past processes of dehumanization – personal and collective– in the present tense, creating tension between the textual reconstitution of subjectivity and the narration of past desubjectification.

I center on the discursive tensions present in Valdés' testimony by referring to the Agambian notion of the "impossibility of bearing witness" and the moments of narratival

[107] Both Strejilevich and Avendaño Martínez published their prison narratives decades after their release from their respective detention centers, signaling a critical difference in the historical-political context of these textual productions and the particular audience towards whom these works are directed.

fragmentation. Valdés assumes the role of what Agamben calls the "pseudo-witness" and utilizes a language that is inherently a "language-as-remnant", and invokes dead language as a living subject in order to bear witness to the unsayable. I argue that Valdés' intention to make the atrocities of the camp relatable to his interlocutors is an impossible task -- which evokes the Agambian idea of the paradox of bearing witness -- and rather, Valdés produces a cultural text which presents us with the complexity of discursively navigating the irreducible disjunction between his processes of desubjectification and subjectification. However, I contend that Valdés' representation of his – and the collective—processes of desubjectification in the camps reveal a complexity in portraying the sexualized and gendered degradation of the abject prisoners. As a subject who inhabits the liminal spaces between life and death, human and inhuman, subjectification and desubjectification, Valdés is confronted with the complex task of documenting personal moments of sexual torture and humiliation.

I maintain that in his recapitulation of the sexual violence that occurred within Tejas Verdes, Valdés reinforces problematic, heteropatriarchal notions of sexuality and gender. Valdés' *testimonio* indicates that the processes of dehumanization are gender-based, his masculinity and sexuality are violently questioned and mocked by the guards. The policing of the prisoners' masculinity and (hetero)sexuality results in the following aporia: how is it possible to reduce the prisoners to desubjectivized entities, yet simultaneously ascribe specific gendered and sexual attributes to these bare lives? How are masculinity and Chilean national identity intrinsically linked and how does this impact the cultural production of Valdés' *testimonio*? How does his experience as a

sexually abjected political prisoner and the inculcation of heteropatriarchal gender norms within the camps affect Valdés' portrayal of gender relations?

Tejas Verdes' narrative structure is linear in form, mimicking the style of a personal diary and follows a sequential progression which commences the day Valdés is illegally detained on February 12, 1974 until the day of his release on March 15, 1974. Unlike most conventional diaries, *Tejas Verdes* includes a forward written by Valdés himself, specifically outlining the text's function. This forward, dated and signed by Valdés in Barcelona, May 1974, sets the tone for the text and Valdés states that he is concerned with its veritability and does not want it to be perceived as a work of fiction. The first lines of the forward immerse the interlocutor within the violent, abject space of the concentration camp and Valdés states, "el lector tiene ante sí el diario de un prisionero en uno de los sectores del campo de concentración militar de Tejas Verdes" (5).[108] The first word of the text, "el lector" ("the reader"), immediately invokes the reader and a dialogic relationship is established between writer and interlocutor where we are compelled to bear witness to these events and to propagate this particular historical narrative, despite state-sanctioned attempts at obfuscating the realities of this violence. The publication of his testimony during the height of the military regime's repression is revelatory of the text's urgent message as Valdés writes: "Este libro…está destinado principalmente a quienes, en Chile, quieren conserver la inocencia de su complicidad dentro de su complicidad y promiscuidad con el fascismo… [y] este libro debe

[108] "This book is the diary of a prisoner in one of the sectors of Tejas Verdes military concentration camp, situated near the port of San Antonio some seventy miles from Santiago" (Labanyi 5).

recordarles que el golpe *continua* dándose, en otras formas, cotidianamente" (6).[109] For this reason, the historical-political moment within which *Tejas Verdes* emerges is central to Valdés' narrative and he claims, "estas páginas están escritas a toda prisa" ("these pages were hastily written"). This immediacy of the text to the actuality of the events is Valdés' attempt to portray as accurately as possible-- and as he states with "lenguaje funcional" ("functional language") -- the concentration camp existence without any literary qualities detracting from the narrative's message; for Valdés, the cohesive, ordered form of the text is integral in relaying the realities of the genocidal repression in an accurate and intelligible manner (6).

At the time of the publication of *Tejas Verdes*, thousands continued to be illegally detained in various concentration camps across the country, and this necessity to speak for those still incarcerated – and those who were executed-- is the critical impetus for the text's creation.[110] Valdés' text bears witness to the inhuman, the *Muselmann,* and their processes of desubjectification in the camps. Indeed, Valdés' dedication at the start of the text denotes the critical role the *Muselmann* have in the production of this *testimonio*: "Dedico este libro a mis ex compañeros de Tejas Verdes… y a los muchos amigos que de diferentes modos han hecho posible que yo me sentara a escribirlo" (7).[111] The formality

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[109] "This book is addressed as much to those in Chile who still pretend to a certain innocence within their direct or indirect complicity with fascism…[and] this book should remind them that the coup that overthrew the Popular Unity Government is a living fact that continues to produce its daily victims and tragedies" (Labanyi 9). Valdés implicates that those who quietly acquiesced to the military regime were just as culpable as those working for the state. Also, these lines appear to presage the years of post-dictatorship "democratic" Chile, where vestiges of the dictatorship remain firmly entrenched in the sociopolitical landscape of the nation.

[110] Although his text was not published in his natal country until 1996, signifying as such that his intended audience was among the last to have access to the text.

[111] "I dedicate this book to all the ex-compañeros in Tejas Verdes…and to my many friends who in different ways have made it possible that I sit down and write this."

of the text's structure indicates the critical importance of his personal process of subjectification and this act of *testimoniando* (providing testimony) invariably evokes the forgotten narratives of the *Muselmann*.[112]

The text's linear structure is fractured as Valdés narrates the trajectory of his desubjectification, and specifically relates the processes of bodily and psychic fragmentation "dentro de [esa] prisión intemporal" ("inside this atemporal prison") (127). The ambiguous spatiotemporal referent, "prisión intemporal", alludes to the desubjectivized bodies present in Valdés' narrative as he is compelled to speak for those who remained interned. It is clearly evident in the following passage as Valdés describes seeing his compañeros during his first day at the holding cell: "Mis compañeros parecen un grupo de fusilados…es la visión de alguna fotografía impresa con manchas de tinta en algún mal papel de algún viejo periódico" (28).[113] Valdés is depicting the carceral reality at that particular moment-- February 13, 1974-- yet this is written in the present-tense, as a subjectivized Valdés writing in Spain; here, again, we are presented with this irreducible disjunction between Valdés -- the subjectivized speaking subject-- and the desubjectivized *compañeros,* who remain in his memory as "un grupo de fusilados." Past-

[112] The diary-text is structured according to the temporal progression of events that occurred during Valdés' month-long detention at Tejas Verdes, however, as the narrative progresses, the interlocutor bears witness to the devolution of the narrator – and of his compañeros-- into non-human, abject entities vis-à-vis the horrors of the camp. Valdés contends with his experiences of dehumanization and traces the progression of this abjection in the quotidian experiences of torture, degradation, humiliation; by retracing this process of desubjectification, Valdés reclaims his political agency and subjectivity and is subsequently able to bear witness for those who remain in the camps, the disappeared. However, his process of subjectification invariably evokes his moment of desubjectification within the camp. Valdés' narrative reveals this constant vacillation between desubjectification and subjectification as the *testimonio* bears witness to the unsayable atrocities of the camp and to his – and the *Muselmann's,* the disappeared's -- processes of desubjectification. Valdés' narratival desubjectification is in constant tension with his present-day subjectivity, which I argue results in the text's spatiotemporal disjunctions and in this complexity of discursively depicting dehumanization with a language that is inherently fractured and shattered.

[113] "My compañeros look like a group of prisoners facing the firing squad…it's the image of some old photograph printed in blotchy ink on the rough paper of some old popular newspaper" (Labanyi 29).

as-remnant becomes evident as this particular moment is converted into a weathered, aged photograph, a photographic-image of the past, unsettling and upsetting the linear, temporally-progressive narrative flow. This narratival structure ruptures this notion of linear progression as the most effective means of working through past traumas as this precise image of the past inserts itself into the present. I believe that these critical passages in *Tejas Verdes* expose the ontological breaks produced during the acts of dehumanization and relay the discursive challenges of recapitulating the process of desubjectification in a language predicated on fragments.

As the *testimonio* progresses, this friction between Valdés' present-day process of subjectification and his narration of his past desubjectification is exacerbated as he relates the inmates' transformation into *homo sacer* vis-à-vis bodily and psychological torture. After a few torture sessions, Valdés' narrative centers on this discursive aporia of textually recreating the moment of torture with a language that is destroyed and manipulated by the torturers. During an interrogation, Valdés is beaten by prison guards for responding to a question unsatisfactorily and he recalls the following: "De pronto llega un golpe en la mandíbula, y nuevamente el dolor parece algo ficticio, un puro estallido eléctrico, silencioso, como si el miedo me mantuviera aislado de las sensaciones físicas" (37).[114] The reality of physical pain can only be relayed as "algo ficticio" ("something fictitious/unreal") and here we are confronted with the limitations of language as it cannot accurately depict the lived experiences of pain and torture; as Elaine Scarry notes, physical pain destroys one's ontological foundation and claims, "It is the

[114] "Then, suddenly, I get a blow in the jaw and, again, the pain seems unreal, just a noiseless electric charge, as if fear had cut me off from physical sensations" (Labanyi 37).

intense pain that destroys a person's self and world …intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject" (35). These acts of terrorism committed upon the bodies of the detainees produce ontological ruptures and impede their control over language.

Physical torture is thus presented as "algo ficticio", and there exists no prior experience or appropriate language to precisely describe the continual infliction of pain and agony that was normative in the concentration camp. As the methodic processes of torture and degradation intensify during his detention, Valdés expresses the lexical limitations in writing about the abject, tortured body; there is an absence of language when the body is made excruciatingly present vis-à-vis physical pain and all that is based on reality is portrayed as "algo ficticio."[115] It would seem, then, that Valdés' attempt at an organized exposition of the quotidian experiences in the camps functions not merely as a political tool to denounce the genocidal repression of the Pinochet regime, but also as a means to reclaim his subjectivity and shattered language. In the diary entry dated March 4, Valdés illustrates in detail a particular harrowing and gruesome torture session where he is subjected to electric shock on his genitals, extensive beatings, and psychological torture. While he recounts these violent acts, Valdés repeatedly comments that during the brutal interrogations he could not consciously process the violent realities; while trying to

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[115] Indeed, the irony of Valdés relying on the language of fiction is ever present at this moment as the preface clearly eschews ascribing any literary value to his *testimonio*. It is implicit here that fictive recreations of past traumas are critical and essential modes of recapitulating lived experiences of horror and genocide.

answer the torturers' questions, he states, "mi cerebro está en blanco" ("my brain is a complete blank") (139). At this moment, Valdés as a desubjectivized entity loses control of his consciousness and agency, resulting in a mind that was, at the time, "vacío, en blanco" ("empty, blank") (144).

This "vacío, blanco" best illustrates this lacuna that is inherent in survivor testimony, of this impossibility to bear witness to one's own process of dehumanization and the failure of language to depict this moment. As Valdés notes after this torture session, "no hay memoria del dolor" ("there is no memory of the pain") and the crushing presence of pain obstructs Valdés' control over language. This loss of language during torture prevents him from remembering the precise moments of pain, signaling the impossibility of documenting one's own process of desubjectification (144). Nora Strejilevich argues that these moments of "blanco, algo ficticio" discursively parallel the trauma of the ex-desaparecidos return to "civil society": "A partir del regreso a la vida cotidiana, la vida en los *campos* (que en su momento fuera el presente absoluto de los excluidos, por su capacidad de borrar la memoria del afuera) se impone como un recuerdo de una experiencia irreal" (*Arte* 14).[116] Valdés must resort to fiction, to this non-language in order to relay to the interlocutor the experiences of the "irreal" that was normativized within the camps. As Valdés is being tortured, he is expected to answer the questions violently posed by his torturers, but he is literally unable to do so when he recalls: "las palabras me raspan la garganta" ("the words scratch against my throat") (137). This impediment to speech and this loss of language invariably affects his

[116] "Upon returning to civil society, the life of the camps (in its moment the absolute present reality of the excluded, in its ability to erase the memory of the outside world) imposes itself as a memory of an unreal experience" (*Arte* 14).

conscious ability, exacerbating this disconnect between the mind and the tortured body. Valdés parallels the pain involved in the loss of language and the pain of violence incurred against the abject body, as the words Valdés attempts to speak "raspan la garganta." In this way, any effort to assert his subjectivity – in this instance through speech— ultimately fails, and the physical and ontological violences he experiences in the camps forces him to focus on his tortured, fragmented, dehumanized body.

Within the carceral space, the materiality of Valdés' body thus becomes central to the *testimonio* as the politically-conscious prisoners with subjectivity are transformed into bare lives, lives considered irrelevant by the Chilean regime. In Tejas Verdes, the state of exception, Valdés is now *homo sacer* and his body becomes the locus for castigation and discipline, a body that is denied juridico-political relevance in Chilean society. The violent quotidian realities within the carceral space force the prisoners to become acutely cognizant of their bodies as sites of castigation and this consequently fractures and disrupts their ontological realities. This ontological shift is evident in the following passage when Valdés is forced to defecate communally with the other inmates:

> No puedo razonar. Todo lo que me propongo como pensamiento se transforma en ensoñaciones, en visiones tortuosas y escalofriantes. Me silban los oídos, mi piel empieza a desaparecer bajo la barba. No doy conmigo, no sé qué soy exactamente después de todo lo que ha sucedido...Pero no quiero pensar en eso, no puedo, mi conciencia no admite otra noción que la de este estar-aquí-esperando (76).[117]

[117] "I can't think rationally. Everything I put forward as thought turns to fantasy, into tortuous, spine-chilling visions. My ears are ringing, my skin's beginning to disappear beneath the stubble on my jaws. I can't work myself out, I don't know quite what I am after all that's happened….But I'd rather not think about it, I can't, my consciousness admits only the notion of this Being-here-waiting" (Labanyi 69).

Reduced to the materiality of his body, Valdés is acutely aware of physical brutalities he suffers within the camp. This physical and psychic trauma thus impedes his ability to rationalize as the Chilean regime utilized these particular modalities of repression to systematically break down, destroy and/or eliminate dissenting bodies. The purported intent of torture here then – the dehumanization and desubjectification of once-rational, political citizens—is realized as Valdés' contends that he does not have conscious thoughts and instead all that he notices are "ensoñaciones…visiones tortuosas y escalofriantes." As Pilar Calveiro articulates in her exposition of the Argentinean dictatorship's implementation of concentration camps, the mechanism of torture intended to "quebrar al individuo" ("break the individual"), transforming the rational, subjectivized individual into "un cuerpo sumiso que se dejara incorporar a la maquinaria" ("a submissive body that would permite his or her incorporation in the machinery"); in addition, an integral method of psychological torture was the ever-present threat of death (Calveiro 69). Indeed, Valdés' desubjectivized entity is only cognizant of the here and now and the looming threat of death as he notes, "mi conciencia no admite otra noción de la de este estar-aquí-esperando."

Furthermore, this passage occurs while he and his compañeros are forced to defecate communally, signifying this process of abjection whereby the prisoners' bodies become the site of revulsion and disgust for the military officers and the Chilean regime. The literal signification of forced communal defecation is an example of the ritualized forms of degradation as the prison guards mocked, taunted, and threatened the detainees, equating them to the material waste of their bodies. In addition, Valdés and the

compañeros are metaphorically construed as expendable, irrelevant waste that must be expunged from the national corpus; they are represented as bodily waste, bodies that are transformed into bare lives, devoid of any subjectivity, reduced to their bodily waste within the carceral space, occupying the camps where they are either eliminated from the bowels of Chilean nation-state or reintegrated into society as broken individuals who have been sufficiently castigated and terrorized into submission. Valdés and his compañeros are denied their existences in the state of exception and are entities continuously facing the threat of imminent death. As he notes at one moment towards the end of his internment, "trato de imaginar que no soy sino mierda" ("I try and imagine I'm nothing but shit") and counts himself as one of the multitude in "el tráfico de carne" ("the traffic of flesh"), prisoners who have become utterly desubjectivized beings without language, identity, or consciousness, demarcating as such this lacuna that is inherent in every testimony (85, 114). Yet these moments of desubjectification are complicated by the prison guards' constant gendering and sexualization of the detainees; in a sense, Valdés' narrative alludes to the characteristics of the hypermasculine Pinochet regime that codified very stringent gendered, patriarchal and heteronormative social constructs and these were reproduced within the concentration camps, the power dynamics were violently reproduced between torturer and the prisoner.

The repressive apparatus of the Pinochet regime touted a stringent, heteronormative, patriarchal hierarchical society, elements that are grossly exaggerated and reified in the concentration camps. *Tejas Verdes* textually documents these hierarchical structures vis-à-vis the prison guards' wielding of absolute power over the

detainees, circumscribing the prisoners within spatial, gendered modes of repression. In *Tejas*, there is a tension which emerges in his narratival recapitulation of the process of desubjectification and sexually-based abjection that is critical to explore in further detail and the lexical complexities of documenting this sexual torture. There is a direct correlation between this hypermasculine national character and methodic forms of torture where the narrator's body is ridiculed and converted into a site of castigation and sexual revulsion.

Valdés recounts an episode when he and his compañeros are taken outside to do exercise; the guard asks Valdés to present his identification card, yet as all the inmates had left their items in their cells, the guard reproaches him: "'Agáchate, huevón. Andar sin carnet es lo mismo que andar sin huevas. Te vai a acordar.'…me había dado una patada muy sonora en el culo pero consideraba que mi posición no era lo bastante humilde. Me propinó una segunda" (88).[118] In one sense, the physical positioning between Valdés and the guard embodies this hierarchical relationship between this authority figure and the dejected prisoner as the guard takes perverse pleasure in relegating Valdés to a degraded, passive stance while inflicting bodily harm. This particular scene additionally invokes the military regime's definition of Chilean masculinity, as the guard iterates that to be without an identification card is tantamount to being an emasculated, worthless entity; in this sense, national identity and masculinity here are intrinsically linked. Valdés is being made aware of his status as a bare life, a desubjectivized entity, while simultaneously being made hyperaware of his sexualized

[118] "'Bend down, you bastard. Not having your identity on you's like not having your balls on you. You'll soon learn.' … He'd given me a resounding kick in the arse, but decided my position wasn't humble enough. He treated me to a second one" (Labanyi 79).

body and deficient masculinity. To hold any political relevance or subjectivity within the Pinochet regime is to adhere to social constructs whereby gender roles are stringently upheld, norms which extended to the realm of the state of exception.

As the intensity of the torture sessions increased in Tejas Verdes, Valdés confronts lexical limitations as the torturers inflicted violence that intended to reduce him to his *zoe,* pure biological life, as one who is utterly desubjectivized. In a critical passage that illustrates a particularly brutal torture session, the torturers electrocute Valdés' sexual organs and his tongue, all the while verbally deriding him. The simultaneous electric shock conferred to both Valdés' penis and tongue conveys the guards' concerted efforts to literally maim and destroy Valdés' body. The significance of these bodily organs as the target of destruction reflect this policing of the Pinochet regime's heteropatriarchal norms as these interned bodies become the locus of castigation, as bodies who strayed from these rigid ideals. The electrocution of Valdés tongue symbolizes as such the regime's intent to silence the dissenting body, impeding his ability to speak and to have control over language; this is particularly evident when the torturers ask him to state his name, to which his responds, "Her-nán Val-dés" (134). This broken text mimics his shattered subjectivity as Valdés is unable to enunciate his own name, portraying in this manner the disarticulation of the self and loss of subjecthood. Furthermore, it is indicative of the complications inherent in Valdés' present-day discursive process of reconstituting his fragmented subjectivity as it is always already predicated on this irreducible gap between desubjectification and subjectification.

In the torture chamber, as Valdés loses his grip on speech, the torturers physically mutilate his sexual organs, while incessantly taunting him and accusing him of having had engaged in homosexual acts. The continuous barrage of insults – "maricón", "tenis pico?" ("faggot", "do you have a penis?")– aimed at the male detainees in these concentration camps is indicative of a politics of heteropatriarchy that underpinned the Chilean state. The regime clearly outlined a rigid model of femininity and masculinity which was brutally enforced within the camps, and this is evident in the "Patriotic and Family Values" sponsored by the dictatorship's Chilean National Secretariat for Women. In this propagandistic pamphlet, the "dignity of the woman" in Chilean society was predicated on her "feminine identity" which reinscribes women within the domestic sphere, allotting her social role with meaning as her "feminine vocation [is to] assume domestic chores which constitute a direct service to others"; not surprisingly, the pamphlet adheres to traditional, normative concepts of masculinity as it states that boys from an early age should be instructed to "cultivate the valor, physical resistance, the gentlemanliness and the sense of honor appropriate [in order to] stimulate in him the development of a virile character" (*Values*). Chilean subjects who transgressed these inflexible denotations of gender were assumed to pertain to the Marxist cancer that threatened the integrity of Chilean social and national identity, and Marxism was perceived as "a means of destroying western society, attacking the unity of the family in its very base" (*Values*). Thus, according to the military regime, Valdés and his compañeros represent this Marxist threat to Chilean national "unity" and in this manner, did not embody the specific depiction of Chilean masculinity. Valdés' masculinity and

sexuality is constantly questioned and mocked by the camp guards in an extremely violent manner; while being tortured, Valdés reacts to the overwhelming pain by shouting aloud, prompting the guards to physically assault him even more as Valdés recalls they were "escandalizados de mi delicadeza" (134). As Jean Franco notes in "Gender, Death, and Resistance", this gender-centered abuse was not atypical of Southern Cone military regimes as she notes that they "inherited a long tradition in which the power to inflict pain was taken as proof of masculinity" (108). The exertion of physical and psychological pain upon the prisoners simultaneously reaffirmed the guards' virility and masculinity while relegating the tortured body to a sexualized, passive, and desubjectivized state.

The masculinity and (hetero)sexuality of the prisoners is under constant scrutiny in the concentration camp yet this fierce reification of gender and heterosexual norms is in constant tension with the abnegation of the prisoners' existence, as lives that are utterly desubjectivized. Yet if these prisoners are constantly reminded of their dehumanized, non-existences, why are these heteronormative, gendered norms replicated in the interaction between guard and detainees? What, then, is the effect of this exacerbation of this disjuncture between the abject, dehumanized prisoner and the sexually reviled, "emasculation" of the prisoner? Valdés reveals this lasting effect of the tension between utter abjection and policing of gendered-norms; in one moment, a guard comes into the prison cells and after questioning if there were any "maricones" among them, he proceeds to scrutinize the prisoners, "tratando de descubrir alguna evidencia feminoide" ("tries to find some feminoid trait") (81). The prisoners, after verifying their heterosexual identities

as married or divorced men, subsequently adopt a stern, "masculine" appearance in accordance to the regime's gendered norms : "Instintivamente nos ponemos serios, conformamos expresiones duras" "(Instinctively we look serious and show a stern expression") (81). For a moment, Valdés suspects his sandals are too effeminate and fears that the guard will notice them; despite his demoralized status and negated subjecthood, constantly facing death, he nonetheless questions his own heterosexual masculine identity and is compelled to adhere to the regime's dominant social norms in order to survive. To escape death and avoid degradation, Valdés and the other prisoners must engage in a specific gender performativity which validates the regime's denotation of a stoic, virile, combative masculinity; yet what is critical here is this perverse policing of heteromasculinity by the Chilean authority figures, where the prisoners are stripped of any human qualities (proper names, subjectivity) and simultaneously forced to reassert their heteromasculinized identities.

These heterosexual and gendered norms were violently monitored and within the concentration camps, this authoritative presence prompts the prisoners to perform a virile, somber masculinity as any effeminate or "homosexual" qualities perceived by the prison guards would result in physical and psychological torture. However, Valdés denotes that this reaction to the guard's inspection was instinctual, which I believe to be indicative of a more complex politics of (hetero)sexuality and gendering within the camps. In *Gender Trouble,* Butler offers a useful manner with which to approach the idea of gender performativity in the presence of an authoritative figure: "The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and

installed: the anticipation conjures its object… [and gender] operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates" (xv). In the state of exception, gender performativity assumes a distinct role as the ever-present threat of death and violence brutally enforces this maintenance of strict heterosexual, gender norms; in essence, engaging in this gender performativity in the concentration camps was key in ensuring their survival.[119]

I believe Butler's definition here helps contextualize Valdés' "instinctual" reaction to appear "masculine" while being observed by the prison guards. This authoritative presence additionally explicates Valdés' self-policing of his heterosexual masculine identity as he speculates his sandals may be too effeminate. While the fear of this authoritative presence is indeed grounded in a hyperviolent reality whereby any transgressions – sexual, gender, political – to the social order are tantamount to death, it is indeed interesting to note that Valdés relies on his gendered "instincts" to assume a normative masculine identity in order to survive. This normative masculinized "performance" and policing of his own masculine identity is thus provoked by the continuous sexual abjection of his tortured body in the state of exception. As Butler notes, "under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality" (xii). Indeed, as Butler indicates here, gender norms are dictated by a compulsive heterosexuality, and in the context of the Chilean military regime, this patriarchal, heterosexual discourse was propagated by the state authorities

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[119] This is particularly evident when one of the guards taunts the prisoners and ask if there are any "maricones" among them or if any of their children are queer; one prisoner replies that this "condition" pertains only to the rich and is not an issue relating to the working classes (81). Here then, homosexuality is not only aligned with weakness, femininity (according to the regime), but is also construed as that which only pertains to the bourgeois.

both inside and outside of the concentration camps.[120] In his *testimonio*, as Valdés utilizes this text to re-subjectivize his broken personhood, there exist discursive gaps and lexical impediments as he relates his experiences of sexualized brutalization.

Valdés is confronted with a discursive challenge in textually reconstituting his shattered subjectivity, and this is particularly evident when he refers specifically to moments of physical assault of his sexual organs. In the aforementioned torture session, while the torturers deride Valdés for being a "maricón" who cannot sexually satisfy the carnal, illicit sexual desires of his ex-partner, Eva, they electrocute his penis, signifying in this way a symbolic (or literal) castration; the excruciating pain transcends the configuration of written or spoken language as Valdés denotes: "Es como si me arrancan el sexo de raíces, como una dentallada que me deja abierto y, arriba, en la boca, como una explosión que volara toda la carne, que dejara los huesos de la cara y del cuello al desnudo, los nervios petrificados, en el vacío. Es más que eso, no hay memoria del dolor" (144).[121] The use of similes to depict the magnitude of pain -- "es como si" ("it's as if") – is indicative of this discursive impossibility of relaying lived experiences of horror and sexual torture; here, it is evident that there is no discourse for pain and Valdés must rely on analogous referents to relay this utter abjection. Moreover, the allusion to negation and lack –"vacío", "no hay" ("emptiness", "there isn't") — textually portrays this

[120] In addition, during this interrogation and torture session, Valdés feels compelled to indicate to the torturers that Eva's particular journalistic area centers on domestic issues, as opposed to her true profession which dealt with political journalism and her inclinations towards radical political activism; this perhaps was to evade verbal and physical punishment as women who were politically active were the target of repression.

[121] "It's as if they'd torn my penis up by the roots, like something taking a giant bite out of me, and then, in my mouth, like an explosion blasting away the flesh, laying bare the bones of my face and neck, leaving the nerves petrified, in a vacuum. Even more than that, there's no recollection of the pain" (Labanyi 129).

moment of castration/mutilation; what is important here is centering on the torturer's insistence on Valdés' deficient heteromasculinized identity while he constantly reminds Valdés of his abject, desubjectivized existence. Indeed, Valdés states that after the constant electric shock torture and verbal assault, he becomes "una pura masa que tiembla" ("a pure mass that trembles"), reduced entirely the materiality of his tortured, broken body, a body that is continuously sexually reviled and degraded (135). I would like to suggest that the violent policing of normative heterosexual, gendered constructs in the concentration camp influences Valdés' problematic portrayal of a perverse, traitorous female sexuality in *Tejas Verdes*.

Valdés' continuous sexual, gendered abjection in the concentration camp offers a critical perspective on the gender politics between the male and female detainees in the camps. In Tejas Verdes, male and female prisoners are kept in separate locations in the camp which impedes any type of communication between the prisoners. In a key passage, Valdés and his compañeros overhear the prison guards interacting with the women detainees:

> Evidentemente, estaban bebiendo con ellas…No podíamos imaginarnos la conducta de las mujeres. ¿Participaban por temor, de pura desesperación, cínicamente o por gusto? Algunas cantaban, se oían risotadas, gritos histéricos, caídas. Luego sucedían silencios incomprensibles. A medianoche, algunos salieron fuera de la cabaña. En el estrecho espacio entre nuestra cabaña y la vecina la presencia de una pareja nos mantuvo a todos tensos. '—Aquí no, hace mucho frío. – Era la voz de una mujer… Estábamos todos furiosos. Alguno recordó que las mujeres prisioneras en el Estadio Nacional preferían ser fusiladas antes de dejarse manosear por los soldados. No podíamos explicarnos esa especie de complicidad (87).[122]

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[122] "They were obviously drinking with them…we couldn't figure the women's behaviour out. Were they participating out of fear, sheer despair, cynicism or pleasure? Some of them were singing, there were peals of laughter, hysterical shrieks, sounds of falling. Followed by incomprehensible silences. At midnight some of them came out of the hut. The presence of a couple in a narrow space between our hut and the one next-

While the men are reeling from the degradation and sexual mutilation, the women in this passage are portrayed as willing participants and, I would argue, carefree, using their sexuality to comply with the Chilean state apparatus. Valdés expresses incredulity at their apparent complicit actions and indicates that it is possible the women engaged in sexual activities with the guards "por temor" or "pura desesperación", as a means of survival. This passage's underlying sentiment is indicative of Valdés' disgust and abhorrence at the women's behavior. Indeed, the syntactical progression of this query– do they participate out of "temor", or "desesperación", or, finally, "gusto"— presents the dichotomous political identity for women involved in the anti-authoritarian movements as either martyrs to the political cause or complicit Malinchistas, utilizing sexuality as a means of survival.

In this context, Valdés reifies a problematic gendered hierarchy in relation to the politics of torture and the complexity of survivor subjecthood. In the text, Valdés and his compañeros are construed as victims of state violence whose bodies are tortured, broken and sexually mutilated by agents of the state who were representative of the nation's patriarchal, heteromasculine identity. Conversely, this passage indicates that the women prisoners utilize their bodies to willingly engage in sexual activities with the guards, which allots them a degree of agency and subjectivity as Valdés could hear "algunas cantaban, se oían risotadas." Indeed, the depiction here denotes a certain element of enjoyment in these activities, which further fuels the male prisoners' sentiment of disgust

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door held us all in suspense. 'Not here, it's too cold.' It was a woman's voice… We were all of us outraged. Someone recalled how in the National Stadium the women prisoners had preferred to be shot rather than let the soldiers lay a finger on them. We couldn't explain this kind of collusion" (Labanyi 78).

at their apparent betrayal in partaking in such "pleasurable" activities with the enemy. However, this apparent complicity obfuscates the political reality of the scene and elides the power dynamics operating in the camps between prisoners and guards; as Nora Strejilevich mentions, women prisoners in Argentina were often given the "option" of being raped by the guards or by the electric cattle prod; many times the women would opt first for the prod, then after experiencing the body-shattering pain, they would "choose" to be raped (*Numberless* 15). The discourse of rape in this particular moment is problematically absent, which eradicates the power the guards wielded over the inmates and the sexual abjection of the women inmates. While the details involved in this particular scene are unknown to Valdés and his compañeros, their reaction to the woman who "chose" to sleep with a guard – "estábamos todos furiosos" – is revelatory of the men's inherent patriarchal perspective as the blame is placed on the incarcerated woman rather than the guard. Here, it reinforces a gendered hierarchy whereby the male prisoners are paradigmatic of the pure, true political prisoners against which the women prisoners must be measured. Additionally, this exposes an existent double standard in the camp as Valdés does not indicate any type of criticism of the male detainees for adhering to the regime's stringent definition of masculinity in order to survive, yet the women who utilize their sexuality to survive are perceived as treacherous and traitorous by the male inmates.

As political prisoners, these women are incarcerated by state officials for their seemingly "un-feminine" transgressions in their participation in political activism; in this sense, the women detainees are perceived as contrary to the Chilean cult of ideal

womanhood who contravene their position in the domestic sphere and thus have to be castigated and/or eliminated from the state. Within the camps, women are often derided for these unwomanly activities and labeled as impure, ribald, licentious women whose bodies are deserving of illimitable forms of physical and psychological torture (Ross 65). It would seem, then, that this sexual revulsion of the women vis-à-vis the prison guards would parallel Valdés' experiences of sexual abjection, yet this passage connotes a more nuanced politics of gender that existed in the camps. This perception of the female inmates as sexually wanton for relying on their sexuality for survival – or possibly "por gusto" ("out of pleasure") – uncovers the dominant patriarchal ideologies that are still exhibited in the state of exception. While it is apparent that only certain masculine bodies are allotted with complete power, this passage indicates that patriarchal epistemologies are firmly entrenched in distinctive political ideological frameworks as even the abject, dehumanized male prisoners perceive the women in this manner. As the military officials' verbally slander the politically active women for being licentious harlots who do not adhere to this definition of an ideal, domesticated Chilean woman, the male detainees critique the women for contravening the image of a pure, martyred female political subject in their sexual acquiescence to the guards.

It is critical to investigate this representation of the women detainees in conjunction with the construction of a mythic, martyred political heroine; the passage alludes to the binarism of martyr/traitor which reifies dominant notions of gender which is clearly reflective of a patriarchal ideological framework. Indeed, this martyr/traitor dichotomy is most evident when Valdés relates that the women detainees in el Estadio

Nacional “preferían ser fusiladas antes de dejarse manosear por los soldados” (“the women prisoners had preferred to be shot rather than let the soldiers lay a finger on them”), suggesting in this way that these women would rather die as vestial representatives of the anti-Pinochet cause than have their bodies sexually marred by the enemy. The sexual interactions between prison guard and the dehumanized, desubjectivized female body encapsulate the power structure operating within the concentration camp, yet Valdés and his compañeros conceive of this interaction as tantamount to the ultimate betrayal; indeed, after this passage, Valdés and the others ponder over the status of these political prisoners and he notes, “algunos comenzamos a dudar de la condición política de los prisioneros del campo” (“some of us began to have doubts about the political status of the prisoners in the camp”) (87) (Labanyi 78). The isolation and separation from the female inmates exacerbates the degree of doubt the male prisoners have in comprehending the true, abject status of the women; yet I believe this passage is critical as it represents the complexity of this politics of gender in the camps and a perpetuation of dominant masculinist ideologies and patriarchal gender constructs within the state of exception.

In sum, I argue that it is imperative to examine the patriarchal epistemologies that emerge from various *testimonios* as they proffer a critical perspective on the mechanisms of torture and the politics of gender within the concentration camps. Despite Valdés' intention to write a political, historically-accurate testimony with “lenguaje funcional”, *Tejas Verdes* is in essence a critical work of testimonial fiction that elucidates the hierarchized processes of gendered and sexualized dehumanization in the Chilean camps

and the impossibility of bearing witness to absolute desubjectification. This irreducible tension between Valdés present-day subjecthood and his past-tense desubjectivized being results in this *testimonio* fraught with spatiotemporal disjuntures, gaps, and omissions in his ability to portray moments of past sexual and psychological torture.[123] This particular sexualization and normative-gendering of abject bodies also appears in Nora Strejilevich's testimonial novel on on the Argentine repression, yet this cultural text assumes a completely distinctive form than Valdés' diary-format *testimonio.* In Strejilevich's text, her denunciation of sexualized violence that is normalized in the state of exception does not reduce her experiences as purely a victim of sexual-based violence, but rather, she exposes the Argentine regime's institutionalization of gender-based violence as a form of perpetuating heteropatriarchal normativity.

A Single, Numberless Death: Desubjectivized, Gendered Bodies and Fractured Language in "the Cells of Not-Being"

Originally published in Spanish in 1997 -- fourteen years after the demise of the Argentinean military regime--, *A Single Numberless Death* is one of the many cultural texts to emerge in the postdictatorship era, an important text that belongs to the myriad of works in the genre of Latin American testimonial literature. Twenty-five-year old Nora Strejilevich was preparing for a trip to Israel in 1977 when several men dressed in civilian clothing violently entered her apartment one afternoon in Buenos Aires, subjecting her to beatings and interrogation before forcibly taking her to the nearby

[123] It is important to refer again to Jelin's theory on gendered processes of remembering and her claim that men's testimonies tend to "convey their recollections within logical and rational frameworks" in order to put this in dialogue with my analysis of Valdés' *testimonio* (Jelin 82).

clandestine center, The Athletic Club; this "secret" detention center was located in the middle of the bustling metropolis, and as Strejilevich denotes, she was abducted in the middle of the work-day and it was "business as usual" around her (3). While both Strejilevich and Valdés produced their testimonies in exile, *Numberless'* context is distinct from *Tejas Verdes* as Strejilevich's work is published approximately twenty years after being "desaparecida" by the military regime. There is a distinctive impetus in *Numberless* as her aim is not to inform the interlocutors of the present-day repression – as is the intent of *Tejas Verdes* -- but rather, I believe her intention is to produce a narratively disjointed *testimonio* in order to situate the narrative of the past genocidal repression in present-day Argentina and to disturb the national discourse of progress and to question the politics of a gendered memory and justice.

In this manner, Strejilevich's text does not adhere to the traditional structure of the first-person narratival format that many *testimonios* assume, but rather, her *testimonio* is experimental in form, situating her personal narratives alongside the experiences of others who were affected by the repression. The text also incorporates quotes from political figures of the time, splices of media headlines, excerpts from other prisoners' testimonies, and intermixes poetry and prose. This experimental form effectively creates an aesthetic quality that disrupts a temporally progressive, linear format, creating a sense of unease and structural confusion as the interlocutor is incessantly transported back and forth across various spatiotemporal realms; while Valdés purports to create a historically-accurate, personalized account of his month-long detention in the Chilean camp, the narratival, structural and spatiotemporal disjunctions and fragments exhibited in

Strejilevich's testimony is reflective of the vestiges of the historical trauma of the Argentine dictatorship in an individual and collective sense. While both testimonies are radically distinct in their narratival, structural form, they nonetheless allude to the discursive aporia of relating the experiences of gender-based torture and trauma and the tension which emerges between the subjectification and desubjectification inherent in all survivor testimony. This is a critical point of comparison as Strejilevich's text emerges in the post-dictatorship moment, and it serves to deconstruct the Argentine national discourse of having had sufficiently "worked through" the trauma and state-sanctioned violence of the past; *Numberless* challenges this widely-accepted claim of historical progress by exposing on the vestiges of violence and trauma in post-dictatorship Argentina.

In my analysis of *Numberless*, I concentrate specifically on the distinct rhetorical devices employed by Strejilevich and the impact of trauma on the production of language and the lexical complications that arise in documenting lived experiences of sexualized torture and gendered violence. Fragmentation is a central trope in her text, specifically, the fragmentation which emerges as she narrates the individual and communal desubjectification of the prisoners at the Athletic Club during her incarceration.[124] This fragmentation is definitive of the experimental format of *Numberless;* there is an attempt at an ordered progression of the text, however, the structure is characterized more by ruptures in linear narrative and an asymmetrical form, indicative of this impossibility of

[124] As Agamben notes in *Remnants,* the subject who bears witness and who provides testimony is considered a "remnant" as "there is no foundation in or beneath them; rather, at their center lies an irreducible disjunction in which each term, stepping forth in the place of a remnant, can bear witness", further signaling as such that there is no singular subject of testimony (159).

bearing witness. It is precisely this experimental form and the discursive absences present in Strejilevich's text that expose the hypermasculinized, heteropatriarchal ideology that was violently enforced within the concentration camps; I argue that Strejilevich's gendered subjugation and the ritualization of sexualized torture upon the dehumanized bodies of the prisoners produces these textual gaps, which denote the complexity of writing about this gender-specific torture. I argue that there exists a lack of critical focus that has not sufficiently exlored this discursive void that exhibits this tension between the hypersexualization of the inmates and the simultaneous demarcation of their status as bare lives by the prison guards.

While *Numberless* utilizes a fragmented structural form to relay the experiences of lived horror, there does exist an underlying cohesive quality in her narrative. The testimony expresses a fundamental connection with others affected by the military regime and this is most evident in the linear structure; her testimony evokes the polyphonous narratives of the multitude of ex-desaparecidos, survivors, relatives, those executed by the regime and those who remain disappeared. Strejilevich's work is not a testimonial in the traditional sense, but rather her text is a literary collage of her poetry, personal testimony, the testimonies of various survivors and family members, fictive recreations, excerpts from various print media sources, and quotes from various ex-military officials and other figures relating to the Argentinean military dictatorship, which thus gives her novel a segmented aspect. The narrative production of the lived experiences in the camps is a compilation of the ruins, fragments, and the residues of trauma, an indication of her status as an ex-desaparecida, as one whose subjectivized identity is predicated on her past

process of desubjectification and the desubjectivized bodies that were claimed by the military regime.

As the text is neither entirely disjointed nor is it entirely cohesive, it is precisely this reason why I believe that *Numberless* successfully renders an unsettling and disturbing effect upon its readers. It was published during postdictatorship Argentina, in an era of judiciary amnesty and apathy regarding the recent violent history of the nation. While the amnesty laws abnegated the gravity of the institutionalized forms repression by protecting the "genocidas" who perpetrated crimes against humanity, *Numberless* disrupts this systematic form of elision and oblivion of the Argentinean genocide. Strejilevich commences her work with the episode of her kidnapping; what is most striking in this section is the repetitiveness and fragmented nature of her prose and the incomplete, disjointed sentences. As interlocutors, we are witnesses to the commencement of her transformation into bare life. This rhetorical device parallels the actual destructive, chaotic moment when military officials invade her apartment; more importantly, this narrative style is indicative of the presence of fragments and destruction that are left behind by the dictatorship. In *Cultural Residues,* an analysis of memory and fragmentation in the postdictatorship era in Chile, Nelly Richard proposes that testimonial dictatorship literature assumes "the heroic task of having to reinvent languages and syntaxes to survive the catastrophe of dictatorship that submerged bodies and experiences in the dismembering violence of multiple shocks and shatterings of identity" (19). This manipulation and revision of language is prevalent throughout *Numberless.* The following passage exemplifies this literary technique and demonstrates

how Strejilevich "reinvent[s] languages": "Dizzy you whirl in a vortex of scraps of yesterdays and nows crushed by orders and decrees. You get lost amid chairs overturned, drawers emptied, suitcases torn open, colors blanched out, maps slashed, roads severed" (3).

The disjointed nature of her narrative denotes the initial stages of disembodiment as she is reduced to mere body parts which are separated from the corporeal whole. During a torture session where Strejilevich is abused with electrical prods, she notices the following: "White light, scorched mouth, shivers. Tendons, muscles, blood all roar guttural words, consonants and vowels" (24). What is most striking here is the intermingling of the loss of language control and loss of bodily control; Strejilevich's prose here is indicative of not merely her body becoming not her own, but also the breakdown of language and misuse of proper grammar. Once again, the syntax of the sentence is disjointed and ruptured where each body part is separated by a comma; in addition, the elements that comprise a word --"consonants, vowels"—parallel Strejilevich's use of biological terminology – "tendons, muscles"-- that constitute the fundamental elements of a human body. The disintegration of sentence structure in Strejilevich's prose is reflective of the military regime's control over language. During her incarceration, Strejilevich and the other prisoners are constantly monitored and their interactions severely prohibited and as she notes, "the disappeared are forbidden to talk" (64). This statement succinctly demonstrates the loss of language and loss of communicative abilities amongst the prisoners who inhabit a communal space. As prisoners stripped of all their rights and voices, this further displays how the regime not

only physically dominated the detainees but also adversely affected their ability to vocally interact with others. Once again, this use of the third person to portray an abstract mass of bodies – "the disappeared"—is crucial in linking Strejilevich's personal testimony to the experiences of the other prisoners; it further exacerbates the solitary, isolating effect of the concentration camp experience as all forms of communication are prohibited. In describing the military officials and prison guards, Strejilevich states that "they are the keepers of the keys to the alphabet and to the cemetery gate" (65). While this passage indicates the military's control in a linguistic sense, there is also a correlation here between language and death; life and death are decreed by the military personnel and their absolute control of language is also an integral element in maintaining their domination over the prisoners.

Without language, the prisoners are stripped of their humanity as language is a definitive element of communal interchange; this temporary restriction of language separates prisoners from one another while it simultaneously presents the correlation between existence and language: "In the cells of not being, speaking is strictly forbidden" (61). This denial and absence of language within the camps marks Strejilevich's process of desubjectification as "the human being is the speaking being, the living being who has language" (*Remnants* 146). Furthermore, it must be said that the absence of language also reflects the absence of memory and this aggressive strategy employed by the military government portrays the extent to which they are able to maintain power over the prisoners' individual bodies, indicative of the biopolitical power structures that underpinned the Argentine military regime.

The disjointed structural form of *Numberless Death* parallels the ruptures in her identity and the process of her desubjectification in the Athletic Club. Strejilevich vacillates between the first and second person, demonstrating in this sense her ontological rupturing; she begins with the first person during the physical act of the abduction -- "you kick and scream against a nameless fate in some mass grave" -- and quickly switches to the second person when she states, "I hurl my name with every last fiber" (Strejilevich 4). The use of both first and second person in her narrative form ostensibly depict the utter confusion and chaos she experiences during her abduction, but what this particular effect evokes are more critical questions of identity and the tenuous subject of testimony. This conflation of the first and second person is indicative of the ruptures and breaks in the concentration camp prisoners' sense of identity and alters her way of knowing. The use of the first person -- "I hurl my name with every last fiber" – centers the narrative on Strejilevich's personal account and portrays the details surrounding her abduction. This is critical as she is voicing a part of her identity, her last name, in the face of her assailants in order to retain a part of her subjectivity.

This motif of the proper name is referenced sequentially in the poems which commence each section of the text. The first section's poem introduces the eradication of individual identity and the repression of political dissent. In these four stanzas, Strejilevich alludes to the book's epigraph by Tomás Eloy Martínez which presents the dissolution of humanity into a "single, numberless death" as the prisoners are thus converted into an innumerable mass of bodies differentiated only by their prison numbers. The quantitative element appears here is the military regime's strategy to

dehumanize and eliminate the human elements of each prisoner as she notes: "I was one I was hundreds I was thousands / I was no one" (2). In this process, prisoners are stripped of their proper names and are assigned a number; they are denied their proper names, individual identities, and in most cases, their existences which thus disorients the prisoner and confuses their sense of being. Strejilevich's text incorporates her first-person narrative with the third person and this rhetorical tactic situates her personal testimony among the experience of thousands of other disappeared and her compulsion to bear witness to this historical trauma, as she cannot not remember.

The poem at the start of the second section reflects her experiences upon being released from the concentration camp: "Until one day/ they returned my name" (Strejilevich 2, 90). "They" attempt to imbue her with human elements again upon returning her name to her; in this manner she is now "whole" and the fragmentation of her body and psyche are attempted to be pieced together, a product of "The Process for National Reorganization" deemed fit to return to civil society. These stanzas also replicate the systemic processes used by the military government and their absolute power over the incarcerated individual; through a carefully organized protocol utilized for all detained individuals, the military officials methodically stripped the prisoners of all distinguishing characteristics which subsequently results in their dehumanization. Reassigning Strejilevich with her proper name upon her release from the detention camp merely reflects the extent of the military government's control over the detained individuals as it decides who can and cannot repossess his or her identity.

Yet this reacquisition of her proper name is initially rejected by Strejilevich as she notes that this name seems too detached from her. As she is reassigned her own name, she notes that it seems foreign to her: "This name is not mine!/ Mine / was a hundred a thousand it was all / mine" (90). While Strejilevich had been an Agambian "bare life", she relates this solidarity with other lives stripped of their humanity in this state of exception. In the final section of the novel, Strejilevich continues the poem from the second section, again introducing the lack of subjectivity the disappeared experience during their internment: "My name a climbing vine / got tangled / among syllables of death / DE SA PA RE CI DO / gone/ name never more/ my name" (158). Her subjectivity, her name, is "tangled" in this trope of death, torture, and oblivion; thus, here we see a conflation of the first and third persons again as her identity is enmeshed with those of the other disappeared and those who remain in the camps. This conflation is exemplified vis-à-vis the motif of the proper name as her name, as well as those of the other disappeared, is "gone/name never more/ my name."

The systematic attempt of the state to elide the narratives of brutalization institutionalized during the military regime is contravened in *Numberless* as Strejilevich iterates the critical importance of memory and providing testimony: "Right then I seal a pact with Nora-to-Come: to remember" (41). As I argue, this particular form of memory is gendered, as Strejilevich's testimony centers on the violence of heteropatriarchy that is sustained in the camps. Even as she is reduced to bare life in the camp, Strejilevich is cognizant of the importance of bearing witness and future activism, and as Fiona Ross denotes, she is "sustaining a sense of self" in the face of abjection. Despite the state's

attempt to destroy and break down the prisoners and their social bonds via torture, psychological and physical, Ross mentions that future political activism and solidarity movements are essential for many survivors and states, “In extremity, political commitments were important in surviving violence and sustaining a sense of self. They enabled activists both to withstand extreme hardship and to return to protest or resistance activities on their release” (71). Maintaining a sense of self is predicated on the preservation of women’s political agency even during extreme moments of degradation, and this is particularly relevant when Strejilevich and other women detainees are subjected to gender-based physical and psychological torments and torture due to their political activism.

The experiences resulting from the processes of dehumanization were a normalized part of the military regime’s repressive practices which were utilized in order to exterminate all political dissension and to rid the nation of bodies that did not adhere to the political and social norms. The espousal of Western, Christian values that touted a heteropatriarchal social order are of importance in the discussion of bare lives in the Argentinean concentration camps; in the following section, I argue that Strejilevich’s exposition on the gendered processes of torture and abjection is revelatory of a critical need to deconstruct patriarchal modes of documenting female survivor testimony as always predicated on sexual abuse. Strejilevich’s narrative refers to her personal sexualized abuse in order to deconstruct patriarchal forms of repression that were institutionalized during the Argentine dictatorship and in the post-dictatorship era.

It is critical to delineate the representations of gendered abjection within the camps as this is reflective of the military regime's simultaneous sexualization and dehumanization of the prisoners. The military regime underscored the importance of gender roles, especially Argentinean women's placement in the domestic sphere as nurturers and caretakers of their families (Jelin 82). Thus, any person transgressing the sociomasculine norms vis-à-vis their political affiliations or perspectives on gender notions were considered subversive threats to the military regime's new social order. If these strict gendered divisions were set forth by the military regime, then one must consider how these gender roles were manifested in camps in the relationship between the prisoners and the guards, who functioned as agents of the state. Thus, it is my intent to investigate the complex replication of gender roles within the Argentinean concentration camps vis-à-vis Strejilevich's recapitulation of the sexualized and gendered process of desubjectification. *Numberless Death* exposes the existent tension between the simultaneous sexualized abjection and abnegation of existence of the female prisoners, and this tension is discursively reflected in the experimental form of her text, specifically in the discursive gaps. Moreover, I argue that *Numberless'* exposition of the hypermasculine modes of domination functions as a political, counterhegemonic text that critically subverts gendered expectations of the content of her testimony and as being privy to merely her experiences as a victim of sexual torture.

In Strejilevich's discussion of gender, she clearly emphasizes the military regime's masculinist ideology and critiques their use of sexual violence to torture the prisoners in the camps. By alluding to the personal and collectivized experiences of

sexualized torture, her *testimonio* provides a critical exposition and deconstruction of these rigid, entrenched hypermasculinized forms of repression that were systematically enforced during the military dictatorship. Although the concentration camp experience was predicated on the dehumanization of each prisoner in order to facilitate their extermination, a central method of torture in the camps was sexual abuse and rape. The military officials' depiction of the female prisoners as debased, licentious women encouraged their degradation of the prisoners through sexual abuse. In the text's section entitled "Men quick to unzip", she presents the topic of rape as constitutive of the repressive state apparatus in the concentration camps:

> How do you live…among men who, without a qualm, earn their daily bread by asking how you like it—from the front or from the rear? Men quick to unzip who open and close their flies with masterful swiftness, the result of extensive training. A very masculine way of subduing the enemy (14).

Here, rape is not an impulsive act of sexual domination, but rather, it is "the result of extensive training" by the military regime, a critical element utilized against these bare lives in the state of exception; rape is thus reflective of the systemic heteropatriarchal violence that underpinned the Argentine dictatorship, where gender roles were codified and violently maintained inside and outside of the camps. What is important to note here is that although the prisoners are denied all of their human characteristics and both men and women are equally tortured, they are still portrayed as sexual beings, sexualized and dehumanized in the concentration camps and bodies that are in need of physical and psychological castigation. The women raped in this passage are demoralized when asked whether they "like it…from the front or from the rear." In this instance, the officials are

underscoring their power over the prisoners by morbidly offering a "choice" in their method of rape. This hypermasculinized method of torture indicates the military officials' systemic use of rape as a primary method of torture.

We must thus consider the regime's use of sexual torture as a simulataneous hypersexualization and revilement of the female prisoners, particularly in their sexual objectification of the female body but also in their expression of utter disgust and contempt for these women. In their concentration of distinct female body parts, here is an instance of corporeal fragmentation of the body through the experience of, in this case, sexualized torture. The female prisoner is being sexualized in an extreme sense and is reduced to her mere sexual organs. In addition to being objectified in the crudest sense, the prisoners are constantly reminded of their inferior status as bare lives and are faced with the ever-present threat of death in the camps. In a critical passage, Strejilevich invokes the simultaneous fragmentation and sexualization of the women inmates when the guards taunt the women on the way to the shower: "The guards rate us as soon as we start to pull down our pants…The ass of the third one, the legs of this one, the tits of the first one in line – one hundred points. Any other bids? ... Better enjoy it [the shower], this might just be your last time under water" (69). The women are verbally degraded and sexually dehumanized as the guards objectify them, concentrating on their distinctive body parts, yet they also reinforce their absolute power as agents of the state. This particular sexualized abjection is in dialogue with the hypermasculinize power structure of the military regime that systematically sexualizes, dehumanizes, and abnegates the existences of these women; while the guards degrade them sexually, they also remind the

women of their ability to exterminate them at any moment; in these instances, sexual torture and death are intimately linked in a sinister form of repression and power.

Strejilevich includes the following excerpt from *Nunca Más* which further illustrates this hypermasculinized, sexual domination over the prisoners:

> "What did they do to you last night?" "They raped me, sir."
> "Bitch, (*slaps*) no one did anything to you here, understand?"
> "Yes, sir." "What happened to you last night?" "Nothing, sir." (15).

The dialogue included in this archival source is critical in demonstrating not merely the binary between oppressor and victim, but also the absolute power of the state vis-à-vis the negation of this victimization. Here we are presented with what Agamben terms as life that "ceases to be politically relevant", but within a gender and sexualized context; the military officers in this scenario are not merely emphasizing their power over the tortured woman, but they denote here the prisoners' lack of political and legal rights while simultaneously sexually torturing this dehumanized prisoner (*Homo* 139). The prisoners' absence of human characteristics therefore demonstrates that they are now politically and socially irrelevant to Argentina during the dictatorship. However, this process does not merely reflect the dehumanization of the women, it alludes to the critical role sexual abjection plays in this process of degradation. In essence, the prisoners in the concentration camps are incarcerated and abused for their political affiliations and for being suspected subversive threats to the "Process'" social order; this particular passage therefore iterates the process of sexualization via the woman's rape and also underscores the dehumanization vis-à-vis the officials' denial of her sexual abuse.

The trauma of rape reappears later in the text upon Strejilevich's release from the Athletic Club. While settling into her parents' home after her internment, she remembers hearing about a young British woman named Diana, who was also in a concentration camp. Both are subjected to torture and rape:

> When they were ready, one said, 'Take off your clothes!' We took them off, Diana. And right then a new battle began. The Dirty War…The hazing episode lasted three days and three nights. 'If you say a word, you're history,' she was told. We're history, Diana…Triumph, terror, booty, and ravaged land. Dirty War. Ten days later Diana was able to leave the country. We were able, Diana (87-8).

This particular moment of the narrative posits the government-termed "Dirty War" as a figurative and literal act of the sexual, physical, and mental violation of thousands of prisoners. While the term is originally used by the government to depict the supposed warring factions between the military state and the terrorists, Strejilevich here inverts the traditional definition of the "Dirty War" and makes a clear connection between the systemic use of rape in the concentration camps and the military government's quest for a new sociopolitical order. Both Diana and Strejilevich not only metaphorically represent the "booty and ravaged land" of the war, but more importantly this passage signifies that this moment of torture irrevocably changes their lives as she notes, "We were able, Diana." This ambiguous statement notes that while they are able to survive the concentration camp experience, it more significantly illuminates the extent to which the military regime is able to dehumanize the prisoners. Strejilevich uses the past tense to reveal that she is no longer an able-bodied individual with subjectivity, but rather she is redefined by the military government and now is utterly desubjectivized. These particular instances in Strejilevich's text expose the process of her own sexual abuse and

dehumanization and of other women who were sexually brutalized in the camps. However, her documentation of these silenced, gendered narratives in the publication of *Numberless* is effectively brushing against the military regime's systematic attempt of eliding the past.

I also believe it is critical to denote that Strejilevich is not merely providing a detailed, explicit account of her personal experiences of rape and sexual abuse. She invokes a narratival style that alludes to the brutalities of sexualized torture yet it is grounded in a political critique of these hypermasculine modes of repression. In her depictions of the sexualized, gendered forms of torture, Strejilevich does not assume the narrative voice of a victimized, passive prisoner, but rather, she offers a scathing criticism of the institutionalization of hypermasculine modes of domination that underpinned the military regime; this is particularly evident in the re-ascription of the term "Dirty War" within a specific gendered context that critiques dominant masculine epistemologies embedded within the masculinist terrororist Argentine state. Here, then, it is apparent that Strejilevich's text contradicts Jelin's postulation on women's testimonies as she notes that they "emphasize their vulnerability as sexual beings and the affective and nurturing bonds that developed among them" (Jelin 84). In *Numberless,* Strejilevich counters Jelin's problematic infantilization of women detainees by subverting the dominant, masculinized paradigm that functioned to attempt to elide the narratives of the desubjectivized women. Referring to Fiona Ross' criticism of human rights scholars and Truth and Reconciliation forums' tendency to centralize mainly on the sexual abuses women activists suffered, it is critical here to not reduce Strejilevich to victim-status,

centering only on her experiences of sexual torture. *Numberless'* narratival form alludes to Strejilevich's personalized experiences of sexual torture and rather than detailing these moments, she subverts the masculinized sexual form of domination by revealing the inextricable connection between the dictatorship's genocidal practices and rigid forms of patriarchal forms of sexual and gender repression. Her *testimonio* is a critical text that challenges such gendered assumptions of testimony and witnessing, such as Jelin et al. postulate in their works; rather, the fragmentation that is thematically and formally evident in her work is meant to disrupt linear manners of cataloguing survivor testimony according to gender. As she states in *Arte,* her testimony is not an attempt to present an historically accurate depiction of the quotidian experiences of dehumanization and gendered abjection in the concentration camps, but rather, she depicts testimony in the following manner:

> Lo que surge es una labor artística en la que ética y estética coinciden. La forma de contar en este caso suele parecerse a la tarea de juntar fragmentos, ruinas que pueden, en su superposición y organización, producir algún sentido. Tal vez los sobrevivientes estamos destinados a dar *testimonio* para mantener viva la dignidad de la verdad – no, insisto, la verdad de los hechos, sino la verdad de lo que le ha pasado y le sigue pasando a la humanidad, que se acerca peligrosamente a un punto de no retorno (20).[125]

Indeed, *Numberless* is not only preoccupied with relating the facts of what occurred to Strejilevich and thousands of other Argentines, but additionally, there is a critical import

[125] "What emerges is an artistic labor where the ethical and aesthetic coincide. The form of narrating in this case usually seems like the work of uniting fragments, ruins that can, in their superimposition and organization, produce some kind of feeling. Perhaps we survivors are destined to provide testimony in order to maintain alive the dignity of truth – not, I argue, the truth of the historical facts, but rather the truth of what has happened and what continues happening to humanity, which is dangerously close to a point of no return."

in disseminating the truth of a gendered history of violence that is "peligrosamente a un punto de no retorno" ("dangerously close to a point of no return") or in danger of being archived and assessed in the academy in a gender-normative manner. The importance of documenting women's experience of political violence and subjucation is echoed in Roberta Avendano Martínez's testimonial narrative, *De la libertad y el encierro*, one of the only existing cultural works that center on women activist's involved in the Mexican student movement of the 1960s and the persecuation and erasure of these political prisoners' narratives.

Disrupting the Amnestic Official History of Mexico's "Dirty War" and the Formation of a Collective Feminist Subjectivity in *De la libertad y el encierro*

While Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco* is perhaps one of the most reknown and critical works that centers on the Tlatelolco massacre, there exist very few first-person *testimonios* documenting the personalized experiences of those involved in the 1968 student movement. Of the several *testimonios* that have been published – Paco Ignacio Taibo II and Luis González del Alba – there are even fewer works that relate the quotidian carceral experiences of the hundreds of political prisoners detained in the moments following the massacre. This literary void and absence of a genre of testimonial literature on the '68 massacre is reflective of the Mexican government's legacy of repression and inculcation of a culture of fear and amnesia. The Mexico City massacre was a brutal, violent shock that quelled the nascent movements that promoted social reform and contested the authoritative regime of the PRI presidencies. While the prior *testimonios* analyzed in this chapter belong to an extensive and established genre of Latin

American (post)dictatorship literature, the number of *testimonios* produced around the 1968 massacre is sparse and indeed, the few that exist are not easily accessible by the general public. One such critical *testimonio*, *De la libertad y el encierro,* details the two-year incarceration of Roberta Avendaño Martínez, student activist and organizer at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM) and member of the National Strike Council from the UNAM's Faculty of Law.

Three months after the massacre of Tlatelolco, Avendaño was detained and arrested by Mexico City police officials while on her way to teach at the Felipe Rivera primary school. Avendaño was illegally detained for six days in a clandestine center and interrogated by police official Miguel Nazar Haro before being transported to the Santa María Acatitla Women's Prison in the city. Initially condemned to sixteen years in prison for "invitación a la rebelión" and "sedición" ("sedition") among other charges, Avendaño was finally released from custody in 1971, having spent two years as a political prisoner based on trumped up charges that she and hundreds of other student activists faced. Thirty years after the Tlatelolco massacre, Avendaño publishes her prison memoire, *De la libertad,* one of the few *testimonios* written by political prisoners of the 1968 student movement in Mexico City and the only existing *testimonio* written by a woman. This discursive absence in the genre of Latin American *testimonio* literature is indicative of a significant cultural and social omission in contemporary Mexican political historiography and indeed, there is a noticeable absence of published or written political memoires relating to the '68 movement and the Tlatelolco massacre in general.[126]

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[126] Since the 30th anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre, the Mexican government has taken an interest in

Despite the incarceration of hundreds of women activists in the aftermath of the Tlatelolco massacre, Avendaño's text appears to be the only published first-person prison testimony written by a woman involved in the 1968 movement. This gendered dynamic is critical to underscore as this absence of women's prison testimonies in relation to the '68 movement is illustrative of the gender power structures that were codified by the traditional, conservative patriarchal nation. While the movement of 1968 did not explicitly center on gender equality or promulgate a feminist agenda, the active involvement of many female students and activists in the demonstrations, meetings, and rallies leading up the the massacre is reflective of the massive mobilizations of the populus to critique and desire critical social changes. The potentiality for massive social change and reform within the national landscape was violently and brutally stemmed in the massacre on October 2nd, and this moment ultimately reaffirmed the existent power dynamics that defined the authoritative Mexican state. As one of the protagonists of the quashed student movement, Avendaño's *testimonio* emerges after a thirty year silence, disrupting the Mexican state's attempt to investigate the human rights abuses committed by the government in 1968 by implicating them as the principal agents of institutionalized, state-sanctioned violence/genocidal repression; her text essentially disturbs the linear temporality of these investigations and condemns the representatives of the state for their orchestration of the crimes committed in the past and the social inequities that are institutionalized in present-day Mexico. Avendaño's carceral

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reappropriating the historical memory of the massacre, which parallels Argentina's President Kirchner and his decision to turn the ESMA detention center into a memorial site preserved by the state. Many survivors of these historical traumas in Mexico and Argentina have critiqued the government's slow response to acknowledge the crimes committed in the past, and they view these attempts at reappropriating this history as a way of controlling the official discourses on these histories of state violence.

experience departs from Valdés and Strejilevich as she was both a “desaparecida” *and* a “presa política” (political prisoner); while she was classified as a political prisoner for the majority of the time of her incarceration, the six days she spent in a clandestine center and these moments of trauma indubitably influenced the narratival form of her *testimonio*, resulting in textual gaps and ellipses in her documentation of those moments of desubjectification. In Avendaño’s *testimonio*, she explicitly denounces the Mexican state’s attempt to distort the historical trauma of the 1968 massacre while simultaneously connecting this moment of state-sponsored terror to present-day Mexico’s institutionalization of racist, gendered, patriarchal and classist mechanisms of repression that is essential to the maintainence of a specific economic, political social order. Similar to Valdés and Strejilevich’s *testimonios*, Avendaño’s carceral experiences result in the evocation of a multivarianced subject of *testimonio* and the critical importance of recuperating the lost narratives of the desaparecidos and compañeras in the prison. However, Avendaño’s *testimonio* is distinctive in its structural form, as she evades elaborating her personal moments of trauma and rather centers on reconstructing the narratives of other inmates whose voices had been silenced within the carceral space, the state of exception. I argue that *De la libertad* centers on the intersectionality of political, class, gender, sexual and racial repressions that underpin –and continue to do so today – the Mexican state, and this act of writing and remembering, to reference Mohanty, invokes a feminist memory that “leads to the formation of politicized consciousness and self-identity” (78).

Avendaño's *testimonio* is published in 1998, which is the same year President Zedillo declares a formal inquiry into the massacre and the year that the National Security Archive released a set of 30 U.S. declassified documents on the Tlatelolco massacre.[127] In an interview conducted a year before her death and the same year as the publication of her text, Avendaño declares the following upon hearing of the Mexican government's decision to release previously classified documents:

> La historia la escriben los vencedores y hoy, aunque nos pese, los vencedores siguen siendo los del gobierno, porque mantienen el poder. Cuántas cosas que los involucran habrán desaparecido de los archivos; van a sacar sólo lo que quieran que veamos, lo demás no, quizá porque ya esté destruido o guardado en la casa de alguien a nivel particular.[128]

Her criticism of recent investigations into the Tlatelolco massacre evokes Benjamin's claim that the victors "[participate] in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostate" (*Theses* VII). Here then, Avendaño's narrative is a critical cultural text that symbolically reclaims the discursive power from the state officials by structuring her *testimonio* in a manner that centers primarily on the past collectivized experiences of trauma and state-sanctioned violence, allotting the repressed with subjectivity and exposing the gendered history of violence.

Her prison narrative is published on the thirtieth anniversary of the massacre, a textual form of past-as-remnant in the present-day discourse on the Mexican "Dirty

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[127] In 1994, under the Freedom of Information Act, the National Security Archive was granted access to these formerly classified documents, implicating the CIA, FBI, the Defense Department, the U.S. embassy in Mexico City and the White House in their involvement in and cognizance of the events surrounding the Tlatelolco massacreNational Security Archive. http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB99/

[128] "History is written by the victors and today, although it weighs on us, the victors continue being the ones in the government, because they still have the power. How many things of those involved will have disappeared from the archives; they are only going to reveal what they want us to se, and the rest no, because it's already destroyed or kept hidden in the house of individuals of certain rank." [http://mujeresporlademocracia.blogspot.com/2008/10/historias-del-68.html]

War." *De la libertad* disrupts the official narrative of the Tlatelolco repression and the state's infliction of psychic and bodily violence on the social and individual bodies. The state systematically eradicated evidence of this historical trauma, yet the remnants of Tlatlelolco appear in Avendaño's narratival format. Avendaño's carceral narrative assumes a structural form that re-creates the collectivized subjectivities of these marginalized, abject bodies of the nation, bare lives that were disenfranchised and deemed unworthy of being lived; these subaltern figures –racialized, gendered bodies— were criminalized by the state and whose narratives were erased from the nation's official history. Avedaño's narratival structure is based upon the reconstruction of these elided, marginalized subjects, imbricating her personal experience of trauma with the collective experiences of trauma that relate to state violence, political repression, institutionalized racism, classism and sexism.

The carceral experience for Avendaño did not, as the state intended, repress her political agency nor did it succed in its desubjectification of the political prisoners; rather, this spatial configuration of the prison, as Barbara Harlow denotes, "provide[s] the critical space within which…alternative social and political practices of counterhegemonic resistance movements are schooled" (10). Indeed, as Avendaño concludes her *testimonio*, it is evident that the quotidian experiences as a political prisoner in the Mexico City Women's Prison reaffirms her personalized investment in solidarity coalitions and the prison is thus symbolically converted from a spatial site of repression into a site of resistance. Despite the structural cohesion of her text in commencing and concluding her *testimonio* with the memory of the Tlatelolco and the

evocation of the political context of the student movement, the experience of trauma upon the individual and social body is at times noticeably absent in her text. The trauma of the massacre, the privation of Avendaño's freedom, and her existence as a political prisoner – as bare life -- for two years are narrativally reflected in the textual omissions and gaps.

As a delegate of the UNAM in the National Strike Council, Avendaño's arrest on January 3, 1969 was directly linked to her participation in the Tlatelolco protest on October 2 and other demonstrations. However, the October 2nd massacre is only cursorily mentioned in *De la libertad* and the *testimonio* centers primarily on her carceral experiences during her two-year detention. The shock of this historical trauma on the social body of the nation is discursively absent in Avendaño's *testimonio* and indeed, there are also specific narratival gaps as she also refrains from relating in detail her personalized moments of physical and psychological trauma. Despite these omissions of personalized experiences of trauma, her narrative centralizes on exposing and denouncing the illegal measures enacted by the state in order to criminalize and eradicate political dissension. In this manner, Avendaño's testimonial narrative does not refer to the Tlatelolco massacre as an isolated instance of state-sanctioned violence, but rather, her text deconstructs state hegemony and the institutionalization of violence that underpinned the sovereign, "democratic" nation by referring to the specific injustices and dehumanization of prisoners that was normalized during the carceral experience.

Avendaño does not include a biographical introduction and instead begins the *testimonio* by relating the moment of her abduction; in so doing, she clearly establishes that this is a historical, political testimonial account that will relate the personal and

collectivized experiences of state violence. Her narrative immediately launches into the moment she is abducted, signifying the commencement of her conversion into bare life; this traumatic moment is narrated in a way that is revelatory of the spatiotemporal disjunctions incurred on victims of state violence.[129] Avendaño is clear to expose the repressive practices implemented by the state and the suspension of the law that defined this state of emergency. The morning after she is initially abducted and transported to the secret detention center, she is interrogated by a large group of armed policemen, garishly wielding their weapons as a display of power in order to intimidate and threaten Avendaño. This performance of excessive masculine power, domination and control reinscribes the hierarchical relation between detainee and agents of the state. Furthermore, the armed officers exert their masculinized form of domination over the unarmed Avendaño, underscoring the gendered hierarchies that were set in place during the PRI regimes. As one of the principal female members of the National Strike Council, her positionality as a politically-active woman organizing antisystemic movements poses a double-threat to the Mexican officials.

Avendaño relates that typically within the first 24 hours of detention, detainees must undergo a formal process of charges, yet as bare lives, these legal processes are not applied to her or any of the other political prisoners. This realization of her biopolitical status as bare life is portrayed in the following passage when Avendaño attempts to assert

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[129] Avendaño was abducted on her way to work in a violent manner and she was threatened with guns, blindfolded, and thrown into an unmarked car; these details are critical as they signify a transnational method of kidnapping that occurred in the Southern Cone as well, connoting as such a hemispheric pattern of repression and state-sanctioned violence.

her legal rights: "¿Yo quiero saber con base a qué orden de aprensión estoy detenida? A mi no me han mostrado nada. Según yo muy legaloide.' El tipo contestó, '¿Qué le han maltratado?' le contesté que no pero quería saber qué hacía ahí. Con gran cinismo me dijo que estaba invitada" (6).[130] Avendaño's juridico-political status as a citizen of "democratic" Mexico is instantly abnegated within these carceral spaces, signifying in this instance her conversion into bare life, into a politically irrelevant member of society. Her legal rights are instantly suspended in this carceral space, a spatial manifestion of the state of exception where she is held for six days without due cause; as Agamben denotes, "The state of exception thus ceases to be referred to as an external and provisional state of factual danger and comes to be confused with juridical rule itself" (168). The state of exception functioning as "juridical rule itself" is evident in this dialogue between Avendaño and her interrogator as she attempts to assert her political rights; the sarcastic, cryptic response by the interrogator stating that she had been officially "invited" by the state into this secret detention center denies Avendaño her political, legal rights while reinforcing masculinist modes of power.

When Avendaño expresses desire to leave the detention center and attemps to assert her legal rights, the Director of Federal Security, Nassar Haro, formally charges her with her presumed "illegal" activities, namely, that she was a member of the National Strike Council. Avendaño narrates here that Haro lists the history of her activism, stemming back to her involvement in the 1958 Revolutionary Magisterial Movement of Othón Salazar and her subsequent leadership positions in the various student and labor

[130] "'I want to know on what basis I have been arrested. No one has shown me anything. I contend that I have done nothing illegal.' This man responded, 'Have they mistreated you?' I responded no, but I wanted to know what I was doing there. With cynicism he told me that I had been invited."

movements and protests organized across the city. Avendaño's political activism is thus reconceived by state officials as acts of subversion and by criminalizing political dissension, they legitimize the suspension of her fundamental rights. By documenting these "illegal" student protests and demonstrations in which Avendaño participated, her *testimonio* exposes the extent of state repression and contradicts the government's revisionist historical narrative that had placed culpability on "subversive" student agents for instigating Mexico's "Dirty War." Moreover, Avendaño implies here that the Tlatelolco massacre was not an isolated violent incident in Mexico's recent history, but rather, their knowledge of her activism commencing in 1958 denotes that the state had been monitoring these counterhegemonic, political movements prior to 1968.[131]

In this manner, Avendaño's *testimonio* establishes this counterhistory as a means of disrupting the dominant, masculinsit narrative on the 1968 movement; despite the narratival gaps and disjunctures that mark her experiences of trauma, Avendaño's carceral narrative is integrated within a collectivized experience of subjugation in the Women's Prison. By tracing these moments of criminalization and desubjectification vis-

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[131] In the final chapter of her *testimonio*, Avendaño concludes by returning to the six demands of the National Strike Council (CNH), the ideological foundations of her political consciousness. The six demands of the 1968 movement have a place in the present and they signify a brief, illusory moment in Mexico's recent history that could have heralded massive social restructuring based upon the promise that the Cuban revolution represented for the rest of Latin America. Avendaño explicates each of the six points, reassessing in the 1990s it significance for the student movement of the 1960s and how this can translate into present-day Mexico. While the Zedillo and Fox administrations portrayed the Tlatelolco massacre as an instance of human rights violation decontextualized from its very specific political roots, Avendaño reinserts the politicized history of the student movement by recapitulating the specific political goals of the National Strike Council. This notion of "democracy" is lambasted in this particular moment of her *testimonio*, as Avendaño and hundreds of other activists spent years incarcerated for their political dissension and thousands more murdered in the Tlatelolco and Corpus Christi massacres under presumed "democratic" presidential terms of Díaz-Ordaz and Echeverría.

à-vis the repressive state apparatus, Avendaño subsequently subverts her status bare life, as well as the status of other female inmates within the carceral space. Her *testimonio* in this manner refrains from divulging her personal moments of trauma and centers on recreating the narratives of other common and political prisoners; this collective subject of *testimonio* invoked in *De la libertad* ascribes the prisoners with political agency and subjectivity which had been elided and abnegated by masculinized forms of state power.

The incarceration and criminalization of thousands of political activists in the 1950s and 1960s denotes the extension of the repressive, authoritative regime of the Mexican state; the carceral space came to symbolize a critical space of repression and the Mexican state's sovereign, biopolitical power over these incarcerated, politically-dissenting bodies. Avendaño explicates how the prison as a physical form of repression intended to subjugate its inmates and and to splinter any political forms of solidarity inside and outside the carceral space; in monitoring the interactions between the inmates, the authorities reinforced their power and control over the incarcerated bodies. Indeed, the constant vigilance of the prisoners – the guard towers—and the degradation of the prisoners – for instance, the forced communal defecation – intended to berate, dehumanize, and destroy the subjectivities of these women, and essentially, fracture the political momentum of the movement.

Furthermore, the spatial configuration of the Women's Prison denied the detainees the possibility of building coalitions and prohibited interactions among the various groups of political prisoners at the Lecumberri prison. Avendaño recalls that she and other political prisoners in the ward had been allowed to convene with the male

political prisoners, yet Ferrer McGregor – Judge of the Municipal Court of the First District—ultimately prohibited this communication as their interaction was perceived as a form of resistance, and as Avendaño recalls, "su rabia fue infinita al vernos sonreír y vernos juntos" ("his anger increased at seeing us laughing together") (81). McGregor's patronizing, overbearing response reflects the state's masculinized form of power, as these women were transgressing the bounds of propriety and contravening the state's definition of traditional femininity. This hierarchical repression that defined the carceral experience is further displayed in its reification of gender norms and heteronormative, Christian, and patriarchal values. Avendaño relates that various classes were made available to the prisoners and were taught by "algunas señoras que pertenecían a algún voluntario 'popof' o bien a alguna 'congregación cristiana' para ofrecer clases de 'flores de migajón', 'tejido', y 'flores y arreglos de medias'" ("some women that belonged to society ladies volunteer organizations or Christian societies that that offer crafts classes") (94). The state here authorizes classes that condone specific ideals of femininity, reinforcing patriarchal notions of domesticity and Christianity in an attempt to re-educate these women. As political prisoners who had participated in political movements, these women transgressed the bounds of the domestic sphere; these courses reflected the state's intention to inculcate traditional, conservative patriarchal values within these women who did not adhere to these social norms.

Despite the extent of the prison system's attempt to re-educate and repress the political subjectivities of the inmates, Avendaño and her compañeras deny the Women's prison of its symbolic authoritarianism. The first chapter of the *testimonio* immerses the

interlocutor into the carceral space by commencing specifically invoking "la cárcel" ("the prison"), an architectural extension of the sovereign state's hegemony and the spatial location that deprived her two years of her life (1). Despite the privation of her liberty, Avendaño's narrative subsequently reduces the daunting spatial elements of the prison as she and her friend and fellow cellmate assert their control over this carceral space: "El edificio que al llegar se nos hizo tan grande e imposible de conocer, empezó a reducirse, fuimos conociendo cada uno de sus rincones de tal manera que al poco tiempo ya nos parecía pequeño" (45).[132] The prison as a spatial site of power and repression is thus reduced and reappropriated by Avendaño and her compañera, reasserting their subjectivity and political agency.[133]

Despite the authorities' intention to deny any forms of resistance or solidarity amongst the prisoners, it is precisely this experience as a political prisoner that reaffirms Avendaño's commitment to social justice and radical politics. Indeed, the two years of her existence as a subjugated, political prisoner -- a bare life whose fundamental rights had been suspended and denied -- merely reaffirmed for Avendaño the critical significance of her political participation in the movement. Since the political prisoners were incarcerated along with common prisoners, Avendaño was exposed to the various systemic economic, racial, political and social injustices against which the common prisoners had struggled. Barbara Harlow articulates this important relationship between

[132] "The building that upon arriving, it seemed to us so big and impossible to know, started to reduce in size, and we began learning about each one of its corners so that in a short amount of time it seemed to us small."

[133] It is important to reiterate here that unlike Valdés and Strejilevich, Avendaño was considered a political prisoner by the Mexican authorities, and not an ex-detenida desaparecida. Although she was technically disappeared and held without due cause in a clandestine prison for six days, she was subsequently transported to the Women's prison and formally charged and sentenced to a sixteen year term.

these prisoners and sets forth that political prisoners, when incarcerated with common prisoners, are often confronted with other disenfranchised sectors of society --the impoverished, racially subjugated, and so forth-- and this carceral experience functions as a type of political consciousness-building (11). Indeed, this is evident in Avendaño's narrative as she frequently invokes the heterogeneous experiences of the other prisoners and constructs a *testimonio* based upon the multiperspectival, divergent histories of her compañeras at the Women's prison. While her *testimonio* at times evokes her personal experiences as a political prisoner, the text is primarily a reconstruction of the elided narratives of her fellow compañeras with whom Avendaño had been incarcerated; these women's histories relayed narratives of gender violence and the economic and racial injustices that were – and continue to be—constitutive of Mexico's stringently patriarchal, Christian, and authoritative society.

This unique narratival form of *De la libertad* invokes a collective subjecthood whereby the majority of the text's forty-two chapters center on the distinct histories of various inmates. In this manner, Avendaño's narrative voice is polyphonous and in so doing, she reveals her inextricable connection to those other incarcerated bodies, desubjectivized and converted into bare lives by agents of the state. In one critical chapter, Avendaño relates the narrative of an elderly female prisoner from the slums on the outskirts of Mexico City known as the "'cinturón de miseria'" ("'belt of misery'"). She had fallen asleep with her candles burning --to the saints, the irony of religious symbolism in its repression of the impoverished sector of society-- and accidentally set fire to her home. Despite suffering severe burns to her body, she survived the blaze only

to be charged with “daño en propiedad de la nación” (“damaging state property”) for accidentally setting her home on fire (88). The state’s justification of her incarceration demonstrates the convoluted notion of “justice” in Mexico, and Avendaño utilizes this narrative to expose these modalities of repression where marginalized bodies are surreptitiously converted into bare lives, to whom fundamental rights are no longer applicable. The nameless prisoner, nicknamed “mi viejita” (“my little old lady”) by Avendaño and the other prisoners, dies quietly one day in the prison hospital and as no relative claimed her body, “el Estado se hizo cargo” (“the State became in charge”) of her remains (88). This declaration – “el Estado se hizo cargo”— underscores the extent of state power and personifies the state, “el Estado” (“the State”), as an authoritative figure that is the proprietor of all of its citizens’ bodies. In this instance, the biopolitical power of the state reduces the woman to a nameless, racialized gendered body, a “criminal” whose life was not considered worthy of being lived.

In order to symbolically challenge the state’s attempt to claim this woman’s body and disappear her within Mexico’s annals of amnesia, Avendaño and her compañeras decide to carry the plain, wooden coffin to the hearse: “¡Cómo pesaba, Dios mío, tan pequeña y delgada que parecía! Se empezó a pasar lista y cada quien al escuchar su nombre contestaba con su voz más fuerte ¡Presente! … al final de la lista se dijo el nombre de ella, entonces todas a una sola voz…todas gritamos fuerte, ¡Sale libre!” (89).[134] Despite the oppressive structuring of the carceral space and its methodic

[134] “How heavy she weighed, my God, so small and thin that she seemed! They began to ready the list and everyone who heard their name responded with a loud voice, Present! ... at the end of the list they announced her name, and then all of us said at the same time…all of us shouted with force, She leaves here with freedom!”

degradation of its inmates, this critical passage marks a significant moment of resistance as Avendaño and her compañeras reclaim the woman's desubjectivized body and assign her with agency. The woman's small, fragile body weighed heavily on the compañeras' shoulders, and this figurative weight of her death signifies the burden it should weigh on the conscience of the Mexican government, as she is one of the innumerable, nameless casualties of Mexican corruption and state violence.

The roll call -- commencing with the names of the inmates and culminating in the name of the deceased prisoner – evokes the multivarianced, polyphonous subject of Avendaño's *testimonio* as one that is always already a collective subject. The roll call is also critical in the demarcation of the word "¡Presente!", signifying that they will retain the memory of compañera – and the countless others who had been disappeared by the state -- in the present-day discourse on social justice; "presente!" furthermore evokes the cries for justice of the disappeared who are still present in the consciousness of the survivors.[135] In addition, the enunciation of the term "presente!" to refer to the elided subjectivities the Mexican state had disappeared and the declaration "presente!" integrates these silenced, obscured narratives into the present. The "una sola voz" ("one single voice") utilized in the roll call demonstrates the coalitional foundations that the prisoners established as a means of counteracting the repressive practices of the Mexican state; this voice is decidedly politicized and evokes the importance of a collective, feminist subjectivity as means of symbolically resisting patriarchal modes of repression and incarceration.

[135] This marks a transnational dimension here as the cry of "presente!" is also utilized in reference to the disappeared in the Southern Cone who are still "presente, ahora y siempre" in the subjectivities of those who survived.

By including these multiple narratives in her first-person *testimonio*, Avendaño correlates the criminalization of political dissentors to the state's criminalization of the racialized, gendered working class bodies.[136] In these narratival reconstructions of these multiple subjectivities, Avendaño centers on women who combat physical and psychic barriers of patriarchy and the opportunities for building political, counterhegemonic coalitions within the prison setting. Barbara Harlow expands on this consciousness-building within the carceral space: "Political prison, then, as a part of the narrative of resistance becomes a site in which these gendered values, the cultural traditions of patriarchy and women's passivity…hierarchical structures of domination and the exploitation of categories of race and class, all are submitted to the systemic brutality of torture and interrogation – and transformed" (46). These political possibilities that Harlow claim are present in the carceral experience is denoted in a chapter that relates the history of a nameless mother of a student activist who was disappeared during the Tlatelolco massacre. Avendaño first meets her when she and several other political prisoners visited the ward where the mentally infirm prisoners were interned. Avendaño relates that the woman, beyond desperation, was unable to process the senseless loss of her daughter during the massacre and as a result, loses her sanity. After incessantly demanding the whereabouts of her disappeared daughter and constantly confronting the police and state officials, she is ultimately incarcerated for challenging state authorities.

When the mother meets Avendaño and the others in jail, she questions them if they have seen her daughter: "'No han visto a mi hija? … ¿No la vieron? ¿No? ¡La tienen

[136] Class and race intersect here, as a majority of Mexico's indigenous population live in squalid living conditions and poverty-stricken areas.

que haber visto! Ella fue a la manifestación y no ha vuelto, diganle que ya vuelva, es morenita de pelo lacio y estudia en la Universidad" (41).[137] The loss and desperation is translated in this moment in the constant, futile questioning of the disappeared girl's mother and Avendaño denotes that this memory affects her in the present:

> Hasta el presente se me enchina la piel y la angustia, la impotencia, se anuda en la garganta, ¿o será la rabia? No pude dar respuesta afirmativa a su pregunta, no pude ayudar a esa pobre madre a recobrar su hija, no pude darle noticias de su hija, no pude, no podré jamás consolarla y decirle donde quedó, ¿Lo sabrá alguien? ¿Lo sabrán acaso aquellos que la masacraron el 2 de octubre de 1968? (41)[138]

This passage depicts how the historical trauma of the massacre has indelibly affected the personal and collective discourses of the present. As Avendaño writes and remembers this particular narrative, she relays that this memory provokes a visceral reaction as she states, "hasta el presente se me enchina la piel." On this impact of trauma on survivor testimony, Dori Laub relates that "trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (69). In this sense, then, this national trauma of the massacre is personified in this individual mother's traumatic experience of having lost her daughter to state violence. The temporal conflation of past and present – as Avendaño utilizes the present-tense to depict this moment – conveys the irreality of the traumatic experience. Despite the "angustia" and "impotencia" that Avendaño feels during this moment – and in the present—she converts these paralyzying effects of trauma into

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[137] "'Have you seen my daughter? … Did you see her? No? You must have seen her! She went to the protest and she hasn't returned, tell her to come home, she has straight, dark hair and is studying at the university."

[138] "To this day I still get goosebumps and the anguish, the impotence, gets knotted in my throat, or is it rage? I couldn't respond to her question, I couldn't help that poor mother find her daughter, I couldn't give her any information about her daughter, I couldn't, and I will never be able to console her and tell her she went, does anyone know? Perhaps the ones who killed her on October 2, 1968 know where she is?"

political and discursive possibilities to incite change and resistance. Indeed, the very act of writing and remembering is evidence of this form of discursive resistance and antisystemic possibilities.

Furthermore, Avendaño's rhetorical questions parallel the lack of answers in relation to the horrors committed by the state and their systematic method of abnegating the historical veracities of what occurred on October 2, 1968. Avendaño challenges the official historical narrative of the Tlatelolco massacre and these questions she poses here have and continue to be evaded by Mexican government officials. While this mother's unanswered questions were stifled and ignored by state officials, Avendaño's *testimonio* rescues this narrative and history from oblivion. What is also significant here is that Avendaño echoes the mother's questions in her *testimonio* and by invoking her silenced voice, Avendaño is allotting the mother with political subjectivity that had been elided by the state. The police constructed a narrative whereby a mentally unstable mother had been arrested for provoking the police and for her civil disobedience; this gendered discourse of the grief-laden, hysterical mother underscores the state's patriarchal tendencies to portray politically-active women – or women who challenged the state—as hysterical and/or mentally infirm. [139] However, Avendaño repositions the mother as one with political agency, as a woman who sought justice for the daughter's disappearance and as one who challenged state-sponsored violence and terrorism.

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[139] This discourse of the grieving, mentally-unstable mother is also present in the military repressions of the Southern Cone, specifically, the mothers and grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires who were commonly referred to as "las locas de la Plaza de Mayo." For further discussion of the politicization of motherhood in the Southern Cone military regimes, see Jean Franco's "Gender, Death, and Resistance."

By aligning the marginalized experiences of the common prisoners to the narratives of the political prisoners, Avendaño creates a pluralized feminist subjecthood of *testimonio* that contextualizes the 1968 movement within a larger narrative of antisystemic resistance; this narrative has a critical place in Mexico's present-day discourse as the 1968 movement was predicated on promoting and instigating social justice that attempted to dismantle the traditional, patriarchal, Christian paradigm that underpinned the nascent Mexican neoliberal state. *De la libertad* exposes the societal constructs that delimit the disenfranchised sectors of the Mexican community and the repressive practices that maintain these hierarchies of power; these marginalized groups – whether racialized, gendered, or impoverished—are constituted as bare lives by the government whereby their fundamental rights are suspended. As Avendaño relates in her *testimonio*, these bare lives can be easily incarcerated without option for rehabilitation or transformative opportunities to break free from cyclical nature of exploitation and oppression.

The production of language, *testimoniar,* for Avendaño here is a critical mode of contesting these hierarchies of power that attempt to elide the hetereogeneous subjectivities of the women in the Women's prison. I argue that Avendaño's narrative voice and the construction of a collective subject is inherently feminist and antisystemic, invoking the multiplicity of the politicized histories and identities that the patriarchal Mexican state had intended to silence and hystericize. As I will explore further in the following chapter, my discussions with Avendano's cellmate, Ana Ignacia Rodríguez, reveal that the massacre and other modes of state violence had terrorized many

politically-active women – and men—into silence and back to their prescribed social and gender, and class roles. Furthermore, after the massacre, the state disappeared much of the evidence – bodies, archives – making it very difficult for family members to find their missing relatives. In this case, mothers who were searching for their children were depicted as hysterical and exaggerating, and many police officials dismissed their claims by stating that the women were insane or that their missing children had probably run away. By including these vignettes in her *testimonio*, Avendaño is underscoring the critical importance of a collective subjectivity by reconstructing these silenced, heterogeneous narratives of women from various disenfranchised groups: “Muchas fueron las compañeras que conocí en la cárcel …hubo tanta gente que apoyó … [y] cada quien tiene su parte de recuerdo, de cariño y de agradecimiento, para todos ellos ¡Gracias mil! ¡Adelante!”(63-64).[140]

I am cognizant of the problematic notion of labeling Avendaño as a “feminist” activist as the student movement in Mexico -- and indeed in other Latin American nations during the 1970s-- built coalitional links that united men and women in common struggles that challenged the hegemonic, patriarchal and exploitative practices of their governments. However, I argue that this collectivized subjecthood present in Avendaño’s *testimonio* evokes a particular gendered narrative based upon the multivarianced experiences of the various compañeras in the Women’s Prison. Mohanty’s passage explicates how it is critical to be cognizant of the geohistorical and political nuances of various Third World political movements and examining these movements through a

[140] “I met many companeras in prison…there were so many people who were supportive… [and] each one I remember with fondness and gratitude, and to everyone, Thank you so much! Carry on!”

feminist lens can expose the intersectionality of political, social, gendered, sexual, racial, and class repressions. In this manner, I contend that *De la libertad* is a critical text that reveals this intersectionality vis-à-vis the construction of a collectivized subject of *testimonio* and indeed, Avendano's act of *testimoniando* and remembering "leads to the formation of politicized consciousness and self-identity" (Mohanty 78).

Decades after the massacre, Avendaño continued her commitment to her political activism and utilized her law degree to liberate fellow political prisoners in the 1970s. Up until her death in 1999, Avendaño carried with her the desire to inform and to mobilize the masses in order to inspire the creation of a more just nation; the desire of the Mexican state, for those who survived this historical trauma to disappear into the oblivion of a history that is not officially documented and only exists vis-a-vis the memories of those who participated in the movement. In this portion of the text, Avendaño relates her continued frustration and disappointment with the continued exploitation and systematic corruption of her nation:

> Mi rabia, mi deseo de lucha y todo que esto conlleva, no pueden desaparecer puesto que aquello contra lo que luché aun persiste, falta que el pueblo realmente ejerza la democracia…mi rabia se ha hecho infinita y aunque vieja y enferma cargo con ella, esto les platico a cuantos así lo desean y a veces hasta a quienes no lo desean…a luchar unidos por el objetivo que a todos nos va a favorecer, un México mejor…[141]

As I will explore further in this last chapter, Avendaño and other survivors of state violence have utilized their experiences of gendered subjugation and repression in order

[141] "My rage, my desire to struggle and everything that contains, they cannot disappear because what I struggled against still persists, the people need to exert democracy…my rage is infinite and although I am old and not well, I carry that rage, this I tell to people to who want it and even to those who don't want it…to fight united for the objective that will benefit us all, a better Mexico."

to not only recuperate the historical memory of these episodes of violence, but to mobilize present-day movements that critically combat the existing forms of exploitative measures sanctioned by the hegemonic state. As Avendaño eloquently articulates, everything that she had struggled for during the movement of the 1960s has not dissipated and the goals of the movement have yet to be realized in Mexico. This "politicized consciousness" evident in *De la libertad* evokes the possibilities of Third World feminist alliances, and despite the pitfalls of categorizing Third World women's *testimonios* as feminist texts, I believe it is essential to investigate how these cultural texts pose challenges to hegemonic masculinist discourses on historical memory and testimonial literature. As I will develop in the final chapter, it is critical to explore how these narratives destabilize problematic assumptions of women's oral narratives and the existing gender-normative frameworks that are utilized when analyzing women's oral narratives of political resistance.

CHAPTER THREE – Testimonies of Resistance: Third World Feminism and the Politics of Solidarity in Latin American Women's Carceral Narratives

"Yo no me considero feminista, pero sí me considero con una forma muy particular de pensarme mujer…pero no feminista, una forma muy particular…la cuestión de género no estaba planteada, porque no era necesario plantearla…una ideología del cambio, de cambio de una sociedad, de igualdad, de compañeros, de posibilidades." – Margarita Cruz, survivor of the Escuelita Faimallá Detention center in Tucumán, Argentina and member of the AEDD.[142]

"Feminist oral historians interviewing women who do not communicate as men do have learned to discard idealized, androcentric concepts of the effective oral history interview, the assumption that a universal method can successfully be applied to situated and particular oral history encounters. Interviewers who validate women by using women's communication are the midwives for women's words." – Kristina Minister, "A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview."

While chapter two explores the politics of gender in the written carceral testimonies of survivors of state-sanctioned violence in Mexico and the Southern Cone, this chapter assesses the oral narratives of former political prisoners in these same regions. In the epigraph above, oral historian Kristina Minister asserts that one must utilize a feminist lens when assessing women's oral narratives and researchers cannot rely upon a universal framework when conducting interviews with women. In one respect, it would seem Minister is centering her focus on the importance of recuperating the elided narratives of women from distinct historical-political contexts, however, in her essay she reinforces the very heteropatriarchal paradigm that she sets forth to destabilize. While I concur with Minister in that a universal approach ignores the specific realities that women faced in their respective cultural, historical and political contexts, she relies on a vernacular that is inherently biologically gendered – "the midwives for women's

[142] " I don't consider myself a feminist but I do have a special way of considering myself a woman . . . but not a feminist, a very special way of thinking. . . the question of gender was not in place because it was not necessary to consider it . . . an ideology of change, change in society, for equality for friends and of possibilities."

words" – and is indeed problematic as she states, "a feminist oral history frame will nurture and assist in the interpretation of stories by women for women" (37). Indeed, it is not only Minister who relies upon a gender-normative schema in assessing women's oral narratives vis-à-vis a "feminist" lens. Feminist oral historian Sherna Gluck as well as oral historians Concepción Ruiz-Funes and Enriqueta Tuñón underscore the importance of validating women's active roles in various historical contexts, however they do so through a decidedly gender-normative approach, disavowing the politicized context of the women's narratives and this furthermore reproduces a hierarchy between the First and Third Worlds and the problematic relationship the academy sometimes develops in relation to its areas of study.

These contradictions evident in this feminist oral history scholarship have posed critical limitations on my angle of research for this concluding chapter which engages with three interviews I conducted with female survivors of Latin American state violence. As one woman stated to me, there exists an absence of critical focus on Third World women's narratives as significant historical-political moments have predominately been narrated by male protagonists. In this way, I found existent scholarship on women's oral narratives limiting in their purview of transnational feminism, Latin American activism and women's politicized agency. As Margarita Cruz's statement indicates in the epigraph, many Latin American women who participated in resistance struggles did not define themselves as feminist, however, their political identity and involvement in counterhegemonic movements were predicated on a politics of equality that included sociopolitical changes based on gender equity. In many ways, this existing feminist

scholarship evades addressing the political agency and the history of political consciousness that is critical for many women who were affected by Latin American state violence. Thus, in this chapter, I attempt to remain faithful to the political contexts of my interviews, relying on Alessandro Portelli's oral history scholarship and Davoine and Gaudilliere's work on historical trauma and psychoanalysis to assess the interviews. As survivors of state violence, these women provide their oral histories on the systematic forms of genocidal repression in Latin America during the height of the Cold War; these oral narratives serve as critical cultural texts that insert the state-sponsored violent past into the political terrain of Argentina, Mexico, and Chile's present, and are critical texts that disseminate pertinent information on the gender-based experiences of incarceration and politicized resistance against the nascent neoliberal, free market economic policies ratified in their societies.

In this chapter, I center on the importance of oral histories as critical cultural texts that serve as invaluable historical sources in my investigations on politically-active women in resistance movements in Mexico and the Southern Cone. In his text, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, Alessandro Portelli contends that oral sources provide critical insight into the significance of various historical events, and not as much on the events of the past; he is clear to maintain, however, that these oral sources do offer "factual validity" as they often reveal facts that were omitted from historical records. According to Portelli, what distinguishes oral historical sources from written sources is the emphasis on the speaker's subjectivity as he states, "oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what

they now think they did" as this information provides information on "people or social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted" (47, 50). Mexican oral historian Antonio García de León similarly notes that oral history addresses the following: "es un replanteamiento de la historia en donde la memoria colectiva, la memoria social, se revaloriza" (158). These marginalized narratives proffer critical histories that have been systematically obfuscated by the dominant class and the state. As oral histories rely upon the memories of individuals and often with the passage of many years, many historians criticize oral histories as viable historical sources.

While many historians question the historical accuracy of oral testimonies due to faulty memories and the passage of time, I believe this dangerously elides the information that survivors provide in relation to their society's history. While oral histories may not always be empirically factual, the same may be said about official histories constructed by nation-states, where objectivity and veracity can always be challenged. Moreover, as many oral historians have noted, historical accuracy is not the primary function of oral testimonies but rather there are both historical information and aural qualities of the narrative that are essential to examine. As Portelli aptly contends, "oral sources compensate chronological distance with a much closer personal involvement" and in my research, these oral sources have elucidated historical events that the state for decades had attempted to eradicate and elide (52). I believe Alessandro Portelli's term "history-telling" is most useful in my research, which he defines as "the combination of the prevalence of the narrative form on the one hand and the search for a connection between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformation of society,

on the other" (6). Indeed, it is the transformative politics that is a pivotal feature of the oral testimonies of former political prisoners in Mexico and the Southern Cone; despite having survived egregious acts of psychological and physical violence and having been divested of their fundamental rights by the state, these political prisoners have utilized this personal and historical trauma in order to brush history against the grain and to expose the radicalized, politicized possibilities of these lived experiences of trauma.

In this chapter, I argue that the survivors' incessant return to their past traumas are acts of radical political subversion that denounce perpetrators of genocide, years of institutionalized amnesty and a culture of apathy that has defined post-dictatorship Argentina, Chile and post-Tlatelolco Mexico. In *Actos melancólicos,* Christian Gundermann sets forth that post-dictatorship Argentina's attempts to appropriate the historical trauma of the military regime in order to adhere to an official memory that would disassociate the violent past from Argentina's present-day neoliberal economic order. Referring to Freud's essay on "Mourning and Melancholia", Gundermann claims that in the Argentine case, melancholia constitutes the inability to accept the loss of a person or loss of a political ideal. This results in melancholic acts of resistance, a melancholia which he defines as the following: "la condición que posibilitó no solamente la supervivencia de una cultura crítica al proyecto neoliberal, sino que incluso produjo profundas transformaciones en el imaginario cultural hacia la fundación de una nueva izquierda" (40).[143] Gundermann articulates that various groups, such as H.I.J.O.S. and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, engage in various acts of resistance ("'trabajos

[143] "Melancholy is the condition that made it possible, not only for the survival of criticism of the neoliberal project, but it also produced a deep transformation in the cultural imagination towards the foundation of a new left."

melancólicos'") that challenge this effacement of Argentina's violent history and the current neoliberal society that is predicated on this historical amnesia (16).[144] In this chapter, I am interested in exploring the impact of trauma on oral narratives and I am primarily concerned with examining women's oral narratives of survival and resistance in order to unpack what is not said or obfuscated in relation to these women's lived experiences of trauma and political persecution.

Methodological Approach and Interview Background

With this theoretical framework on trauma and oral history in mind, I felt sufficiently prepared to interview survivors of violent traumas and political genocide in Mexico and the Southern Cone. Taking the theoretical training from my experience participating in the UC San Diego Spanish Civil War Audiovisual Archive Project, my experiences interviewing survivors of the Francoist repression informed the methodological approach utilized when interviewing survivors of Latin American historical traumas.[145] I became invested in researching the often elided narratives of

[144] In their text, *Loss: the Politics of Mourning,* on trauma, memory and the politics of mourning, David Eng and David Kazanjian elucidate the politicized possibilities that are inherent in the melancholia's proximity to past traumas. In the introduction, Eng and Kazanjian refer to Freud's seminal essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" in order to "depathologize" melancholia and its negative connotations (3). Freud's analysis reveals that there is lacking sufficient research and empirical evidence in order to deem melancholia a pathological affliction and that "the inhibition of the melancholic seems puzzling to us because we cannot see what it is that absorbs him so entirely" (167). It this aspect --the uncertainty, the unknown, that which is puzzling -- which is of importance in Freud's findings on melancholia as it seems that those afflicted with melancholia possess a greater "self-knowledge" which is why it is deemed pathological, and as Freud states, "we only wonder why a man must become ill before he can discover truth of this kind" (167-68).
[145] In the summer of 2008, I participated in this Spanish Civil War Audiovisual Archive and worked with six other graduate students conducting interviews with men and women who survived the violent repression during the Civil War and the subsequent Fascist Francoist regime; many of those we interviewed had never provided their narratives before and had been terrorized into silence by the regime and the post-dictatorship government's emphasis on apathy and oblivion of their recent traumatic past. During the

women's participation in resistance movements in the Mexico City student movement and the various militant groups of the Southern Cone.

Thus, with this training I was able to successfully localize and realize interviews with approximately ten women survivors of state violence in Mexico and the Southern Cone. In the summer of 2009, I worked with the *Association of the Ex-Detained Disappeared* (AEDD) in Buenos Aires; the AEDD is comprised of mostly concentration camp survivors of the dictatorship and was formed in 1984 when various survivors met after giving their testimonies to the trials against military officials upon the demise of the dictatorship.[146] The political subjectivity for the members of the AEDD and of the association itself is a critical component as they underscore to me that they were and continue to be politically active. During this summer, I also traveled to Santiago, Chile and interviewed former members of the MIR and survivors of the Villa Grimaldi concentration camp. I was also able to travel the following spring of 2010 to Mexico City to interview the only surviving woman ex-political prisoner of the student movement. Traveling to these locales and realizing these interviews provided me with critical insight and connected me with individuals dedicated to the continuous struggle for social, political and economic justices for past crimes of the state. For survivors of state violence, it has been critically important to remain vocal and to provide their testimonies

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summer, I worked with fellow graduate student Jodi Eisenberg in the Seville, Andalucía region and relied on psychoanalysis, trauma studies and oral history theory to assist us in our interviews. Utilizing an open format, we commenced the interviews with general, open-ended questions that allowed the narrator to shape the trajectory of the interview.

[146] The members of the AEDD knew that they shared the desire for justice for the crimes committed during the regime and to bring all the "genocidas" – perpetrators of genocide -- to trial. The survivors also believe it is imperative to publicly disseminate information about the systematic, organized form of repression and eradication of dissenters as a form of political genocide.

whenever possible, as this is a critical example of melancholia's political possibilities and maintaining women survivor's political agency.

While preparing for these interviews, I referred to the psychoanalytic work of Francoise Davoine and Jean-Max Guadilliere's *History beyond Trauma.* Psychotherapists Davoine and Guadilliere are preoccupied with exploring the political and social ramifications of their patients' experiences of trauma and are invested in exploring madness and not denouncing it or demarcating it as purely an illness. In their work with patients, Davoine and Guadilliere attempt to bridge the chasm between history and psychoanalysis vis-à-vis their form of therapy which seeks to elucidate narratives that were obliterated by official histories; their work thus "set[s] in motion a memory that does not forget and that is seeking to be inscribed" (xxvii). Thus, when working with narratives that center on personal events circumscribed within a historical trauma, it is critical to unpack the moments of silence or what cannot be said or represented, which inhabits the domain of Real.[147] According to Davoine and Guadilliere, psychoanalysis is a critical mode of assisting survivors of historical trauma as there is an emphasis on recuperating lost, erased narratives: "What is at stake, then, is precisely the coming into being of the subject, the subject of a history not so much censored as erased, reduced to nothing, and yet inevitably existing" (47). For survivors of Latin American state violence, this particular passage reverberates with the incessant need to provide testimony as the

[147] In their analysis, they refer to Jacques Lacan's conceptualization of three interlocking realms, the Symbolic the Imaginary and the Real; according to Lacan unlocking these three realms results in madness and it is precisely the realm of the Real which represents the uncanny and that which is outside the field of speech and "breaking the limits of body and soul, escaping history, defying time and oblivion" (45-6).

subjectivity of these survivors is always predicated on the subjectivity of the *desaparecidos* and those who did not survive.[148]

When conducting these interviews, I was invested in exploring the elided narratives of women's involvement in radical politics as their politicized accounts of trauma and survival are not integrated in the official memory and history of these nation-states. In order to successfully conduct the interviews, I had to establish a level of trust and comfort with the women, or what oral historians and psychoanalysts' term, "transference." According to Davoine and Guadilliere, this moment of transference during interviews is critical in showing what cannot be said: "the transference to someone else, the other, who is able to receive the impression of this showing and to show how he received it by the use he makes of it" (79). The women I interviewed were curious to learn more of my personal and education background and my political interest in the topic paralleled their current activism and commitment to the recuperation of historical memory. Once trust was established and I indicated my desire to learn about their carceral and political life histories, the interviews commenced with an open format, which allowed for them to control the interview.

Despite this open format I utilize in my interviews, the interview was still guided by my specific questions and interest in the politics of gender and experiences of incarceration. As Portelli notes, interviews are typically guided by the interviewer with specific questions and establishes the tone of the interview. Although the interviews are

[148] The concept of the "desaparecido" in Latin America illustrates what Davoine and Guadilliere state as the subject of history which is "reduced to nothing, and yet inevitably existing"; despite the state's systematic attempt to eradicate and disappear dissenting, political bodies from the nation-state, the desaparecidos have become a phenomenon that has haunted the imaginary of present-day Latin America, invoking the violence of the past in the present.

centered on the person speaking, the first to speak is the interviewer, with introductions and with a specific question which sets the tone and trajectory of the interview. Thus, the difference between oral and written testimony is precisely this dialogic relationship that is established during the interview as well as the trajectory of the interview, which my questions inevitably shape. It is particularly my interest in the unique quality of each interview that differentiates this oral cultural text from its written counterparts; these personal cultural texts serve as oral testaments to the heterogeneous, polyphonous qualities of the life stories of those who experienced historical traumas and repression during the moments of state-sponsored terrorism. However, as I expressed at the start of the chapter, the existent scholarship on oral history and gender merely circumscribes women's narratives within a heteropatriarchal, gender-normative framework, depoliticizing these women's histories of activism. While some of the women I interviewed were mothers, wives, and partners, their narratives primarily engaged with the history of their political consciousness-formation and present-day activism and quest for justice.

Western Feminism and it Discontents – The Limitations of Western Feminist Oral History Scholarship

In various accounts by feminist oral historians, based in both Western and Latin American academies, women's testimonies are often framed within a gender heteronormative framework that negates their political subjectivities. In their essay on the oral histories of Spanish exiles in Mexico, Concepción Ruiz-Funes and Enriqueta Tañón reflect on the uniqueness of women's oral histories and denote that reviewing women's

narratives allow for the reconstruction of "los ciclos de vida de la mujer y…el reconocimiento de su sexualidad, educación, maternidad, reproducción, religiosidad, imaginación y deseos, como partes integrantes de su identidad genérica"; it is this problematic assumption that Spanish women are a singular identity category whose life experiences are based solely on maternity, sexuality, and reproduction (194).[149] Ruiz-Funes and Tañón rely on this model of assessing women's oral narratives based on their experiences within the "esfera privada" ("private sphere") without ever referring to the political histories of these women or their involvement in the resistance struggles during the Francoist repression. Similarly, oral historian Sherna Berger Gluck relies on this framework when she claims that while U.S. women's narratives are often excluded from dominant, national narratives, interviewing women signified that "there was a near, though unspoken, consensus that this meant asking women about certain aspects of sexuality, reproduction, and family relationships" (359). Although Gluck is referring to women in the 20th-century U.S. and not specifically political activists, her essay problematically assumes there is a universal category of woman, ignoring the differences of class, race, sexuality, and political subjectivity.

While indeed it is critical to examine women's oral narratives and to explore these obfuscated experiences in many dominant national narratives, Gluck examines these oral histories with a gender normative lens that reduces these women's narratives to their perspective on "sexuality, reproduction, and family relationships", echoing Ruiz-Funes and Tañón's negation of the women's political agency. Such a narrowed perspective also

[149] "The cycles in a life of a woman and . .. the acknowledgement of her sexuality, education, maternity, reproduction, religion, imagination, desire, all as integral parts of her generic identity."

implies that men's narratives have no insight on these categories and that conversely, women's histories are more apt and well-versed in these categories based on the body, sexuality, and the domestic sphere. Gluck further adds that women's oral history is inherently "a feminist encounter, even if the interviewee is not herself a feminist" (5). I would argue that it is not necessarily a feminist encounter, as most women I interviewed did not proclaim to be feminists; instead, I refer to Mohanty's reliance on Third World feminism and she articulates that Third World women's skepticism of Western feminism is intelligible as it has historically engaged with white, middle-class women's issues. She claims, "Third World women have always engaged with feminism, even if the label has been rejected in a number of instances" and that a Third World feminism centers on "the idea of the simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism; the crucial role of a hegemonic state in circumscribing their/our daily lives and survival struggles" and, significant for this chapter, "the significance of memory and writing in the creation of oppositional agency" (50, 52).

In my chapter's subsequent analysis of three oral testimonies of former political activists from Mexico and the Southern Cone, I attempt to carefully navigate the historical, social and geopolitical contexts within which these oral histories emerge, centering on their unique political subjectivities that impelled them to their past and current commitment to resistance movements. Conversely, I am careful to not force my academic training nor to impose Western academic models of analysis, such as First World feminism, on these sources; it is critical to deconstruct this heteropatriarchal

model of oral historiography but this should be done cautiously, as many of Latin American activists reject the category of "feminist." In this manner, Mohanty's explication of Third World feminism is essential in my engagement of these interviews as Eloy, Negrón, and Rodríguez's narratives reveal a politics of solidarity that converge in their past and present commitment to anticapitalist, antisystemic, antihegemonic social movements. Therefore, this chapter seeks to answer the following questions: what are the limitations posed by existing scholarship on oral history, trauma studies and Western feminism in our engagement with Third World women's oral narratives of resistance? What cautionary academic measures must be taken when referring to transnational feminist theory as it intersects with these cultural texts/oral sources? In assessing the aural qualities of these oral narratives, what do the silences and gaps indicate in relation to their lived experiences of gender-based trauma and subjugation? And finally, as critical oral counternarratives and testaments to the genocidal histories of Mexico and the Southern Cone, how does each interview address the systematic efforts of the state to silence their politicized histories and how do their narratives challenge dominant, masculinist historical discourses?

In order to best address these queries, I turn to three oral testimonies of three women with whom I met and interviewed in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Santiago. I approach these oral narratives as critical cultural texts, cognizant of the implications my personal relationship with these three women had upon the final product of these oral histories. Despite parallel experiences of surviving torture, their fervent commitment to social justice and similar politicized identities, each interview is revelatory of the

multivarianced subject of women's oral history as each narrative exposes the nuances and individual's relationship with their genocidal past and surviving trauma. I commence with my analysis of Nilda Eloy's interview, conducted in Buenos Aires; a survivor of six Buenos Aires concentration camps, her oral testimony was predicated on the recapitulation of her political subjectivity, evading discussion of her personal moments of torture and degradation. In a similar vein, during Amelia Negrón's interview in Santiago, she bases her narrative primarily on a collectivized subjecthood of testimony, invoking her past trauma as predicated on the inextricable connection she has with other survivors and desaparecidos of the dictatorship. While Negrón never refuses an interview relating her experiences as political prisoner of the Pinochet regime, her distanced narrative and the structure of her oral history critically reflect post-dictatorship Chile's complicated relationship with its recent traumatic past. The chapter concludes with an analysis of my interview with Ana Ignacia Rodríguez, activist and survivor of the 1968 Mexico City massacre and ex-political prisoner; as the only surviving female ex-political prisoner of the Tlatelolco massacre, Rodríguez's narrative exposes the elision of Mexico's genocidal past and Dirty War, focusing importantly on the gendered disparities throughout her history of activism.

Although these oral histories diverge in formal structure, narrative trajectory and temporal progression, the interviews generally abstain from segregating men's political experiences from women's experiences and they also evade detailing gender-based forms of subjugation during their incarceration. Ultimately, while Negrón, Eloy and Rodríguez evoke the importance of solidarity by reconstructing a narrative invoking the collective,

political subject of testimony, there is recognition that there exists an absence of women's narratives of resistance in their respective political movements and a general trend to obfuscate women's politicized narratives and relegate them within heteropatriarchal, gender-normative parameters. These narratives reflect the plurality of experiences of women involved in anticapitalist, antiviolent resistance struggles in Latin America. Despite the diversity of experiences, the narratives are ultimately testament to what Mohanty terms the politics of solidarity, demonstrating the radical possibilities of Third World feminism, each woman committed to resistance struggles against apathy, oblivion, and historical distortion as essential in neoliberalism's current reign in Latin America.

Interview with Nilda Eloy – Maintaining Political Subjectivity and "Retacitos de memoria" ("Pieces of memory")

"Yo soy nacida, criada, secuestrada, reaparecida y todo en La Plata" ("I was born, raised, abducted and reappeared all in La Plata"), Nilda Eloy states at the commencement of our interview, conducted July 22, 2009 in La Plata, Argentina. It is an assertive and politically-imbued manner of responding to my first question, "Where were you born?" Eloy presents her political and personal subjectivity in a succinct statement where her place of birth, her origins, the moment of her disappearance and reappearance ascribes La Plata with geopolitical meaning as past and present collude in her opening statement. As I subsequently discuss, Eloy posits her subjectivity within her origins, which later depicts the political and genocidal history of La Plata and the neoliberal origins of the dictatorship; the violent and geopolitical history is inexorable from her place of birth and from her political subjectivity. Furthermore, as an ex-*desaparecida,* she resolutely

declares that this is an essential element of her post-carceral identity; this is critical in exposing the machineries of terrorism upon which the Argentine dictatorship relied in order to exterminate a portion of its population, and the mass disappearance of political dissenters was a central component in the elimination of unwanted bodies and ideologies.

I first met Eloy after attending a weekly meeting of the *Association of the Ex-Detained Disappeared* (AEDD) in Buenos Aires in the summer of 2009.[150] It is important to mention here that my summer internship with the AEDD and participation in their projects established a relationship of trust and accessibility as member Veronica Jeria spoke to Eloy about the possibility of me interviewing her. Despite being a foreigner and only briefly working with the AEDD, Eloy agreed to an interview with me; in casual conversation prior to the interview, Eloy asked several questions in order to gauge my personal and political stance in relation to the theme of the AEDD's work. Once I divulge my Cuban, Mexican and politically left-leaning familial origins, Eloy appeared to relax and engage more openly with her political condemnation of U.S. foreign policy and its imperial history in Latin America and with this moment of transference, the interview proceeded comfortably and naturally.

Eloy, a survivor of six concentration camps and detention centers, has provided her testimony on numerous occasions. Despite having been interviewed multiple times, Eloy did not speak of her traumatic past until 1997. This nearly twenty-year silence and

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[150] With the generous UC Human Rights Fellowship, I was able to work with the *Association of the Ex-Detained Disappeared*, a civic organization based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The association is comprised mostly of survivors of the more than 500 clandestine centers established during the dictatorship and one of their primary projects is to compile survivor testimony of these centers in order to denounce and provide evidence against the thousands of perpetrators of genocide currently awaiting or undergoing trial across the nation.

repression of past trauma indubitably impacts the oral narrative, producing gaps and a circularity during the interview that alludes to the weight of her past on her present subjectivity. Regarding testimony, she states that "Es tan doloroso, todo el relato, dar testimonio es doloroso, entonces es aquello más te duele, a veces hay pedacitos de recuerdos que uno lo tiene tan cerrados en la memoria, que no los dices."[151] The psychic trauma of reliving the past vis-a-vis oral testimony is a critical facet that affects the dialogic relationship between interviewer and interviewee and impacts the temporal linearity of the oral narrative. When speaking of her work with the AEDD, Eloy states that their work is contingent upon survivor testimony, precisely these "pieces of frozen time": "La AEDD es …retacitos de memoria que vamos amalgamando, amasando y retacitos de memoria …porque los retacitos de la memoria son los compañeros que no sobrevivieron" (Davoine xxx).[152] Eloy's political subjectivity is predicated on the innumerable memories she has of the compañeros with whom she was incarcerated, of those who did not survive; it is a collective political subjectivity that was sparked and maintained during her involvement in the AEDD, evident in the group's identity as *ex*-detained disappeared, demarcating the members as survivors of genocidal repression and witnesses to those who were murdered.[153]

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[151] "It is so painful, all of this, providing testimony is painful, so it is that that pains you more, sometimes there are pieces of memory that one has so closed off in one's memory, that you don't say it."

[152] "AEDD is . . . pieces of memory that we mix together, kneading and small bits of memory…because these bits of memory represent our companions that did not survive."

[153] Margarita Cruz, fellow compañera of the AEDD, explains that the collective political subjectivity of the group is an integral aspect, which is precisely why they called themselves the "Association of the Ex-Detained Disappeared." As survivors of this genocide, she states, "A partir del relato nuestro, la única forma material que prueba que los campos de concentración existieron, es parir de los sobrevivientes, no hay otra forma…los sobrevivientes dan cuenta de que pasó en esos lugares…por eso decimos ex-detenidos desaparecidos" ("Through our story, the only way to prove that the concentration camps existed is through

In this section, I center on the non-linearity of Eloy's interview in order to unpack the silences of her experiences of sexual and gender-based torture and dehumanization; Eloy admits to not having explicitly stated previously that she was repeatedly subjected to sexual-based torture. While Eloy reveals that it is indeed critical to discuss such personal moments of torture, I believe this evasion in her testimony is a critique of the human rights community's emphasis on women survivors' sexual-based torture, which – as Fiona Ross has noted— reduces their experiences to gender-specific forms of repression and obfuscates carceral moments of political solidarity and resistance. Instead, Eloy imbues her interview with a political consciousness that defines her subjectivity, which in essence deconstructs this existing scholarship on gender and oral history centering mainly on women's domestic experiences.

A critical component of Eloy's interview is her present-day political consciousness and commitment, and throughout her interview she is clear to provide her analysis of Argentina's genocide –never referring to it as the "Dirty War"—and the geopolitical history of La Plata. After a brief personal introduction, Eloy speaks at length about the exploitation of La Plata's working class at the start of the dictatorship: "Era una ciudad con corbón industrial muy importante que no existe ya…YPF [Argentine oil company] de ese momento tendría unos 30,000 obreros, ahora no llega a los 4-5,000. Esa diferencia, la venta de YPF, el despido de los obreros, hubiera sido imposible de llevar a

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the survivors, there is no other way…the survivors know what happened in those places…for that reason we say ex-detained disappeared").

cabo sin haber cometido el genocidio.”[154] Eloy adds, “Sin haber destruido esos valores, ese grado de participación, ese grado de conciencia política, en el cual nosotros vivíamos, como una cosa natural.”[155] Eloy indicates that the labor repression of La Plata’s working class at the start of the dictatorship was predicated on a genocidal politics whereby all dissension stemming from the working class and university students was decimated. Her personal involvement in this state-sponsored elimination of this particular working and political class in La Plata is imbricated in the history of Argentina’s genocide. In this light, these acts of brutalization and genocide are theorized vis-à-vis Eloy’s narrative of personal trauma, where organized state violence was instituted in order to efface any political dissension to Argentina’s implementation of neoliberal, capitalist economic plans.

This mode of what Portelli terms “history-telling” is present throughout Eloy’s interview as she interweaves her personal narrative with the geopolitical history of La Plata. This is further evident as she recounts to me the moment of her abduction when she was studying medicine in her second year at the University of La Plata: “Tiraron la puerta. Pensé que eran ladrones…la represión en La Plata empezó en octubre de 74…se cierra la Universidad y ahí empieza la represión por ahí no con la magnitud que tuvo después pero sí, ehhh, era una cuestión habitual.” Eloy further relates that this defined La Plata’s history and adds, “Acá estamos en una cafetería, cervecería una de las más viejas de la Plata – 1894…De acá, de acá dentro también se secuestraron gente…tenemos

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[154] “ It was a very important, coal producing, city that no longer exists . . . YPF (Argentine Oil company) at that time probably had 30,000 workers and now there are only 4-5000. That difference, the sale of YPF, the firing of workers, would not have been possible without having committed genocide.”

[155] “Without having destroyed those ideas, that level of participation, that level of political conscientiousness, that we were living, as a normal occurrence.”

lamentablemente el record de ser la ciudad con mayor número de desaparecidos con respeto al porcentaje de habitante…tener una universidad muy importante y cordón de industria."[156] Although Eloy is relating the moment of her abduction, she configures her forced disappearance alongside the mass-scale repression that occurred in La Plata. She parallels her personal history of violence with the violence that became systematized in La Plata ("Es la historia de La Plata" "That is the history of La Plata"), marking her narrative among the innumerable residents of La Plata who were kidnapped and disappeared. Furthermore, she deconstructs the official Argentine history of the "Dirty War", rupturing the accepted narrative that the violence occurred only between 1976 and 1983. As Eloy notes, this state-sponsored terrorism occurred in La Plata in 1974, during the constitutional government.[157] This mode of "history-telling" contests historicism's linear narrative whereby state violence was present during the Argentine dictatorship and links the origins of Argentina's genocide to the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. Moreover, she refers to the physical space where this interview took place -- in a café in La Plata -- and Argentina's genocidal past flows into the present and shapes the dialogic nature of our interview. Here we can refer to Felman and Laub's *Testimony* and the relationship that develops between interlocutor and the survivor of a traumatic event:

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[156] "They broke down the door. I thought they were thieves…the repression in La Plata started in October 1974…they close the University and there begins the repression there, not to the same degree as later but yes, ehhh, it was something habitual." … "Here we are in a cafeteria, one of the oldest bars in La Plata – 1984…over here, even inside of this café they kidnapped people…unfortunately we have the record of being the city with the most number of disappearances with respect to the percentage of people living here…to have a very important university as well as a chain of industry."

[157] This is also done in Cruz's interview, where her detention occurred two years before the dictatorship started in 1974; Cruz was held at La Escuelita Faimallá in Tucumán, Argentina, also known as the School for the Repressors. Cruz was one of many prisoners utilized as a guinea pig for torture and other forms of psychological and physical torture. This was committed under the Independence Operation of 1974, and she thus indicates that this systemic, organized form of torture and repression has neoliberal origins.

"the listener, by definition, partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past" (58). By historicizing the spatial location of the interview, Eloy partially integrates me in this personal, collective narrative of La Plata's history of violence; Eloy's invocation of the past repression that took place in this particular café temporally sustains La Plata's history of violence and furthermore, this moment represents an encounter with the Real that Davoine and Guadilliere discuss, where the past, present and future collapse in this piece of "frozen time."

These narrative devices which Eloy employs throughout her interview clearly present her as a politically-conscious activist, knowledgeable of her city's history during the dictatorship. Her history-telling evades detailing her personal moments and instead delineates the historical-political moment of her repression. This is most evident when I ask her about the six camps and detention centers through which she was passed, whereupon she responded with a succinct list of the names of the centers: "De Arana, al Vesubio, de ahí otro lugar El Infierno, ahí estuve dos meses. Después de ahí, la comisaría de Lanuse hasta agosto 1977 me trasladan a la cárcel de Villa Devoto. Once meses en circuito Camps."[158] Despite having spent almost three years in these centers, Eloy is at first guarded about the carceral experiences in each center and provides empirical data on where she was detained and the duration in each center. This is indicative of a circular

[158] "From Arana, to Vesubio, from there to another place called El Infierno, and there I stayed two months. From there, I was taken to the Lanuse police headquarters until August, 1977 when they transfer me to the Villa Devoto prison. Eleven months in circuito Camps."

narratival approach as Eloy glosses over her three-year detention in order to centralize her testimony on the historical-political context of her detention.[159]

In this vein, she devotes part of the interview explicating the “Circuito Camps”, which refers to the transportation of thousands of prisoners throughout various detention centers, directed by general Ramón Camps and head of Provincial Police in Buenos Aires. She includes this information in order to expose the systematic form of repression that was instituted in the various regions of the nation. She states that this relatively unknown information is work that is assumed by the AEDD and not by the post-dictatorship government. Her transfer among the various camps in “Circuito Camps” was methodically organized and systematically constructed to disappear and elide evidence of the detainee’s existence. This crucial data, as mentioned before, is not information that is readily available to the general public and the AEDD works exhaustively on these projects in order to expose the extent of the genocidal repression, its origins and its aftermath. In “Circuito Camps”, Eloy relates that the transportation to distinct centers represented a form of psychological torture, organized by the dictatorial state in order to erase traces of the detained-disappeared and was an integral form of the dehumanization of the prisoners: “El traslado de un lugar a otro a otro es como, como si vos fueras perdiéndote cada vez mas. Lograr la perdida de la orientación cuando parece que vos te

[159] This tactic of relaying factual details of her incarceration is an essential step towards the reclamation of her own subjectivity that the dictatorship attempted to eradicate as the purpose of her transportation among various centers was to disorient and dehumanize her. Eloy relates that she is able to recall and name all the centers where she was detained, however, she cannot recall the location of the fourth clandestine center.

iba ubicar se trasladaban a otro lado…te ibas perdiendo en los pozos. Ibas hundiendo. Era una forma más de tortura."[160]

As Eloy and other survivors denote, each survivor of the dictatorship relate unique experiences of repression and torture; in her particular case, Eloy was detained in the "Circuito Camps" longer than any other prisoner of that particular rotation and ultimately transitioned from a disappeared body to an official political prisoner of the Argentine state; this particularity reveals the biopolitical power of the military officials as they determined who survived, who remained disappeared, and who was to become a political prisoner. When I asked her why she thinks the officials in "Circuito Camps" decided to transfer her to a public prison as a political prisoner, she answers, "Es una pregunta que no podemos contestar porque no teníamos ningún poder de decisión…hay desaparecidos de gente que no tenía un grado de compromiso político sin embargo están desaparecidos."[161] Many survivors grapple with this paralyzing guilt as to why they were selected to survive and why many apolitical citizens were detained; there do not exist sufficient answers to these extremely unnerving, disconcerting questions and thus, many politically-active survivors, such as Eloy and other members of the AEDD, assume the overwhelming task of compiling as much information on the various detention centers vis-à-vis survivor testimony in order to make sense of seemingly illogical detention and illegal incarceration of thousands of Argentineans. As AEDD compañera Margarita Cruz

[160] "Being moved from one place to another, over and over again, was as if you were losing your mind more and more. Losing your sense of place just when you thought you were settled by moving you again … you felt like you were losing yourself in these depths. You were sinking. It was one more form of torture."
[161] "It's a question we can't answer because we didn't have any control over the decision-making…there are *desaparecidos* who were not politically-active but regardless they remain disappeared."

states in her interview, "Nosotros somos los aparecidos" ("we are the reappeared"), signifying in this manner that their post-carceral identity always already invokes their former status as disappearead, as dehumanized, desubjectified entities. As "aparecidos", Eloy, Cruz, and their compañeros assume the arduous task of constantly reliving and re-telling their experiences as detenidos-desaparecidos in order to maintain subjectivity of the thousands of compañeros who did not survive, "remnantes molestos" in post-genocidal Argentina.

The reclamation of Eloy's political subjectivity is based on the dissemination of her testimony, which is a simultaneous reconstruction of her personal history of trauma and violence that always evokes the collective subject of testimony. What is apparent in Eloy's oral narrative is that the process of her personal subjectification in the post-dictatorship era is predicated on a continuous return to the past, and always refers to the identities of the thousands of compañeros who were disappeared. This manner of continuously alluding to her past desubjectified self is evident when she commences the interview: "Yo soy nacida, criada, secuestrada, reaparecida y todo en La Plata. Me largaron en Capital Federal, pero bueno, incluso, salir del país, después de mi liberación estuve un año y pico en España pero volví aquí. Es mi ciudad."[162] Here, then, her subjectivity is bound to her past trauma and her speaking subject is one that always implicates her past desubjectified self. By providing her testimony, Eloy is engaging in a political act vis-à-vis the reclamation of her personal, politicized identity, in this manner,

[162] "I was born, raised, abducted, and reappeared all in La Plata. They released me in Buenos Aires, but well, even upon leaving the country, after my release I was in Spain for about a year but then I returned here. This is my city."

the process of her subjectification which invariably invokes her present-day positionality as a female political activist and not a passive victim of sexual torture.

Eloy's statement also reveals how the narrative structure of her testimony organizes her memories according to her experiences as a former detained-disappeared and survivor of brutal repression. Eloy commences the interview and organizes her memory vis-à-vis through the interview's structure, which repeatedly refers to her political subjectivity and the collective identity of her fellow compañeros and the geopolitical history of her natal city. What formally organizes her narrative here is the political basis of the act of providing testimony; while this signifies a critical re-construction of her personal subjecthood, Eloy indicates that the driving force behind her testimony is the ability to speak for and about the thousands of desaparecidos with whom she spent time in the various detention centers, and Eloy is, to cite Agamben "bear[ing] witness to…missing testimon[ies]" (*Remnants* 34). In Eloy's case, this desire to reconstruct her subjectivity and the subjectivity of her disappeared compañeros was a delayed process as she did not provide testimony until 1999. Repression of the traumatic moment is a common manner in which survivors cope with their experiences as oftentimes providing testimony signifies a return to the traumatic moment. As I will subsequently assess, her further reluctance to speak of her personal experiences of torture – specifically repeated raping – also impacted her decision to remain silent about her experiences. The trajectory of her post-dictatorship positionality shifted when she describes to me the first time she provided her testimony. Eloy relates that after her release from prison, she did not join any survivor group nor did she speak of her

experience to anyone, yet after hearing Spanish Judge Castresana – one of the key judges responsible for Pinochet's arrest in London in 1998 – she felt compelled to speak: "algo algo pasó en mi que me animé ir, cuando terminó me levanté, le di la mano, y empecé a llorar. Jamás había llorado en esa manera" ("something something happened to me that made me go, when I finished I got up, I extended my hand to shake it, and I started to cry. I had never cried in that way"). After the passage of many years, this critical moment signifies the inescapable aspect of Eloy's trauma and her public act of crying was the pivotal return of the traumatic past.

After breaking her fifteen-year silence, Eloy contends that providing testimony is an arduous, political act as it entails a return to the concentration camp, a return to the moment of desubjectification: "Dar testimonio siempre es duro. Siempre es duro. Uno no, no es algo que te acostumbre. Y pasa que la primera vez que declaras, la sensación que olvidaste decir montones de cosas, eso es lo normal" ("Providing testimony is always hard. It is always hard. One does not, it is not something that you get used to. And what happens is that the first time you speak, you get the feeling that you forgot to say a bunch of things, which is a normal feeling"). Since first breaking her silence, she joined the AEDD and has been a member ever since 1997. She states that speaking out is essential and says, "Son once años que voy al juicio, once años que voy a las audiencias, once años que cumple esa función de acercamiento…a otros sobrevivientes…para dar testimonio tienes que volver meterte en el campo" ("It has been eleven years since I've been giving testimony in the trials, eleven years that I attend the trials, eleven years that it has been

since I have gotten close to…other survivors…to provide testimony you have to return again to the camps”).

Eloy states that in order to engage with critical memory work, in order to effect radical change, she must repeatedly return to the camps. Returning to her past trauma is in essence an act of political subversion and contests post-dictatorship Argentina’s fomentation of a culture of amnesty and apathy. As Dori Laub aptly states, the testimonies provided by survivors of concentration camps reveal the “very secret of survival and of resistance to extermination” and by recounting the camp experience, one is “breaking out of” the camp by the very act of giving testimony (62). Continually returning to the threat of death which defined the camp experience in the act of providing testimony paradoxically underscores one’s commitment to survival and the process of subjectification. Here, then, in Eloy’s particular experience, providing testimony is an extremely difficult task as it assumes the return to the trauma of the carceral experience, a return to the ever-present threat of death, and the torture and death of her compañeros.

While Eloy’s testimony signifies the critical moment of her political subjectification, it also implicates that political subjectivities of the thousands of compañeros who remain disappeared. Eloy’s personal subject of testimony is always a collective subject as each time she provides her testimony, she is speaking for and about these compañeros, and according to Agamben, Eloy is “bear[ing] witness to…missing testimon[ies]” (34). Eloy further explains to me this act of speaking of her past as a detained-disappeared always invokes the memory of her compañeros in the various centers: “La inmensa mayoría de los testimonios es hablar de los compañeros que

estuvieron con ellos…Siempre lo vi como una deuda, porque muchos de esos compañeros que hoy no están, son los que hicieron posible que yo esté. Que ahí con una palabra, con una caricia, hicieron, te ayudaron en sobrevivir. Es la deuda. Yo lo siento así."[163] She continues to describe the moment of Etchecolatz's sentencing in 2006: "en el medio de la desesperación de que Jorge [López] no estaba, era poder mirarlo a él, y yo lo miraba a él, no sé cómo explicarlo, pero era como yo lo miraba pero, como si tuviera dos imágenes, lo que yo tenía era imágenes de compañeros, de momentos, como si fuera una película, era la alegría de la condena, la desesperación por la falta de Jorge." [164] She further describes the first moments of hearing the guilty sentence and says, "Yo estuve sentada. El movimiento alrededor mí, no me podía mover. No me podía mover. La mirada clavada en Etchecolatz todos los minutos previos y adelante mío, tenía ya la foto de Jorge."[165] In one respect, Eloy alludes to the "deuda", or survivor guilt compelling her – and other survivors – to constantly remember and speak for the deceased; however, Eloy describes this as a debt as her compañeros provided these critical moments and gestures of solidarity that aided in her survival as they combated the systemic

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[163] "The majority of testimonies have to do with talking about the compañeros that were with them… I always considered it an obligation, because many of those compañeros that are no longer with us, are the ones who made it possible for me to be here. Those that, with a word, a caress, allowed you, helped you, survive. That is the debt to them. I feel that deeply."

[164] Eloy served as the key witness to the prosecution against Miguel Etchecolatz, who served as the former chief of Buenos Aires police during the dictatorship. Eloy and Jorge Julio López were both witnesses for the prosecution against Etchecolatz, which resulted in the life term of Etchecolatz in 2006. On September 18, 2006, López was disappeared for the second time in his life before he was due to continue his testimony against Etchecolatz; he remains disappeared to this day, a harrowing testament to the violent vestiges of the dictatorship.

[165] "In the middle of the desperation we felt with Jorge's [López] absence, I was able to look at him [Etchecolatz], and I was looking at him, I don't know how to explain it, but, I was looking at him but, as if I had two images, what I had was the images of compañeros, of moments, as if it were a scene of a movie, the joy of hearing the verdict, the desperation we felt with Jorge's absence…I was seated. I could not move for the activity around me. I could not move. I was staring at Etchecolatz the moments before [the verdict] and in front of me, I was holding a photo of Jorge."

mechanisms of dehumanization. These acts of solidarity and human interaction, as Eloy notes, "era lo que te permetía a sobrevivir" ("it was what allowed you to survive").

In another respect, this passage reveals the continuity of the repressive tactics of the past bearing on the present. While Eloy and López testified against Etchecolatz in order to condemn the past genocidal practices and deaths of their compañeros, Eloy ultimately provides testimony for the disappearance of her compañero López. In essence, the ex-detained disappeared López returns to inhabit this desubjectified status and thus becomes one of the many specters and ghosts that form the collective subjecthood of Eloy's testimony. In his essays on mourning, Derrida reflects on the death of his friend, Althusser and contemplates the idea of haunting: "Ghosts: the concept of the other in the same…the completely other, dead, living in me…this concept of a ghost is as scarcely graspable in its self…as the ghost of a concept. Neither life nor death, but the haunting of the one by the other" (41-42). When the ghosts are the victims of genocide and state-sponsored terrorism, the traumatic context intensifies the haunting and the "dead, living in me" resurface in Eloy's testimony. While Eloy is haunted by the ghosts of her deceased compañeros, she is thus re-traumatized when López is disappeared again in 2006, adding to the collectivized subject of her testimony, reflecting the temporal circularity of trauma. This passage reveals the continuity of the repressive tactics of the past bearing on the present in the disappearance of Lopez during the trial. This act of violence occurred in a democratic moment, signaling the degree of impunity and permanence of state terrorism and tactics meant to intimidate survivors into silence and oblivion.

What I think is remarkable about this passage of the interview is her resilience and commitment to her compañeros during the trial; despite the trauma of López's disappearance as well as the potential threat that this abduction signified to Eloy's safety, Eloy continues attending the trial in order to ensure Etchecolatz's conviction. The intimidating tactic of López's abduction does not hinder Eloy from concluding her testimony at the trial, and it has the contrary effect as this motivated Eloy to finish her testimony in López's stead. The various images of her past compañeros and the photo of López she holds at the moment of Etchecolatz's sentencing allows her to finish her testimony during the trial. As she notes, her depiction of the moment of his guilty verdict is indeed like a scene of a film, where the elation of those around her in the courtroom are juxtaposed against her immobile stance, her gaze fixed firmly on Etchecolatz. Derrida's contradictory notion of the "dead, living in me" is evoked at this moment, where the images of López and other compañeros overwhelm and immobilize her, yet all the while she cannot remove her gaze from the perpetrator of these disappearances, one of thousands of military officials who lived comfortably in amnesty. Indeed, it is a harrowing, impacting moment of her testimony as Eloy reconstructs the moment of Etchecolatz's sentencing after years of amnesty, and the intensity of her gaze conjures these elided and repressed subjectivities.

Another integral aspect of this passage is the aural quality of this moment in the interview; when she speaks of López's disappearance, the intonation of Eloy's voice alters, and her subdued tonality signifies the difficulty with which it is to enunciate the events surrounding the disappearance of her compañero. For the majority of the

interview, Eloy speaks jovially and with purpose, her raspy laugh oftentimes interjecting various moments of the interview; what's more, her manner of speaking signaled to me her confidence when talking of the genocidal past and assuredly presenting her political subjectivity. However, when she relates her relationship with López and his subsequent disappearance, the tone shifts and is indicative of the circularity of time and the violent vestiges of dictatorship-era Argentina. Portelli reflects on the importance of the orality of testimonies: "While the orality of the sources is scarcely thematized, and little advantage is taken of the possibilities of narrative and linguistic analysis, the 'oral' remains essential to the success of this book as 'history', through the category of subjectivity" (17). Indeed, this subdued tone of her narrative at this moment evokes the presence of the subjectivities of the disappeared with whom Eloy shared the carceral experience, as well as the disappearance of López in 2006.

Thus, for Eloy and other survivors of the Argentine genocide, testimony is always a political act that relies on the collective speaking subject in order to reaffirm the political subjectivities of the thousands of disappeared and the ex-disappeared. After repressing her trauma for years, Eloy is able to commence the process of subjectification through the act of speaking and reclaims her political subjectivity that the dictatorship had attempted to systematically eradicate. As she tells me, she was not meant to survive as the military officials sadistically told her when she was transported to clandestine center, "El Infierno", that she had arrived to hell and that she was not going to live, as she states, "era un lugar de exterminios" ("it was an extermination center"). By surviving one of the most sinister centers which functioned solely as an extermination camp, Eloy bears

witness to the genocidal, organized repression that defined the military regime. For Eloy and other members of the AEDD, it is essential to recapitulate the data of the various detention centers in order to uncover the regime's genocidal and organized method of repression; and while initially Eloy and other AEDD members clarify that they do not distinguish "compañeros" from the "companeras" – all equals in their political commitment to resistance struggles in Argentina—Eloy later reveals that there is indeed a necessity to emphasize the patriarchal modes of repression and gender-based violence upon which the dictatorship relied.

Eloy and other members of the AEDD, as protagonists of their own history, maintain their political positionality in regards to genocide in order to continue exposing the genocidal repression that defined the dictatorship and its link to present-day Argentina's neoliberal economic policies. Despite the political slant and somewhat de-personalized account of her testimony, Eloy eventually discloses the gendered experiences of subjugation during her incarceration. Without explicitly asking her about the gendered moments of dehumanization during her incarceration, it is probable that Eloy would have evaded any mention of her personal sexual-based torture and abuse in the camps. The one memory she volunteers that reveals gender-specific moment of repression refers to her time with other compañeras in the Vesubio concentration camp: "Era un lugar muy particular que tenía un enorme parque afuera…entonces los fines de semana se juntaban a comer asado…los oficiales…seleccionaban algunas mujeres y nos sacaban para bañar…entonces nos desnudaban y nos mangueaban. Y nos tenían así, y

nada, es perverso. Y como ponían un jarrón con flores."[166] In this memory, Eloy utilizes the first-person plural to describe this sadistic moment of gender-based humiliation and dehumanization; in this manner, the "we" refers to the plural subject of testimony, and I believe this aids her ability to relay this information with more ease as she is subjugated to these form of torture in a collective setting. This particular memory exemplifies this specific tension between dehumanization and sexualization; as the guards employ institutionalized forms of dehumanization by forcing the women to strip so they may hose them down like animals and order them around, they are simultaneously fixating on their bodies, the subjects of a sadistic, perverse male gaze. The humiliating moment underscores the male prison guards' heteropatriarchal gaze as the women are reduced to their naked bodies, utterly dehumanized and deprived of their political agency.

After an hour and a half of our interview, I feel comfortable asking Eloy about gender-based torture in the camps, framing my question within political parameters. I ask her if the military officials relayed their discontent with the women prisoners for not complying with the heteronormative role of being an apolitical wife and mother. Eloy relates that the systematic use of rape in the detention centers was an integral, premeditated form of domination and torture against women who transgressed their domestic roles: "Para la mujer todo era peor, el simple hecho de ser mujer. Era muy difícil por primero, a pesar de que tal como lo es en la vida cotidiana normal la violación

[166] "It was a place that had a large park outside…and on the weekends they [the military officers] would get together and have a barbeque…the officials…would select some women and they would take us out to bathe…and they would make us strip off our clothes and they would order us around. And they had us there, and well, it was perverse. Like showcasing a vase with flowers."

es un delito poco denunciado. Era norma…era bastante habitual."[167] She continues and states that when asked in court about the Law of Due Obedience and whether the officers were merely following orders from above, she retorts, "yo les contesté que yo entendía que una de las prácticas dentro de los campos era lo que demostraba la falsedad de eso y eso era la violación. Porque yo entendía ningún hombre tiene una erección porque solo manda su jefe. Es un acto absolutamente voluntario."[168] At this point Eloy pauses momentarily, before continuing: "Y ese acto voluntario de degradación suprema a la mujer era una práctica habitual aunque uno lo tiene que entender por ahí se lee poco en los testimonios, por ahí hay que saber leer entre líneas porque en general las mujeres les cuestan denunciar."[169]

In this passage, Eloy theorizes on the problematic silence surrounding violence against women in many Western societies, specifically rape and how it is the least denounced crime; Eloy's discussion of rape is not relegated within the confines of the dictatorship as one of the numerous crimes committed between 1976 and 1983, but rather, its prevalence in "everyday" societies is symptomatic of patriarchy's often violent control over women's bodies and institutionalized misogyny. This is most aptly noted in Eloy's powerful declaration against the officers who were granted amnesty due to the law

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[167] "For women it was worse, just by the simple fact of being women. It was very difficult at first, as rape is the least denounced crime in everyday society. It [Rape] is the norm…it was habitual."

[168] "I answered them that I understood that one of the practices that occurred in the camps that demonstrated the falsity of this claims was rape. Because I understood that no man has an erection just because his boss commands him to. It is absolutely a voluntary act."

[169] "And that voluntary, degrading act against women was a habitual practice and though one has to understand that it doesn't come up often in testimonies, one has to know how to read between the lines because in general it takes a lot for women to denounce [the crime of rape]." Eloy is referring to the amnesty law, "Law of Due Obedience", instated in 1987 and repealed in 2006; this amnesty law stated that no military official could be charged with crimes against humanity as they were merely complying with their superiors' orders.

of Due Obedience; in one succinct statement – “ningún hombre tiene una erección porque solo manda su jefe” (“no man has an erection just because his boss commands him to”) -- Eloy undermines the validity of this law while simultaneously exposing its misogynist underpinnings. Furthermore, she deconstructs the notion that extreme forms of violence against women in the camps was committed by a few sadistic, insane men; in Ximena Bunster’s essay on violence committed against women during the Southern Cone dictatorships, she abrogates Eloy’s claim: “these are not simples males ‘out of control with permission’; with a demonic irony, the sexual torture of women is named ‘control’ and is authorized state ‘security’” (109). Bunster and Eloy thus importantly relay the dictatorship’s institutionalization of sexual torture to punish “subversives”, and the amnesty law merely serves as a perpetuation of dictatorship-era violence against women.

While this passage powerfully critiques Argentina’s systematic forms of violence committed against women, prior, during and post-dictatorship, it is a passage that is exhibits the aural and narrative omissions and pauses that are revelatory of Eloy’s personal trauma surfacing in her testimony. After denouncing the use of rape as a systematic form of dehumanization, there is a considerable pause before remarking on the difficulty with which survivors of rape encounter when attempting to speak of their trauma. This silence here refers to a normalized sentiment of shame surrounding the discourse of rape, and this particular context of habitual rape in the camps, Eloy’s silence alludes to a trauma that is weighed by the shame of rape. At this moment of the interview, the pause signified Eloy’s return to the camp and the moment of her gendered desubjectification, as Agamben notes, “to speak, to bear witness, is thus to enter into a

vertiginous movement in which something sinks to the bottom, wholly desubjectified and silenced" (120). This pause is the transition between Eloy speaking as a collective subject and the desubjectified, dehumanized Eloy in the concentration camps:

> Cuando se reconocía este cabo de El Infierno, yo me acuerdo que dijeron bueno que me iban a tomar una declaración aparte e iba caminando con la abogada y 'Pero estás segura?' [y yo la respondí:] 'Y vos sabes las veces que este tipo me violó a mí? Y que me vas a desanimar a denunciar? No.' Pero tuvo que preguntar. Y sí. Sí sí, así lo hice. Porque yo en mis testimonios nunca había dicho que había sido violada. Siempre había sido muy elíptica. Y yo decía en los testimonios que durante dos meses yo había sido en forma permanente la única mujer para todo en El Infierno. Pero no aclaraba más que eso. Pero vos nunca dijiste. Ni yo me había dada cuenta de que no lo había dicho. Yo era mi manera de decirlo era ésa. Muchas veces en los testimonios de las compañeras, hay que ver entre líneas. Porque evidentemente nos cuesta…entonces, es, es…es muy, es muy duro, pero bueno, en la vida cotidiana, fuera, esa experiencia, y no solamente acá, pero en todo el mundo, el delito de la violación es uno de los delitos menos denunciados. Y la mujer está tan educada en esos criterios que parece que es uno que provoca, tenemos tan poco metido en la cabeza que siempre podemos decir que no. Y que nuestro no, tiene que ser respetado. Pero bueno, es igual en todos lados…[170]

While she relates that women often do not report the crime of rape in "civil society", she states that this is exacerbated by women who were raped within the camps; initially in this testimony, Eloy refers to the general category of "women" survivors of the camps, yet in this passage she explicitly mentions her trauma of rape. It is critical here to center

[170] "When this military officer of The Infierno [camp] became known, I remember that they told me that they were going to take my testimony separately and I was walking with my lawyer and she asked me, 'Are you sure?' [And I replied:] 'Do you know how many times he raped me? And you're going to discourage me from pressing charges? No.' 'Well, I had to ask.' And yes. Yes, yes. That is what I did. Because in those testimonies I had never said I had been raped. I had always been vague. And I would say in those testimonies that for two months I had been the only woman for the whole Infierno camp. I would not say anything more than that…I had not even noticed that I had not said anything about that. It was my way of saying that. Often, in the testimonies of compañeras, you have to read between the lines. Because obviously it is very difficult for us…so, it is, it is…very, very difficult for us, but in everyday life, and not only here, everywhere, the crime of rape is one that is the least denounced. And, women are so aware of this that it might seem that we are the ones that provoke that crime, because it is not part of our belief that we can say no. And that this no must be respected. But well, it is the same everywhere…."

on Eloy's evasion of stating that she was raped on multiple occasions in various camps during her detention; for Eloy, alluding to the fact she was raped – "yo decía en los testimonies que durante dos meses yo había sido en forma permanente la única mujer para todo El Infierno" ("I would say in those testimonies that for two months I had been the only woman for the whole Infierno camp") – was in effect a clear declaration of having been raped. Eloy notes that she was not aware of this and that according to her, she felt she had explicitly stated that she had been raped and it was not until later that she realized that she had merely alluded to the rapes. She then reverts back to the collective subject and to her compañeras who had also suffered the trauma of multiple rapes in the camp. In a sense, relating one's past trauma of having been raped implies a psychic re-traumatization and as Eloy discusses her personal trauma of rape, her body language relates the pain of recounting this memory; with eyes downcast, she avoids eye contact until she resumes the collective narrative voice and when she speaks with pain and anger when she relates the moment she told her lawyer that the ex-official of El Infierno had repeatedly raped her, fueling her commitment to denounce him in court.

Indeed, it is an impacting, powerful moment of her testimony and it is one we must approach with caution, as it is critical not to analyze these passages of her testimony as indicative of her victimization of being the only woman in the Infierno camp; rather, we must assess these passages as testament to her determination to denounce the institutionalized forms of state violence whereby politically-active women were subjected to repeated rape as a form of degradation, their bodies utilized as caution against their activism. As discussed in the chapter's introduction, feminist oral history has proffered a

myopic theoretical framework with which to engage women's oral narratives. In this manner, we can comprehend why Eloy does not refer to these heteronormative, patriarchal categories of "woman" in her interview but rather, she constructs an oral narrative that relates her carceral experiences as a survivor of genocide and a survivor who is committed to the recapitulation of historical data that can assist in the condemnation of perpetrators of genocide. Her testimony is not her own and her testimony challenges dominant history by referring to these "retacitos" ("pieces") of the memory of her disappeared compañeros, it is a testimony that is always already a politicized action that contests an apathetic, neoliberal post-genocidal Argentina. And although Eloy and other female ex-political prisoners indicate to me the need to conduct further research on gender-based violence institutionalized within Latin America's "Dirty Wars", Eloy ultimately relies on the plural narrative voice, a politics of solidarity in order to evade singling her experience as a sexually-tortured, passive apolitical victim of the dictatorship. In the interview I conducted with Amelia Negrón, she similarly relied upon a collective, politicized narrative voice in the recapitulation of her lived experiences of trauma in one of Chile's most notorious concentration camps, Villa Grimaldi.

Interview with Amelia Negrón -- Configuring Gendered Oral Histories of Trauma in Post-Dictatorship Chile

I met Amelia Negrón for the first time on the scheduled day of our interview on August 13, 2009. She graciously agreed to be interviewed despite not having met me before and my brief stay in Santiago made it more challenging to locate survivors of the

Chilean repression.[171] Although Negrón kindly accepted an interview, a common link was lacking that allowed for Negrón to be as candid as in the interviews conducted with the members of the AEDD. While Negrón spent over an hour talking with me about her two-year detention at the start of the dictatorship, there was a marked contrast between my interviews with Negrón and Eloy, especially in what Portelli terms the "velocity of narration" and in the content revealed during the interview. This differentiation between the several interviews I had conducted in Argentina and Chile revealed not only the lack of transference and trust established prior to the interview, but additionally it was indicative of the socio-historical differences between post-dictatorship Chile and Argentina. While post-dictatorship Argentine society, generally speaking, is cognizant of the egregious acts of human rights abuses committed, an era depicted as a brutal dictatorship, many Chileans consider Pinochet to have been a strong, effective leader and also perceive those repressed as subversive, armed militants.[172] This is further evident when Negrón claims that she no longer participates in any human rights group meetings, signaling perhaps demoralization in terms of successfully condemning former military officials as their sentences do not reflect the severity of the crimes committed.

By never refusing an interview, Negrón relies upon the collectivized subject of testimony to propel her narrative and relates to me that she speaks for the many

[171]I received her contact information through another survivor of the Chilean dictatorship working at the Villa Grimaldi Park for Peace. Villa Grimaldi was one of the numerous concentration camps that was created during the dictatorship; located in outskirts of Santiago, this particular camp was functioning between 1974 and 1978.

[172]Argentina additionally possesses a better track record in sentencing ex-military officials to life in prison, yet Negrón informs me that Chile has convicted fewer ex-officials and those condemned have only received 5 or 6 years sentences. See Mark Ensalaco's *Chile Under Pinochet* for more information regarding the transitional to democracy after the Pinochet regime and Carlos Huneeus' *Chile, un pais dividido* on the various factions of Chilean society that continue to defend Pinochet's legacy and regime.

compañeros who did not survive. In her narrative, she evades delving into the personal, emotive moments of repression and incarceration – much like the interview with Eloy – but instead focuses her testimony on the socio-historical, political context of the Allende government, the coup d'état and the subsequent Pinochet regime. Thus, in a similar frame, Negrón clearly defines her political agency as a former MIR member as this was foundational to her subjectivity, eschewing traditional gender expectations of women's testimonies centering on their roles as mothers and companions to male political activists. In essence, Negrón's testimony is an extremely informative historical-political document that deconstructs what many oral historians have categorized as "typically" female oral narratives, however, I find that her hesitance to delve into personal carceral accounts and the velocity with which she narrates her testimony to be reflective of post-dictatorship Chile's abnegation of survivor testimony and culture of impunity.

Negrón was born to a middle class family in Sorno, a city in the south of Chile, and her family's socioeconomic standing and the geopolitical history of southern Chile piqued her political awareness and introduced her to the economic disparities that were evident in her natal town. Similar to Eloy's narrative, Negrón commences the interview by reflecting on the socioeconomic differences in Sorno, which frames the interview within a predominately political context, and additionally intertwines her upbringing with the commencement of her politicized subjectivity. Her childhood in Sorno exposed to her to the economic exploitation of the working class in the countryside. She recalls that "desde mucho antes en el sur en Chile la discriminación es muy grande, la diferenciación era muy grande entre la gente que era muy pobre pobre y la gente que tenía una cierta

solvencia económica" and thus while her family was financially comfortable, she claims "yo iba a la escuela con zapatos en uniforme me llevan en auto, y los vecinos con los que jugaban en el verano, andaban todos sin zapatos [y] entonces te va creando como porque nosotros sí, y porque ellos no."[173] As a child, Negrón questions her privileged reality, an awareness that piques her political consciousness and prompts her to later mobilize against these socioeconomic differences and class exploitation.

These years fomented her political subjectivity and during her years at the University of Valparaíso, she becomes an avid supporter of Allende and the Popular Unity government, an epoch of her life that she describes fondly. During this time, she recounts the moment she decides to become a member of MIR, which led to her participation in projects that assisted the various disenfranchised sectors of Chilean society. She then briefly glosses over the moment of the coup d'état –"después vino el golpe" ("and then came the coup") – as well as her two-year incarceration at the Villa Grimaldi and Tres Alamos concentration camps. She then briefly relates that upon her release from Tres Alamos, she lives in exile in France for many years until her return to Chile in the 1990s. These facts of her life story are narrated sequentially, denoting the basic critical moments of her life and without divulging more detail surrounding these events; what's more, Negrón summarizes her life history in under ten minutes, suggestive of her guarded approach to the interview and what is not revealed in her interview at this moment is indicative of a "velocity of narrative" that is critical to examine.

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[173] "For a long time in the south of Chile the discrimination was quite noticeable, and there was a great difference between the very poor and the people who had some economic comfort" … "I would go to school with shoes and uniform and they would take me there in a car, and my neighbors with whom I'd play in the summer would be without shoes and that way I started questioning why did we have these comforts and they didn't."

Alessandro Portelli theorizes on the structural form of oral histories, specifically turning his attention to the "velocity of narration" of testimonies. According to Portelli, the "velocity of narration" refers to the speed with which interviewees relay their life stories and contends that an important task of the oral historian is to concentrate on which events are succinctly stated and those events that are described in detail. In Negrón's interview, this brief summation of her life related in an accelerated speed alludes to what she does not want to reveal. The majority of these ten minutes are spent on the formation of her political consciousness during her youth and she skims quickly over the traumatic past of the coup d'état and her years as a female political prisoner of the Pinochet dictatorship. When she quickly summarizes her life narrative, she concludes by stating: "Bueno eso es más o menos mi historia. No estoy casada y no tengo hijos" ("Well that's more or less my story. I'm not married and I don't have children"). This particular statement is essential to unpack as it indicative of two integral factors that are central to my analysis: on one hand, Negrón is deflecting any importance that could be attributed to her life experiences during the dictatorship as well as indicating her reluctance to center on her carceral experiences and gender-based subjugation within the torture chamber. Additionally, she indicates to me that she did not marry nor did she have children, revealing a minimal amount of her personal life as well as her rejection of patriarchy's prescribed role for her as mother and wife. Up to this moment, Negrón refers to the central role politics played in her life history, contesting what Ruiz-Funes and Tuñón claim is essential in oral narratives of women, revealing their valorization of their identity as "partner…mother…family…the home" (195). In these ten minutes, Negrón denotes

that her subjectivity is more complex than the gender normative role which Ruiz-Funes, Tuñón and other scholars describe as critical features in assessing women's oral narratives.

The historical trauma which occurred on September 11 violently terminated – literally and figuratively -- the promise of a complete Chilean socio-political transformation. In this way, it is clear how Negrón organizes the memory of the coup d'état according to a prior and post-traumatic moment, exacerbated by the termination of the political changes to which Negrón was committed. The memory of the Allende years is crystallized as representative of critical change, as "what [people] wanted to do" and this consistent reference to the ideal past in her narrative reflects the impact of this historical trauma on September 11th. When asked to describe the day of the coup, she does so in great detail, which is important to compare with her initial cursory mention of the coup ("después vino el golpe"). She relates the psychic trauma of having experienced the coup as they had been participating in years of social reform, which is a marked distinction between Chile and Argentina: "No teníamos mucha conciencia de que significaba un golpe de estado. Una cosa es saber por noticias, y otra cosa es que te pase a ti, que te maten a tus amigos. El choque es mucho más grande" ("We weren't aware of what a coup signified. One thing is to be aware through the news, and another thing is when it happens to you, when they kill your friends. The shock is much bigger"). This "choque", as Negrón explains, is greatly intensified when Chile is violently converted to a right-wing, fascist military regime from a left-wing, socialist government.

Negrón describes the impact of the coup d'état on her and her compañeros: "Bueno ese día yo me acuerdo que yo tenía una radio pila para escuchar las noticias. Me levanto, como cualquier día y voy a prender la radio para escuchar las noticias, y no funcionaba. Entonces yo pensé que era problema de la radio." Her quotidian activities are brutally interrupted when she tries the radio again, "escucho el mensaje de Allende de la Moneda que estaban transmitiendo. Entonces ahí escuché el golpe…amigos mi dijeron que no fuera [a la Universidad], que la universidad que habían tomado los militares, que estaban quemando todo, habían tomado presos a los alumnos y que estaban preguntando por mí."[174] The impact of the historical trauma and the seemingly irreality of this day results in Negrón's detailed description of her precise movements that morning of the coup. Negrón commences this passage using the past tense – "tenía una radio" ("I had a radio") – and the radio is thus a particular detail of the morning that relays the disastrous news to her. She then transitions into the present tense – "me levanto, como cualquier día y voy a prender la radio" ("I get up that morning, like any other day, and I go to turn on the radio"); this temporal detail is critical in my analysis of trauma's impact on narrative form. Negrón switches to the present tense to describe the details of her quotidian routine during this time of her life, invoking the interlocutor to the past with her. However, the past here is not past, as it is relayed in present tense; instead, the use of the present tense to refer to this past moment alludes to the psychic trauma of the coup as it is a memory

[174]"Well that day I remember I had a battery-operated radio I would use to listen to the news. I get up that morning, like any other day, and I go to turn on the radio to hear the news, and it wasn't working. And so I thought it was just a problem with the radio" …. "I hear Allende's message from the Moneda that was being transmitted. So then I hear about the coup d'etat… my friends told me not to go to the university, that the university had been taken over by the military, that they were burning everything, they had taken the students prisoner and they were asking around for me."

that is irrevocably etched into her consciousness, freezing the past moment in its originary present-tense form and inserting it into the present, signifying here another encounter with the Real.

In the passage, Negrón vacillates between past and present tense, yet what is critical is her description of the moment she hears Allende's speech on the radio, "escucho el mensaje de Allende… ahí escuché el golpe" ("I hear Allende's message…there I hear about the coup d'etat"), Negrón uses the present tense to recount the moment she is made aware of the coup d'etat in Allende's message which related the bombing of the Moneda presidential palace and the violent overthrow of his presidency. The impact of this historical trauma immobilizes the memory of the morning of September 11 in Negrón's consciousness. This absence of temporal boundaries that is apparent in Negrón's oral testimony does indeed refer to these stories that were erased from the dominant history constructed by the Pinochet regime and his post-dictatorship supporters. A critical facet of these historical narratives that have been systematically suppressed by dominant history includes women's narratives of repression and dehumanization as political prisoners of the military regime.

In the interviews conducted with former political prisoners of the Southern Cone dictatorships, the women organized their narratives according to their political investment in their respective nations and constantly underscored the fomentation of their political subjectivities.[175] In Negrón's interview, she bases her narrative on the history of her

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[175] While some women were not politically active prior to their arrest, their experiences as political prisoners and conversion into bare lives motivated the previously politically inactive women to participate in political movements, and reified for the other women their commitment to political struggles for social justice.

political activism and much of her testimony is a recapitulation of the events of her life as a political prisoner, with less emphasis on the personal, emotive moments. I believe this guarded approach is an important response to gendered assumptions of women's narratives and experiences as political prisoners. In this regard, Negrón's testimony does not attribute any importance to these categories nor do I believe it is of critical importance to ask her these questions. As the interview follows an open format, Negrón guides the trajectory of the interview and as such, she centralizes her narrative on her politicized history of resistance and a narrative of survival.

With feminist oral historian Sherna Gluck's problematic framework in mind, it is critical to engage with Negrón's narrative as one of many oral testimonies that deconstruct the fundamentally anti-feminist schema many oral historians utilize. When asked to recount the day of her abduction, Negrón is clear to emphasize her participation in the radical leftist organization, MIR, as this is precisely what led to her arrest: "Cuando fui detenida, yo iba con un miembro de la dirección del MIR, toda la gente con el que él trabajaba había sido detenida, y su señora. Por lo tanto él no tenía donde vivir. Y lo había traido a vivir en la casa de donde vivíamos."[176] Negrón relates that she was going with her friend to meet a mutual friend who was going to help him find a place of his own, and she accompanied him to meet her. At this time, she had been briefly detained once before and this is how they were able to arrest her and her friend. The memory of her arrest is predicated on her resilience and commitment to her activism in MIR, despite having been arrested and released and the news of constant disappearances and targeting of MIR

[176] "When I was abducted, I was with a fellow member of the MIR, and all those with whom he worked had been abducted, and his partner. For that reason he had nowhere to live. I had brought him to the house where we were living."

activists. At 21 years old, Negrón's political identity is critical and she continues to participate in MIR activities until she is arrested for the second time. This memory furthermore denotes the solidarity-based politics of the MIR as the dangers of being targeted by the armed forces do not thwart her efforts to assist fellow MIR members.[177]

She then continues to describe the moment of her arrest by DINA agents and her transportation to the Villa Grimaldi detention center: "Bueno y ahí nos toman detenidos a los dos y nos llevan a Villa Grimaldi. *[Pausa]* Y nos toman en la calle…y saltan gente de todos lados, y rodean con armas, nos bajan, y la típica empieza los golpes, la venda, y partir a Villa Grimaldi, y tanto pegando en camino." [178] When they arrive at Villa Grimaldi, she states that, "me llevan a torturar inmediatamente, con el corriente. A mí me dejan a un lado, pero mientras tanto me pegaban con los pies, las manos, y así como no decía nada, me llevan a la parrilla, y me aplican electricidad, y empiezan a preguntar sobre mi familia."[179] In this passage, there is a shift in the temporal narrative voice as Negrón utilizes mostly the present tense to relate this memory. Negrón relates the moment of her abduction and first torture session almost entirely in the present tense; the memory of her abduction and first experience with physical torture is frozen in the present tense, a visceral trauma narrated in the present tense. There is an immediacy

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[177] Although Negrón does not expressly state this, her pride for her involvement in the militant group, MIR, was critical in a gendered sense; many young women students and activists participated in the armed struggle against the Pinochet regime and the leftist, MIR based set forth a politics of solidarity that included in its political agenda a transformative politics based on equality.

[178] "Well, they arrest us both and take us to Villa Grimaldi. *[Pause]*. And they take us in the middle of the street…and a bunch of people get out, armed, they make us get out, and then the usual starts, with beatings, the blindfold, as we head to Villa Grimaldi, and hitting us the whole way there."

[179] "They take me to be tortured immediately, with the electric currents. Then the leave me to one side, but meanwhile they were hitting my feet, my hands, and because I didn't say anything, they take me to the *parrilla* [a torture table where electric torture took place], and they submit me to electric shock torture, while asking me questions about my family."

established in her use of the present tense, referring to the absence of Negrón's history in the official historical narrative of the Chilean military regime. This pregnant pause could refer to the overwhelming sense of this negation of her lived experiences of trauma and torture by many Chileans and the inability to process her past trauma as she is recounting her final moments before succumbing to state violence and her conversion into bare life, a dehumanized entity.

Furthermore, the manner in which she recreates the moment of her first torture session is indicative of the pride she feels in not divulging any information to the DINA, the Directorate for National Intelligence. She relates this moment with apparent ease and her tone shifts to a more confident intonation and claims that despite the physical pain endured, she does not once reveal any information to the military officials as they were looking for her older brother knowing he was a key figure in the resistance movement. In essence, this manner of relaying her first experience with torture reflects the minute amount of control Negrón possessed regarding her political subjectivity as she does not provide the DINA with any critical information regarding her brother or the MIR. Additionally, there is no mention of sexual-based torture, invoking what I believe Eloy also avoided initially; however, in Negron's interview, she does not mention having been raped or sexually assaulted in any way. By not disclosing whether she was subjected to sexual-based torture, I believe Negrón refuses to allow her testimony to become reduced to another victim of sexual-based terror and violence committed by the military regime.

Following this trajectory, I ask her what the DINA officers opined regarding politically-active detainees and whether she and the other women inmates were more

severely tortured due to their political status. Her response was unexpected and intriguing:

> De lo que yo recuerdo en esa época es que, bueno Chile era un país muy, muy machista. Había habido una cierta apertura durante el periodo de Allende, pero sin que el machismo apareciera. Para ellos era como normal, que los hombres participaran en la política, y como los hombres eran más impulsivos, más apasionados, ellos podían participar en política… Pero que las mujeres, estuviéramos en eso, para ellos era una aberración, que las mujeres estuvieran metidas en la política. Y…ellos me confesaron que las mujeres eran mucho más consecuentes y mucho más firmes ante la tortura que los hombres. Porque según ellos, el hecho de que una mujer entrara a militar en partido político significaba que entrara con mucha conciencia de lo que estaba haciendo…Por lo tanto las mujeres eran más duras. Ellos me lo dijeron. [180]

She explains that those who buckled under extreme torture and divulged information were considered weak and cowardly by the military officers and the prisoners who did not speak were treated with more respect and tortured less. This reflects a sadistic hierarchy created in the carceral space whereby those who revealed information after being subjected to extreme forms of torture were considered more fragile and traitorous, and were thus inflicted with even more torture. Negron states that officers revealed to her that the women prisoners, including herself, were more resistant to torture and less inclined to talk than the men; despite the illogical tactics used by the military officials, Negron relates proudly she withstood the torture and did not reveal any information to the officers.

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[180] "From what I remember in that moment is that, well Chile was a very, very macho country. There had been a kind of break from that during the Allende era, but without machismo entirely disappearing. For them it was the norm, that men participated in politics, and that men were more impulsive, passionate [about politics], they could participate in politics…but that women, to be involved in that, for them it was an aberration, that women were involved in politics. And…they confessed to me that women were much more consistent and braver when it came to torture, more than the men. According to them, the fact that a woman who became politically active meant that women were much more aware of what they were doing… For that reason women were stronger. That is what they told me."

Despite garnering a degree of "respect" by the military officials at Villa Grimaldi, the militant women detained at this center are still considered to be "aberrant" and the ultimate antithesis of Pinochet-era woman. Referring again to the Chilean National Secretariat for Women's *Patriotic and Family Values,* it clearly defines the patriotic Chilean woman as one who is critically invested in her "feminine identity", detailing the importance of her ascribed role within the domestic sphere; the pamphlet explicitly links her national identity to her "feminine vocation assum[ing] domestic chores which constitute a direct service to others." Thus, Negrón and other militant women undermine the dictatorship's definition of the ideal, patriotic Chilean woman and signify to the regime subversive, terrorist threats that have to be annihilated. However, this political commitment exhibited by the women at Villa Grimaldi is what the military officials simultaneously respect and despise. Negrón indicates to me that regarding the theme of gender in the prison, this particularity is one that she could never reconcile nor explicate: "era una cosa muy, muy loca" ("it was a very, very crazy thing"). In another sense, it alludes to the politics of masculinity within the prisons as men were often taunted as "maricones", psychologically torturing them and deriding their virility as their leftist politics were tantamount to a lack of masculinity, a masculinity clearly defined by the regime.[181] Thus as Negrón indicates, the military officers considered the male prisoners to be weak, effeminate, and unable to withstand physical pain, reflective of their non-existent masculinity. In this manner, then, the Chilean military officials relied on a

[181] As Lucrecia Brito states in her testimony, at Villa Grimaldi the male prisoners were constantly called "maricones" and she recalls that they were often subjected to simulate anal sex/sodomy by forcing the prisoners to walk closely, one behind the other, all the while taunting and ridiculing them. Thus as Negrón and Brito indicates, the military officers considered the male prisoners to be weak, effeminate, and unable to withstand physical pain, reflective of their non-existent masculinity.

perverse heteronormativity to police gender within the prison as they simultaneously derided and dehumanized the prisoners, referring to a heterosexist matrix and heteropatriarchal paradigm upon which the Chilean dictatorship relied.

This particular question based on gendered forms of degradation and repression indeed elicits this unexpected, complex glimpse into the sadistic and contradictory carceral experiences at Villa Grimaldi. While this presents a new facet of the gendered subjugation of men and women at this particular center, it is critical to situate Negrón's personal subjectivity in this historical moment. Negrón is hesitant to divulge personal moments in the prison and rather proffers the historical-political context of her involvement in this trauma. And while Negrón is affable and generally warm, the overall tone of her interview demonstrates her confidence, particularly when she recounts her moments of resistance to torture and interrogation. After our interview concludes, she indicates to me that she considers those who relayed information during torture to be, in a certain sense, traitors as they leaked names to the officials, resulting in the deaths of these compañeros who the DINA had been searching for; in this sense, she is proud of her resistance to torture as she claimed to never have provided the DINA with pertinent information about her compañeros.

I will refrain from attempting to psychoanalyze Negrón's positionality on the hierarchy of prisoners vis-à-vis their experiences with torture, but rather, I would like to approach this with a feminist lens. I believe Negrón's stance on torture and her pride in not having succumbed to the excruciating pain of torture is indicative of her survival and process of subjectification. Negrón survives the numerous traumas of having her youth

disrupted, being expelled from her university, targeted by the DINA, abducted, tortured, and converted into a dehumanized, desubjectified detained-disappeared for two years. Her testimony discloses the pride she feels as having been a woman militant who survived extreme torture and never complying with the DINA; her testimony furthermore complicates this aforementioned gender normative framework utilized in oral history. Negrón's testimony is clear to rupture a rigid, gender-normative framework by imbuing her narrative with her political agency and eschews the gendered expectations of various scholars. Although this type of heroism and idealization attributed to those who did not divulge information to the military officials is problematic and unsettling, I believe it is critical to investigate the gender dynamics involved in surviving trauma and in the construction of one's subjectivity after these experiences.

This is further evident in the aural qualities that contextualize Negrón's response to my question concerning the gender-based forms of torture in Villa Grimaldi. As I am introducing my question, I indicate to her that I am interested in the topic of gender in prison testimonies during moments of state violence in Latin America. I explicitly state to her that I am not particularly interested in the minute details of rape nor other forms of sexual-based torture as I do not want her to misinterpret my question as a complete disregard her political subjectivity during her incarceration. Before I can entirely finish my question, Negrón quietly states something incoherent under her breath before answering my question. While her tone is not hostile, it is incoherent enough for me not to entirely hear what she is saying; what I gather from her garbled words is that the topic of gender is not one she is prone to discuss or it is a topic that is too difficult to discuss.

After this, she clears her throat and clearly answers my question regarding the guards' valorization of prisoners who did not succumb to extreme forms of torture; once she concludes this answer, she does not voluntarily provide more information regarding gendered experiences of repression in the prisons, thus indicating that her inaudible statement is crucial in terms of relaying her reluctance to revisit those memories based on gender and trauma. Hence, this inaudible reaction to my question is perhaps the lacuna of Negrón's testimony, the impossibility of bearing witness of that which she is unable to speak; Negrón does not reveal personal-based moments of gender-based trauma nor of other compañeras, and it is significant that she does not speak of the disappeared compañeras' and their gender-based dehumanization. Negrón is clear, however, to express the various moments of solidarity with these compañeras in the carceral spaces as fundamental to her survival and resistance to the military regime's systematic, methodic form of degradation and dehumanization.

Although Negrón is reluctant to imbue her oral narrative with personal experiences of gender-specific forms of torture dehumanization, she explicates that solidarity efforts in the carceral spaces were essential to defy continuous forms of degradation and the systemic modes of desubjectification. In a key passage, Negrón describes the moment she is cognizant of her complete desubjectified status as a bare life, whose fundamental rights are abnegated and her existence destroyed: "Una de las cosas más fuerte que me tocó vivir fue…pues sabíamos que estábamos en el lugar más siniestro de Santiago, Villa Grimaldi. Y de vez en cuando en las tardes sacaban grupos de prisioneros, los formaban delante del patio y se le llevaban en camioneta o en autos y no

volvieron nunca más."[182] She states that at the time in 1975, there was no knowledge of the term "desaparecido" and it was not until she was taken to Cuatro Alamos that she learns from a cellmate that about the term "desaparecido", as she used this term to describe her brother. Although Negrón is aware she is detained at "el lugar más siniestro de Santiago" ("the most sinister place in Santiago"), she is not cognizant of this phenomenon of the "desaparecido" and its genocidal, violent implications. When she is made aware of this practice of disappearing thousands of people deemed "terrorist threats" by the Chilean dictatorship, she realized that she is included in this phenomenon, a body completely manipulated and controlled by the state, an unwanted body, a bare life. When faced with this realization, Negrón relates this is yet another form of psychological trauma to which she is subjected as it becomes "una de las cosas más fuerte que me tocó vivir" ("one of the most difficult things I had to endure"). This critical moment of realization denotes Negrón's conversion into a bare life whose rights have been stripped as she is converted into a desubjectified being, a desaparecida; at this point, Negrón is cognizant of the military regime's ultimate control over her life and the threat of death becomes a constant.

Ultimately, Negrón is transported to Tres Alamos, a detention center where she is officially recognized as a political prisoner, implicating she is no longer a desaparecida and is allotted with the "privileges" associated with common prisoners. The difference between her existence as a desaparecida and her new status as a political prisoner is

[182] "One of the most difficult things I had to endure…well we knew that we were in one of the most sinister places in Santiago, Villa Grimaldi. And sometimes they would take out groups of prisoners in the afternoons, and they would line them up in front of the patio and they would take them in a van or in cars and they would never return."

critical as she discloses she is no longer subjected to the same extreme forms of torture and brutalization. Negrón is no longer blindfolded, handcuffed, physically tortured and communication is allowed among prisoners, whereas in the clandestine centers, "si te veían hablando con un preso, te pegaban" ("If they saw you talking to a prisoner, they would hit you"). However, despite these new conditions and "freedoms" allotted to political prisoners, Negrón is still denied her fundamental rights as she is held without due cause. When she is finally charged, Negrón states that political prisoners were accused of crimes invented by the military officials who manipulated the facts in order to accuse her and other political prisoners of breaking the law of national security. According to Negrón, most political prisoners were formally charged with this same crime, yet as she states that it was an invented charge and explains that it was "ningún delito, nada…de que te iban a acusar? Todos que estábamos ahí, estábamos en esas condiciones [por el mismo crimen]…en caso nuestro, ningún explicación de nada."[183] Here she discloses that she and her compañeros are held without due cause and remain desubjectified entities. Furthermore, the military officials never reveal to Negrón why she is transported to a political prison whereas other compañeros remained –and remain to this day disappeared—at Villa Grimaldi. This inexplicable decision on behalf of the military officials further perplexes Negrón and contributes to what Agamben describes as the phenomenon of survival guilt. Furthermore, Negrón is compelled to speak for the compañeros who remain disappeared and her testimony assists her in processing her experiences as a dehumanized, bare life at the whim of the military regime.

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[183] "No crime, nothing…what were they going to charge you with? All of us who were there, we were in the same situation [for the same crime] … in our case, there was no explanation."

In her testimony, Negrón reflects on the importance of solidarity and companionship among the prisoners as a way of defying the psychological burdens of torture and prescient death. During Negrón's two-year existence as a *desaparecida* and a political prisoner of the Pinochet regime, she and her compañeros were faced with various forms of psychological and physical torture, instrumental in the genocidal tactics utilized by the state. One critical form of psychological torture was confronting the detainees with the constant threat of death.[184] The many destroyed, desubjectified entities with whom Negrón shared carceral experiences are invoked in the polyphonous subject of her testimony as they were critical in assisting her to survive; it is a subject that invokes the narrative voices of men and women ex-prisoners. Even though Negrón is forced to enter into this morbid desubjectified, abject past while speaking of her time as a detained-disappeared, testimony ultimately becomes a political act of resistance and a testament to her survival, a memory that recapitulates the technologies of terror that the dictatorship institutionalized and subsequently attempted to elide in the post-dictatorship era.

After her release from the Tres Alamos center, Negrón and her brothers live in exile and she states that her first task when she arrived to France was to "declarar todos los detenidos desaparecidos que yo vi en Villa Grimaldi….me dediqué a reconstruir quienes habían sido detenidos, fechas, y todo eso, siempre declaro por ellos. Testigo por

[184] Specifically, prisoners were often held near the torture chambers so they could overhear the screams of those being physically maimed during their interrogations. Additionally, many were sadistically subjected to an extremely cruel form of psychological torture, which included blindfolding the prisoners and taking them outside, where military officials simulate an execution; once the prisoners realize they are not shot, the military officials inform them this is what awaited them if they did not comply with the officials.

varios juicios por los detenidos desaparecidos."[185] An ardent MIR activist prior to her detention, I am curious to know if the military regime succeeded in demolishing Negrón's political vision and if it changed during her incarceration, to which she responded: "Me reafirmó todo lo que pensaba antes. Más todavía. Porque lo vi en práctica. Como trabajan, como son…esta aparente democracia, buenas maneras, el respeto a las leyes, eso es mentira. Eso les sirve, mientras les sirven las leyes para seguir manteniendo, ocupando el poder."[186] Negrón dedicated many years while living in exile to elucidate the truth and denounce the disappearance and expose the institutionalized of repression and torture that defined the Pinochet regime.

However, intimidating tactics continued during the transition era towards the end of the dictatorship; in 1988, Negrón returns to Chile to visit other family members and to visit the grave of her mother, who passed away while she was living in France. When she arrives home, her family informs her that the military agents burned her mother's grave as yet another cruel tactic, cautioning Negrón into silence and demonstrating their knowledge of her whereabouts. While the magnitude of violence diminished in the latter years of the Pinochet dictatorship, Negrón states that they continued to rely on the exact same modes of terrorism and intimidation utilized during the dictatorship. Despite these terrorist acts, Negrón is not dissuaded from denouncing Chile's violent, traumatic history and present-day institutionalized violence.

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[185] "to recount all the detained disappeared I saw in Villa Grimaldi…I was dedicated in recapitulating all who had been detained, the dates, all of that, I always declare my testimony for them. I am a witness for many trials for the detained disappeared."

[186] "It reaffirmed everything that I believed in before. And even more so. Because I saw it in practice. How they operate, how they are…this supposed democracy, good manners, respecting the laws, that is a lie. It benefits them, the laws serve those who continue to stay in power."

As our interview concludes, I thank Negrón for her time and for sharing her testimony with me, to which she responds, "No, no gracias no. Lo hago por mis compañeros" ("No, no thank you, no. I do it for my compañeros"). Negrón invokes the collective subjectivity of testimony and the compulsion to speak out and for those who cannot speak of their experiences as detained-disappeared. As the survivor's vocation is to remember, as Agamben notes, Negrón cannot not remember and her survival is predicated on their memory and in maintaining alive the political subjectivity of the compañeros who remain disappeared. Negrón's post-carceral identity is predicated on maintaining this memory alive, a memory that the government has systematically attempted to elide; her survival of this historical trauma is predicated on her political agency as a former female member of the MIR and the perpetuation of the truth and memory. She and her compañeros are "pedacitos de esa historia" ("pieces of that history") who are compelled to speak out against this history of genocide that Chile has been unwilling to process or acknowledge.

Interview with Ignacia Rodríguez Marquez – "Las mujeres anónimas" ("The anonymous women") of the Mexican student movement

While I could realize interviews with survivors in the Southern Cone with relative ease, I had a different experience in conducting research on survivors of the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City. Before traveling to Mexico City to interview women who participated in the 1968 Mexican student movement, I naively assumed there would be many women available and willing to share their narratives with me, as this was my experience with survivors of state violence in the Southern Cone. I was cognizant of the

divergent geohistorical backgrounds between the two regions and that there was a smaller amount of women who had been incarcerated because of their activism in Mexico, but I had assumed there would be at least several women whom I could interview as many women students participated in the demonstrations. When I arrived to Mexico City and met the members of the Comité ’68 – a civic organization comprised of survivors of Mexico’s “Dirty War”– they informed me that very few women who had been incarcerated have remained politically active. While acts of state violence commonly terrorize many into silence and oblivion, I had not anticipated the extent of such trauma and a legacy of silence and this points to the innumerable histories of women’s experiences that will remain in oblivion. Ana Ignacia Rodríguez Márquez and Roberta Avendaño Martínez, however, were two women who could not be psychically or physically traumatized into silence; despite being incarcerated for their participation in the student movement, upon their release both women remained politically active in the search for justice of the “genocidas” responsible for the 1968 massacre and other state-sponsored violence against political dissidents.[187]

Rodríguez is the only surviving woman who had been incarcerated following the 1968 massacre -- Roberta Avendaño Martínez passed away in 1999 -- and frequently speaks of her experience.[188] Rodríguez’s testimony uniquely relates her personal, political agency within the geohistorical context of the massacre and the reconstruction of her

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187 The Comité and other activists in Mexico City inform me that while many women participated in the movement, after the massacre very few women were incarcerated for more than a several days. Of these women who were jailed for a short period, the Comité states that these women were terrorized into silence and have not spoken of their experiences since their release from prison.

[188] I first learned of Rodríguez’s history in Roberta Avendaño testimonial narrative, *De la libertad y el encierro*, as both women were friends from the UNAM, participants in the student movement, and eventual cellmates in Mexico City’s Lecumberri Prison.

political agency vis-à-vis her testimony critically reveals a narrative that is virtually unknown and erased from the dominant history of Mexico's recent past. Rodríguez has been an active member of Comité '68 for many years since her release from Lecumberri prison and she maintains that it has been an integral in her survival and in the reconstruction of her political agency. The Comité '68 functions similarly to that of the AEDD and although former '68 student leader and ex-political prisoner, Raúl Alvarez Garín, was a key figure in coordinating and founding the association, it functions horizontally and in a democratic manner.

I meet Rodríguez after the weekly Comité 68 meeting and once it concludes, we have lunch before the interview. During lunch, Rodríguez is curious to learn more about my political and personal background and I realize that this moment is crucial in order to establish trust and a firm foundation before she is to share her trauma narrative with me. My Latin American familial and political roots seem to be critical points in our moment of transference and her interest is piqued when I relate to her that my maternal grandfather was a Cuban activist and supporter of the revolution; upon learning this, she excitedly informs me that as a young student, the Cuban Revolution served as a beacon of hope and inspiration for the Mexican student movement and this is what prompted her to participate in the movement in the 1960s. At the end of our lunch, Rodríguez smiles and grabs my hand, informing me that she looks forward to our interview and that our good chemistry makes her feel comfortable with me.

The shock of the massacre on October 2nd critically impacts the narrative of Rodríguez's testimony and as she is one of the remaining female figures of the movement

to speak publicly of her trauma, imbuing it with a sense of political and personal urgency and the compulsion to denounce the genocidal crimes of the past and present serve as her testimony's critical context. While speaking with Rodríguez, she claims that women's narratives are missing in the recuperation of the historical memory of the 1968 massacre and that she never refuses an interview precisely because she believes that women's voices are an essential yet lacking component to the Mexico's historical traumatic past. In her testimony a tension emerges between the critical importance of underscoring women's experiences in the movement while maintaining her stance on the importance of the politics of solidarity. As I soon discover, however, this tension is exacerbated as there is little academic recognition of women's political agency in the student movement and most of this recognition merely underscores women's traditional roles as mothers and companions.

Originally from a working-class family in Taxco, Mexico, Rodríguez moves to Mexico City in order to study law at UNAM and is immediately immersed in the political climate of the 1960s. At the commencement of our interview, it is again clearly evident that political agency is crucial to her subjecthood as she begins her testimony in the following manner: "Yo soy Ana Ignacia Rodríguez Márquez y me conocen como "la Nacha" desde el movimiento, precisamente porque las fuerzas, las autoridades nos pusieron ese, ese, yo digo, que ellos pusieron como un alias y por otra parte criminalizar la lucha nuestra." She further adds, "Pero de hecho, la Nacha, viene de mi nombre Ignacia y entonces pusieron "la Nacha" como mote, como un alias. Y luego la de la Tita,

fue lo mismo, de Roberta, pero de tratar de criminalizarnos, y la lucha."[189] Rodríguez begins her narrative by introducing the history of Mexico's criminalization of its students and of the movement; additionally, she appropriates the alias given to her by the Mexican officials who had attempted to negate her political subjectivity and instead inserts her nickname, Nacha, with its inherent political-historical meaning. These first few lines of the interview also introduce the commitment to political solidarity as she immediately refers to her compañera, Roberta Avendaño Martínez, and the similar tactic of institutionalized criminalization of student activists. She relates to me that her political consciousness had begun to form as a young girl in Taxco, Guerrero, where she had been exposed to her family's economic struggles and that of the other disenfranchised population of her native city: "La idea era estudiar derecho porque yo creo que yo desde niña, desde joven me dolía ver a mi alrededor ver la pobreza, la injusticia entonces yo tenía en mente ser abogada con la idea de ayudar a los pobres de Taxco."[190]

Thus, upon her arrival to Mexico City, she commenced studies at the UNAM's Law Department and was an active member of the university's political organization called the Comité de Lucha. Her political fervor and investment in the movement was solidified when she witnessed the violent repression and arrest of her university friends for demonstrating on July 26, commemorating the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

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[189] "My name is Ana Ignacia Rodríguez Márquez and I'm known as 'la Nacha' from the movement, precisely because the Armed Forces, the authorities gave us that, that, I mean, that they gave us an alias in order to criminalize our movement." … "But la Nacha comes from my name Ignacia and so they gave me 'la Nacha' as a nickname, as an alias. And then with la Tita, it was the same, it came from Roberta, but because they tried to criminalize us, and our movement."

[190] "The idea was to study law because I think that since I was a little girl, since I was young it pained me to see poverty around me, and injustice, so I had in mind to become a lawyer with the idea to help out the poor in Taxco."

This trajectory continued and her participation in the Comité de Lucha intensified as she soon became the target of the government's war against its student activists. Rodríguez was detained when the Armed Forces violently intruded the UNAM and she was arrested with fellow students, a pivotal day that defined her political subjecthood and commitment: "Entonces fue otro acontecimiento que marca mi vida porque yo no sabía que detenían a las muchachas y cuando nos van subiendo a un autobús y nos dicen que nos van a llevar a Lecumberri [cárcel] y dije 'Pero cómo, cómo es posible?'"[191] The psychic trauma of her first detention for merely participating in political meetings is evident in the conflation of past and present tenses and this incredulity is expressed in her futile question -- "How is this possible?" – as the government's criminalization of its students effectively distorted the events that lead to the tragedy on October 2nd.[192] Although Rodríguez was released from custody after her first arrest, she was exposed to the fraudulent accusations and repressive state that monitored and controlled her political involvement. As one of the more prominent women participants of the movement, Mexican officials easily tracked her whereabouts and considered her inhabiting a public space that transgressed normative gender roles.

Rodríguez explains that many young women participated in the student protests and this signified a social and gender paradigm shift; women were marching in the streets, publicly decrying social injustices and occupying a gender space that had not

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[191] "So it was another moment that marked my life because I didn't know that they detained girls and when we were getting on a bus they tell us that they are going to take us to Lecumberri [prison] and I said, 'But how, how is this possible?'"

[192] Although there existed armed guerilla movements in Mexico City at the time of the student movement, the majority of activists remained unarmed; the government thus fabricated charges that accused these activists of bearing arms and organizing Communist coups.

available before in such numbers. As tensions between the Armed Forces, the government, and the students and other political dissidents intensified before October 2nd, so did Rodríguez's fervent commitment to the political concerns and in disseminating information to disenfranchised sectors of Mexican society. As a political activist, her participation in the current political climate was essential to her identity as she states, "Para mí, fui rompiendo con todas esas estructuras, con todas esas canones que estaban manejando… [el movimiento] quería que se viera la participación de la mujer."[193] Rodríguez is clear to maintain that although the gendered dynamic was not completely egalitarian and men still dominated many leadership positions, there was a significant paradigm shift that incorporated many young women students into the movement, exposing them to a political consciousness from which they had been previously excluded. According to Rodríguez, this shift was most evident in the creation of various political brigades which served a vital role in fomenting her political subjectivity and raising public awareness of the current political moment to rural areas of Mexico: "Lo que más importancia para mi tiene el movimiento de 68, que dio una fuerza vital al movimiento, fue las brigadas. Entonces, nosotros nos conformamos en brigadas." Rodríguez relates that they were critical in disseminating information about the movement and "yo me acuerdo cuando subíamos a los autobuses…les explicaba lo que sucedía, llegábamos a las fábricas, llegábamos a las plazas públicas, muy importante los mercados públicos y todo el pueblo nos apoyaba."[194]

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[193] "For me, I was breaking away from all those structures, with all those norms that they were controling… [the movement] wanted the participation of women."
[194] "What was most important about the movement of 68 to me, what gave the most vital force to the movement, were the brigades. So, we started to join various brigades." … "I remember when we would get

She states that they were given donations and people "se interesaban mucho en nuestra participación como estudiantes y que queríamos y todo lo que la gente piensa que este movimiento fue con un tinte verdaderamente político, yo pienso que no fue así porque se fue dando, la cuestión política."[195] Although the student movement attempted to create a dialogue with the government, the paternalistic, hierarchical relationship did not allow for this type of interaction and the government continued to ignore the demands of those protesting. While urban and university settings in Mexico were more appraised of the political and economic climate, the rural communities had remained excluded and unaware of these political tensions. Thus, as Rodríguez contends, the brigades in which she participated were critical to the counterhegemonic movement as they disseminated pertinent information to the public.

Furthermore, this passage alludes to the pivotal moments of Rodríguez's political subjectivity that depicted her experiences of solidarity before the trauma of the Tlatelolco massacre. The solidarity efforts of the brigades impelled her to continue actively participating in the movement as she realized that the Mexican government systematically kept mass sectors of Mexican society ignorant of the political climate. The brigades also dispelled misinformation to the general public regarding the student movement as Mexican officials had, to an extent, successfully constructed a narrative that criminalized political dissension and the student movement. In her passage, Rodríguez illustrates the co-opting of public spheres -- plazas, markets, and so forth – and these

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on the buses…we would explain to them [the locals] what was happening, we would go to factories, to public plazas, and very important, we would go to public markets and the people would support us."

195 "They were very interested in our participation as students and what we wanted and that people think that this movement had shades of political motives, I disagree because it was evolving into a political question."

spaces served as a critical platform for her personal, political fomentation; they also functioned as spaces that built cross-alliances and solidarity among the distinct class, racial, and gender lines. In another critical aspect, Rodríguez and other women involved in these brigades inhabited these public spaces to propagate vital political, social and economic information to the public; the public spaces that had traditionally pertained to male politicians and leaders now pertained to Rodríguez and her compañeras as they assumed vocal, politicized stances. The active, public participation of hundreds of women in the student movement is a pivotal facet of the historical context of the Tlatelolco massacre, yet its aftermath significantly altered and retroacted any gender advancements that had begun during the student movement. Despite the harassment by the armed forces, their illegal occupation of the university campuses, and her brief detention by the police, Rodríguez's commitment to the cause intensified: "entonces me dio mucho coraje, y regresé con más fuerza, yo regresé con más fuerza, y seguimos, con más fuerza por lo mismo…éramos muy libres, vivimos una etapa muy bonita."[196] The momentum of the movement is brutally quelled on the events of October 2nd, and the psychic impact of surviving the massacre alters the narrative structure of Rodríguez's testimony.

Similar to Negrón's history of her activism in the MIR before the coup of 1973, Rodríguez's narrative clearly organizes her testimony according to this historical trauma. Her reflections on the moments before October 2nd remain crystallized and idealized. Indeed, this is evident when she juxtaposes the idealism of the student movement as "una etapa muy bonita" ("a very beautiful time") with the violence evident in her prescient

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[196] "So it gave me a lot of courage, and I returned with more force, I returned with more force and we continued on, with more force for the same thing…we were free, we were living in a very beautiful time."

remark, “nunca imaginé que nosotros fuéramos a ser víctimas de esa represión tan brutalmente” (“I never imagined we would be victims of such a brutal repression.” As Rodríguez commences recreating the events on the evening of October 2nd, 1968, it is apparent that the impact of this trauma frames the narrative trajectory of this memory; at the time of the massacre, Rodríguez had been arrested and released twice for her political involvement and to have survived the violent onslaught results in an unbearable psychic burden: “Cómo era posible estar tres veces presa y había salido?” (“How was it possible to have been arrested three times and have been released?”) Although Rodríguez displays survivor guilt for having survived the multiple incarcerations and the massacre, this traumatic moment merely compels her to compulsively speak and provide her testimony. Despite the intended effect of the organized massacre to terrorize protestors into silence, Rodríguez is acutely aware of the fact that few survivors provide their recollections on the violent night of October 2nd, and even fewer women have come forward since then to relate their own experiences.

In order to combat this entrenched apathy and impunity regarding the events of October 2nd, Rodríguez relates in detail the events leading up to and the day of the massacre. Similar to Eloy and Negrón’s narrative of the traumatic moment in their lives, there is temporal conflation as Rodríguez relates the past of the massacre yet within the present tense, in order to invoke the interlocutor to the immediacy of this moment:

> Bueno vamos al mítin de Tlatelolco y cuando se da la violencia, estábamos frente parados al edificio…veo como salen las luces de bengala amentadas que después eran un alerta, una señal, pero nosotros nos pusimos un poco nerviosos por escuchar las botas de los militares y el ejército y los tanques que llegaban, y los lideres nos decían que no nos preocupábamos porque no nos iban a pasar nada. El mitin estaba

> permitido, ya había diálogo público, ya había diálogo, como es posible que tú estuvieras dialogando y en la noche estuvieran matando, o sea eso no lo puedes creer. Pero allí es donde yo digo hay una traición porque te digo en ese momento, que fue la señal, yo vi una mano con un guante blanco así que tapó la boca de la persona que estaba hablando y lo hecha hacia atrás, y yo dije que pasa? Y luego otro y otro y no me dio mucho tiempo a reaccionar porque salió las balas.... Y yo me quedé no no eso no es posible, esto no puede ser, esto no es cierto, es irreal…nosotros sin armas, y yo con mi manta, entonces cuando yo reacciono fue porque Tita me dijo, córrele porque están matando a los muchachos. Y le dije que no, y yo jalando la manta y Tita me dice, tírala! …Nosotros corrimos sobre las ruinas, y cuando caí en las ruinas me lastimé la rodilla, se me rompió la media… y eso fue muy fuerte el impacto de ver realmente cómo caían los cadáveres, caían los cuerpos y yo no podía creerlo. Y cuando nos fuimos así, pues nos iban a agarrar como a todos, el ejército hace una operación que se llama despeine (sp), se va cerrando, y antes de cerrar nosotros logramos salir, nosotros no fuimos detenidos el 2 de octubre.[197]

As she recreates the moments prior and subsequent to the massacre, Rodríguez commences with the imperfect past tense to contextualize the moment – "estábamos frente parados al edificio" ("we were standing in front of a building") —and then switches to the present tense when she first recalls what triggers the massacre, the flare lights ("veo como salen las luces", "I see the flare lights"). By utilizing the present tense to depict the first signal that propelled the violence on that night, Rodríguez is situating

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[197] "Well we all go to the meeting at Tlatelolco and when the violence starts, we were standing in front of a building…I see the flare lights that were an alert, a sign, but we all became a little nervous hearing the boots of the military officers and the army and the tanks that were arriving and the student leaders were telling us not to worry because nothing was going to happen to us. The meeting had been allowed, there had been a public dialogue, there had been dialogue, how is it possible that you were talking and at night you were killing, I mean that is something you cannot believe. But that is where I say that there is a betrayal because I tell you that in that moment, there was a signal, I saw a hand with a white glove that covered the mouth of the person who was talking and pulled him back, and I said what happened? And then another and another and it didn't give me much time to react because then the bullets began to fly…and I thought no no that isn't possible, this cannot be, this is not right, this isn't real…we are unarmed, and me with my poster, and then when I react it was because Tita said to me, 'Run because they are killing the kids.' And I said no, and I was holding on to the poster and Tita tells me, 'Get rid of it!' …We ran over the ruins, and when I fell on the ruins I hurt my knee, and I ripped my pantyhose…and it was very intense, the impact of seeing just how the dead bodies were falling, the bodies were falling and I couldn't believe it. And they were going to get us all, the army had a technique were they were closing in on us [by blocking the exits], and before they could close in on us we were able to escape, we weren't arrested on October 2nd.

the interlocutor within the moment, demarcating the immediacy of the massacre. Furthermore, it signifies the temporal impact of trauma on Rodríguez's narrative approach. Rodríguez additionally utilizes the present tense to depict the incredulity of witnessing the massacre and the delayed shock: "no es posible, esto no puede ser… es irreal" ("this is not possible, this cannot be…this isn't real").[198]

In addition to this conflation of narrative tenses, Rodríguez invokes the second person "tú" while recreating the intensity of the state's genocidal repression. She relies upon this while she depicts the overwhelming sense of futility and shock at the sheer terror of the armed forces slaughtering peaceful demonstrators. The disbelief Rodríguez relates – "no lo puedes creer" ("you can't believe it") – is intensified with this particular narrative technique of utilizing the second person present as the interlocutor shares this intimate, violent moment temporally in the present. At this moment, Rodríguez grants me access to this hyperpersonal memory, relating the incredulity of such an egregious violent act that the Mexican government carefully premeditated. This particular sentiment is underscored as she discusses that the government had agreed upon creating a public dialogue with the activists, however, this massive deception on behalf of the government is presented in Rodríguez's narrative as she states, "como es posible que tú estuvieras dialogando y en la noche estuvieras matando" ("how is it possible that you were talking and at night you were killing"). The use of the second person past conditional is utilized in order to simultaneously express anguish at the sheer magnitude of repression as well as an invocation into the "you", the absent voice of the Mexican government who left many

[198] Rodríguez further relates that the tremendous shock of the violence in the plaza created a void in her memory as she does not recall the process of running from the plaza to a Sanborns restaurant, crying and in a daze. This memory was retold to her by those who were with her at the moment.

survivors with thousands of questions unanswered. Many students and activists in the plaza had been falsely assured of an open dialogue with the Mexican officials, however, this promise was granted while government officials were strategizing an effective, violent response to the political dissidence.

This violent betrayal by the Mexican government is further portrayed in Rodríguez's depiction of the media response to the events on October 2nd; in this manner, this passage of her testimony challenges the Mexican state's official stance on the massacre, confronting the media's complicit apathy and manipulation of this instance of state-sponsored terrorism. She recalls viewing the television reports of the demonstration at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas the night after she escaped from the plaza and sought refuge in the house of her friend, a medical student, and she states: "veo la televisión… en ese momento sale un cinta. Abajo que dice 'La versión oficial del gobierno es que se tuvo que intervenir en la plaza porque los estudiantes tenían francotiradores entre ellos y empezaron a disparar.' Y yo dije, 'Eso no es cierto, es una mentira.' Y que te pasa cuando estás así, pues te da un choque. Entonces yo me choqué, y él [her friend] me tuvo que inyectar porque estaba yo muy mal y yo me quedé dormida."[199] Once again, Rodríguez utilizes the present tense to relay the trauma and shock, in this case, the betrayal and falsified information propagated by the media and Mexican officials. Mexican authorities defended this official response to the violence ensued in the plaza on October 2nd and maintain that student activists had been the first to instigate the violence,

[199] "I'm watching the television…and in that moment appears an announcement below on the TV. Below it says, 'The official version of the government is that they had to intervene in the plaza because there were snipers among the students and they started to fire shots.' And I said, 'That isn't true, that's a lie.' And then what happens to you when you're there, well it gives you a shock. And I was shocked, and he [her friend] had to give me an injection so I could fall asleep because I was very upset."

prompting the military's violent response. In essence, this collaboration between the media and government officials effectively justified the violence utilized by the army and, ultimately, led to no official investigations for decades after the massacre.

For Rodríguez, this trauma of the massacre was sustained and perpetuated by the obfuscation of the facts vis-à-vis the media and other outlets and Rodríguez's testimony is critical in deconstructing the government's justification of relying on such extreme forms of violence. One of the most harrowing and impacting moments of her narrative is when Rodríguez relates the unimaginable trauma of witnessing bodies of unarmed activists and other civilians being slaughtered around her. While she relays disbelief at the excessive force and violence utilized by the armed forces, she is clear to expose the organized, meticulous forms of violence implemented by the army. Rodríguez and other survivors recall that the military tanks and soldiers had blocked the exits to the plaza, causing mass panic and terror and entrapping the protestors within this cordoned space of the plaza.[200] In this passage, Rodríguez reconstructs the mechanisms of repression utilized by the state and their intent to commit genocide; her oral narrative is a critical subaltern voice that articulates a history that had been effectively and methodically elided from official Mexican historiography. The Mexican media and state corroborated their official stories that erased the true historical accounts of what occurred that evening and a critical component that was negated was the women's involvement in the demonstration;

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[200] Rodríguez and others are fortunate to escape virtually unharmed from the violence; many seek refuge in nearby apartments and others are turned away from the plaza's church, reflecting the Church's complicit actions with the government. For a more detailed, harrowing depiction of the massacre according to survivor eyewitness, please refer to Elena Poniatowska's *Massacre in Mexico*.

thus, Rodríguez's narrative provides a critical gendered context to the repression and the history of women's activism in 1960s Mexico.

Towards the middle of the interview, Rodríguez informs me, "Mira yo nunca he negado hacer una entrevista" ("See, I have never refused someone an interview"). Clearly, this statement is pregnant with significance as there exist few official sources or survivors from this epoch in Mexican history who bear witness to the gendered elements of the student movement and who can also speak of about the political prisoner experience. Rodríguez alludes to a gendered absence surrounding the massacre and its aftermath as the Mexican government successfully quelled a burgeoning movement whose political agenda included deconstructing the patriarchal paradigm that had been deeply entrenched in Mexican society. Women had begun participating more visibly and vocally in the movements of the 1950s and 1960s and this paradigm shift threatened the dominant class' socioeconomic, political stronghold. Rodríguez's testimony exposes the nuances of women's involvement in the student movement and the remnants of patriarchy which women activists faced within the movement in addition to the Mexican state's heteropatriarchal ideals. Thus, as one of the remaining women survivors of the massacre, Rodríguez's testimony reveals this tension within the movement and contests the erasure of the history of the student movement and ruptures the silence surrounding women's political participation in Mexico's history of violence.

Rodríguez recounts the vibrant, active participation of women in the movement, particularly in the various brigades as these women came from various socioeconomic backgrounds, mostly first-generation university-age young women who were the first in

their families to contest and critique the rigid dictates of patriarchy within and outside their homes.[201] The visibility of women in the political movements in the 1960s is recaptured in Rodríguez's testimony and women had been actively involved in the various movements and brigades and their political subjectivity was a critical component to the movement. Rodríguez narrates the significant gendered shift during the height of the movement: "Antes, aparecían como acompañantes, hacían la comida, hacían las cosas así más de la casa, más de familia. Y nunca se veía la participación activa como se vio allí, salir a las calles, manifestarse, a las calles, todo eso lo que hicieron las brigadas fue vital…todas participamos."[202] Within the movement itself, then, traditional gender roles had begun to transform and women occupied significant political roles which propelled them to demonstrate in public and organize the various brigades that disseminated critical political information to the public.

However, women's political activism is juxtaposed against Rodríguez's account of their elision from the history of the Tlatelolco massacre. Despite the movement's emphasis on social justice and antisystemic resistance, Rodríguez relates that men were predominately the leaders and at times exhibited the influence of patriarchy in their interaction with the women activists: "Las mujeres participaban en los movimientos, el movimiento comunista, pero como que no era muy visible la lucha que daban las mujeres. No sé si es por la situación del macho mexicano, o no sé si por el mismo

[201] Poniatowska's work recaptures the generational tension between women students and their parents who disapproved of their political involvement in the 1960s, precisely as this signified a breaking away from traditional gender roles and expectations of their daughters.
[202] "Before, women were the companions, they made the food, they did more of the house chores, took care of the family affairs. And never had there been such an active participation as there was then, taking to the streets, protesting, in the streets, all the work the brigades did was essential…all of us [women] participating."

gobierno se encargó de que no, no sé qué." The integral role of women in the movement is obfuscated from the history of the massacre and she comments before our interview and to the Mexican periodical, *La Jornada:* "La discriminación de la mujer en el 68, ¡en serio!, es enorme. Nuestra participación fue determinante (...) A pesar de todo, por el movimiento sólo hablan los compañeros."[203] In this manner, then, it appears that the demise of the student movement implicated the abnegation of women's involvement, silencing and terrorizing women activists into oblivion. When the history of the Tlatelolco massacre garnered more mainstream attention in Mexico, Rodríguez denotes that the former male student leaders are more vocal in denouncing Mexico's history of state-sponsored violence.

When I ask her why she believes these women do not choose to provide their testimonies nor denounce the crimes committed by the state on October 2nd, Rodríguez explicates that the enormous burden of bearing witness overwhelmed and subjugated many into silence. She relates, "Mucha gente no volvió a hablar. Mucha gente tuvo miedo. Y yo las comprendo…hay muchísimas mujeres que fueron protagonistas de esa historia, que forman parte de esa memoria que no han vuelto a hablar. Y no quieren hacerlo, y es muy respetable."[204] This in essence creates a significant void in the Tlatlelolco massacre's official history and the student movement as there will be fragments of this history that will remain in oblivion; the gendered experiences of

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[203] "The discrimination against women in 68 – seriously!-- was enormous. Our participation was pivotal (…) And in spite of that, only the men speak about the movement."

[204] "Many people have never spoken of it again. Many people were scared. And I understand them…there are many women who were protagonists of that history, that form part of that memory and who have not spoken of it. They don't want to, and I respect that." Rodríguez relates to me one woman whose son was tortured and murdered during the Dirty War and was denied access to her son's body until she signed a release form stating that he had died from pneumonia.

repression during this historical trauma remains a narrative that is critically underrepresented in the history of the massacre. While Rodríguez comprehends and respects the decisions of the women to remain anonymous and in silence, she is cognizant of the burden of being one of the few women speaking for a generation of the polyphonous voices of women in the movement.

This burden of surviving and bearing witness to this violent atrocity is expressed in the following segment: "A mí una de las cosas que toda la vida he dicho cuando me entrevistan: cuando yo me amanecí el 3 de octubre, yo me quedé pensando bueno por qué no morí ayer? Por qué fuimos privilegiados y no nos mataron? Por algo…hay muchas mujeres del 68 valiosísimas, pero anónimas…hay muchas mujeres que no hablan. Del 2 de octubre no volvieron a hablar y no quieren hablar."[205] In this passage, Rodríguez refers to the double burden of surviving the repression on October 2nd and bearing witness for those who cannot or will not speak of their trauma. As she states at the commencement of this passage, she refers to this notion of survival guilt that impels her to provide her testimony in order to publically denounce the genocidal crimes committed by the state. This passage alludes to the lacuna inherent in every testimony and Rodríguez's impossible task of bearing witness for those who cannot provide testimony. This is indicated when Rodríguez questions why she and the others survived, while many were massacred, their bodies disappeared by the army; she replies, "por algo" ("for some reason"), implicating as such her task of bearing witness for those who did not survive.

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[205] "One of the things I always say when I'm interviewed is: when I awoke on the morning of October 3rd, I wondered, why did I not die yesterday? Why we were privileged and why were we not killed? For some reason ... there are many very brave women of 68, but anonymous . . . there are many women who don't speak. Concerning October 2nd, they have never spoken, nor do they want to speak."

Thus, Rodríguez's testimony is a testament to the originary definition of *testimonio* narratives as invoking the multiperspectival, polyphonous subject of testimony, the multiple subjects who did not survive to provide their own testimonies. In addition, there is the extra burden of speaking for the many women who were traumatized into silence and castigated for transgressing their traditional gender roles.

While many women were shocked into silence, the massacre had the adverse effect on Rodríguez and she has remained fervently committed to denouncing the crimes of the Mexican state and providing her testimony to various media sources and international organizations. Considering her prominent, critical role as a woman activist, I ask her if she would consider herself a feminist: "Bueno antes la historia solo la narraban los hombres hasta que comenzamos a hablar las mujeres…yo no soy feminista precisamente pero ese grupo hizo que la mujer se implante en muchos terrenos en México."[206] Similar to Nilda Eloy in Argentina, Rodríguez eschews the label of "feminist" and criticizes Western, First world feminism as it traditionally ignores the particularities of race, class, sexuality and the history of colonization and neocolonialism in the Third World. However, she does acknowledge that the student movement made significant advancements for women becoming involved in public, political demonstrations which assisted in contesting Mexico's rigid patriarchal paradigm. Despite the feminist subtext of the movement, the central focus, to borrow from Chandra Mohanty, was a politics of solidarity that sought to improve the living conditions for Mexican men and women of various socioeconomic classes and races.

[206] "Before only men told their stories until we women began to speak … I am not exactly a feminist but that group allowed for women to be heard in many parts of Mexico."

Rodríguez furthermore relates her wariness of historians and researchers who perpetuate a gender-normative approach in assessing the history of the Tlatelolco massacre. Her suspicions of Western feminists are comprehendible when she relates to me of the time she went to hear an American woman present her book on the '68 movement in Mexico. Rodríguez was horrified when the American researcher concluded that women participated in the movement because of the influence their male partners had on their partners; in essence, she stated that women joined the movement because their men had informed them of the political climate and that these women did not join of their own volition. Outraged at such a dismissive and erroneous categorization of women's involvement in the movement, Rodríguez approached the woman at the end of the lecture and declared, "Pero cómo te atreves a decir que las mujeres solo participaron por sus amantes hombres? Sí, eran famosas por ejemplo amantes de no sé que, más de nada como damas de comer… realmente las que habían participado no eran por ideales, propios, pero más bien por la compañía de los compañeros. A mí, yo no podría haber aceptado que hicieras este libro."[207] The woman makes excuses that she could not find Rodríguez in order to interview her, which Nacha rebuffs and says there were other women who participated and did not join because of the men they were with at the time. This is a critical example of how researchers have manipulated and misconstrued historical documentation in order to align with their particular academic scope and also perpetuates stereotypes of Third World women. In this manner, a Western female

[207] "How dare you say that women only participated because of their male partners? … [You say] the women that participated did not do so because of their own beliefs, but rather because of their male companions. In my opinion, I would not have accepted for you to write this book."

academic reifies existent gender norms in order to archive women's participation in the Mexican student movement as merely companions to the male protagonists of the political era, negating the history of women's political activism and agency.

It is indeed frustrating that various oral historians, academics and feminist scholars have imposed a fixed Western belief system when investigating the role of Third World women and various political, historical movements and as Rodríguez notes, "Hay muchas mujeres, están en el pueblo, que participaron que ofrendaron gran parte de su tiempo…y nunca se les ha tomado realmente en cuenta como deben."[208] While some of these women's roles and historical narratives are elided by both academics and their governments, other academics who do engage with these narratives perpetuate traditional, heteropatriarchal values that reify stereotypes of Third World Latin America. In her essay on sexual-based torture in the Southern Cone dictatorships, Ximena Bunster relies on a similar problematic schema to assess women's experiences as survivors of state terrorism. While she explicitly condemns the hyperpatriarchal state and its institutionalized forms of gender violence utilized during these regimes, she relies on traditional gender frameworks to refer to the women prisoners and their testimonies: "the identity of the Latin American woman is derived from her position in the family and especially from her 'sacred' mothering role…these attributes provide the foundation on which the edifice of the Latin American woman's self-perception and self-respect is built" (106). Politically-active women are reduced to roles as mothers, wives, partners,

[208] "There are many women, who are in smaller towns, that participated and offered a large part of their time…and they have never been acknowledged as they should be."

and companions and their politically entrenched pasts are obfuscated by relying on this gender normative framework.

In "Postwar Peace and the Feminization of Memory", Lisa Yoneyama asserts that Japanese women's political subjectivity in the post-war era is predicated on motherhood; she claims that the maternal symbolized peace and innocence and that maternal instincts prompted women to protect the innocent: "all female participants were depicted as enacting natural maternal dispositions—creating and protecting lives, nurturing and caring for the weak" (194). Women activists in Japan, much like women involved in the Mexican student movement, were not portrayed as intellectuals, workers, or political activists, but rather, they were admitted into the public sphere "insofar as they spoke as mothers…as the everyday and de-ideologized constructs of patriarchal authority" (203). While Yoneyama is referring to the nation's construction of a depoliticized history of women's involvement in the public sphere, this similar patriarchal, gender normative framework is utilized by scholars and feminist historians, evident in Rodríguez's testimony. As researchers we have an obligation to be faithful to the original sources, in this case, Rodríguez's oral narrative and through her testimony, she alludes to the importance of a transgenerational solidarity and resistance against state-sponsored terrorism and gender violence that plagues contemporary Mexico.

In a pivotal moment, Rodríguez asks me if I saw the small memorial built in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas and what I thought of the statue; I responded frankly, stating that I believed that it was a very humble and inconspicuous memorial site with only a few names of those who had been murdered that day. Pleased with my response, Rodríguez

discusses that the commemoration site at the Plaza only documents the names of those the government officially recognized as dead -- about 30 people -- and it also includes names of the dead soldiers. Rodríguez contends the following: “Tiene que haber un apartado solo de mujeres porque las mujeres fueron muy importantes en el 68” (“There should be a separate part solely for women because women were a very important in the 68 movement”). Rodríguez states that women were once a present force and that “las mujeres éramos golpeadas, éramos perseguidas, todas estábamos allí en todas partes del 68…y que participaron muchas mujeres pero no se sabe, yo te digo, y las mujeres anónimas que no han hablado…y nunca se veía la participación activa como se vio allí, salir a las calles, manifestarse.”[209] Rodríguez further relates there exists a gender gap when uncovering Tlatelolco’s past, and that it is critical to center on the role women activists played in the student movement. For Rodríguez, women’s participation in the 1960s was foundational for present-day women’s activism, as she relates, “Tienes a las mujeres de Atenco, tienes a las Triquis, a las indígenas, a la misma gente del pueblo la base del pueblo las mujeres, ya actúan. Entonces sí es un legado [del 68] muy importante pero más que nada porque se atrevieron las mujeres a participar.”[210]

This passage recovers a critical voice in Mexico’s recent history of violence and Rodríguez asserts that women’s involvement in the political movement was essential; furthermore she integrates women’s incorporation into the public, political sphere in the

[209] “We women were beaten, we were persecuted, we were all involved in 68…and many women participated but it is unknown, I tell you, the anonymous women who haven’t spoken…and never has there been such active participation as there was then, taking to the streets, protesting.”
[210] “There are the women of Atenco, those of Triquis, the indigenous women, the women of the towns and villages that now participate. So yes, this is a very important legacy of (68) because above all, women dared to participate.”

1960s as a critical first passage that laid the foundations for contemporary women's antisystemic, resistance movements, such as the women of Atenco and the Triquis.[211] In this manner, Rodríguez alludes to women's solidarity and political participation that the 68 movement fomented; here, then, while the government successfully obliterated the student movement on October 2nd, 1968, Rodríguez asserts that they could not eradicate her political investment and it merely affirmed for her the importance of political solidarity and counterhegemonic movements. Trauma, violence and loss here, then, is transformed into a site of memory and political resistance as Rodríguez relates to me the moments of solidarity in the face of terror during her incarceration.

While Rodríguez is cognizant of the importance of focusing on women's integration and political subjectivity during the student movement, she emphasizes the politics of solidarity among men and women activists during the movement. Rodríguez shares her testimony that is predicated on this collective subject as this solidarity aided in surviving the psychological torture she endured during her two-year incarceration in Mexico City's Lecumberri Prison. Although she iterates the critical importance of this solidarity and collective subject of testimony, Rodríguez's carceral narrative sheds light on the gendered hierarchies that are reproduced during the political prisoner experience in Mexico's post-68 years. While detained at the holding cells called the "Separos de

[211] In 2006 in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico, police arrested and detained more than 45 women who had been participating in various demonstrations that had commenced in 2002, protesting the construction of an airport on local farmlands. The women were rounded up and transported to the local prison in various vans, where police sexually assaulted and raped many of them. And in 2007 in San Juan Copala, Oaxaca, the Triqui indigenous groups declared their locale autonomous from the Mexican government, prompting the Mexican state to send paramilitary forces to blockade and terrorize the community; Rodríguez is referring to the Triqui women who have been active in publicizing the various human rights abuses and murders committed in San Juan Copala by traveling around the nation and disseminating this information.

Tlaxcuaque", Rodríguez relates that "son los días más difíciles que pasaba en mi vida de allí" ("those were the most difficult days of my life"). This traumatic space was where many women were sexually assaulted and subjected to other forms of torture; in Rodríguez's particular case, she recounts with guilt that her friend knew the son of the Chief of Police and they were instructed not to physically harm Rodríguez. Despite these orders, the prison guards informed her that many guards took out female inmates at night to rape and assault them and that she could be privy to this abuse. She relates the terror she felt when they informed her of this: "Pues yo no pude dormir. No se podía…Eran muy durísimos los separos porque habían puro barrotes, entonces todo lo que hacías se veía…Entonces fue una noche horrible, espantosa y dije no, a mi me vayan a hacer algo, me van a tocar o algo."[212]

Ultimately she is released, yet with a harrowing warning that reinforces state power and control, "Y bueno al final me liberan, pero ya me habían fichado…me amenazaron, y me dijeron, 'Vete a tu casa porque la siguiente va a ser muerte.'"[213] While the officials did not physically assault her, Rodríguez experiences illimitable forms of psychological torture as the prison guards manipulated their power and maintained a space of terror in these holding cells. In this time, she is forced to witness others be tortured, instilling in her fear and futility in being unable to assist them. Upon her release, Rodríguez relates the horror of being threatened with death if she is to be detained again and she is paralyzed with fear until her subsequent detention. When arrested again,

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[212] "I couldn't sleep. You couldn't…the holding cells were very difficult because there were only bars, and so they could see everything you did…so it was a horrible night, so frightening and I thought, they are going to do something to me, they're going to harm me or something."
[213] "Well at the end the finally let me out, but they had already marked me…they threatened me, they told me, 'Go home because the next time it will result in your death.'"

Rodríguez is taken to a holding cell where she is interrogated with other activists and she is falsely charged with possession of narcotics and arms, which agents had planted in her apartment; she and the other activists are also falsely charged with sedition and sentenced to sixteen years imprisonment. Furthermore, Rodríguez's testimony alludes to the biopolitical power the state officials exercised over these incarcerated bodies who were denied their fundamental rights and considered lives unworthy of being lived in Mexican society. Rodríguez's carceral accounts relate a critical history of the distinct gendered forms of incarceration and I believe her testimony provides a unique, underinvestigated angle of Mexico's student movement.

What is critical in Rodríguez's testimony of her carceral experiences is the particular treatment of women political prisoners as common criminals, as they did not have their own separate section of the prison. I learn that she and Avendaño Martínez were categorized as common criminals whereas the male political prisoners of the movement had various "privileges" that were not conferred to the women: "Nos metieron en una cárcel de presas comunes. Ellos en Lecumberri estaban en una cárcel de hombres, pero estaban en celdas especiales, donde estaban todos juntos." She adds that the men, "Leían, estudiaban, su visita llegaba hasta la celda, se podían apandar con sus parejas, todas nosotras no. Nosotras éramos unos cuantos bichos allí, conviviendo con los otros cuantos bichos…nos trataban como viles criminales, yo creo que ni los criminales los tratan así."[214] While men and women student activists were criminalized and targeted by

[214] "They put us in a regular prison. The men in Lecumberri were in special prison cells, and they [political prisoners] were all together." … "They read, they studied, they even were allowed visitors in their cells, they could be with their partners, but we women couldn't. We were just insects there, coexisting with the other insects…they treated us like vile criminals, and I don't think they even treated criminals that way."

the Mexican state, existent gender norms allotted the male prisoners with privileges that Rodríguez and the other women were denied. The men were connoted as political prisoners and held in special cells in Lecumberri, whereas Rodríguez and Avendaño Martínez were detained with common prisoners; this symbolic act signified the Mexican state's stance on women activists as they were denied political recognition, eliding their integral participation in the student movement. Furthermore, the male political prisoners were granted conjugal visits with their married or unmarried female partners yet Rodríguez and Avendaño Martínez were unmarried and thus not allowed to have special visits with their partners. This double standard is reflective of the heteropatriarchal structure that abnegates female sexuality as it does not adhere to the patriarchal, western Christian role of woman-as-wife. In a sense, by denying these privileges that were allotted to the men, the Mexican state is reifying – through terror and illegal incarceration – the precise traditional gender roles that Rodríguez and Avendaño Martínez had contested through their political participation.

Despite the harrowing experiences of being detained without due process and of being falsely accused of crimes she did not commit, Rodríguez fondly recalls the moment she sees her friend Avendaño Martínez in the same holding cell. Although having received the news of the injustice of her sixteen-year sentence, Rodríguez remembers feeling relief when she realized she would be sharing a cell with Avendaño Martínez: "Para mí fue algo muy padre de estar juntas, de no estar sola" ("For me it was really cool to be together, to not be alone"). This solidarity and companionship was essential for Rodríguez's survival and it strengthened her personal and political resolve and ability to

survive such injustices. In prison, Rodríguez began to read the works of Che Guevara and she found solace in his political messages; she studied with other political prisoners who taught her about Che Guevara, other inmates who were arrested for being guerrilleras: "Ellas nos enseñaron muchas cosas y sobre todo esa unión, esa fortaleza, es decir, no nos van a acabar, que no es fácil, porque tú lees del '68, verás que algunos compañeros salieron muy mal. Mal mal mal."[215] The solidarity with the other political prisoners, as well as the support from her mother, assisted Rodríguez in combating the Mexican state's attempt to systematically break down the incarcerated individual and destroy their political commitment. For Rodríguez and other political prisoners, this time in prison merely reified her political subjectivity and dedication to the struggle which had commenced in the student movement. Rodríguez utilizes her time in prison to continue her political education and foment her dedication to the recuperation of historical memory of the Tlatelolco massacre. According to Rodríguez, providing testimony is one of the most critical forms of combating injustice and sustaining the memory of those slaughtered on October 2nd.

In addition to the need to speak for those who were murdered by the state, Rodríguez provides her testimony to researchers in order to resist Mexico's dominant history on the Tlatelolco massacre as she is compelled to speak for those compañeros who cannot. While the Mexican state attempted to eradicate this politically dissenting portion of the population and eliminated historical documentation that would incriminate the Mexican officials who are guilty of committing crimes against humanity, they were

[215] "They taught us many things and above everything that union, that strength, it's to say, they aren't going to shut us down, that it isn't easy, because you read about 68, you'll see that some compañeros ended up in a bad state. Very bad, bad bad."

unsuccessful in attempting to co-opt Rodríguez and others in order to maintain their hegemony and command a silence on the true events of the Tlatelolco massacre.[216] Situated in this history of Mexico's systematic attempt to eradicate its young, dissenting population and the evidence of this eradication, we can see through Rodríguez's testimony how Davoine and Gaudilliere's assessment of subjects of an erased history "inevitably exist[…]." After her release from her two-year incarceration at Lecumberri, Rodríguez immersed herself in the study of human rights and Mexican politics and soon joined the Comité '68.[217] Despite the Mexican state's intent to silence the Tlatelolco massacre and its survivors, Rodríguez and her compañeros' belong to a history that is continuously present in contemporary Mexico.

For Rodríguez and other members of the Comité '68, their political projects are based on the recuperation of Mexico's historical memory and these projects include prosecuting former officials of Mexico's Dirty War – "genocidas" – and bringing them to trial. Similar to Argentina's H.I.J.O.S. and the AEDD, the Comité '68 engages in *Escrache* in front of the residences of former Mexican officials who participated in the repression against activists during the Dirty War.[218] Rodríguez describes the importance of participating in such public acts:

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216 When I question her on the contemporary national discourse on the Tlatelolco massacre and the government's current stance on this historical trauma, she sadly informs me that many former compañeros of the student movement were recruited to work for the government; she recounts the horror she felt when she learned that former activists were placed in high-ranking government jobs and asserts that Echeverría himself did this in order to co-opt the history of the Tlatelolco massacre in order to manipulate the historical events of the student movement.
217 Although sentenced to sixteen years, Rodríguez is released after two years due to international pressure from Germany's Amnesty International who had assumed her case and accused the Mexican government of committing human rights abuse.
70 Escrache refers to the public demonstrations against the residences of former military and army officials – in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, among other nations. They are organized by various human rights groups in

> Nosotros vivimos. Y el hecho de que estás dormido y gritamos, 'Asesino!' Eso ya es vivir. Eso es ya es vivir. Además en Mexico, nunca se había visto que un ex-presidente de la república pareciera prisión arreglada. Eso es un mérito del Comité. Luego la gente que dice que nosotros somos los rucos tercos, cosas y no sé qué, pues mira, si no fuera por nosotros, no existiera la demanda en contra de Echeverria pidiendo justicia. Estamos en eso, constantemente…Nosotros nunca hemos dejado de luchar. Nunca hemos dejado de marchar… Yo tengo que seguir, y por qué? Otros nos preguntan si ya dejemos en paz, que es nada más un acto de venganza. No, no es venganza…nosotros no queremos perdón. Ya se sabe que Echeverría fue un genocida…La verdad se sabe. Nosotros no queremos perdonarlo, porque no lo merece. Y no nada más es él, son todos los militares que intervinieron que todavía algunos son maduros, son fuertes, viven. Entonces nosotros queremos castigo a los culpables. Y con qué ideal? Con de toda la vida, que se sepa, que se haga justicia para que no se vuelva a repetir.[219]

Rodríguez contends that centering on the crimes of the past is integral to their survival and in the elucidation of previously elided historical atrocities committed by the Mexican state. In his essay on coming to terms with its past, Adorno contends that in order to deal with the overwhelming guilt and its psychological ramifications, those who were indifferent or who were perpetrators justify these acts by claiming that the victims exaggerate and are obsessed with the past: "Should we consider it pathological to burden

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order to call attention to the various forms of amnesty and leniency granted to the perpetrators of human rights abuse.

[219] "We survived. And the fact that you're [Echeverría] sleeping and we yell, 'Murderer!' that is to be alive. That is what being alive feels like. What's more, in Mexico, there had never been a former president who was condemned to house arrest. That is the achievement of the Comité. Then you have some people who say that we're a bunch old stubborn people, and things like that, I don't know, but look, if it weren't for us, there wouldn't be a case against Echeverría seeking justice. We are always involved in that, constantly…We have never stopped fighting. We have never stopped marching…I have to continue, and why? Others as us to leave it alone, that this is nothing but an act of vengeance…we do not want to forgive. It is known that Echeverría was a perpetrator of genocide…The truth will be known. We do not want to forgive him, because he doesn't deserve to be. And not just him, but all the military officers who were involved and some of them are mature, they're strong, and they're still alive. We want punishment for those responsible. And for what reason? So that this may be known, that justice may be done so that this may never happen again.

oneself with the past, while the healthy and realistic person is absorbed in the present and its practical concerns?" (117).

Rodríguez reveals that they are portrayed as "rucos tercos" ("stubborn old people"), obstinately and obsessively entrenched and haunted by the past and on a quest for vengeance. According to Adorno, when referencing specific traumatic events in the past, he states that many respond with a "vacuous sort of discourse formed around these memories", which signals "an indifference that is obtuse and frightened" (116). Indeed, Rodríguez and the members of the Comité continuously combat this national "vacuous discourse" that attempts to "get free of the past" of the Tlatelolco massacre (115). In this instance, the Comité's recuperation of historical memory led to the trial and conviction of ex-president Echeverría, who is currently under house arrest in Mexico City. This accomplishment, as Rodríguez proudly states, was commenced and organized by the Comité and participating Mexican human rights organizations who charged Echeverría with human rights violations in his participation in the Tlatelolco massacre. However, this form of justice is limited as Rodríguez denotes that Echeverría is only one of many participants in the genocidal politics instigated in 1968 and that most of these "genocidas" live in amnesty. For these reasons, Rodríguez declares emphatically that "yo tengo que seguir" ("I have to continue", continue to participate in politics, in activism, in protests and demonstrations so that "que se sepa, que se haga justicia para que no se vuelva a repetir" ("so that this may be known, that justice may be done so that this may never happen again").

Thus, in considering these three testimonies together, I believe we gain a better understanding of the various positionalities of women ex-political prisoners in post-Tlatelolco and post-dictatorship Argentina and Chile and the importance political agency is for survivors of state violence. By examining these three distinct narratives and histories, it becomes evident how the technologies of power and repression operated in a transnational sense in order to reinforce certain economic, social, and heteropatriarchal norms, and these women's political activism did not adhere to these entrenched norms. In essence, I believe it is critical to consider the politics of visibility in recuperating the silenced narratives of militant women activists and the plurality of women's histories involved in distinct Latin American resistance movements. Moreover, these women's oral histories refer to what Mohanty terms Third World feminism's the politics of solidarity and these narratives articulate a theory of justice that is often absent from the dominant discourses on these historical traumas.

CONCLUSION – The Politics of (Gender) Justice

"Ellos quieren aniquilarme. Conmigo no van a poder. Yo no voy a dejar que me quiebren. Es algo que me dijo al principio. Sigue siendo presente esto" ("They want to annihilate me. They won't be able to do that with me. I won't let them break me. This is something I told myself since the beginning. This is something that continues to be present"). -- Lelia Ferrarese.

Gendering the State of Exception was borne out of my interest in invoking gender as an analytic category in my research on survivors of Latin American political violence. Throughout this project, I have attempted to navigate a series of theoretical concerns related to the politics of human rights and Western feminism, gendered historical memory, and gender-based degradation in the testimonial narratives of former political prisoners in Mexico and the Southern Cone. More specifically, my project engaged with the vexing theoretical limitations of Western feminist scholarship, universal human rights discourse, and dominant historical discourses in their conceptualization and engagement with these Latin American historical traumas and the testimonial narratives that bore witness to them.

During my investigations on the Tlatelolco massacre and the Southern Cone military dictatorships, I encountered an absence of scholarship on women's political agency and a problematic gender-normative approach utilized by Western feminism and human rights theorists. Furthermore, I found that dominant discourses in Mexico and the Southern Cone have either distorted these violent pasts or have assumed a discourse of universal human rights, which divests the survivors of their political agency and decontextualizes these traumas from their geopolitical, historical contexts. Moreover, the existing research on these historical traumas have often centered on a collective subject of testimony or, to refer to Rodríguez's interview, they have been documented and

narrated predominately by the male leaders of these political movements. I have shown that it is essential to explore the gender politics of survivor narratives and to investigate why and how the active participation of women in these political movements resulted in state-sponsored terrorism and incarceration. I decided that this gender-based approach to my investigations would attempt to highlight the critical lack of research done on women's involvement in political movements in Latin America and would call attention to this discursive absence on the gender dynamics revealed in Latin American political prisoner narratives, and how these narratives destabilize dominant discourses on these traumas.

While Mexico and the Southern Cone officially responded to these historical traumas in various ways, my project has demonstrated that what unites these episodes of state violence is the construction of historical narratives that justified said violence by relying on bellicose discourse – such as the theory of the "Two Devils" and Latin America's "Dirty Wars" – that elided the violent origins of neoliberalism and the history of political genocide in these regions. Generally speaking –and only in recent years in Mexico – the Southern Cone and Mexican governments have acknowledged the violation of human rights sanctioned by the state, yet I have argued that this universal human rights discourse has essentially ignored the economic, political and historical motivating factors that led to this organized violence. While in one respect, the internationalization of human rights has shed light on the crimes committed by the state in Mexico and the Southern Cone, little work has comprehensively investigated the economic, historical-political contexts within which these abuses occurred; rather, what this human rights

movement has centered on is the egregious violations of human rights, focusing on the status of the passive "victim" which in turn divests survivors of state violence divests of their political agency.

This culture of "victimhood" in universal rights discourse has lamentably led to the gender-normativizing of women's testimonies, divorcing the women from their histories of political agency, an agency that has been essential in sustaining their subjectivity, or as Margarita Cruz stated to me, "me armaba esa subjetividad política" ("I was armed with my political subjectivity"). This political subjectivity is obfuscated in much of the Western feminist scholarship I encountered, which applies a reductive, gender-normative lens when assessing Latin American women's testimonial narratives of resistance. While much of the feminist analysis that centers on the gendered aspects of these moments of Latin American state violence reduces these women's narratives to their gender-normative experiences, I have found that conversely, examining these narratives within a collective subject of testimony ignores the particularities of gender-based repression that inform us about the hegemonic powers of the state and the perpetuation of heteropatriachal paradigms. In a theoretical angle, then, I have found that Chandra Mohanty's definition of Third World feminism functions as the most relevant means of critically engaging with these testimonies of resistance while not divesting them of their radical, politicized subtexts.

I have considered these queries and limitations in each chapter of *Gendering the State of Exception*, relying upon this transnational framework to expose the hemispheric trends that resulted in the suspension of fundamental rights, which included the

repression, persecution, torture, incarceration and disappearance of thousands of Latin American political dissenters. At stake here is the recuperation of a silenced, gendered history of activism in Mexico and the Southern Cone, and as I have come across in my research -- specifically the interviews conducted with survivors of state violence -- the recuperation of this history is a central task for them. Marta Díaz, former political prisoner of the Argentine dictatorship, states the following:

> La historia está incompleta. Hay una parte y otra, y no se sabe. Completamos la historia con todos, para que tenga la historia completa. Y no va a estar completa, nunca va a estar completa. El terrorismo del estado ocultó, entonces hay cosas que no la vamos a encontrar nunca…[220]

The task of recapitulating the events of the past lies entirely on the survivors, and the lack of state interest in assisting in this recuperation of the past events –in providing archives or documents during the regimes – has added to the difficulties involved in investigating these historical traumas. Furthermore, as Díaz's statement mentions, there are elements of the history that will remain unknown as the state actively decimated evidence, and the organized disappearance of thousands of dissenters represents another portion of this history that will never be recovered. In the instances where the governments demonstrate interest in investigating the state-sanctioned violence of the past, many Latin American political activists with whom I spoke expressed concern and dismay in regards to the government attempting to reappropriate the history of state violence. This concern stems from the state's attempt to eschew responsibilities for the crimes of the past by portraying these events as isolated human rights violations; furthermore, the state's role in

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[220] "This history is incomplete. There's this part and another, and it is unknown. We complete the history together, in order to have a more complete picture of this history. And it will never be complete, it will never be complete. The state terrorism concealed it, so there are things we will never find out…"

recuperating the historical memory of the Tlatleloco massacre and the Southern Cone dictatorships result in their absolute control over the trajectory of the investigations. These states' investigations into these historical traumas, as I explored in chapter one, reinforce the hegemonic power of the state by producing human rights reports that problematically elide the historical-political origins of these epochs of violence and abdicating the quest for justice.

Thus, chapter one's examination of human rights reports on these historical traumas then posits the question of the possibilities of a universal human rights discourse in recapitulating the histories of state violence and whether they can retain the political agency of the victims. I have noted in this chapter that universal rights discourse problematically frames survivor testimonies according to depoliticized, gender-normative concepts, and emphasizes the defense of the abstract, inalienable subject of human rights abuse. Elena Poniatowska's unofficial truth commission on the Tlatelolco massacre emerged before the international legitimization of truth and reconciliation commissions, and thus her report does not rely upon universal rights discourse to condemn the crimes committed by Mexican authorities. *La noche de Tlatelolco* retains the original political impetus of the student movement in Mexico and incorporates a variety of testimonies from survivors and witnesses to document the politically-motivated crimes of the state and its intent to eradicate the politically-dissenting population from the national body. Poniatowska's text clearly dismantles the theory of the "Two Devils" and indicts the Mexican government for its orchestration of the massacre on October 2nd, 1968.

Argentina's human rights commission, CONADEP, and the subsequent publication of its report, *Nunca Más,* marked a significant moment in contemporary Latin America as this was the first state-sponsored commission to assume the investigations of the crimes committed during the dictatorship. However, I have argued that while this commission importantly led to the conviction of the junta military leaders (who were later pardoned), the report itself perpetuates a problematic historical narrative – the myth of the "Two Devils" – that effaces the power dynamics between the military regime and the political dissenters. Moreover, the report underscores the experiences of victimization, and silences the histories of political activism that prompted the repression of these victims. By ignoring these narratives of political activism, we fail to gain a comprehensive understanding of women's political involvement in Argentina, which resulted in the regime's castigation of women activists for transgressing social and gender norms. *Nunca Más* instead problematically frames female testifiers as victimized, passive women, relying upon a discourse of human rights to defend these internationally recognized fundamental rights.

The Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission chose to exclude all survivor testimony in the publication of the *Rettig Report*, defining human rights violations as those that resulted in death or disappearance. Included in this report, however, are military officers killed during the regime, thus their deaths constitute to the commission a human rights violation. Here, then, I have argued that the power dynamics have been completely eradicated and the thousands of people who survived the mechanisms of terror during the Pinochet regime, according to the commission, did not suffer the most

egregious forms of human rights abuse (death or disappearance). In these Southern Cone examples, then, I have questioned these definitions of "human rights violations" and the possibilities of universal rights discourse in denouncing state terrorism and its ability to achieve justice for those affected by this violence. As Agamben states in *Remnants,* the Nuremburg trials "helped to spread the idea that the *problem of Auschwitz had been overcome*" (19). In a similar manner, then, the human rights trials and state-sanctioned reports in the Southern Cone (and Mexico's ex-President Vicente Fox's promise to investigate the Tlatelolco massacre in 1998) attempted to deal with their historical traumas as quickly as possible in order to argue that the "problem...had been overcome." In this chapter, then, human rights discourse is fraught with political intent, despite its claim to be apolitical, and we must question why an international movement so preoccupied with the protection of fundamental rights is less concerned with the search for justice for crimes committed by the state.

My project's second chapter examines the first-person testimonial accounts of former political prisoners and ex-detained disappeared during the Mexican and Southern Cone authoritarian regimes. While chapter one centers on the state's problematic framing, or absolute exclusion of, survivor testimony in the official human rights reports, chapter two explores the narratives of political persecution in three former political prisoners. These *testimonios* relayed the "impossibilities of bearing witness" and I have also explicated that this impossibility is further exacerbated by the gender-based subjugation that was normalized in the carceral space, a reflection of Mexican and Southern Cone regimes' investment in heterosexist gender scripts. Furthermore, I have

exposed the critical limitations of feminist scholars who have problematically categorized survivor testimonies according to a phallogocentric framework, privileging men's accounts as more factual and depicting women's narratives as more emotive. The three *testimonios* analyzed in this chapter destabilize this reductive analytic framework, demonstrating as such that these political prisoner narratives cannot be essentialized according to gender normative assumptions.

In the moments of sexual abjection exhibited in Hernán Valdés' *Tejas verdes*, I argue here that gendered abjection and policing of heteronormativity were sadistically enforced in the prison setting and this *testimonio* traces the lexical complexities involved in writing about past moments of sexual-based desubjectification. I note that the Pinochet regime's inculcation of rigid heteropatriarchal norms is violently reproduced in the prison space, where men and women who contravened these norms ideologically, politically or socially were subjected to violent castigation. Nora Strejilevich's *A Single, Numberless Death* inserts political subjectivity in her *testimonio*, a political agency that state-sanctioned human rights report, *Nunca Más,* had deprived from survivors of organized violence. Strejilevich's text importantly centers on the military regime's institutionalization of violence against politically-active women's bodies, which is critically lacking in the human rights reports investigations on the crimes of the dictatorship. This reclamation of political subjectivity was also a key feature that emerged in Roberta Avendaño Martínez's *De la libertad y el encierro*; targeted for her participation in the student movement, Martínez implicates the Mexican authorities in their systematic elimination of politically-dissenting bodies from the nation-state.

The final chapter follows the theoretical trajectory presented in the second chapter; by referring to the oral histories of three women who were incarcerated during the Mexican and Southern Cone authoritarian regimes, I have shown that existing feminist scholarship relegates Third World women's political narratives to a gender-normative schema. I suggest that this type of scholarship irresponsibly reinforces a hierarchy between the First and Third worlds, as scholars from the First world "discursively colonize" these narratives of resistance by essentializing women's experiences to that of their experiences as mothers, partners or within the domestic realm. In my interviews with Nilda Eloy, Amelia Negrón, and Ana Ignacia Rodríguez, they each contended in they are survivors of political genocide, and they each maintain that disseminating their narratives is a way of combating their nations' culture of impunity and abnegation of genocide. I conclude the dissertation with the interviews I conducted with these former political prisoners in order to explore how these mechanisms of violence were perpetuated transnationally as the women pertained to social movements that challenged the hegemonic neoliberal, heteropatriarchal paradigms in Mexico and the Southern Cone. While I do acknowledge my participation in the production of these cultural texts -- the interviews – I believe these narratives speak of a politics of solidarity and justice that is problematically silenced in dominant historical discourses, human rights reports and Western feminist scholarship.

What emerges from each chapter, the narrative thread that unites these chapters, is a politics of justice that is articulated in these cultural texts. In my conversations with various survivors of these historical traumas, they denote the vexing limitations that

formal justice – trials, prosecutions, universal human rights discourse and truth commissions – represents in contemporary Mexico and the Southern Cone. Many survivors emphasize that indeed this is important in a symbolic sense, as it signifies that *some* kind of justice is being attained, however, there is an understanding that these legal proceedings and universal human rights discourse do not represent true justice, a "comprehensive justice" set forth by Wendy Brown. This "comprehensive justice", would entail investigating the past and assuming historical memory projects that many survivors are involved with in the present. In this manner, the survivors are indeed considered by many, as Rodríguez articulates "rucos tercos" ("stubborn old people") stuck in the past, or to recall Nelly Richard, "remanentes molestos de un mundo ya desaparecido" ("irritating remnants of a world that has disappeared"). For in order to truly achieve this form of justice, we must return to this "mundo desaparecido" ("world that has disappeared") and recuperate the momentum of the movement that the Mexican and Southern Cone authoritarian regimes violently decimated.

In each political organization with which I worked briefly in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Santiago, the survivors of state violence were ensconced in a multitude of activist projects that focused not *only* on the recuperation of historical memory and justice for past crimes, but also justice for contemporary political, social, and economic issues in their respective countries. During my time working with the AEDD, the members worked exhaustively on amassing the testimonies of hundreds of survivors for the many concentration camps instituted during the regime; they concurrently worked on organizing demonstrations with other political groups in Buenos Aires to denounce the

Honduran coup d'etat against democratically-elected President Zelaya and to condemn Israel's occupation of Palestine. Similarly, in my brief time in Santiago, Chile, survivors of the Pinochet regime worked with *Villa Grimaldi's Park for Peace* in order to provide informational workshops on the mechanisms of terror institutionalized during the dictatorship; Chilean survivors of the dictatorship also organized protests against the government's systematic marginalization of the Mapuche indigenous community. During my visits with the Comité '68 in Mexico City, the organization had been working on demonstrations against the exploitation and repression of the Triqui indigenous tribes in Mexico, the feminicides of the factory workers in Juárez, and protests against Arizona's SB1070 law. Thus, these are a few salient examples of how theory and praxis converge in the survivors' articulation of justice, as the state-sanctioned violence of the past is imbricated in the state violence of the present.

My project has aimed to provoke critical questions of gender violence and gender justice that have emerged in the various testimonial works examined in this project. In this manner, I do not think we can investigate this notion of political justice separate from the question of gender justice, as these normative gender scripts were violently reified in these authoritarian states and continue to be perpetuated in contemporary Mexico and the Southern Cone. The gendered violence that was sanctioned during these authoritarian regimes did not dissipate during the transition to "democracy"; politically-active women and men who transgressed normative ideals and challenged the heteropatriachal, neoliberal models during the regimes were violently castigated, and this gendered violence still occurs in Mexico and the Southern Cone. The violence committed against

the Triqui indigenous women in Mexico, for example, is one salient example of how the hegemonic power of the state utilizes gender violence to silence and terrorize the women who challenged the government's attempt to divest them of their land.

In conclusion, I contend that the carceral narratives examined in this project posit a critical space of justice and solidarity that evokes Chandra Mohanty's notion of Third World feminism. The testimonies here speak of a politics of solidarity that does not seek vengeance or forgiveness for these episodes of state terrorism, but rather, what is articulated is a theory of justice that has been abnegated by Mexican and Southern Cone officials for decades. The survivors remain involved in historical memory projects searching for justice and denouncing the crimes committed during the Argentine and Mexican political genocide, but they also are engaged with political projects that seek social and economic justice for various disenfranchised communities in Mexico, Chile and Argentina. In essence, *Gendering the State of Exception* explicates the importance of examining the ways in which these testimonies dialogically relate the possibility of a Third World feminist praxis, as former political prisoners remain engaged in oppositional movements that demand justice for state-sponsored violence and systemic forms of oppression in the past, *and* the present.

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