

Politics of Memory

Remembering the Disappeared: Advantages and Disadvantages of Memory

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The purpose of the paper “Remembering the Disappeared: Advantages and Disadvantages of Memory” is to explore various ways in which Argentines and the international public have attempted to come to terms with the disappearances that occurred during Argentina’s Dirty War between 1976 and 1983. This paper argues that the various mediums available to the Argentine and international public are both advantageous and detrimental. By looking at popular culture, art, literature, protest groups and governmental actions, this study demonstrates how Argentines are able to reconcile with the past by exploring the topic in a private manner, honoring those who disappeared, and acting as a therapeutic agent. These same mediums hinder the process of reconciliation by preventing people from fully grieving those lost and moving past the Dirty War, offering a biased interpretation of the disappeared, and not satisfying the goals or wishes of everyone looking for answers.

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo: Political and Social Activism Post 1983

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Although there is an immense amount of information regarding the social and political activism of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo during the Dirty War and immediately after its conclusion, there is little written about their social and political activities following this period. The purpose of this paper is to examine the participation of the Mothers in Argentine politics post 1983. Specifically, their involvement and activism surrounding the Punto Final [Full Stop Law] and the Obediencia Debida [Law of Due Obedience], which were introduced in 1986 and 1987 respectively. These laws were created under the leadership of President Raúl Alfonsín, who was the first democratically elected President in almost a decade. The Obediencia Debida protected those involved in the junta from being prosecuted if their superior officers had been tried and convicted; and the Punto Final created a 60-day deadline for new prosecutions of army personnel or police who committed crimes between 1976 and 1983. Through primary and secondary research, this paper presents evidence that the Mothers continued to participate as social and political activists in Argentina. They remained loyal to their initial cause of finding their children and bringing junta members to justice, but also expanded their involvement to other social issues in Argentina and worldwide.

The Art of Memory: The Historical Representation and Public Memory of the 1973 Coup D'état in Chilean Communities in Ontario

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Many scholars have examined the dynamic and enigmatic relationship between historical

representation and visual memory, considering the various ways that imagery creates and reproduces ideas of collective memory, identity, and reconciliation. For my research, I examine the historical representation and public memory of the 1973 Chilean military coup d'état in Chilean communities in Ottawa and Toronto. The study of collective experiences and memories, allows me to examine how various Chilean communities have used different mediums (art, photography, poetry, and film) to remember this time in their past and how it has become part of their identity today in Canada. The study of memory is particularly important in understanding how Chileans have struggled to define and re-define the meaning of this collective trauma. Through these cultural productions, personal and public memory act in a reciprocal relationship to explain the larger process of how memories are shared.

Between 1973 and 1988, over 24,000 Chilean nationals, mostly refugees, would arrive in Canada. Chileans have kept an active memory of these extremely violent years, influencing the representations of their experiences in Canada. Conducting oral interviews with Chilean-Canadians has allowed me to examine the collective memory of the coup, which has been expressed in cultural productions. Chilean art is part of a larger human rights' movement and an effort today by these artists to express their past experiences, and form collective memories and identities in Canada, which places this study in an important historical discourse.

Memory & Testimony (Performance)

Zita Nyrody
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My Masters research looks at performances of testimony and memory. For the CERLAC conference I wish to present a performance piece that emerged out of my summer 2008 field experience of studying with Grupo Yuyachkani in Lima Peru.

Grupo Yuyachkani is a renowned physical theatre company that creates works about the past and present social and political climate in Peru. Much of their work is about violence and memory and links to the 20 year internal conflict in Peru. They use a method of theatre called 'documentary theatre' in which performances honor the testimony given by victims of trauma. My time in Peru corresponded with the five year anniversary of the controversial Truth and Reconciliation process. I was invited to attend Audiencia por la CVR, a conference for women who were affected by the violence. Seeing the documentary theatre of Grupo Yuyachkani and the testimonies of the women at the conference has inspired me to create a performance piece that I wish to present at the CERLAC conference.

My performance uses theatrical tools learnt from the company as well as the experiences and observations I had in Peru. This dance/theatre performance deals with performing testimony in the Peruvian context and attempts to understand how we perform and witness memory.

