

## HOW TRAUMATIZED SOCIETIES REMEMBER: THE AFTERMATH OF ARGENTINA'S DIRTY WAR

Antonius C. G. M. Robben

*We all remember that time. It was no different for me than for others. Yet we do tell each other over and over again the particularities of the events we shared, and the repetition, the listening, is as if we are saying: "It was like that for you, too? Then that confirms it, yes, it was so, it must have been, I wasn't imagining things."*

—Doris Lessing, *The Memoirs of a Survivor*.

**N**avy Captain Francisco Scilingo was troubled by a recurrent nightmare: he is flying across the south Atlantic, throwing naked bodies down the hatch of an airplane. Suddenly, he stumbles and falls into the great sky below. Just before crashing into the sea, he wakes up (Verbitsky 1995, 192). "My memory turns automatically to the flights at a moment of stress," he confessed to the Argentine journalist Horacio Verbitsky in 1995 (69).

Scilingo had flown groups of disappeared out to sea during the 1976–1983 dirty war of the Argentine armed forces against a leftist guerrilla insurgency and a heterogeneous political opposition movement. He was convinced that his task was vital to save Argentina from communism. One incident during a flight in 1977 marked him for life.

There are important details but it is difficult for me to talk about them. I think about them and I repress them. They were undressed while being unconscious and when the flight commander gave the order, depending on the location of the plane, the hatch was opened and they were thrown out naked, one by one. . . . As I was quite nervous about the situation, I almost fell and tumbled into the abyss. . . . I stumbled and they grabbed me. (Verbitsky 1995, 58)

Aside from the psychologically complex relation between nightmare and event, this narration cannot be seen independent of the personal and political circumstances of Scilingo's confession. A traumatized Argentine society was the conduit for his posttraumatic stress disorder, and psychoanalytic terminology its cultural idiom.

Captain Scilingo interpreted his traumatization in a popularized psychoanalytic language of unconscious repression, its compulsive recreation in flashbacks, and a sublimation in anxiety dreams. Disturbed by nightmares, suffering from PTSD, spat out by a Navy unwilling to provide psychotherapeutic care, and forced into retirement, Scilingo broke the military's pact of silence in a bone-chilling interview. His confession shocked Argentine society, a society under the false impression that its violent past had been put to rest after guerrillas and military officers were granted presidential pardons in 1989 and 1990. The Scilingo interview gave rise to more revelations by other military officers, made the human rights movement renew their call for the prosecution of perpetrators, and thus demolished the fragile reconciliation that seemed to be sprouting in Argentina.

The aging Madres de Plaza de Mayo continued their Thursday afternoon protest with renewed vigor, and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo intensified their search for their grandchildren. At the same time, high-ranking officers attended Masses to remember their fallen comrades and praise the victory over the revolutionary insurgents. Finally, a new human rights organization, called HIJOS, was founded by young adults whose parents had been persecuted during the military dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> They developed a unique protest. They traced the address of a pardoned officer or former torturer, spray-painted his house with slogans, and divulged his dark past by megaphone to shame the perpetrator publicly and ostracize him from Argentine society (Gelman and LaMadrid 1997). Theirs is a social memory and a social trauma in one. They have no experiential recollection of the dirty war, yet are its living victims.

Why this incessant return to a painful past? Are these individuals, groups, and organizations concerned about how the past will be remembered or how they will be judged by history? Are their public confrontations a manifestation of a politics of memory aimed at imposing a master narrative about dictatorial rule on Argentine society?

In this article, I shall argue that the ongoing conflicts of memory construction are surface manifestations of unresolved traumas about past atrocities in the bosom of Argentine society. Memory, violence, and trauma coexist here in contradictory ways. Past acts of human degradation have evoked their indomitable intrusion on individuals and society alike. The forgetting of violence is inextricably linked to the remembrance of violence because traumatic experiences are characterized by the inability to be either completely recalled or completely forgotten. It is precisely this obstruction to either total recall or total erasure, and the unending search for comprehensive understanding, that makes trauma so indigestible and memory so obsessive.

Holocaust studies and psychoanalysis have stated forcefully that the mourning of mass violence is postponed by denial and repression so that time can wear off the most devastating experiences before the working-through of past losses can begin. Yet, in Argentina, the most painful memories were confronted immediately and a narrative reconstruction set in motion before the military dictatorship collapsed. This article will therefore contest the belief that repression is an inevitable first stage of coming to terms with the trauma of mass violence, because Argentine society entered immediately into an intense contest over the meaning of its recent past. This public contest was initiated between two heterogeneous strands of social memory about the dirty war, each of which manifested internal disagreements about how to remember a past that all recognized as traumatic. Different groups translated traumatic experiences into diverse social memories. Selective forgetting as much as selective remembering led to a polyphonic social memory that changed and expanded over time.

I will begin with a critical examination of some current theoretical understandings of psychic and social trauma, in particular about the Holocaust, and argue that a search for meaning rather than repression is the lynchpin of traumatic memory. Next, I will analyze the ongoing construction of a polyphonic social memory of Argentina's dirty war in terms of three oppositions, namely denial and disclosure, rebellion and defense, and confession and reckoning. Although these three oppositions developed in sequence, each new confrontation did not replace but added to a previous opposition, thus further enhancing the complexity, polysemy, polyphony, and heterogeneity of the process of memory construction about the Argentine dirty war.

Such conflictive memory work has prolonged the traumatized state of Argentine society and led to chronic mourning, as contesting groups could not accept their losses and let go of the past for fear of political defeat and the betrayal of their dead.

### **SOCIAL MEMORY, MASSIVE TRAUMA, AND CHRONIC MOURNING**

There is a common assumption that individuals and societies alike need to repress traumatic events for extended periods before they are able to confront and mourn them. Psychoanalysis states that people resort to repression or dissociation to protect themselves from memories too painful and destabilizing to admit to consciousness (Brett 1993; Freud 1920, 12–18; Mitchell and Black 1995, 118–22). Similar ideas have been expressed about genocides, massacres, and especially the Holocaust. “The traumatic event is repressed or denied and registers only belatedly (*nachträglich*) after the passage of a period of latency. This effect of belatedness has of course been a manifest aspect of the Holocaust” (LaCapra 1998, 9). Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (1975), Adorno (1986), Santner (1990, 1–30), Friedlander (1993, 1–21), and LaCapra (1994, 205–23), among others, have shown how the Holocaust was silenced for decades after the end of World War II. Germany has only since the late 1970s been trying to find its bearings in history through public and scholarly debates about museums, monuments, films, and the Holocaust’s historiography. Such disinterest was found throughout Europe, the United States, and even Israel. Segev (2000) describes how Israel remained silent about the destruction of the European Jews for decades. The 1961 Eichmann trial made the Shoah rise briefly to national consciousness, but it became only firmly entrenched in its collective memory since its inclusion in school curricula during the 1980s. This indifference existed even in the academy. Hilberg (1996) describes the difficulties in having his work on the systemics of the Holocaust published and debated in American universities. In fact, historians personally affected by the Holocaust took a long time in writing about their experiences (Popkin 2003). Clearly, there is a pervasive belief, founded principally on a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Holocaust, that there

exists a tendency to repress collective traumatic memories. Is this response as universal, however, as Holocaust studies and psychoanalysis make us believe? How inevitable are repression and latency, and how are trauma, repression, and memory related on the psychological and the social level?

The psychologists Green (1990, 1633) and McNally (*Remembering Trauma*, 2003, 78) distinguish three aspects to psychic trauma: the event, its subjective perception, and the psychological reaction to that event. Green delineates eight highly stressful generic experiences, ranging from life threats and the loss of loved ones to the infliction of harm on others, that are likely to be traumatic. Memory enters into the person's subsequent interpretation of and reaction to the intrusive events. The question is whether or not repression is a necessary corollary of memory construction.

Psychoanalytic theory has developed two explanatory models about the relations between trauma, memory, and repression. One model considers the recurrent thoughts and incessant recreation of disturbing events in nightmares and psychoses as desperate attempts to become familiar with traumatic experiences. This heightened awareness intends to master the unknowable and erect anew the protective inner barrier ruptured by the traumatizing assault.<sup>2</sup> The other model emphasizes a progressive withdrawal from agonizing memories into a restricted private world, shutting out the most intense traumatic experiences from consciousness. Repression and repetition compulsion are crucial in both explanations, but the first model assigns primary importance to selective remembering, while the second emphasizes selective forgetting (Brett 1993, 67; Freud 1920).<sup>3</sup> Compulsive acting out prevents people from disengaging from their painful experiences and obstructs mourning the losses.

Richard McNally (*Remembering Trauma*, 2003, 190, 275) has severely criticized the psychoanalytic notion of repression. Clinical studies have shown that people may temporarily forget but do not repress traumatic memories. Generally, they do not suffer from amnesia, i.e., the inability to remember, but may have either forgotten certain aspects of a traumatic event or simply not encoded them in memory. According to McNally, the psychoanalytic concept of repression confuses an encoding failure with a retrieval failure.<sup>4</sup>

McNally's dismissal of repression as a necessary psychological

coping mechanism seems to pull one of the three pillars from under the psychoanalytic edifice of trauma. Still, with or without repression, the dynamic of selective forgetting and selective remembering is sufficient to explain the compulsive nature of trauma. On the one hand, recurrent re-experience helps trauma sufferers in their search for meaning, precisely because they were unable to encode and thus remember every detail of an overwhelming event. On the other hand, deliberately shutting out the most inexplicable memories makes the traumatic event more manageable. Both responses help to create universes of meaning that give people a sense of mastery, orient them to the future instead of the past, and allows them to function better in society by giving their experiences a place in life.

Are these psychological explanations about trauma of any use for understanding the social memory of political violence? Can psychological interpretations of intrapsychic processes be transferred to the cultural analysis of collective processes? Catastrophes like the Holocaust have been called massive traumas because they leave entire communities and groups socially and emotionally defenseless (Krystal 1968; Krystal 1985). Massive trauma is more than the sum total of individual suffering because it ruptures social bonds, destroys group identities, undermines the sense of community, and entails cultural disorientation when taken-for-granted meanings become obsolete. A social trauma is thus a wound to the social body and its cultural frame (Erikson 1995; Neal 1998; Sztompka 2000; Watson 1994).<sup>5</sup> Sztompka (2000) has described a traumatizing sequence for societies that begins with a major social upheaval (such as genocide or economic collapse), continues with a cultural interpretation and narration of events, and then leads to disruptive collective conducts, opinions, and moods. A cultural trauma is then “the culturally defined and interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of society” (Sztompka 2000, 449). In sum, massive trauma affects people as much on the physical and mental level as on the social and cultural level.<sup>6</sup>

Much has been written in recent years about how individuals and societies come to terms with massive social trauma (e.g., Antze and Lambek 1996; Ball 2000; Climo and Cattell 2002; Eyerman 2001; Herman 1997; Minow 1998; Neal 1998). Once again, Holocaust studies takes a prominent place, while psychoanalysis has provided an influential interpretive framework about mourning that has been

transposed to the collective level. People respond to losses through normal mourning, pathological mourning, or melancholia. Normal mourning unravels the emotional attachment to a deceased person by relegating this relation to the past as remembrance. Pathological mourning is characterized by reactions such as the inability to accept the death, feeling responsible for it, or displaying aggression towards the deceased person. Melancholia is a process in which a person does not understand what he or she lost when death or destruction undid the relation; the attachment is not unraveled but incorporated into the person's self, thus leading to a continuous sense of loss and a suicidal depression (Freud 1917; Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 486).

The problem with Freud's classification is, according to Santner (1990, 3) and LaCapra (1994, 213), that melancholia and mourning are not two separate states of bereavement but form a continuum, as can be demonstrated for societies traumatized by the Holocaust. An additional complication is that Freud's three reactions are not the only responses possible. Close deaths are generally stressful and sometimes traumatic. Both emotional reactions require mourning to accept the loss. However, a traumatic reaction to death inhibits the working-through process through compulsive re-experience, requiring psychotherapeutic treatment to pull the bereaved person from his or her emotional *cul-de-sac*.

How did Europe cope with the traumatic losses of World War II, according to this psychoanalytic understanding of bereavement? Postwar Germany neither mourned nor yielded to melancholia because of a highly effective denial of its losses. Adolf Hitler was still part of the self-image of Germans, and the removal of this attachment would have been too devastating. It is not that the Holocaust was inaccessible because of repression, amnesia, or inoperative encoding, but it was silenced and disavowed. Instead of mourning, Germans worked in a monomaniacal way toward their economic miracle to avoid facing an all-too-painful reality (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1975; Adorno 1986; Santner 1990, 3–6). Israel has mourned the Holocaust since the 1980s but with a degree of melancholia. Israelis internalized victimhood within their selves as the Shoah became part of the country's national identity, and began to act toward the future from that position (Segev 2000, 487–517). Most west European societies mourned the Holocaust by initially placing themselves on par

with the Jewish victims of the Nazi regime, while later admitting to their complicity in the deportation of their Jewish compatriots to the concentration camps.

Psychoanalytically inclined interpreters of the Holocaust, such as the Mitscherlichs, Santner, Friedlander, and LaCapra, seem to suggest that one copes with such genocidal forms of massive violence through either mourning or melancholia. So writes LaCapra (2001, 65; see also LaCapra 1998, 183–86): “mourning might be seen as a form of working through, and melancholia as a form of acting out.” However, the Argentine response to the traumatic dirty war has not been one of silence, disavowal, melancholia, or impeded mourning, but instead a compulsive remembering and continued contestation about the meaning of terror and suffering. The designation pathological or, more accurately, chronic mourning is appropriate here because the various groups in Argentine society are enwrapped in a contestive relation, which keeps them hostage to each other’s memory politics and prevents the intermittent manifestations of mourning from becoming more inclusive as time passes, thus leading to unfinished and therefore chronic mourning. People cannot mourn their losses when others deny that those losses took place. The contest of memory denies conflicting parties sufficient room to work through their traumas, hinders them from gradually standing back from the past and proceeding from testimony to historical interpretation and from re-experience to commemoration. Conflictive memory work does not facilitate working through, but slows it down, and turns re-enactment into a compulsive practice. In sum, Argentina shows that the decades-long silence that preceded the mourning of the Holocaust is not intrinsic to trauma or caused by repression, but dependent on specific political, national, and historical circumstances. The response to social trauma may be a lengthy silence, forgetting, and withdrawal, as in the case of the Holocaust during the 1950s and 1960s, but can also be a compulsive reliving, acting-out, re-experiencing, and repetition, as in the case of Argentina’s dirty war.

Thus, it is in the highly conflictive reliving of dirty war experiences, rather than in repression, that the key to understanding the traumatized Argentine society should be sought. This collective re-experiencing is not a static reproduction or repetitive replay of the same memories, but a contested, contradictory, and heterogeneous



process of selective memories among different groups. A cultural analysis of the sequels of Argentina's dirty war should therefore be attentive to the shifting meanings and memory politics within the compulsive repetition of traumatic experiences whose referents and contexts change through time.

### THE EVENTS: REMINISCENCES OF VIOLENCE

The historical roots of the 1976–1983 dirty war are long and convoluted. Some authors believe that the civil wars of the early nineteenth century were the foundation for centuries-long animosities. Others point to the 1919 Tragic Week, when police killed thirty striking workers and instituted a repressive regime toward social and political protest that culminated in the dirty war. I prefer to begin in 1945, with the rise to political prominence of the Argentine working class under the populist leadership of Juan Domingo Perón. This emancipatory movement provoked a growing opposition by the upper and middle classes, which eventually resulted in the 1955 coup against Perón. The worsening labor conditions and the political proscription of the Peronist movement contributed significantly to the political violence in Argentina. Peronists reacted with sabotage and armed resistance against the military government, but their actions petered out by the late 1950s due to increased police repression. By the mid-1960s, the initiative of political violence shifted from the Peronist working class to a younger generation inspired by the 1959 Cuban revolution. Tiny Peronist and Marxist guerrilla organizations emerged, which interpreted the massive worker and student street protests of 1969 as a portent of revolution.

The abduction of former president Pedro Aramburu on May 29, 1970 by a small group of young Peronist guerrillas calling themselves Montoneros marked the beginning of a decade of guerrilla insurgency in Argentina. Retired Lieutenant-General Aramburu had been one of the principal ringleaders of the September 1955 coup against Perón and the architect of the violent repression of the Peronist movement (Gillespie 1982, 96-97; *La Causa Peronista*, 1974, 9:25–31). Aramburu's execution prompted the military junta to pursue the guerrillas vigorously and bring them to court for inciting political

violence. Armed operations in Argentina rose from 141 in 1969 to 434 in 1970, increased further to 654 in 1971, but declined in 1972 to 352 because of the effective counterinsurgency (Moyano 1995, 27–28).

Meanwhile, the pressure on the military junta from strikes and street protests became so great that national elections were held in March 1973. The Peronists won the elections and assumed power on May 25, 1973. One of the first political deeds was the amnesty of 372 political prisoners, among whom were several of Aramburu's abductors (San Martino de Dromi 1988, 2:33–39). The military were shocked. This amnesty became a watershed in their thinking about counterinsurgency warfare, made them suspicious of democracy, and convinced them that a total annihilation of the revolutionary left was the only correct response to a future resurgence of political violence.

Soon after the May 1973 turn to democracy, and especially after Perón assumed the presidency in October 1973, the political violence in Argentina increased rapidly. A deadly confrontation between right-wing and left-wing Peronists erupted, and Marxist guerrilla organizations attacked the armed forces in the belief that the revolutionary process begun in 1969 was maturing into victory. Perón's death in July 1974, and the incompetent government of Perón's widow, Isabel Martínez de Perón, led to such chaos that the armed forces decided to take charge of the country in March 1976.

Disappearance was the preferred repressive method of the Argentine military.<sup>7</sup> The junta reported that, between 1969 and 1978, the guerrillas had inflicted 515 deaths on military and police, and killed 172 civilians (PEN 1979, 302–5). Its antirevolutionary "dirty war" resulted in an estimated ten thousand disappeared on the political left. The abducted were never publicly acknowledged as detainees once they disappeared into the hundreds of secret detention centers known as "pits" (*pozos*) and "black holes" (*chupaderos*). Some were released into exile, but most of them were assassinated, and their bodies discarded (CONADEP 1986, 11–13; Mittelbach 1986). Aside from operational reasons (spreading confusion among guerrilla organizations), social reasons (sowing fear in Argentine society), judicial reasons (destroying incriminating evidence), and political reasons (misleading world opinion), the disappearances also served a conscious construction of the national memory about the dirty war. There was not a trace to be left of the defeated, only a memory of the glorious.

The junta fell from power after the disastrous 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war. A transitional military government took its place, prepared general elections for October 1983, and began to construct a master narrative of the dirty war directed as much at an angry Argentine society as at the shocked military personnel.<sup>8</sup> Military spokesmen composed this narrative around the 1970 execution of Lieutenant-General Aramburu, the 1973 amnesty of convicted guerrillas, the political chaos of the 1974–1976 Peronist government, the more than five hundred deaths suffered by the armed and security forces, and the constant reminder of Argentina's predicament if the guerrillas would have won. At the same time, the Argentine military dismissed the human rights charges leveled against them. In their eyes, Argentine society had to remember the victory over the subversive left and forget the inevitable tragedies of war.

In 1984, the Argentine military embarked on a decade-long campaign of intentional public denial, which could not but end in failure. Massive traumatic experiences cannot be silenced indefinitely by a large group of people, even by such a hierarchically structured organization as the armed forces, because silence does not erase the original emotional assault experienced by its members.

### **DENIAL AND DISCLOSURE: CONADEP TRUTH COMMISSION AND THE TRIAL OF THE COMMANDERS**

In the final months of the 1983 transitional military government, the armed forces did their best to influence national memory by impressing the following four points on the Argentine people. One, the dirty war had been a legitimate antirevolutionary war against a guerrilla insurgency supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union. This war had been won at the cost of hundreds of patriotic officers, soldiers, and policemen. Two, the military had put Argentina on the right track. They had halted the political disintegration, stimulated the economy, and combated corruption and nepotism. Three, the counterinsurgency war was fought within the margins of the law, with a legal mandate and legal measures of repression. Torture and disappearances were not officially sanctioned, but were the inevitable excesses of war. Four, the armed forces were an inextricable part of Argentine society,

a social institution that stood at the birth of the nation and the only stable institution since Independence.

This master narrative failed to convince the Argentine people not only because it was blatantly untrue (corruption, nepotism, and abuse of power soared under the military, and state terror was policy), but because the fate of the disappeared was of an overarching public concern. The dirty war had not truly ended as long as the suspicion remained that the military still held people in secret detention. In December 1983, the newly elected president Raúl Alfonsín installed the National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP) to inquire into the fate of the disappeared. Unlike the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the CONADEP's most important objective was truth and adversity, not reconciliation and forgiveness. Memory construction and reality testing shared a discursive arena centered on a continued denial by the military that systematic disappearances had taken place. The CONADEP, the judiciary, and especially the hitherto censored news media were now the competing voices of remembrance.

The military had had a head start in the politics of memory by obliterating the bodies of the assassinated disappeared, thus attempting to confine the traces of their repression purely to the discursive domain. It was their word against that of the surviving victims. Aware of this dilemma, the CONADEP truth commission took over fourteen hundred depositions in Argentina and hundreds more abroad, examined the records of morgues and cemeteries, opened mass graves, and carried out forensic investigations (CONADEP 1986, 428–37). Delegations also visited military bases, police stations, psychiatric hospitals, and sites denounced as secret detention centers.<sup>9</sup> CONADEP commission member Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazu concluded that “unfortunately we have found nobody alive, not even in hospitals. We went to the Borda [psychiatric hospital] with relatives, examining patient by patient to see if we could find anyone” (*El Diario del Juicio* 1985, 7:156).

This statement was psychologically devastating and politically unacceptable to many searching relatives. The meaning of a “disappeared” as someone alive yet missing changed into someone dead yet unaccounted for. Unlike in the case of the Holocaust, where the absence of proof of the death of millions of extermination camp

inmates was explained by the Nazi logic of genocide and the existence of crematoria and gas chambers, the Argentine dirty war lacked such open ideological framework and visible infrastructure of mass murder. The Argentine military always denied having the disappeared in secret detention and thus nurtured a hope among relatives that was hard to abandon. Furthermore, the political reality of an Argentina climbing out of years of authoritarianism did not allow for the public acceptance of a presumption of death without the presence of a corpse. The CONADEP assertion of death failed to neutralize the denial of disappearance, prevented a closure, raised an incessant call for the truth, and thus allowed for the continuous re-experience of the traumatic abductions and absences in search of their meaning.

The continued demand for truth demonstrates that personal and social traumas revolve around a search for the meaning of past suffering. An individual may forget or not recall certain devastating experiences, but that does not make the traumatic event go away. It rather pushes it to the front of consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Many traumatized people want to know every single detail of the harrowing events. This recurrent recollection is, according to psychoanalysis, a way to come to grips with and adjust to the unknown and even the unknowable, as Cathy Caruth has argued. Certain aspects of a traumatic experience are simply unknowable because there is a strange relation “between the *elision* of memory and the *precision* of recall” (Caruth 1995, 153). Some parts of a traumatic experience are recalled with incredible detail, including sensations of taste and smell, while others are never encoded and thus lost forever. A traumatizing event consists of so many new and overwhelming impressions that these can never be encoded in full.<sup>11</sup> In fact, so argues Caruth, in a psychoanalytic reasoning that is also found among the Holocaust scholars mentioned above: “The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself” (Caruth 1996, 17). But does this latency also exist within a social trauma experienced by a society composed of heterogeneous social groups with different ways of participating in, witnessing, encoding, and remembering traumatic events?

Social memory gaps proved less final in Argentina than the unrecoverable omissions in the personal memories of traumatized

individuals. Witnesses, victims, perpetrators, politicians, officers, guerrillas, lawyers, judges, and historians may ignore or be ignorant of certain circumstances but not in unison. In a similar way, latency and imperfect recall may be at play in psychic trauma, but their existence in social trauma is, to an important extent, a matter of the national, historical, and political context rather than part of its constitution. Latency existed in the aftermath of the Holocaust but not in the case of Argentina's dirty war. For instance, a large number of personal testimonies appeared immediately after the fall of the military junta. These authors tried as much to come to grips with their own experiences as to fill in the gaps for the Argentine people. Each new account added an unknown detail, revealed another dark corner of state terror, and disproved the military memory discourse (e.g., Bondone 1985; Buda 1988; Firpo 1983; Seoane and Nuñez 1986; Timerman 1981; Vazquez 1988). Without entering here into a discussion of testimonial discourse (see, e.g., Felman and Laub 1992; Gugelberger 1996; Gugelberger and Kearney 1991; LaCapra 2001, 86–113; Langer 1988; Wieviorka 1994; Young 1988), it has to be said that these testimonies were not simple truth statements, but should be interpreted as counterdiscourses empowering their narrators, impelling them to contest official discourses, and making them active players in the politics of memory, as Sanford (2001) has shown convincingly for Guatemala.

Such testimonial revelations were of course not welcomed by the Argentine military, and more surprisingly, by some surviving relatives. Hebe de Bonafini of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo abhorred these narratives as a further humiliation of disappeared Argentines. She could not talk about her son Jorge as a tortured body because she had given birth to him and felt shame imagining his body covered with bruises and blood. "Because I see him with another nudity and to describe this is to humiliate him, is to repeat the torture and deepen the violence" (cited in Sánchez 1985, 127). For some groups of victims, as well as victimizers, Argentina's collective memory had to be sanitized, either out of piety for the dead or concern for the living. Still, witnesses continued to write testimonies. Complainants filed lawsuits, and historians examined recently opened archives. Nevertheless, despite all these persistent efforts to cover and uncover the traumatic past, there continued to be an unknowable that summoned new explorations of the past and beckoned for meaning.<sup>12</sup>

In the absence of much material evidence, the reconstruction of the dirty war was, by 1984, above all a narrative reconstruction, in which personal experience turned into public testimony. Traumatized Argentines were empowered by an official forum helping them on the way to recovery (Herman 1997, 133). Excerpts were included in the CONADEP's final report, thus giving an emotional content to the dispassionate concluding figures of 340 secret detention centers and 8,960 disappeared.

In anticipation of the final report to president Alfonsín, the CONADEP commission decided to take their case to the Argentine people. Their ninety-minute documentary "Never Again" (*Nunca Más*) was broadcast at 10:00 PM on July 4, 1984, and captured national attention.<sup>13</sup> The documentary began with the display of the photos of men, women, and children who had disappeared, and the voice of a narrator who said "Why this atrocious enigma?" The contrast between the smiling faces beaming from the photos and their unknown fate could hardly be greater, especially because these were unmarked dead resting in undisclosed places.

The documentary explained the dirty war as a Manichean struggle between an idealistic younger generation and a repressive military apparatus. Good was pitted against evil. This explanation was criticized from two sides. President Alfonsín's party members observed that two demons had been responsible for the violence. According to congressman Moreau, there "had been an armed struggle between two sectors to take power in which both equally demolished ethical values and were not fighting for democracy" (*Somos* 1984, 408:11). Instead, the military perceived the dirty war as a struggle between good and evil, with the military in the benign role as the defenders of Argentina's sovereignty. One officer remarked, "According to the program, the disappeared were peaceful citizens, writers, workers, and housewives who didn't know anything about politics. It seems as if one day they were detained by the armed forces just like that, without rhyme or reason" (*Somos* 1984, 408:11). However, it was precisely this impression that had been nurtured by the armed forces. The repression had been carried out with so much concealment, without trials and convictions, with the refusal to honor the right of *habeas corpus*, and the repeated denial that the disappeared were in custody, that the CONADEP image of state terror was all the more convincing.

Two and a half months after the documentary, on the evening of September 20, 1984, the CONADEP truth commission presented its 50,000-page report to the government. It was accompanied by an estimated 70,000 persons under the motto “punishment for the guilty.” A summary of the report, entitled “Never Again” (*Nunca Más*), became available in newsstands throughout the country, selling more than 300,000 copies. This was the first systematic description of the dirty war for the Argentine people.<sup>14</sup>

Once the practice of disappearance had been documented, the time arrived to bring the suspects to justice. The 1985 trial against the leaders of the military dictatorship was the second comprehensive attempt to reconstruct the national memory about the dirty war, a reconstruction that did not replace, but added to the existing collective memory.<sup>15</sup> Under tremendous pressure, president Alfonsín decided in December 1983 to give the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces the chance to try the three military juntas. As if to provoke public opinion and defy the government, the Council declared on September 21, 1984, one day after the CONADEP had presented its final report, that it could not pronounce a sentence at the October 21 deadline. The Federal Court of Appeals ruled that a civilian court could now try the case (San Martino de Dromi 1988, 2:555–56).

The trial began in April 1985 and captured the attention of the Argentine people, albeit mainly in print. The testimonies were reproduced in a weekly publication (*El Diario del Juicio*), which sold more than 200,000 copies. The hearings were open to the public, but television broadcasts were mute. The image of the dictators sitting in the accused stand and the soundless sobs of the witnesses gave the trial an unreal quality that mirrored the ambiguous status of the disappeared (neither dead nor alive) and the contradictory conclusion of the truth commission (all disappeared are dead but there is no physical proof).<sup>16</sup>

The conviction of the once omnipotent military commanders and the public testimony of the victims had a tremendous impact on national opinion. Former captors and former captives were now placed on an equal footing before a court of law as defendants and plaintiffs, while the systematic questioning by judges, lawyers, and public defenders about the precise place and circumstance of torture and rape entailed a persuasive objectivity. The hegemony of the court



temporarily suspended the memory competition between the military and the human rights organizations (González Bombal 1995, 210–14). Now, memory rested in the hands of the judges, and the trial became a secular ritual of commemoration in which the democratic forces were once again at the helm (Minow 1998, 46).

After closing arguments had been read in September 1985, the defense council was heard. Retired Admiral Massera spoke in his own defense.

I have not come to defend myself. Nobody has to defend himself for having won a just war. And the war against terrorism was a just war. Nevertheless, I am put on trial here because we won that just war. If we would have lost it then we wouldn't have been here—neither you nor we—because the highest judges of this Chamber would have been replaced some time ago by turbulent people's tribunals, and a ferocious and irrecognizable Argentina would have replaced the old Fatherland. But here we are. Because we won the military war and lost the psychological war. (Cited in *El Diario del Juicio* 1985, 20:5)

Massera presented himself as Argentina's sacrificial lamb, who ignored his personal predicament to safeguard the nation's Christian civilization and prevent its fall to atheist communism. The just war doctrine was invoked to give the Argentine military the freedom to use whatever means necessary to defeat the guerrilla insurgency and political opposition. But, as Michael Walzer (1977, 21) has stated: "It is right to resist aggression, but the resistance is subject to moral (and legal) restraint." The reasons of war may be just, but its means unjust, and the other way around. Even those who fight just wars are accountable for their actions, because "justice itself requires that unjust killing be condemned" (Walzer 1977, 323). Here, the military's interpretation of the dirty war stood face to face with the prosecutor's account, awaiting a ruling from the judges. The verdict was given on December 9. Two defendants (Videla and Massera) were sentenced to life in prison. Four defendants (Graffigna, Galtieri, Anaya, and Lami Dozo) were acquitted, while three defendants (Agosti, Viola, and Lambruschini) were given between four and seventeen years imprisonment (Camara Nacional 1987, 2:858–66). The five commanders were found guilty of the systematic abduction, torture, and disappearance of Argentine civilians, and for allowing subordinates ample

freedom to decide about the fate of their victims without due process (Camara Nacional 1987 1:266).

How did the military respond to the successful efforts of human rights organizations and the courts to convince the Argentine people that they had been the victims of state terror? The military pursued three strategies: emphasizing that Argentina had been involved in a guerrilla war, discrediting evidence about the disappearances, and portraying the convicted military commanders as martyrs. They gave the typical responses of most repressive regimes accused of human rights violations: “the classic discourse of official denial, the conversion of a defensive position into an attack on the critic, and the partial acknowledgment of criticism” (Cohen 2001, 102).

First, the military emphasized that Argentina had been in a state of war. The armed forces had the constitutional right to defend the country against this assault on its sovereignty. Several books described the extent of the guerrilla violence inflicted on Argentine society (Díaz Bessone 1988; Petric 1983) and the international connections of the insurgency (Pozzi Jáuregui 1983). This message was repeated over and over again with the reproduction of iconic photographs of assassinated officers and the narration of armed confrontations.

Second, the charge of systematic disappearances was first denied and then discredited. The military first dismissed the existence of a premeditated disappearance strategy and then, in the face of growing material proof, placed doubt on the quality of the evidence, the credibility of the testimonies, the political persuasion of the eyewitnesses, the forensic methodology, and the circumstances under which the deaths had taken place. For example, General Villegas stated that many of the persons reported as disappeared were living in exile under false names, fighting abroad as mercenaries under *noms de guerre*, had returned to Argentina illegally, were unidentified casualties of the counterinsurgency war, or had fallen victim to internal disputes within the guerrilla organizations (Villegas 1990, 182–84).

The third strategy of the military consisted of displaying themselves as victims of political persecution, holding religious services in homage to military and civilian victims, and trying to erect a memorial in honor of the victims of the war against the Marxist subversion (*Tributo*, January–April 1990, 27–29). Notwithstanding these three public strategies, high-ranking military officers were at a loss about

how to respond to the prosecution of officers accused of human rights violations. Officers who had participated in counterinsurgency and intelligence operations were becoming disgruntled about their commanders' passiveness in protecting them. They were determined to escape prosecution and make Argentine society put the past to rest.

The dynamic of denial and disclosure produced two main conflicting discourses yielding a continuous stream of new revelations about past abuses and an equally persistent stream of disavowals. This repetition of the past acquired a tit-for-tat compulsiveness that was not a regurgitation of the same narratives. Each revelation and subsequent denial created new tensions between and within the military and the human rights organizations. Such tensions evolved into open conflicts within the armed forces and the human rights movement, as will be demonstrated in the next two sections.

### **REBELLION AND DEFENSE: OPERATION DIGNITY AND DUE OBEDIENCE**

The successful trial against the military commanders opened the possibility of further convictions. By early 1985, more than two thousand complaints had been filed against 650 officers and NCOs (Americas Watch 1991, 45). The prospect of hundreds of new trials put the joint chiefs of staff and the retired generals of the 1976–1983 dictatorship in a bind. Their problem was not just to refute the evidence brought forward in the courts and remain steadfast in their public denial of any wrongdoing, but also to construct their discourse in such a way as to satisfy those officers who had been directly involved in the repression yet had to maintain the pact of silence.

The public denial of the traumatic experiences of NCOs and lower-ranked officers was intolerable to some because it seemed to imply that their experiences had never happened. Traumatized people, whether these are victims or perpetrators, need the world to accept the reality of their harrowing experiences to be able to integrate them into consciousness (Robben 1996). Denial relegates those experiences to the world of the uncanny. These officers were besieged by their nightmares and by a society keen on convicting them. They

felt doubly betrayed when their superior officers failed to protect them against prosecution.

At the same time, president Alfonsín was concerned about the cost to democracy of a resentful armed forces. He pushed the so-called Final Stop law (*Punto Final*) through Congress on December 23, 1986, which placed a sixty-day statute of limitations on criminal charges against individual officers. In an unexpected reaction, judges and legal clerks canceled their vacations to file a great number of complaints presented by the human rights organizations (Americas Watch 1991, 48).

The disgruntlement with the failing leadership of the joint chiefs of staff came to a head on April 15, 1987, when Major Ernesto Barreiro refused to appear at a federal court on the charge of having tortured prisoners at La Perla secret detention center in Córdoba. When his commander tried to force Major Barreiro to present himself, his comrades rebelled. The mutiny spread to other military bases, and Lieutenant-Colonel Aldo Rico emerged as the leader of a movement he later baptized Operation Dignity. Old fears about military intervention were resuscitated. Alfonsín decided to talk to Rico, while nearly one hundred thousand people were waiting in anguish at the capital's Plaza de Mayo.

Rico explained to Alfonsín that the rebels wanted a political solution to the sequels of the counterinsurgency war and to begin a process of national reconciliation. Alfonsín confided to Rico the new legislation he was about to submit to Congress, and the rebel leader agreed to surrender to the proper military authorities.<sup>17</sup> As Alfonsín was leaving the meeting, he was stopped by an emotional Captain Breide Obeid: "Mister President, you have to understand us. . . . They ordered us to fight against the subversion, saying that we were defending society against the enemy. . . . We were not prepared for that type of a fight and they made us do things that we never dreamed of as military men. They said it was for our families." The captain told Alfonsín about the hardships during the Falklands/Malvinas War, and then continued: "Immediately upon our return, they treated us as criminals, they hid us as if we were lepers. . . . The trials ended up crushing us. We didn't speak of anything else in the barracks. The generals didn't defend us, they didn't even take notice

of our requests for reforms. . . . This is all, Mister President. I wanted to explain to you what I felt" (cited in Grecco and González 1988, 224–25.<sup>18</sup> Alfonsín was visibly moved by these words, but their deeper sense was replaced by the elation about the political victory. He returned to the Plaza de Mayo to announce the end of the Easter rebellion, as it became known. The price was paid six weeks later (Grecco and González 1988; López 1988, 74–82; Norden 1996, 128–30; Waisbord 1991).

On June 4, 1987, the government proposed the Due Obedience law (*Obediencia Debida*), which filled the Argentine people with disgust. The law distinguished three levels of responsibility. The higher the rank, the greater the responsibility. The law stated that most accusations against many officers were unfounded because they had only been carrying out orders given by higher-ranked officers. Only theft, rape, and the abduction of babies were still considered punishable. Most military defendants were thus left scot-free.

What is the meaning of this rebellion in relation to the memory construction about the dirty war? The rebels felt that their commanders had failed to protect them against criminal charges for actions carried out in the line of duty. They wanted their commanders to restore their military honor by vindicating the dirty war (Hernández 1989, 45). However, from a sociopsychological perspective, I believe that the rebellion was the eruption of a multiple social trauma within the military, which prevented them from working through their losses and led to a compulsive re-experiencing of the past by the ongoing human rights accusations. The first traumatization had occurred during the dirty war when individual officers decided to abuse people's most fundamental rights and lost their military honor in the process. The rebel officers blamed their commanders for making them fight a war for which they were ill equipped. According to Major Ernesto Barreiro, "In general, we were not prepared for anything we did, we had to manage things by ourselves. This is the truth: we had to manage things alone."<sup>19</sup> The armed forces, its hierarchical command structure, its integrity and honor had been seriously damaged by the brutal dirty war in the eyes of many officers. These ambivalent emotions about winning a dirty war that smeared their uniform led a life of subterfuge because neither the military establishment nor Argentine society was receptive to their plight.

The second traumatization was the defeat on the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and the shameful return to Argentina. Instead of preparing a big homecoming, allowing the troops to parade through Buenos Aires, and commemorate the dead comrades left behind on the wind-swept South Atlantic islands, the war veterans “were hidden like lepers” (cited in Hernández 1989, 68). Aside from the post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by individual combatants, the military defeat and dishonorable arrival in Argentina cut deep wounds into the armed forces whose political, institutional, and emotional consequences can be best described as a social trauma.

The prosecution of hundreds of officers for human rights violations enhanced the multiple traumatization. Rico and his rebels felt that their superiors failed to protect the armed forces against the humiliating trials and wanted their commanders to restore military honor by vindicating the counterinsurgency war.<sup>20</sup> Repeated public accusations obstructed the selective forgetting of memories that were particularly traumatizing because they could only be uttered at the expense of prosecution. In sum, the complex social trauma, consisting of the unresolved injuries of two wars, increased the feeling of defenselessness against prosecution. The solution was sought in a rebellious demonstration of power against the lackluster commanders, the persecutory government, and a thankless Argentine people.

The 1987 military rebellion demonstrated that, just as traumatized people may suffer from incessant thoughts about horrifying experiences, so the intrusion of painful memories occurred in Argentina on the collective level as new material evidence, unexpected revelations, and continued criminal prosecution prevented closure. These recurrent intrusions from an unelaborated past, the emotional responses they summoned forth, and the political debates and public protests they provoked, were the unmistakable characteristics of a society that had not yet come to terms with the massive trauma in its recent past.

The newly elected president Menem tried to close the book on the dirty war with two sweeping presidential pardons. He pardoned 277 military officers and former guerrillas in October 1989, and in December 1990 decreed a pardon for the incarcerated military commanders as a final turning of the page in pursuit of national reconciliation.<sup>21</sup> This orientation toward the future concealed a political

maneuver about the past, as Hartman (1994, 15) has observed in relation to the Holocaust: “Amnesty is lawful amnesia; and what takes place at this highly formalized level may also take place in the domain of the social and collective memory.” Yet, this assertion ignores the nature of a social trauma and its tendency toward compulsive re-experience, as former president Alfonsín was keenly aware: “One cannot decree the amnesia of an entire society because every time anyone tried to sweep the past under the carpet, the past returned with a vengeance” (*La Nación*, October 10, 1989).

The dynamic of rebellion and defense demonstrated that the Argentine memory construction contained a clear political dimension. As Theidon has remarked in her study on the political use of historical narratives about Peru’s internal war during the 1980s and 1990s, “These histories use the past in a creative manner, combining and recombining elements of that past in service to interests in the present” (2003, 67). Likewise in Argentina, every group participating in the conflictive interpretation of the past had its own internal and external agenda for the future. The military desired a closure of the past to guarantee their survival as a corporate institution. The human rights movement wanted to punish the perpetrators and prevent the military from ever again assuming power. The judiciary emphasized the importance of instituting legal accountability, due process, and equality before the law, while the government pursued the reconciliation and democratization of Argentine society. These diverse political objectives entered into the heart of the conflicting memory construction and the ways each group dealt with the multiple social traumas besieging them.

## EXHUMATIONS AND SUFFERING

The first exhumations were carried out in late October 1982, when forensic experts uncovered an estimated four hundred unidentified bodies (Cohen Salama 1992, 60–62; *Somos* 1982, 319:11). The Argentine people were devastated by the discoveries. The opening of mass graves continued reluctantly until December 1983, because the military was still in power, but the country became truly mesmerized by the exhumations after the installation of the Alfonsín government.

Nearly every day, new exhumations were ordered by judges, as if impelled to come face-to-face, time and again, with the incomprehensible. Unmarked graves were opened with pickaxes and mechanical shovels, destroying important forensic traces that could have led to positive identifications (Cohen Salama 1992, 85–87). These exhumations provided another dimension to the social memory of the dirty war. How exhumations were carried out and the different meanings attributed to the uncovered remains reflected the increasing complexity of the politics of memory in Argentina.

The renowned forensic anthropologist Clyde Snow brought to Argentina an advanced scientific knowledge, resulting in a considerable change in the nature and objectives of the exhumations (CONADEP 1986, 311). Snow demonstrated that a careful forensic examination could establish the identity of the exhumed as well as the cause and circumstance of death. The objective of the exhumations expanded from ascertaining the fact of death to the gathering of forensic evidence. Furthermore, these techniques could determine whether or not the deceased had been pregnant, and whether or not she had given birth. In this way, abducted infants might be recovered from their adoptive military parents. With the first major trials brought to completion, the exhumations were gathering such new evidence against indicted military officers.

The meaning of the exhumations underwent a considerable development after October 1982, and the social memory construction of the dirty war changed along with it. The repeated shocks of disclosure at the turn of 1983, the 1984 proof of births in captivity, the 1985 establishment of guilt, and finally the positive identification of the victims of repression, saturated the exhumations with meanings that had diverse political consequences and contested the validity of several competing discourses about the past.

One would expect that the human rights organizations would wholeheartedly approve of the forensic efforts to uncover the past, and thus contribute to a national memory of the dirty war based on hard proof. The Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a human rights organization consisting of hundreds of mothers of the disappeared, played a pivotal role in the ensuing debate about the exhumations. The Madres were at the time regarded as the political conscience of Argentina because of their courageous opposition to the military



dictatorship.<sup>22</sup> The CONADEP conclusion that the disappeared were dead was therefore devastating. Now, losses had to be mourned, a working-through that was made possible by the exhumations. After all, the exhumations confirmed the reality of death and allowed for culturally appropriate burial practices that contributed to mourning and acceptance.

In the second half of 1984, the Madres formulated their opposition to the exhumations in terms of a critique of the ongoing memory construction. A majority felt that, however painful, the wounds of the disappearances had to be kept open to resist a national forgetting. Their leader Hebe de Bonafini declared, "Many want the wound to dry so that we will forget. We want it to continue bleeding, because this is the only way that one continues to have strength to fight. . . . But, above all, it is necessary that this wound bleeds so that the assassins will be condemned, as they deserve, and that what has happened will not happen again" (*Madres* 1987, 29:1). But what is this "wound" and why do "many" want the Madres to forget? Is this wound only the laceration of the social tissue left by the disappearances, and is forgetting seen as the cure for their suffering?

The Madres' attitude is an example of melancholia transformed into defiance. The bleeding wound is the ongoing internal dialogue with their disappeared children, urging them to political action, while the refusal to forget refers to that internalized attachment. In the perception of the Madres, Argentine society wanted to lift them out of their melancholic defiance and enter mourning, while they wanted Argentine society to incorporate the ideal image of the disappeared into its collective self. In December 1984, a group of Madres headed by Hebe de Bonafini condemned the exhumations (*Madres*, 1984, 1:2). They regarded exhumations as a sinister government scheme to set a mourning process in motion to achieve the demobilization and depoliticization of the surviving relatives.<sup>23</sup> Mourning would break the solidarity of the Madres and produce a reconciliatory attitude. Exhumations and reburials destroyed the living memory of the disappeared and interred them in an enclosed remembrance. Instead, the Madres preferred to continue appropriating public space with their weekly rounds of protest at the Plaza de Mayo as living memorials to the past (Schirmer 1994). Re-experiencing their pains and struggles became a way of coping with their social trauma and,

in the process, contribute to a social memory of military repression. Thus, melancholia was transformed into defiance as the Madres took on universal suffering in a maternal embrace.

By late 1988, the Madres spoke of the need to “socialize their maternity” and adopt the suffering of all victims of political violence in the world.<sup>24</sup> “When we understood that our children were not going to appear, we socialized motherhood and felt that we are the mothers of everybody, that all are our children” (cited in *Madres*, 1989, 53:17). In the eyes of these mothers, exhumations became synonymous with spiritual and physical death, while the reburial of the identified skeletal remains destroyed the living memory of the disappeared. Political activism and the refusal to accept the death of their abducted children were their way of continuing a relationship with the assassinated disappeared.

The majority of the human rights organizations, however, did not desire a social memory based on continued suffering. They remained in favor of exhumations. The fight for the remains of the disappeared was for most human rights groups a struggle about the survival of their legacy to Argentine history and society. The unwillingness of the military to reveal the whereabouts of the remains held the relatives hostage to an anguish that continued to insert the traumatic past into the present.

### **CONFESSION AND RECKONING: FACING THE TRUTH AND MEMORY PARK**

The story of torture and disappearance, consciously denied by the armed forces, was bound to erupt because such traumatizing experiences cannot be silenced indefinitely but will eventually break through the façade of assumed innocence. The military rebellion, the due obedience legislation, and sweeping pardons only kept the lid on temporarily. Unexpectedly, vengeance came in the person of retired Navy Captain Scilingo who told a journalist in March 1995 how he had hurled sedated prisoners from a plane. Captain Scilingo talked because he felt betrayed by his superiors. Their continued denial had converted him into a war criminal, while he had only carried out their orders (Verbitsky 1995, 42).

Scilingo had been faced with a dilemma. He could either confess and swallow the accusation of being a traitor to the armed forces, or he could maintain the pact of silence and suffer the emotional consequences. Unlike the survivors of the dirty war, eager to remember the repression publicly, the perpetrators forced each other to deny their involvement. There existed in Argentina a public space of solidarity among victims of repression and a private space of secrecy among the victimizers.<sup>25</sup> The emotional strain of denial became too great for some officers. They could no longer protect the armed forces at their own emotional expense when that institution turned its back on them. While the armed forces abandoned perpetrators to the trauma of their own atrocities, the community of victims did their utmost to weave their traumatizing experiences into national memory. Still, their efforts ran inevitably aground on the incomprehensibility and uncanniness at the heart of every trauma, personal as well as social.

Traumatization revolves around the disorientation of its sufferers. Cognitive understanding fails. The individual cannot cope, becomes confused, helpless, and terrified (Saporta and van der Kolk 1992, 152). This experience is traumatic because it overwhelms and breaks down what Freud (1920, 27) has called the inner protective shield. Extreme violence unmakes people's basic trust within a topsy-turvy world where everything is incommensurable with the safety of the familiar everyday world (see Erikson 1951; Robben 2000). Gampel (2000, 54–58) argues that traumatized people cannot reconcile the everyday background of safety with the background of the uncanny, namely the terrifying experiences. They cannot psychically integrate these two disparate realities and therefore try to keep them apart. They may often succeed in keeping the uncanny at bay, but sometimes the traumatic memories intrude on the background of safety and manifest themselves in nightmares, somatization, or psychotic behavior. The incomprehensible invades consciousness and disturbs the precarious balance of the everyday. Argentine perpetrators suffering from PTSD, like Scilingo, were doubly disturbed because the public attention to the dirty war continued to provoke the uncanny while their traumatic realities were denied by their superiors, thus dismissing their uncanny sensations as illusions.

On the collective level, the uncanny also continued to intrude upon the present because large outbreaks of violence equally fail

human comprehension since meaningless destruction is endemic to trauma. Assaulted societies become disoriented, cannot comprehend, and fail to cope with the overwhelming losses. They are continuously reminded of past atrocities that may be incommensurable with post-catastrophe times, as Friedlander (1993, 48–58) has argued about the Holocaust. In Argentina, mass graves were opened, adopted children asked about their biological parents, and testimonies, films, and books disproved the military's collective denial. Unlike the disinterest in the Holocaust after World War II, this unending stream of public representations found a responsive ear in an Argentine society still traumatized by the sequels of the dirty war. "If we observe heated debates and public disputes in the media, at public meetings, or in political bodies; if values and judgments are strongly contested; if certain themes become obsessive for artistic expression through the movies, theatre, literature, and poetry; if social movements mobilize for the expression of cultural discontents, then we are certainly witnessing unhealed and potentially evolving trauma," writes the Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (2000, 456). Such compulsive evocations of traumatic experiences are all ways of coping with the incomprehensible, while at the same time drawing attention to the unfillable gaps in society's knowledge, which thus demands a further excavation of the past and will incite the forces of denial.

The pardoned junta commanders continued with their denial in the midst of the public storm raised by Scilingo's confession, but army commander General Martín Balza decided that the time had come for a thinly veiled admission of guilt.<sup>26</sup> He declared on April 25, 1995 that Argentina had been involved in a spiral of violence during the 1970s that had to be halted, yet this restoration of the social order did not justify the means used by the armed forces. Balza took responsibility for the "mistakes" made by the army, promised to uncover any lists of disappeared that might exist, and added that no officer would ever again be obliged to carry out immoral orders. General Balza had made his historic televised statement to "initiate a painful dialogue about the past which never has taken place; a past which hovers as a ghost over the collective conscience, returning hopelessly, as in these days, from the shadows where it occasionally hides" (*Clarín*, April 26, 1995).

General Balza's confession about the return of the repressed was

soon followed by similar admissions from the Navy, Air Force, and police. Still, these admissions were not uniformly shared within the armed forces. A group of seventy retired generals, many of them active during the dictatorship, gave out a declaration defending the repression. They reiterated the same themes outlined above: the 1970 assassination of Aramburu, the sentencing of guerrillas in a Federal Court between 1971 and 1973, the amnesty of convicted guerrillas in May 1973, and the need for the 1976 coup d'état to halt the political chaos (*La Nación*, May 6, 1995).<sup>27</sup> Captain Scilingo was dismissed as small fry, an emotionally unstable detractor who was out for personal gain. Scilingo fled to Spain in October 1997 after being assaulted by four men.<sup>28</sup> The surprise was therefore great when Alfredo Astiz, one of the symbols of the dirty war, gave an unprecedented interview in 1998.

Astiz had become involved in the dirty war as a young navy lieutenant, while working at the Navy Mechanics School or ESMA (*Escuela Mecánica de la Armada*), which housed a large secret detention center. His claim to notoriety came with his infiltration in the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Alfredo Astiz had presented himself as Gustavo Niño, the brother of a disappeared. He attended masses, meetings, and protests. The Madres took an instant liking to this charming blond, blue-eyed man of twenty-six. The undercover operation climaxed in December 1977 with the abduction of Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti, the founder of the Madres, and twelve other persons, including two French nuns (CONADEP 1986, 128–29, 343).

The turn to democracy made Astiz a marked man. However, the 1987 Due Obedience Law absolved him from any wrongdoing. In 1990, he was convicted in absentia by a French court for the murder of the two French nuns and was placed on Interpol's wanted list. The French conviction and his notoriety in Argentina caused such a public outcry that when Astiz came up for promotion in December 1995, he voluntarily resigned his commission. The January 1998 interview was, therefore, a real bombshell. The interview hardly contributed any new information but, amidst denials of his complicity in the disappearance of the French nuns, contained statements such as "I tell you that the Navy taught me to destroy. They didn't teach me to construct, they taught me to destroy" (*Tres Puntos*, 1998, 30:3). These admissions opened the floodgates of Argentine remembrance. Other retired officers came forward with new revelations.

President Menem's ill-timed proposal in January 1998 to tear down the Navy Mechanics School and construct a monument to national unity in its place caused an uproar among human rights organizations (*Página/12*, January 14, 1998).<sup>29</sup> A bill to derogate the 1986 and 1987 legislation, which freed military officers from prosecution, the interview with Astiz, and Menem's project at building a reconciliation monument revealed Argentina's continued struggle with the unknowns of an unelaborated past.

The declaration of General Balza in June 1998 that the 1976 military junta had a standard procedure of separating guerrillas from their children added more fuel to the fire (*El País*, June 13, 1998; see also *Clarín*, January 24, 1999). The seventy-two-year-old Lieutenant-General Videla, who had been pardoned in December 1990, was suddenly held in preventive custody on June 9, 1998 and later given house arrest on the charge of being responsible for the abduction of five babies born in secret detention centers (*Clarín*, June 15, 1998). Videla's coconspirator, retired Admiral Massera, was also charged with baby theft and given house arrest on December 7, 1998. General Balza suggested that the armed forces should make a clean sweep because "the tragedy of a sick memory consists in the denial of history. We lived an unfortunate past that must be overcome by acknowledging our mistakes and responsibilities. We must neither nourish more hatred nor create new grudges" (*La Nación*, October 22, 1998). As in previous declarations, Balza expressed himself in a popularized psychoanalytic discourse, a common practice in Argentina. However, in the context of human rights violations, terms like "denial," "dialogue," "collective conscience," "memory," and Freud's "return of the repressed" were more than fancy metaphors. Balza implied that Argentina was a traumatized society that needed to confront its mistakes, work through its violent past, mourn its many losses, and reconcile its differences. As LaCapra has suggested in relation to the Holocaust, "working-through, as it relates both to the rebuilding of lives and to the elaboration of a critical historiography, requires the effort to achieve critical distance on experience through a comparison of experiences and through a reconstruction of larger contexts that help to inform and perhaps to transform experience" (LaCapra 1994, 200). The problem of Balza's cure and the lessons from the Holocaust are that a society enveloped in trauma has great

difficulty in escaping from the compulsive repetition that prolongs its traumatization. Argentina had difficulty in pulling itself up by its bootstraps when mired in a quagmire of new revelations, gruesome confessions, and further arrests. Each piecemeal confession undid the small steps of mourning because it entailed a re-experiencing of past suffering, and any attempt to gain distance from painful experiences further incited personal and social traumas, thus turning the working-through of the past into a drawn-out process of advances and setbacks.

In the years following the detention of Videla and Massera, other high-ranking officers, Navy NCOs, police commissioners, and several civilians were accused of abducting babies. By mid-2000, thirty-two persons had been charged for baby theft (*Clarín*, July 23, 2000). This wave of prosecutions was echoed abroad. Judges in Spain, Italy, France, Sweden, and Germany began extradition procedures for high-ranking officers accused of disappearing and assassinating foreign residents. To the relief of the indicted, the Argentine government passed a decree that rejected the extradition of Argentine citizens accused of crimes enacted on Argentine soil (*Clarín*, December 18, 2001).

The arrests and extradition requests revived the human rights movement that had been at a loss on how to proceed after the sweeping amnesty legislation and presidential pardons between 1986 and 1990. One important development was the 1999 institution of truth trials (*juicios de la verdad*) in the cities of Buenos Aires, La Plata, Bahía Blanca, and Córdoba. Amnestied officers were summoned to appear in court as witnesses. They were ordered to give testimony under oath about the disappearances, how the captives had been assassinated, and where their bodies were hidden. Afraid to be accused of perjury by giving false testimony, several officers decided not to appear in court. They were charged immediately with the obstruction of justice and given a forty-eight-hour arrest to reconsider their decision (*Clarín*, July 23, 2000). Several officers appealed their convictions as being in conflict with the amnesty legislation.

The military suffered another serious setback in March 2001. A federal judge declared that the Final Stop and Due Obedience amnesty laws of 1986 and 1987, which had benefited 1,180 individuals, were unconstitutional and incompatible with the American Convention of Human Rights (*Clarín*, March 7, 2001). Congress followed suit in 2003. Whatever the final ruling from the Supreme Court, the truth

trials, the penalties given to tight-lipped officers, and the Congressional derogation of the amnesty laws demonstrated that the social traumas of the dirty war continued to weigh on Argentine society.

At the same time, there were some successful attempts to instill Argentine society with new interpretations of the past. On August 30, 2001, a Memory Park (*Parque de la Memoria*) was inaugurated along the river bank of the Rio de la Plata in Buenos Aires. Reminiscent of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., this park will contain a “Monument to the Victims of State Terror” who died between 1970 and 1983. A sinuous fissure traverses part of the fourteen-hectare park to symbolize the open wound in Argentine society left by the disappearances.

Rather than expressing a national consensus, the Memory Park showed that Argentina was still a hopelessly divided, traumatized society, where each attempt to relegate the dirty war to the past was met with strong opposition. Several human rights organizations, including the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, opposed the Memory Park because “The Madres do not want a monument which becomes a cemetery to bemoan our dead” (cited in Vecchioli 2000, 53). The proposal to eternalize the names of Argentina’s disappeared in granite raised much controversy. How many people had disappeared under state terror? Most human rights organizations claim thirty thousand, but only around thirteen thousand disappearances have been confirmed by the Undersecretary of Human Rights (Vecchioli 2000, 1–2, 72–73; *Clarín*, October 6, 2003). And what about the persons killed by guerrilla organizations? Should they not also be included in the list of victims? Clearly, the personal wounds were still too fresh and the society too traumatized that opponents could only regard the monument as another political move by the human rights movement to influence Argentina’s national memory.

In another attempt to influence the perception of the past, the city council of Buenos Aires decided in 2001 to turn the twenty-fourth of March into a Day of Memory (*Día de la Memoria*) to commemorate the 1976 military coup. Every year on this day, flags will fly at half-mast from official buildings and public schools. Schools will have educational programs about the dictatorship and the city will organize various public activities (*Clarín*, March 13, 2001). These are all attempts to forge a national memory where there still exists discord,



and provide a public space for an ever-more-distant past without forgetting the losses suffered.

Still, Argentina continued to be reminded of the past. On April 13, 2002, the secret detention center known as the Athletic Club (*Club Atlético*) was unearthed in the city of Buenos Aires, near one of the pillars of a highway overpass. An estimated eighteen hundred disappeared had transited through this center in 1976 and 1977. The excavation uncovered parts of several prison cells, pieces of police uniforms, boots, bottles, and a rosary. Plans were made to turn the place into a site of memory (*Clarín*, May 8, 2002). Still, how could this place be a site of memory when the possible derogation of the amnesty laws hung like the sword of Damocles over the heads of more than one thousand policemen and officers? This site was more like a crime scene than a historical place, because it reminded Argentine society of recent atrocities and might influence public opinion and the outcome of future court cases.

## UNHEALED WOUNDS

The continual resurgence of traumatic memories from the dirty war indicates that Argentine society has not yet come to terms with its past. "Unmastered memories represent 'unhealed wounds,' which keep generating painful affects. Memories that cannot be accepted may have to be reinterpreted or modified in a kind of self-detoxification" (Krystal 1985, 156). The reliving of the past through a truth commission, criminal trials, truth trials, exhumations, long-overdue confessions by perpetrators, the admission of guilt by high-ranking officers, and the arrest of pardoned junta members have in some ways contributed to the detoxification of Argentine society but, in other ways, postponed the mourning process.

Many Argentines involved in memory construction reiterate that they are motivated by the determination that Argentine society should not forget the horrors of the dirty war. Forgetting the past would be the final victory of the perpetrators, after having already erased the remains of many disappeared from Argentine society. The greater tragedy is that perpetrators always score a victory because the unknowable is a foundational element of any trauma, be it psychic or

social. Trauma and the unknowable emerge together. Hence, memory construction becomes an even more transcendent means to prevent forgetting, namely by steadily nibbling away at those voids with testimonies, narratives, and artistic expressions, and by piecing separate memory strands into interpretational and analytical frameworks.

Such memory construction is not a unitary process in Argentina, and I wonder if it ever is where massive traumatic violence is concerned, because even the abundantly documented Holocaust has its deniers. But unlike the Holocaust, there is no uniform or even hegemonic Argentine memory about the dirty war, a designation that is by itself a subject of memory politics. Argentina's social memories are conflicting re-memberances, conflicting re-constructions of narrative wholes out of fragmentary traumatic memories because of forgetting, insufficient encoding, incomprehensibility, and unknowability within, and here there is a major difference with the Holocaust, an ideologically and politically divided context. The recurrent recollection of partial traumatic experiences will therefore not unify discourse, but enhance the antagonism within Argentina's traumatized society. As Lambek and Antze (1996, xx) explain, "where conflict prevails, the reception of narrative . . . may be fraught with tension. Memory becomes a locus of struggle over the boundary between the individual and the collective or between distinct interest groups in which power becomes the operative factor." The persistence of hostile groups entails the production of social memories that cannot be integrated on the societal level, but instead tend to further polarize into opposite positions. Just as psychologists, such as Daniel Schacter (1996, 5), have argued that personal memory is not one single faculty of the human mind, but a dynamic constellation of different neural structures with distinct memory processes, so the collective memory of a society consists of different social memories reproduced in different tempos, times, and ways in interaction with their context. Different groups contribute different memories to society whose confrontation continuously produces new memory configurations.

Even monuments, memorials, and commemorations, which have played a significant role in mourning and working through the Holocaust, have, in Argentina, increased instead of lessened society's divisiveness. Contrary to Nora's suggestion that such embodied memories displace traumatic memories and thus relieve people from

reliving a painful past, history has neither replaced memory in Argentina, nor has representation absorbed experience (Nora 1978; Nora 1984). Likewise, Young (1993; 1994), Connerton (1989), and LaCapra (1998, 184–96) have pointed out the importance of commemorations, testimonies, historical studies, and even bodily practices for national remembrance and reconciliation. Memorial days are supposed to create a shared history, allow people to exchange narratives about past sorrows, and thus enhance feelings of national identity. Yet, such ritualization of the past, and the mourning that ensues, are condemned by several sectors of Argentine society, notably the human rights movement and the armed and security forces, each of which are internally divided. Riding on the presumed neutrality of material representation, the monuments, memorials, and commemorations are the expressions of political memory agendas and become, therefore, extensions, repetitions, and manifestations of social traumas rather than their substitutes.

The reconstruction of historical memory began in Argentina immediately after the turn to democracy in 1983, with the entrenchment of the armed forces and the human rights organizations into two opposite positions: outright denial versus continued disclosure. Rather than relegating the dirty war to the past, the blatant disavowal by the military intensified the resolve of a traumatized Argentine society to recover its disturbing past. Both the politics of denial and the need to master traumatic experiences propelled the incessant search for the remains of the disappeared and the compulsive narration of detailed accounts of torture, abuse, suffering, and anguish. Once the validity of the accusations had been established by a truth commission and in court, the responsibility for the criminal actions was abrogated by a military rebellion. The relentless public attention to the military abuses caused some officers to break under the emotional strain and admit to their aberrant actions. These confessions resulted in an outcry of public indignation, which led in 1998 to the arrest of formerly pardoned military commanders and to a Congressional derogation of amnesty legislation in 2003.

Has Argentine society come full circle, and is it back where it started in 1983 when the dictatorship fell? Paradoxically, the polyphonic national memory complicates national reconciliation but also imposes a certain order on an incomprehensible reality. Even

conflictive remembrances, whether through trials, truth commissions, or testimonies, are all struggles with the incomprehensible and the unknowable aiming to reposition Argentine society in the flow of history. Even conflictive memory provides a certain antagonistic clarity, reducing the enigma to historical narratives that reorient people in their collective and personal history. Eventually, narration will take the place of experience, even if that narration will reproduce the current antagonism founded on contrary experiences. Past episodes of violence will become increasingly appropriated by social memories, conflictive though they may be. This contested social memory returns to people a sense of control over the past and over their destiny as they now become engaged in a memory contest with an identifiable opponent with a clear contrary ideological and political discourse.

## Notes

This article is based on field research in Argentina between 1989 and 1991 funded by the *National Science Foundation* and the *Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation*. Additional field trips were made in 1995, 2000, and 2002. Earlier versions were presented at H. F. Guggenheim Foundation conferences in New York and Queluz, Portugal. I particularly thank Byron Good, Allen Feldman, Karen Colvard, Valentine Daniel, Renaat DeVisch, Uli Linke, Catherine Merridale, Pamela Reynolds, Eric Santner, and Paul Stoller for their stimulating and insightful comments. A portion of this article originally appeared in *Political Violence and Trauma in Argentina* by Antonius Robben (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), reprinted by permission of the University of Pennsylvania Press. All Spanish quotations have been translated by the author.

1. The acronym HIJOS means literally children and stands for Children for Identity and Justice, against Oblivion and Silence (*Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia, contra el Olvido y el Silencio*).

2. Clinical studies have demonstrated that repetition compulsion does not always lead to greater mastery of the traumatic experience, but may instead increase suffering as the aggression and anger are turned against the sufferer and his or her significant others. This re-enactment of the trauma as either victim or victimizer is particularly common among children (van der Kolk 1989).

3. These two explanations of posttraumatic disorders must be distinguished from the explanation of the traumatizing experience itself. Both the exposure to the unbearable external stresses of the violent event that break down a person's inner protective barrier *and* the individual's psychological makeup and subjective experience are taken into consideration as traumatizing forces (Brett

1993, 62–63; Freud 1919; Freud 1920; Herman 1997, 23–26; Kardiner 1941; Kardiner and Spiegel 1947, 360–65).

4. I am aware that this view is contested by other researchers (e.g., Brown, Schefflin, and Hammond 1998), who stand on the opposite side of the highly politicized recovered memory debate.

5. Massive trauma may be transmitted to other generations as memories of unelaborated and unintegrated experiences of violence. However, McNally (*Remembering Trauma*, 2003; “Progress and Controversy,” 2003) casts doubts on the existence of secondary psychic traumatization, even though studies have shown that children of Holocaust survivors have developed severe psychological problems, such as extreme anxiety, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, impaired reality testing, and persecutory dreams (Barocas and Barocas 1979; Bar-On 1995; Bergmann and Jucovy 1982; Grubrich-Simitis 1981). Whether or not cumulative psychic trauma exists, there can still be transgenerational social trauma.

6. Several authors have recently argued that psychic and social traumas may not be universal responses to excessive violence but are cultural constructs and that, therefore, not all individuals and societies will respond in the same way or require the same therapeutic treatment or reconstruction policies (Bracken, Giller, and Summerfield 1995; Kirmayer 1996; Last 2000; Merridale 2000; Young 1995). This question is of lesser concern in the case of Argentina. Psychoanalytic thought has penetrated Argentine culture as one of the foremost interpretive models about the human condition. Concepts such as trauma, repression, neurosis, and the unconscious have pervaded popular speech since the late 1950s and were even adopted by the 1976–1983 military regime (Plotkin 2001, 221–22). The Argentine people were thus predisposed toward understanding their suffering in terms of trauma, and this condition makes social trauma a highly congenial concept with which to interpret Argentine political violence.

7. It is unknown how many members of the military suffered from the traumatic aftereffects of the dirty war. It is humanly impossible that the tens of thousands of members of the armed forces and the police remained emotionally unscathed. We may suspect that a certain number of members of the task forces who hunted after guerrilla insurgents, torturers working for the intelligence services, prison guards who kept the disappeared under secret detention, and executioners who carried out the assassinations must have suffered and continue to suffer from posttraumatic stress disorders.

8. The social traumas inflicted by the Falklands/Malvinas war are beyond the scope of this paper. For an interesting approach, see Lorenz (1999).

9. This search yielded 340 secret detention centers, described as concentration camps by most human rights organizations, but no disappeared were found. The figure was revised to 651 centers in the report’s 2001 update (*Clarín*, March 25, 2001).

10. See Schacter (1996, 218–33) for a psychological explanation of psychogenic amnesia, as well as the eventual chances of recall.

11. Caruth (1995; 1996) suggests that the refusal to force the inexplicable into interpretational schemata and instead to bear witness, to listen, and allow testimony to unfold itself with all its contradictions and enigmas is an alternative way of remembering. Likewise, Culbertson (1995) draws attention to the importance of embodied memory (smells, sounds, movements, aches, numbness), which cannot be translated into narrative memory.

12. These continuous revisions also provide opportunities to redirect social memory away from the most painful and toward more uplifting memories. Todorov (1996) has described the compassion and solidarity in Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet gulag. Many parents of Argentina's disappeared have emphasized their children's ecological awareness, compassion for slum dwellers, and dedication to a better future for the Argentine people.

13. The program had a rating of 20.5 points, almost double the second-most-watched transmission, a tango program, which received 11.2 points (*Somos*, 1984, 408:6–8).

14. The CONADEP was of course not the first organization to describe and denounce the disappearances. The CELS (*Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales*) had been founded in 1980 by human rights lawyers to document the human rights abuses of the military government. They published their findings in Argentina and abroad. There was also the report of an investigative committee of the OAS (Organization of American States). The CONADEP report surpassed by far, in depth and breadth, previous investigations and publications.

15. See Osiel (2000) for a detailed analysis of how the trial of the commanders influenced collective memory.

16. It would take until 1998 before the tapes were broadcast with a soundtrack on Argentine television (*Clarín*, December 11, 1998).

17. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel Aldo Rico on September 24, 1990; Giussani 1987, 261–62.

18. For a slightly different rendition, see Giussani 1987, 262–63.

19. Interview with Major Ernesto Barreiro on May 22, 1990.

20. See Lieutenant-Colonel Aldo Rico, cited in Hernández 1989, 45.

21. The pardoned officers consisted of military commanders who had been indicted for human rights violations, junta members convicted for waging the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war, and the leaders of several military rebellions in 1986 and 1987. The members of the 1976–1982 military juntas who had been convicted for their repressive regime and the disappearances of the 1970s remained in prison, but were pardoned in December 1990.

22. The following books provide a historical background to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo: Bousquet 1984; Diago 1988; Fisher 1989; Guzman Bouvard 1994; Oria 1987; and Sánchez 1985. The first protest was held on Saturday afternoon, April 13, 1977, but was moved initially to a Friday and soon to Thursday afternoons. The city was deserted on Saturdays, while Friday was believed to be an unlucky day (Simpson and Bennett 1985, 157–58).

23. The belief that the relatives of reburied disappeared will forget the dirty war is ungrounded. Many of the relatives who have recovered their loved ones continue to be active in human rights organizations. They procure embodiments that have reparation and reconciliation as the eventual effects. They seek a negotiated reparation and restorative justice. They do this by endorsing exhumations and reburials, demanding restitution payments, holding public commemorations, erecting memorials, writing memoirs, promoting artistic expressions, compiling archives, continuing the search for abducted children, and pursuing human rights issues (better housing, health facilities, and police training) by political means. These ways of remembering the traumatic past imply a societal desire to restore the symbolic order damaged by political violence and terror.

24. *Madres*, 1988, 48:17.

25. "If a community agrees traumatic events occurred and weaves this fact into its identity, then collective memory survives and individual memory can find a place (albeit transformed) within that landscape. If a family or a community agrees that a trauma did not happen, then it vanishes from collective memory and the possibility for individual memory is severely strained" (Kirmayer 1996, 189–90). Kirmayer is talking about persons who belong to the same community, in his case Holocaust survivors. The problem of Argentina is the existence of different communities with opposing political agendas.

26. The immediate cause was the public confirmation of Scilingo's confession by retired Sergeant Víctor Ibáñez on April 24, 1995. Like Scilingo, Ibáñez had suffered from severe depressions because of his participation in the dirty war and was forced into retirement by the army (Feitlowitz 1998, 206). Balza must have sensed that he had to make his public admission before other low-ranking officers would come forward and the confessional catharsis would be beyond control.

27. Five years later, one hard-line member of the dictatorship, retired General Díaz Bessone, even succeeded in having retired General Balza expelled from the Army social club (*Círculo Militar*) in June 2000. Díaz Bessone was given a one-week house arrest for breaking the unity of the Argentine armed forces but Balza's membership was not reinstated (*Clarín*, July 1 and 5, 2000).

28. Scilingo was attacked on September 11, 1997. The four men forced him into their car, warned him to stop talking to the press, and then carved into his face the initials of the three journalists who had interviewed him (*New York Times*, September 12, 1997). Scilingo left for Spain to testify before judge Baltasar Garzón, who was investigating the disappearance of Spanish citizens living in Argentina during the dirty war. To his dismay, Scilingo was charged himself, after giving testimony, and arrested. By late 2000, he was out of custody, still living in Spain, but unable to leave the country while awaiting trial (*Clarín*, October 11, 2000).

29. Menem's project was withdrawn when a judge ruled on October 16, 1998 that the Navy Mechanics School could not be torn down because it belonged to the nation's cultural patrimony (*Clarín*, December 11, 1998).

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" In *Bit-burg in Moral and Political Perspective*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman, 114–29. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. Originally published in 1959.
- Americas Watch. *Truth and Partial Justice in Argentina: An Update*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991.
- Antze, Paul, and Michael Lambek, eds. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Ball, Karyn, ed. "Introduction: Trauma and Its Cultural Aftereffects." *Cultural Critique* 46 (Fall 2000): 1–44.
- Barocas, H., and C. Barocas. "Wounds of the Fathers: The Next Generation of Holocaust Victims." *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 6 (1979): 331–41.
- Bar-On, Dan. *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Bergmann, Martin S., and Milton E. Jucovy. "Prelude." In *Generations of the Holocaust*, ed. Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy, 3–29. New York: Basic Books, 1982.
- Bondone, Luis José. *Con mis hijos en las cárceles del Proceso*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Anteo, 1985.
- Bousquet, Jean-Pierre. *Las locas de la Plaza de Mayo*. Córdoba: Fundación para la Democracia en Argentina, 1984.
- Bracken, Patrick J., Joan E. Giller, and Derek Summerfield. "Psychological Responses to War and Atrocity: The Limitations of Current Concepts." *Social Science and Medicine* 40, no. 8 (1995): 1073–82.
- Brett, Elizabeth A. "Psychoanalytic Contributions to a Theory of Traumatic Stress." In *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes*, ed. John P. Wilson and Beverley Raphael, 61–68. New York: Plenum Press, 1993.
- Brown, Daniel, Alan W. Schefflin, and D. Corydon Hammond. *Memory, Trauma Treatment, and the Law*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998.
- Buda, Blanca. *Cuerpo I-Zona IV: El infierno de Suárez Mason*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1988.
- Camara Nacional de Apelaciones en lo Criminal y Correccional Federal de la Capital Federal. *La Sentencia*. 2 vols. Buenos Aires: Imprenta del Congreso de la Nación, 1987.
- Caruth, Cathy. "Introduction." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, 151–57. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- . *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Climo, Jacob J., and Maria G. Cattell, eds. *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2002.
- Cohen, Stanley. *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001.
- Cohen Salama, Mauricio. *Tumbas anónimas*. Buenos Aires: Catálogos, 1992.



- CONADEP. *Nunca Más: The Report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Culbertson, Roberta. "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self." *New Literary History* 26, no. 1 (1995): 169–95.
- Diago, Alejandro. *Conversando con las Madres de Plaza de Mayo: Hebe de Bonafini, memoria y esperanza*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Dialectica, 1988.
- Díaz Bessone, Ramón Genaro. *Guerra revolucionaria en la Argentina (1959–1978)*. Buenos Aires: Círculo Militar, 1988.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. London: Imago Publishing, 1951.
- Erikson, Kai. "Notes on Trauma and Community." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, 183–99. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Eyerman, Ron. *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Feitlowitz, Marguerite. *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Firpo, Norberto. *Cuerpo a tierra*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1983.
- Fisher, Jo. *Mothers of the Disappeared*. Boston: South End Press, 1989.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." Originally published in 1917. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 14:243–58. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.
- . "Introduction to Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses." Originally published in 1919. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 17:207–10. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.
- . "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Originally published in 1920. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 18:7–64. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Friedlander, Saul. *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Gampel, Yolanda. "Reflections on the Prevalence of the Uncanny in Social Violence." In *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, 48–69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Gelman, Juan, and Mara La Madrid. *Ni el flaco perdón de Dios: Hijos de desaparecidos*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1997.
- Gillespie, Richard. *Soldiers of Perón: Argentina's Montoneros*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Giussani, Pablo. *Por qué, doctor Alfonsín?* Buenos Aires: Sudamericana/Planeta, 1987.
- González Bombal, Inés. "'Nunca Más': El Juicio más allá de los estrados." In

- Juicio, castigos y memorias: Derechos humanos y justicia en la política argentina*, ed. Carlos H. Acuña, et al., 193–216. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1995.
- Grecco, Jorge, and Gustavo González. *Felices Pascuas! Los hechos inéditos de la rebelión militar*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1988.
- Green, Bonnie L. "Defining Trauma: Terminology and Generic Stressor Dimensions." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 20 (1990): 1632–42.
- Grubrich-Simitis, Ilse. "Extreme Traumatization as Cumulative Trauma: Psychoanalytic Investigations of the Effects of Concentration Camp Experiences on Survivors and Their Children." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 36 (1981): 415–50.
- Gugelberger, Georg M., ed. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Gugelberger, Georg M., and Michael Kearney. "Voices of the Voiceless: Testimonial Literature and Latin America." *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (1991): 3–14.
- Guzman Bouvard, Marguerite. *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. Wilmington, CT: Scholarly Resources, 1994.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. "Introduction: Darkness Visible." In *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman, 1–22. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994.
- Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.
- Hernández, Pablo. *Conversaciones con el teniente coronel Aldo Rico: De Malvinas a la Operación Dignidad*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Fortaleza, 1989.
- Hilberg, Raul. *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996.
- Kardiner, Abram. *The Traumatic Neuroses of War*. Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing, 1941.
- Kardiner, Abram, and Herbert Spiegel. *War Stress and Neurotic Illness*. New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1947.
- Kirmayer, Laurence J. "Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and Dissociation." In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, 173–98. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Krystal, Henry. "Patterns of Psychological Damage." In *Massive Psychic Trauma*, 1–7. New York: International Universities Press, 1968.
- . "Trauma and the Stimulus Barrier." *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 5 (1985): 131–61.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- . *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- . *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Lambek, Michael, and Paul Antze. "Introduction: Forecasting Memory." In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, xi–xxxviii. New York: Routledge, 1996.

- Langer, Lawrence. "Interpreting Survivor Testimony." In *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang, 26–40. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988.
- Laplanche, J., and J.-B. Pontalis. *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*. London: Hogarth Press, 1973.
- Last, Murray. "Reconciliation and Memory in Postwar Nigeria." In *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds, 315–32. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000.
- Lessing, Doris. *The Memoirs of a Survivor*. London: Picador, 1976.
- López, Ernesto. *El último levantamiento*. Buenos Aires: Legasa, 1988.
- Lorenz, Federico. "The Unending War: Social Myth, Individual Memory and the Malvinas." In *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives*, ed. Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff, and Graham Dawson, 95–112. London: Routledge, 1999.
- McNally, Richard J. *Remembering Trauma*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- . "Progress and Controversy in the Study of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *Annual Review of Psychology* 54 (2003): 229–52.
- Merridale, Catherine. *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia*. New York: Viking, 2000.
- Minow, Martha. *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.
- Mitchell, Stephen A., and Margaret J. Black. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.
- Mitscherlich, Alexander, and Margarete Mitscherlich. *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*. New York: Grove Press, 1975.
- Mittelbach, Federico. *Punto 30: Informe sobre desaparecidos*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Urraca, 1986.
- Moyano, María José. *Argentina's Lost Patrol: Armed Struggle, 1969–1979*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Neal, Arthur G. *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999.
- Nora, Pierre. "Mémoire collective." In *La nouvelle histoire*, ed. Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, and Jacques Revel, 398–401. Paris: Retz-C. E. P. L., 1978.
- . "Entre Mémoire et Histoire: La problématique des lieux." In *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, vol. 1: *La République*, ed. Pierre Nora, xvii–xlii. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.
- Norden, Deborah L. *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- Oria, Piera Paola. *De la casa a la Plaza*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva America, 1987.
- Osiel, Mark. *Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000.
- PEN (Poder Ejecutivo Nacional). *El terrorismo en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: PEN, 1979.

- Petric, Antonio. *Así sangraba la Argentina: Sallustro, Quijaba, Larrabure*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Depalma, 1983.
- Plotkin, Mariano Ben. *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Popkin, Jeremy D. "Holocaust Memories, Historians' Memoirs: First-Person Narrative and the Memory of the Holocaust." *History and Memory* 15, no. 1 (2003): 49–84.
- Pozzi Jáuregui, Néstor O. *Expansión Mundial Marxista: Sus causas y su respuesta*. Buenos Aires: Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, 1983.
- Robben, Antonius C. G. M. "Ethnographic Seduction, Transference, and Resistance in Dialogues about Terror and Violence in Argentina." *Ethos* 24, no. 1 (1996): 71–106.
- . "The Assault on Basic Trust: Disappearance, Protest, and Reburial in Argentina." In *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, 70–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Sánchez, Matilde. *Histórias de vida: Hebe de Bonafini*. Buenos Aires: Fraterna/Del Nuevo Extremo, 1985.
- Sanford, Victoria. "From *I, Rigoberta* to the Commissioning of Truth: Maya Women and the Reshaping of Guatemalan History." *Cultural Critique* 47 (Winter 2001): 16–53.
- San Martino de Dromi, María Laura. *Historia política argentina (1955–1988)*. 2 vols. Buenos Aires: Editorial Astrea, 1988.
- Santner, Eric L. *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Saporta, José A., and Bessel A. van der Kolk. "Psychobiological Consequences of Severe Trauma." In *Torture and Its Consequences: Current Treatment Approaches*, ed. Metin Basoglu, 151–81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Schacter, Daniel L. *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past*. New York: Basic Books, 1996.
- Schirmer, Jennifer. "The Claiming of Space and the Body Politic within National-Security States: The Plaza de Mayo Madres and the Greenham Common Women." In *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin, 185–220. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Segev, Tom. *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000.
- Seoane, María, and Hector Ruiz Nuñez. *La noche de los lápices*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1986.
- Simpson, John, and Jana Bennett. *The Disappeared and the Mothers of the Plaza: The Story of the 11,000 Argentiniens Who Vanished*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.
- Sztompka, Piotr. "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change." *European Journal of Social Theory* 3, no. 4 (2000): 449–66.
- Theidon, Kimberly. "Disarming the Subject: Remembering War and Imagining Citizenship in Peru." *Cultural Critique* 54 (Spring 2003): 67–87.

- Timerman, Jacobo. *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*. New York: Henry Holt, 1996.
- van der Kolk, Bessel A. "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism." *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 12, no. 2 (1989): 389–411.
- Vazquez, Chacho. *Polvo enamorado*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1988.
- Vecchioli, Virginia. "Os trabalhos pela memória." *Um esboço de campo dos direitos humanos na Argentina através da construção social da categoria de vítima do terrorismo de estado*. Unpublished master's thesis. Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2000.
- Verbitsky, Horacio. *El vuelo*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1995.
- Villegas, Osiris G. *Testimonio de un alegato*. Buenos Aires: author's edition, 1990.
- Waisbord, Silvio. "Politics and Identity in the Argentine Army: Cleavages and the Generational Factor." *Latin American Research Review* 26, no. 2 (1991): 157–70.
- Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- Watson, Rubie S. "Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism: An Introduction." In *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, ed. Rubie S. Watson, 1–20. Washington, WA: University of Washington Press, 1994.
- Wieviorka, Annette. "On Testimony." In *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman, 23–32. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994.
- Young, Allan. *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Young, James E. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- . *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993.
- , ed. *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*. Munich: Prestel, 1994.

## Periodicals

*Clarín*  
*El Diario del Juicio*  
*El País* [Spain]  
*La Causa Peronista*  
*La Nación*  
*Madres*  
*New York Times*  
*Página/12*  
*Somos*  
*Tres Puntos*  
*Tributo*